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UK in ‘prolonged recession’ as Bank of England hikes interest rates to 3%, knocking pound – as it happened

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Interest rates

Interest rates likely to jump as markets await Bank of England decision

Analysts believe a 0.75 percentage point rise is likely, potentially the biggest hike in the base rate since 1989

- [UK food prices soar by fastest rate on record](#)
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- [Fed unveils sixth consecutive hike in US rates to fight inflation](#)



Bank of England is forecast to the base lending rate by 0.75 percentage points on Thursday. Photograph: Maxian/Getty Images/iStockphoto

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Wed 2 Nov 2022 20.01 EDTLast modified on Thu 3 Nov 2022 01.13 EDT

Mortgage rates are expected to jump on Thursday in response to the largest increase in [the Bank of England's](#) base rate since 1989, as the central bank tries to bring down an inflation rate expected to remain in double figures until at least next spring.

Marking [the eighth consecutive interest rate rise](#), the Bank of England is expected to push the base interest rate up by 0.75 percentage points to 3% after what is likely to be a tense meeting of the monetary policy committee (MPC).

With economic figures showing that Europe and the US will be in recession next year, members of the MPC are expected to remain split over whether to restrict the rise to 0.5 percentage points, to prevent an even deeper downturn than already forecast.

The nine-strong MPC will come under pressure from rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve which on Wednesday [hiked its rate by 0.75 percentage points](#) and the ECB, which last week increased its main deposit rate by the same amount.

Last month, Bank governor [Andrew Bailey](#) said the economic situation had deteriorated since the MPC signalled a 0.5% rise in the summer.

He said: "As things stand today, my best guess is that inflationary pressures will require a stronger response than we perhaps thought in August."

Homebuyers with tracker or variable rate mortgages will feel the pain of the rate rise immediately, while the estimated 300,000 people who must remortgage this month will find that two-year and five-year fixed rates remain at levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis.

The average two-year fixed rate has fallen to 6.47% from 6.65% in mid-October – as the effects of the disastrous Kwasi Kwarteng mini-budget ease – but remains three times the rate offered by lenders earlier this year. A five-year fixed rate mortgage that could be bought for 6.51% on 20 October has slipped only marginally to 6.31%.

Investors expect the bank to continue its programme of raising rates into next year, despite Bailey stressing that each decision is made on its merits from one meeting to the next.

Until recently, the base rate was forecast to reach 5% before falling back in 2024.

MPC members Ben Broadbent, a deputy governor of the Bank, and Catherine Mann, who joined last year from a US investment bank, have argued that financial markets are overestimating how high rates will go.

In response to their interventions, markets have scaled back the peak rate to 4.75%.

Capital Economics, a consultancy, said the Fed and the ECB were poised to signal a slowdown in rate rises, but the UK's weak financial position meant that the [Bank of England](#) would need to keep going.

However, many analysts said they expected the Bank would ease its rate rises next year in response to a tight government budget that cuts household spending power.

Analysts at Deutsche Bank have said they expect Threadneedle Street to opt for a 0.75 percentage point rise with a split vote.

Experts at the firm said they expect latest forecasts from the Bank of England, which will also be revealed on Thursday, to show that “the economic outlook has deteriorated further”.

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They added: “Conditioned on market pricing, the UK economy will probably fall into a deeper and more prolonged recession.”

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt is understood to be considering steep tax rises to limit the government’s spending deficit when he announces his budget on 17 November.

Hunt and Rishi Sunak have argued they need to arrest a widening shortfall in government spending to reassure financial markets that proposals for tax cuts in the mini-budget in September was an aberration.

Economic conditions have worsened across most developed economies in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a steep rise in energy costs.

UK factories reported a slump in orders in October that was likely to plunge the manufacturing industry into recession before the end of the year. Retailers and services firms have come under pressure from falling consumer and business confidence.

Rachel Reeves, labour’s shadow chancellor, said “Britain’s unique exposure to economic shocks has been down to a failure to get to grips with more than a decade of weak growth, low productivity and underinvestment and widening inequality.

“Rising interest rates will mean families with already stretched budgets will be hit by higher mortgage payments.

[“It will mean higher financing costs for businesses.](#)

“For many firms who have had a tough couple of years this will mean desperately difficult decisions about whether to carry on.”

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[J Sainsbury](#)

Sainsbury's profits fall as households shop early for Christmas to spread cost

Supermarket chain says it has tried to keep prices down with households dining more at home rather than eating out



Sainsbury's said its plan to save £1.3bn in costs was helping to offset 'higher than expected operating cost inflation'. Photograph: Rui Vieira/PA

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Thu 3 Nov 2022 09.00 EDTFirst published on Thu 3 Nov 2022 04.43 EDT

Households “feeling the squeeze” are shopping earlier for Christmas to spread the cost and have made a shift to dining at home rather than at restaurants, according to Sainsbury's.

The supermarket revealed an 8% fall in first-half profits as it said it had invested in keeping prices as low as possible, with food price inflation in its

stores running at “comfortably less” than the [10%-plus](#) reported for the wider market.

The supermarket said its effort to cut £1.3bn in costs in the three years to 2024 – double the savings in the three years to 2020, and a step up from the figure laid out last year – was helping to offset “higher than expected operating cost inflation”.

Simon Roberts, the chief executive, suggested there would be more price rises to come into next year as he said there was still “pressure in the system” from energy and labour cost rises.

He said shoppers had already made clear they were “really feeling the squeeze”, putting fewer items in their baskets, shifting to cheaper own-label products – which he said could be half the price of similar branded items – and shopping earlier than usual for Christmas products so that that they could spread the cost over several pay packets.

Roberts added that as autumn had arrived shoppers had also shifted back towards “eating at home rather than at restaurants”.

Sales of the retailer’s Taste the Difference premium food ranges are up 14% on pre-pandemic levels as analysts said Sainsbury’s was picking up sales from households who were saving money by treating themselves at home rather than eating out.

Roberts expects the trend for home dining to continue over the coming weeks with gatherings to watch the football World Cup in homes rather than pubs.

He said: “We really get how tough it is for millions of households right now. Customers are watching every penny and every pound and we know that they are relying on us to keep food prices as low as we can.

“We will have invested more than £500m by March 2023 in keeping prices lower by cutting our costs at a faster rate than our competitors, meaning we have more firepower to battle inflation. Over the past year and a half we

have consistently passed on less price inflation than our competitors and I am confident we have never been better value.”

He said it was too early to say how sales of general merchandise at the group’s Argos chain would fare in the run-up to Christmas, but the company has decided to retain 60 more high street stores than previously anticipated after renegotiating rents. The group now intends to have 160 standalone outlets by March 2024 and up to 460 inside its supermarkets.

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The UK’s second largest supermarket chain said underlying pre-tax profits fell to £340m, better than the City had expected, as sales rose 4.4% to £16.4bn in the six months to 17 September. Sales of groceries rose 3.8% in the second quarter compared with the same period a year before, while sales at Argos rose 1.6%, compared with a 10.5% decline in the first quarter.

Sainsbury’s said it was seeing less switching to Aldi and Lidl than all other traditional supermarkets and that, while sales online were down, those shoppers were returning to its supermarkets.

The retailer had been expected to cut annual profit forecasts from a £630m to a £690m target. However, analysts said Sainsbury’s had delivered better than expected sales and profits, with outperformance in all categories including clothing, sales of which fell just 0.2% in the second quarter, compared with a year before, and in general merchandise, where sales rose 1.2%, helped by strong sales of fans and other warm weather gear.

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BT

BT warns of more job losses as rising bills force bigger cost-cutting drive

Telecom giant blames 18% fall in profits on need for extra savings after £200m energy bill increase and soaring inflation



BT said it has been forced to raise its cost-savings target from £2.5bn to £3bn by 2025 in response to [inflation hitting a 40-year high](#) and a surge in energy costs. Photograph: BT/PA

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Thu 3 Nov 2022 06.40 EDTFirst published on Thu 3 Nov 2022 05.00 EDT

BT has warned of more job cuts to come after it was forced to find more than £500m in additional savings due to soaring inflation and energy bills.

The company, which reported an 18% slump in pretax profits from just over £1bn to £831m year-on-year in the six months to the end of September, said

its energy bill will be £200m higher this year.

The telecoms company said it has been forced to raise its cost-savings target from £2.5bn to £3bn by the end of its financial year in 2025 in response to [inflation hitting a 40-year high](#) and a surge in energy costs.

“We are leaving no stone unturned to make sure BT can be the most-efficient organisation it can be,” said Philip Jansen, the chief executive at BT.

“Inevitably it means some jobs will not exist in the future but that has been true of the last few years too. We will use natural attrition as much as we can. In these difficult conditions we know we have to double down on our costs. There are no specific numbers in mind. This [cost-cutting programme] is up until the end of 2025. Everyone has to share the pain – all 100,000 people at BT – to get to this £3bn on cost savings.”

BT’s last official job cuts plan resulted in a [13,000 reduction in the workforce over a three-year period](#), in a cost cutting strategy initiated by the former chief executive Gavin Patterson in 2018.

Jansen also vowed to push through inflation-busting price rises for its millions of customers next spring when mid-contract increases in the cost of their bills are pushed through despite the cost of living crisis.

BT uses a mechanism to increase the cost of bills annually by the rate of inflation as measured by the consumer prices index (CPI) in January, plus 3.9%, which means that customers are facing bill increases of about 14% next year.

Companies including BT have been [criticised for making billions](#) from the price rises and the telecoms regulator Ofcom – which has said a [record 8 million households have already experienced difficulty](#) paying their bills – has told internet companies to “think hard” about continuing to make major hikes.

“Household bills prices will go up by CPI plus 3.9% next year,” said Jansen. “We have been transparent about that. It is in the contracts.”

The company said the half-year profit slump is due to a combination of higher costs across its business as well as relating to the £15bn cost of rolling out next generation full-fibre broadband across the UK.

BT also said that about 40,000 homes missed out on having their broadband connections completed on time due to [ongoing strike action](#).

The telecoms company, which is dealing with rolling [national strikes by tens of thousands of its almost 60,000 frontline workforce](#) over pay and conditions, said that the industrial action affected the rollout of broadband to new customers.

Jansen, who said the eight days of strike action so far had caused only a “relatively modest” impact on costs, criticised the Communications Workers Union (CWU) over the impact it is having on broadband customers.

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“Those 40,000 are disappointed customers,” said Jansen. “Hopefully they are just delayed customers. They had appointments planned on days of strike and if we can’t get to them they don’t get connected. We hope to make [those lost appointments] up. The biggest impact is on our customers which is why we want to stop that and end a dispute that helps nobody.”

Openreach, the BT subsidiary responsible for expanding and maintaining much of the UK’s broadband network, said its customer base fell by 89,000

in the company's second quarter, compared with an increase of 29,000 in the same period last year.

BT's energy costs are set to rise significantly more next year as mechanisms to hedge against price rises run their course.

Simon Lowth, BT's chief financial officer, said that BT's energy costs are 75% to 80% hedged at "reasonable" prices this year – although this still equates to a £200m increase. However, next year energy costs are set to increase significantly further with BT's energy usage only 50% hedged, meaning it will have to trade at market prices on the other half of its energy consumption next year.

Lowth also said that BT has held talks with the government over potentially using the thousands of back-up generators it has at its exchanges across the UK, which are designed to kick-in if there are power disruptions, for wider use to help cope with potential nationwide rolling black outs this winter.

"We have had conversations about whether we can help the government over peak energy demand [this winter] by pro-actively using [our] back up power to help cope with demand at peaks," he said. "We will do what we can to manage the overall UK energy position."

BT operates 6,000 exchanges across the UK, each of which has a backup generator in case of disruption to power supplies.

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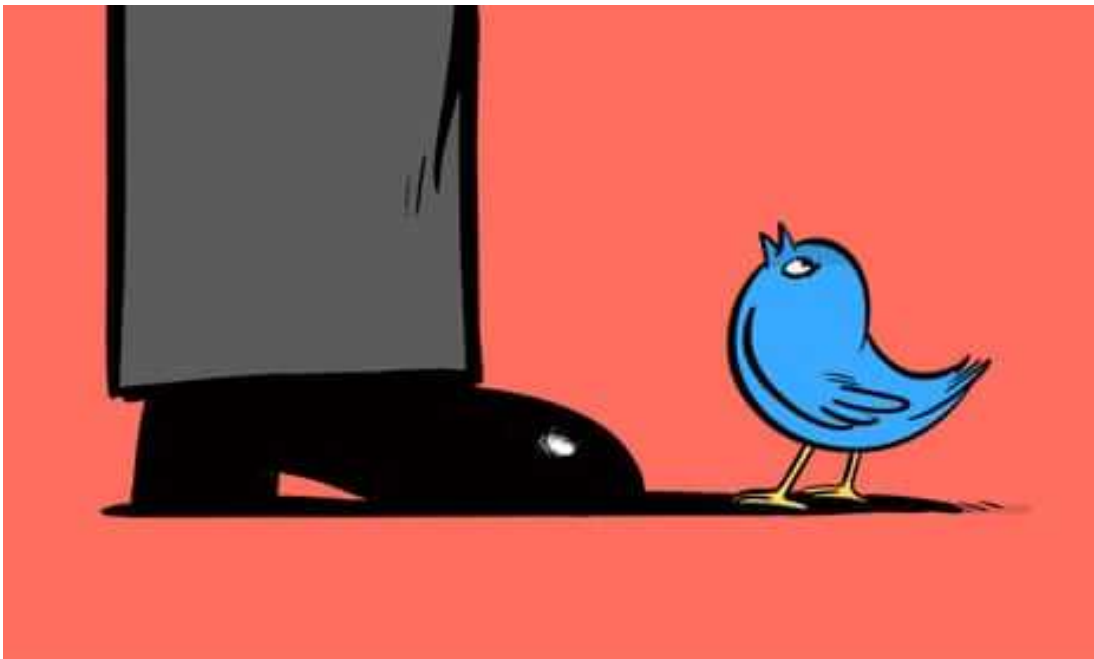
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**‘He is poised to open the floodgates’:
can Twitter survive Elon Musk – or
even thrive?**



‘Twitter has perennially had numerous problems that the Musk acquisition saga significantly clarified, publicised and exacerbated.’ Illustration: Mark Long/The Guardian

Since buying it, the billionaire has wasted no time shaking up the struggling social media firm, cutting staff and introducing fees. But can he make the platform matter again – or will it become a hellscape of hateful content and misinformation?



[Alex Hern](#)

[@alexhern](#)

Thu 3 Nov 2022 02.00 EDT

Twitter isn't a good place to be right now. That's nothing new, but the day-to-day awfulness has been ramped up by Elon Musk's chaotic acquisition. In the week since he marched through the company's San Francisco office holding a basin – so that he could tweet “let that sink in” – and dubbed himself first “chief twit” and then “Twitter complaint hotline operator” (his actual title, according to internal systems, is boring old “chief executive officer”), the world's richest man has done the corporate-takeover equivalent of flipping the table halfway through a game of chess.

Externally, the changes are slim, but significant. One of his first acts was to order a change in the site's homepage. If you visit [Twitter.com](https://twitter.com) without being logged into an account, you will no longer be sent to a log-in page; instead, you'll be taken to the Explore tab, the site's algorithmically curated selection

of the best tweets and most popular trends. It's a change of focus, in other words, from encouraging users to sign up or log in, to embracing visitors who just want to see what's happening and then bail.

That change of focus isn't unprecedented. [Twitter](#) has flipped and flopped on the question multiple times in the past, sometimes arguing that its goal as a company is simply to maximise the number of people reading tweets, other times arguing that it should be maximising account-holders, and other times focusing on "monetisable" users – those who see adverts. No, the point of the change isn't what happened, but when it happened: immediately.

No focus groups, no A/B tests, no memos passed back and forth between senior executives arguing the pros and cons of each option. Musk commands, and change occurs. The message, for those inside Twitter and out, was clear: meet the new boss, not at all the same as the old boss.

In the days since, Musk has torn through the social network's headquarters like a hurricane. Backed up by a brains trust of close friends, including the venture capitalists Jason Calacanis and Sriram Krishnan, PayPal co-founder David Sacks, and Alex Spiro, his personal lawyer, as well as a handpicked cohort of Tesla engineers, he has set about reshaping the company.

Alongside the symbolic change to the homepage came the actual changes to the executive team. Musk fired Twitter's chief executive and chief finance officer, as well as the head of legal and policy, Vijaya Gadde – the most powerful woman at Twitter and the person most identified with the decision to ban Donald Trump from the site. Despite early reports suggesting the executives were in line for multimillion-dollar golden parachutes, Musk appears instead to have decided that he hasn't seen enough of courtrooms in the past six months, firing them "for cause" – that is, alleging gross incompetence – and denying them their payouts.

The payouts will almost certainly arrive eventually, after Musk plays a mini version of the same courtroom drama that led to him being forced to buy the company in the first place. According to [a Financial Times report](#), his argument is that were it not for his bid, the value of the company's stock would have collapsed. [Others note](#) that the fact that the executives fought so

hard to force Musk to complete the purchase suggests that they did their job very well indeed, securing a multibillion payout for shareholders that would have evaporated if they had let him walk away.

But again, the message is sent: no one is safe. And the rest of the office knows it. On the first day, a missive went out commanding coders (software engineers) to print out their last 30 days of work and bring it to a code review, where one of the Tesla engineers would assess their skill. Shortly after, a second missive went out, telling people to shred those printouts. But the code reviews went ahead, albeit digitally, and on Monday, the layoffs of the rank and file began.

In practice, the code reviews appear to be little more than a blunt ranking of quantity, like assessing a construction crew by how many bricks they have laid. They can't be much more complex than that, because Musk's goal is to see off a quarter of the company's staff – and to do it quickly. Although the chief twit has denied that he was explicitly trying to get rid of staff before an expensive round of cash bonuses became due on 1 November, the time pressure is there nonetheless. Even those who pass the code reviews may find their jobs under threat: one project, to overhaul the company's Twitter Blue subscription service and bring in a monthly fee for verification, was instituted with a deadline of just one week. Whether the project is actually urgent, or simply a useful way to encourage those unwilling to work all hours and weekends for a capricious new manager to quit voluntarily, is unclear. At least Twitter staff can take some comfort in the fact that Musk's reported intention to lay off 75% of the workforce has yet to come to pass.

If Musk sounds like the boss from hell, well, you wouldn't be the first to think so, and Twitter staff aren't the first to find out. In internal Tesla emails, [leaked last year](#), he laid out his management style plainly for underlings: "If an email is sent from me with explicit directions, there are only three actions allowed by managers. 1) Email me back to explain why what I said was incorrect. Sometimes, I'm just plain wrong! 2) Request further clarification if what I said was ambiguous. 3) Execute the directions.

"If none of the above are done, that manager will be asked to resign immediately."

In spring, [he again threatened immediate job losses](#), as part of a return-to-the-office mandate at Tesla. Employees were expected to be in the office for a minimum of 40 hours a week, he said, “or depart Tesla”. Showing he has a soft spot, Musk did allow remote work to continue – as optional extra hours on top of the 40-hour minimum. “If you don’t show up, we will assume you have resigned.”

Over the summer, [employees at one of his other companies had enough](#). “SpaceX must swiftly and explicitly separate itself from Elon’s personal brand,” they wrote, in a letter to senior executives that called Musk a “distraction and embarrassment”. Instead, the letter-writers were fired.

But Musk didn’t buy Twitter to cut jobs, nor to simply expand his fiefdom, which already covers land (Tesla), space (SpaceX) and the underworld (the Boring Company), into cyberspace. In fact, he was clear about his motivations as far back as April, when he first put in a bid to own the company. “Free speech is the bedrock of a functioning democracy,” he said, “and Twitter is the digital town square where matters vital to the future of humanity are debated.”

Not everyone thinks Musk is the right person to oversee that. “Many studies have shown that social media is a leading cause of misinformation and disinformation, especially when it comes to spreading harmful election lies that chip away at trust in our democratic institutions,” says Lindsey Melki, of the nonpartisan anti-corruption group Accountable.US. “To the previous Twitter leadership’s credit, they tried to contain the problem to a certain degree. But now Musk is poised to open the floodgates of election disinformation, making it truly the wild west of Big Lie propaganda and a safe harbour for would-be insurrectionists.”

Even Musk appeared to have second thoughts. Within days of marching into Twitter HQ, his earlier bluster about stripping out content moderation, reinstating banned accounts and emphasising “free speech” was muted. Updating his bio from “chief twit” to “Twitter complaint hotline operator” was an acknowledgment, however understated, that claiming sole power to decide the outcome of moderation decisions on a platform of more than 200 million people isn’t fun.

On the first weekend after buying the company, [he announced](#) that he would be setting up a “content moderation council with widely diverse viewpoints”, and that no major decisions would be made until after it had met. Like Mark Zuckerberg before him, who set up Facebook’s “oversight board” to formalise decision-making around content moderation – and to outsource blame for mistakes – Musk is angling for the power but not the responsibility.



Illustration: Mark Long/The Guardian

Unlike Zuckerberg, Musk has strong commercial reasons to want to avoid being held responsible for the decisions his company makes. Twitter may be his current love, but Tesla is the source of his wealth, and the car company sells vehicles around the world – including in China, where Twitter is banned and where the government was [on Tuesday revealed to be](#) running 2,000 accounts on the social network aimed at influencing the US midterm elections. Promoting free speech in the US is simply defending the constitution; promoting it in China is a subversive act.

So why is he doing it? Because Musk is, at heart, a poster. He cannot stop posting on the internet. He believes, quite sincerely, that Twitter is of societal importance, and that without his strong hand guiding it, it will squander its influence, and he will be left with nowhere to post.

The thing is, it's not clear he's wrong.

The problems at Twitter predate Musk. It is hard to remember now, but in the early days of the 2010s, Twitter and Facebook were spoken of in one breath. As a social network, it wasn't the largest, but it wasn't the smallest either – and unlike Facebook, it had cracked mobile from day one, with an offering that was perfectly suited to the growing penetration of smartphones around the world.

It isn't hard to imagine a parallel world where things had gone differently. Perhaps if Facebook's acquisition of Instagram had fallen through, and Twitter had embraced the more personal side of social media left open by that absence, and won round youthful users as a result, the two companies would continue to be neck and neck.

Instead, Facebook pulled away, and Twitter was left behind. For all its impact on media and politics, the site is a comparative minnow. It doesn't appear in [Ofcom's ranking of the 10 biggest online organisations](#) – even after aggregating all of Google and Facebook's various businesses, it lags behind eBay, PayPal and the NHS. Twitter remains influential, reaching a little under two-thirds of all British adults in September 2021, but with far fewer regular users – just 11.4 million visited the site on an average day, compared with 34.3 million who visited Facebook.

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The vast majority of those visitors are passive users. Twitter “power users”, dubbed “heavy tweeters” in the platform's internal metrics, generate 90% of all tweets and half of global revenue, despite making up less than 10% of

account holders, [according to a recent Reuters report](#). It doesn't take much to make a heavy user: you just need to log in to Twitter "six or seven days a week" and tweet "about three to four times a week". But an internal document seen by Reuters concluded that those users are in "absolute decline". The document was titled: "Where did the tweeters go?"

Some of the company's headline metrics are healthier than that gloomy document suggests. Since 2019, it has focused on "monetisable daily active users" – those it can show adverts to – and they have risen steadily, from 134m accounts in the first quarter of that year to 238m this June, the last figures reported. But those figures didn't filter through to the bottom line. The company has shown a net profit in only two years: 2018 and 2019.

Twitter's chief revenue source has always been advertising, but it has struggled to offer much to advertisers. Sometimes it presents itself as a Facebook in miniature, with detail-rich targeting options for advertisers to personalise against; at other times, it leans on its real-time nature, promoting the ability for advertisers to react rapidly to events. But it sits on the wrong side of an online advertising duopoly, where Google and Facebook are the defaults and any smaller platform has to justify its existence.

The problems at Twitter were both exacerbated and masked by its most prominent user: Donald Trump. For four years, his presence defined the site, with the cadence of a day often set by his first posts, angrily commenting on whatever had happened on cable news. Every US political reporter had to be on Twitter to understand their president; every US journalist had to be there to understand their newsrooms; every US politician had to be there to understand their opponents.

Twitter's user numbers swelled a bit during the Trump years, but its cultural importance grew far more, even in arenas seemingly far removed from the world of politics. Know Your Meme, a website that tracks the rise and fall of online culture, recently published a look at "[where memes come from](#)", tracking, platform by platform, the progress of internet culture from 2010, when YouTube and 4chan dominated, through to 2022, when TikTok contributes almost 30% of all new memes in the site's database. Some stories in the analysis are clear: the slow decline of 4chan and YouTube, the rapid growth of TikTok, the remarkably low impact of Facebook and

Instagram on internet culture. But one that stands out is the peak, and then decline, of Twitter during and after the Trump years. In 2018, 40% of everything added to the site's database came from Twitter: it really was, for a certain vision of the internet, the site where things happened.

The impact of the Trump years wasn't something that Twitter did – it was something done to Twitter. Its co-founder Jack Dorsey had returned to the site just one year earlier, resuming his duties as chief executive after a seven-year gap. But Dorsey couldn't be convinced to give up his role at Square, the payments company he had founded in the interim, and so Twitter entered the most important four years in its history with a literal part-time boss.

Coasting on the wave of attention from Trump enabled Twitter to ignore its vast and growing problems. Some were directly tied to the president, and Twitter's commercial imperative to keep him and his fans active on the site. "I believe that Twitter relished in the knowledge that they were also the favourite and most used service of the former president and enjoyed having that sort of power within the social media ecosystem," [one whistleblower from inside the company](#) told the congressional committee investigating the 6 January attack on the US Capitol. "If former president Donald Trump were any other user on Twitter, he would have been permanently suspended a very long time ago."

Less than a year after Trump left office, Dorsey left Twitter, ousted by activist shareholders who felt that the company was underperforming in part because of its stagnation under a founder chief executive. His replacement, Parag Agrawal, had been in the post for less than six months when another activist shareholder, Musk, arrived and took a much less conventional approach to the same problem.

"Twitter has perennially had numerous problems," says Carl Tobias, the Williams chair in law at the University of Richmond, "that the Musk acquisition saga significantly clarified, publicised and exacerbated. There seemed to be a lack of leadership at the top, and an inability to earn significant profits and grow like the other major competitors.

“What remains unclear now and in the future is whether Musk will be able to operate the company any better, especially given his many other business commitments, namely Tesla and Space X, and his ‘first amendment absolutist’ perspective, whatever that means. One major concern could be whether Twitter will become a platform that ameliorates or worsens the rampant division, partisanship and lying that pervade political discourse in the US and the world. The tasks are many and complex, but Musk’s abilities should not be underestimated, as he has shown before.”

Musk’s takeover relies on the same sense of preternatural self-confidence that underlies his other successes. Tesla built an electric car when the conventional wisdom in the industry was that it was a niche product for eco-nuts, and it sells almost 1m a year, all at the luxury end of the market. SpaceX built reusable rockets, and almost single-handedly lowered the cost of getting things in to orbit, sparking a spaceflight renaissance that lets Musk credibly commit to sending a rocket – if not people – to Mars.

In writing off Musk’s Twitter takeover, it’s hard not to worry that you may be making the same mistake as those naysayers. Sure, he seems in over his head, he has fired everyone who understands the site he’s trying to run, [he’s losing the trust of major advertisers](#) and [bartering with Stephen King](#) over a fair price for a verified tick. But he’s also the last, desperate roll of the dice for a site that has power and influence, but no revenue or vision.

As with Tesla, and SpaceX – and Neuralink, and the Boring Company, and his many other projects that hover between a joke and business – Musk’s central thesis for Twitter is that there’s an opportunity if you bet the farm on the conventional wisdom being wrong. Every other business in the social media sector is substantially funded by advertising, so what if Twitter tried to focus on subscription revenue instead? Every other social media company jealously guards its curation algorithm, wielding the power to promote and bury content like a weapon, so what if Twitter let users pick and choose their own curation algorithm instead?

And every major social network believes that “platform safety” involves a large content moderation team, working day and night to find and remove harmful, hateful and illegal content, in order to prevent the community from being dominated by the worst people on it. So what, Musk asks, if Twitter

just ... didn't do that? Conventional wisdom says that would result in a hellscape, a combination of Reddit at its nadir and the social network Parler around the time of the 6 January riot. Musk's bet is that the wisdom is wrong.

On Tuesday morning San Francisco time, the self-styled Twitter complaint hotline operator announced the first major change to Twitter since taking over: [a new \\$8 a month fee for Twitter Blue](#), tying in the company's "blue tick" verification system to the pre-existing roster of benefits for subscribers. Like everything else Musk does, it's divisive. Is it a canny way to encourage more people to subscribe to the service, and reduce the influence of advertisers over the public square? Or is it a simple attempt to monetise a crucial safety feature, born out of a misguided belief that the 400,000 verified users will pay whatever it takes to preserve their apparent vaunted status?

Alongside his tweets revealing the change, Musk rallied his defenders, making the case that verification for all is a leveller, an equaliser. "Power to the people!" he said. What if he actually believes it?

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The many meanings of moss

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Rishi Sunak

‘Best of a bad bunch’: voters in ‘red wall’ willing to give Rishi Sunak a chance

Panel of Sedgefield voters say they have lost faith with politicians, and Keir Starmer is not doing enough

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One focus group member described Rishi Sunak as the ‘best of a bad bunch’ of Conservative leadership candidates. Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma/Rex/Shutterstock



[Aletha Adu](#) *Political correspondent*

Thu 3 Nov 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 00.27 EDT

Voters in the historic “red wall” seat of Sedgefield in County Durham, where Tony Blair was once elected to parliament, are willing to give Rishi Sunak a chance to improve their prospects as the cost of living crisis deepens, since they say [Keir Starmer](#) is “not making a case for himself”.

Members of a focus group convened by UK More in Common for the Guardian described Sunak as “the money man”, with a CV that proves he was the “best of a bad bunch” of Conservative leadership candidates.

“He does seem competent and seems to have the ability to move the [Conservative] party forward,” said Steve, who questioned why the Tories didn’t vote for him in the first leadership election instead of his predecessor, [Liz Truss](#).

“Rishi is a money-oriented guy. You’d want someone who knows how to retain money and has the platform to change things without having an overbearing personality,” said Jurome, a 37-year-old delivery driver.

But he feels hopeless and fears for the future of the country because the government “knows they’re not doing a good job” and has rolled out

policies to tackle the energy crisis that only help the richest.

“We had someone who was literally outlived by a lettuce,” he said, referring to the [Daily Star’s Liz Truss challenge](#). “It doesn’t fill the country with hope that things can actually improve. People like us who work relatively regular jobs have been put into a state of flux because we’re having to worry about what our future looks like. There doesn’t seem to be a plan that’s going to help us out of this.”

The five participants, from mixed backgrounds, used the words “chaotic”, “flux”, “failing” and “uncertain” to describe what Britain has been like in 2022, placing much of the blame on Boris Johnson’s dishonesty and Truss’s “cameo appearance”, insisting they would not want Johnson to return to No 10.

Westley, 43, a sales manager, said he was “not filled with faith” in the Tory party, but throughout the Covid pandemic “Rishi was flagged as a hero with his campaign to keep people out of work”.

He admitted he hadn’t got to know many of the leadership candidates, but said: “Since Rishi helped people during Covid with the ‘eat out to help out’ [campaign] and keeping people at work during Covid, he had the great ideas to keep our pockets full. None of the Tories can fully be trusted, but he seems like the obvious choice.”

Laura fears Sunak “hasn’t been completely honest” about his family’s tax avoidance and while he “has potential” to fix the country’s economy, he could end up leaving like Boris Johnson because of “his past”.

Steve added: “I don’t know why he wasn’t selected in the first place. Maybe there’s a lot more to come about his history. Boris had Partygate, Cameron had the Panama [offshore trust] scandal.”

In his first speech as prime minister, Sunak vowed to win the public’s trust with a government of “integrity, professionalism and accountability”, going on to say that “trust is earned and I will earn yours”. Paying tribute to Johnson for his “incredible achievements”, he made sure to highlight that the 2019 mandate was for the entire Conservative party, not just Johnson.

However, these voters in Sedgefield, which the Tories took from [Labour](#) in 2019 with a 12.8% swing, believe Sunak should call a general election as he was not voted in as prime minister at the time. The eldest of the group, Steve, felt betrayed and questioned why there could not be an election each time there was a change of hands at No 10, adding: “Blair was our local MP for years. When he dropped out, Brown went in but I didn’t vote for Brown. So I’m confused we don’t get elections when these people step down or are pushed out.”

The youngest of the group, Josh, a 27-year-old engineer, felt maybe a general election wasn’t needed, suggesting it was “better the devil you know”. But Laura weighed in: “We voted for the party, not that actual person, so they should have gone back to the [public] with an election.”

On Labour’s plan to help people through the impending crises: “I don’t think Keir Starmer will be able to do any of the things that he is saying he will do. I don’t have confidence that he can perform from the impression he leaves and how he comes across,” Laura told the group. The youngest members of the group, Jurome and Josh, said Starmer was good at “finger-pointing” and calling the Tories out but not good at setting out his own plan.

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“He’s in a position of power right now as he can call things out. That gives us hope because at least there is someone out there who is holding people at that level accountable. But we’re not seeing what his solutions are.”

Steve said he preferred Starmer's deputy, Angela Rayner, and believed she would be biding her time before she would once again try to run for Labour leader before the next general election. "[Starmer] brings nothing new to politics. He's a professional politician."

Asked if there was anything Starmer could do or say to convince them to fully back him, no members of the group responded.

Despite the promises of a "serious" government, these voters still feel they cannot trust politicians. "I've totally lost faith with all types of politician," Steve said. "The Lib Dems have disappeared into obscurity since their pact with Cameron ... selling their soul to the devil. The Labour party has too much baggage with Corbyn, which is still getting carried through and now we have the invisible man himself." He insists Starmer is the invisible man who is waiting "for his moment in the sun".

"Ministers have been elected into health and education roles without background experience", Laura said, while Westley added that he didn't "feel safe" under any politician because they all kept changing their policy stances. "To be honest, I don't know much about any of them. There have been lots of empty promises recently ... I don't feel like safe under anyone."

Luke Tryl, the director of More in Common, said: "When it came to who was responsible for the economic turmoil we find ourselves in, this group in Sedgefield laid the blame squarely at the government's door.

"Winning back their confidence won't be easy. But the good news for [Rishi Sunak](#) was that they thought he was the best person to clean up the mess, and didn't think that anyone else, including Keir Starmer, would do a better job."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/nov/03/red-wall-voters-willing-to-give-rishi-sunak-a-chance-according-to-focus-group>

Movies

Weird: The Al Yankovic Story review – Daniel Radcliffe biopic packed with wacky walk-ons

Packed with parody musical cliches, this spoof biopic of the afro-haired singing turn is a long slow trudge with little comedy



‘Doesn’t seem to have a funny bone in his body’ ... Daniel Radcliffe in *Weird: The Al Yankovic Story*. Photograph: Aaron Epstein/© 2022 The Roku Channel



[Peter Bradshaw](#)

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Thu 3 Nov 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 3 Nov 2022 03.02 EDT

This month has seen the posthumous release of Alan Rickman's diaries, which revealed the late star's opinion about his Harry Potter co-star Daniel Radcliffe: "I still don't think he's really an actor but he will undoubtedly direct/produce." Maybe so. But these career progressions are still in the future and Radcliffe has been cast here as the American accordionist and wacky singing turn "Weird" Al Yankovic with frizzy afro and moustache in this laboriously unfunny and pointless spoof biopic, co-written and produced by Yankovic himself.

Just as Yankovic made his name with wacky parodies of songs like My Sharona and Another One Bites the Dust, so this movie strains to parody musical films such as Walk the Line, with all the usual clichés: needle-scratch freeze-frame voiceover opening (although the cliché there is maybe unintentional), tough upbringing, uncaring parents, breakthrough to fame, substance abuse, crisis and comeback, all of which bears little or no relation to Yankovic's actual life.

There are one or two vaguely decent things here: a nice gag about no one recognising Queen bassist John Deacon, and a game performance from Julianne Nicholson. Having just portrayed Marilyn Monroe's mother in *Blonde*, Nicholson now gets to play Al's mum, placidly telling her music-obsessed boy things such as: "Stop being who you are and doing the things you love."

But really it is a long, slow trudge through a lot of zany walk-ons. Rainn Wilson plays the freaky DJ Dr Demento who gave Al his first break, [Jack Black](#) shows up briefly to play Wolfman Jack, and Evan Rachel Wood plays 80s-era Madonna whom this film imagines to have had a passionate affair with our hero. This film also jokingly – or maybe not exactly jokingly – implies that Al repeatedly turned down historic opportunities that would have made him an A-list pop legend. As for Radcliffe, he doesn't seem to have a funny bone in his body, but then it's difficult to tell considering the preponderance of unfunniness in this script.

Weird: The Al Yankovic Story is released on 4 November on Roku.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/nov/03/weird-the-al-yankovic-story-review-daniel-radcliffe-biopic-packed-with-wacky-walk-ons>

2022.11.03 - Opinion

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- Can you 'lose' an accent? And more importantly, why would you want to?
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[Opinion](#) **Climate crisis**

Fossil fuel burning once caused a mass extinction – now we're risking another

[George Monbiot](#)



The Devon coastline reveals that Earth was in a near-lifeless state for up to five million years after the last extinction event



Illustration: Matt Kenyon/The Guardian

Thu 3 Nov 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 06.01 EDT

Budleigh Salterton, on the south coast of Devon, sits above the most frightening cliffs on Earth. They are not particularly high. Though you don't want to stand beneath them, they are not especially prone to collapse. The horror takes another form. It is contained in the story they tell. For they capture the moment at which life on Earth almost came to an end.

The sediments preserved in these cliffs were laid down in the early Triassic period, just after the greatest mass extinction in the history of multicellular life that brought the Permian period to an end 252m years ago. Around [90% of species died](#), and fish and four-footed animals were [more or less exterminated](#) between 30 degrees north of the equator and 40 degrees south.

Most remarkably, while biological abundance (if not diversity) tends to recover from mass extinctions within a few hundred thousand years, our planet remained in this near-lifeless state for the following 5m years. In studying these cliffs, you see the precipice on which we teeter.

Cop27: the climate carnage we've faced this year – video

The lowest stratum at the western end of the beach is a bed of rounded pebbles. These are the stones washed off Triassic mountains by flash floods and deposited in great dumps by temporary rivers. Because the forests and savannahs that might have covered the mountains had died, there was nothing to hold the soil and subsoil together, so erosion is likely to have [accelerated greatly](#).

At the top of the pebble bed is a stony desert surface. The pebbles here have been sculpted by the wind into sharp angles and varnished with shiny oxides, suggesting the surface was unchanged for a long time. Above it are towering red Triassic sand dunes. Through a quirk of erosion, these soft deposits have been sculpted into hollows that look uncannily like fanged and screaming skulls.

We now know that there were two main [pulses of extinction](#). The first, which began 252.1m years ago, mostly affected life on land. It coincided with a series of massive volcanic eruptions in the region now known as the Siberian Traps. The second, more devastating phase, started about 200,000 years later. It almost completed the extinction of terrestrial life, as well as wiping out the great majority of species in the sea.



The cliffs at Budleigh Salterton, Devon. Photograph: Joana Kruse/Alamy

Though we cannot yet be sure, [the first phase](#) might have been triggered by acid rain, ozone depletion and metal pollution caused by volcanic chemicals. As rainforests and other ecosystems were wiped out, more toxic compounds were released from exposed soils and rocks, creating an escalating cycle of collapse.

The second phase appears to have been driven by global heating. By 251.9m years ago, so much solidified rock had accumulated on the surface of the [Siberian Traps](#) that the lava could no longer escape. Instead, it was forced to spread underground, along horizontal fissures, into rocks that were rich in coal and other hydrocarbons. The heat from the magma (underground lava) cooked the hydrocarbons, releasing vast amounts of carbon dioxide and methane. In other words, though there were no humans on the planet, this disaster seems to have been caused by fossil fuel burning.

Temperatures are believed to have climbed by between 8C and 10C, though much of the [second phase of extinction](#) might have been caused by an initial rise of between 3C and 5C. The extra carbon dioxide also dissolved into the oceans, [raising their acidity](#) to the point at which many species could no longer survive. The temperature rise appears to have brought [ocean currents](#) to a halt, through the same mechanism that now threatens the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation, which drives the Gulf Stream. As [wildfires raged](#) across the planet, [incinerating the vegetation](#) protecting its surface, ash and soil would have poured into the sea, triggering eutrophication (an excess of nutrients). In combination with the high temperatures and stalled circulation, this [starved](#) the remaining life forms of oxygen.

A [paper](#) released as a pre-print in September might explain why recovery took so long. Because so many of the world's rich ecosystems had been replaced by desert, plants struggled to re-establish themselves. Their total weight on Earth fell by about two thirds. Throughout these 5m years, [no coal deposits](#) formed, as there wasn't sufficient plant production to make peat bogs. In other words, the natural processes that remove CO2 from the atmosphere and turn it into wood and soil or bury it as fossil carbon stalled. For 5m years, the world was trapped in this hothouse state. In the cliffs at the eastern end of the bay, you can see when conditions began, at last, to

change, as the fossilised roots of semi-desert plants twist down through the ancient sand dunes.

The story the cliffs tell is of planetary tipping points: Earth systems pushed past their critical thresholds, beyond which they collapsed into a new equilibrium state, that could not be readily reversed. It was a world hostile to almost all large life forms: the monsters of the Permian were replaced nearly everywhere by [dwarf fauna](#).

Could it happen again? Two parallel and contradictory processes are in play. At climate summits, governments produce feeble voluntary commitments to limit the production of greenhouse gases. At the same time, almost every state with significant fossil reserves – [including the UK](#) – intends to extract as much as they can. A [report](#) by Carbon Tracker shows that if all the world's reserves of fossil fields were extracted, their combustion would exceed the carbon budget governments have agreed sevenfold. While less carbon is contained in these reserves than the amount produced during the Permian-Triassic extinction, the [compressed timescale](#) could render this release [just as deadly](#) to life on Earth. The increase in atmospheric CO₂ at the end of the Permian took about [75,000 years](#), but many of our fossil fuel reserves could be consumed in decades. Already, we seem to be approaching a series of possible [tipping points](#), some of which could trigger cascading collapse.

Everything now hangs on which process prevails: the sometimes well-meaning, but always feeble, attempts to limit the burning of fossil carbon, or the ruthless determination – often on the part of the same governments – to extract (and therefore burn) as much of it as possible, granting the profits of legacy industries precedence over life on Earth. At the [climate summit](#) this month in Egypt, a nation in which protests are banned and the interests of the people must at all times cede to the interests of power, we will see how close to the cliff edge the world's governments intend to take us.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionNorth of England

Can you ‘lose’ an accent? And more importantly, why would you want to?

Kirsty Major

In England, the southern accent is seen as neutral and aspirational, but we rarely pause to ask exactly why



Illustration: Thomas Pullin/The Guardian

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More than a decade ago, I moved down from Liverpool to London to study and work, like many thousands of other young people before and after me. Countless times during this period people have said to me, “You’ve not lost your accent.”

It’s always struck me as an odd phrase, as if the pronunciation of words is something external, at risk of being accidentally dropped down the back of a

sofa. Can you really lose an accent, and more importantly, why would you want to?

Well, there may be good reason. New research by the Sutton Trust reveals that accent discrimination has a significant impact on people's experience in education and the workplace, and therefore on overall social mobility. Lower levels of negative bias were attributed to accents closely related to received pronunciation (RP), compared with accents from northern cities such as Manchester and Liverpool, as well as ethnic minority accents.

[According to linguists](#), we learn most of our vowel and consonant sounds as children, and the ability to learn new sounds tapers off around puberty. As adults, we can add sounds to our speech library, but we can't remove them.

Most people will have a spectrum of sounds that they'll move along on any given day as they "code switch" between different social settings. On the phone to my mum, my "g"s will go missing, and my "t"s will sound more like "r"s (think of Cilla Black's catchphrase "lorra lorra laughs") and I will sound more "scouse", but in a meeting with my boss, the missing vowels and consonants will make an appearance, and my speech will resemble a [general northern English](#) accent. Even within one sentence, [a speaker](#) with a Yorkshire accent may say the word "the" and then reduce it to an almost inaudible "t".

To make things more complicated, English accents are constantly shifting and becoming more or less distinctive. According to Jonnie Robinson, the lead curator of spoken English at the British Library, in the last 70 years there has been greater geographic and social mobility, meaning that people have come into contact with a wider variety of speakers. In some metropolitan areas such as Tyneside, where there is a well-established regional economy, accents are spreading out from large cities into surrounding areas.

Conversely, in rural areas or cities with strong local communities, broad accents are thriving. The scouse accent is actually getting stronger – just compare the Beatles to the actor [Stephen Graham](#). Within cities, they can

change as the result of migration patterns, as in London with the longer vowel sounds and harder “t”s of [multicultural London English](#).

Accents also shift over time across the whole of the nation. In the 19th century, linguists noted that the “h” sound began to disappear. Right now, younger speakers are more likely to pronounce the “th” in words such as “thanks” so it resembles an “f” sound. In British English, compared with American English, “garage” has changed from having a long “a” at the end – to rhyme with camouflage – to having a shorter one to rhyme with marriage.

What remains steadfast is the north-south divide in England marked by the “trap-bath split”. It’s the difference between pronouncing grass with a short vowel, as in cat, or with a long vowel, like the sound you make when a doctor examines your throat. This division cannot be separated from the fact that the country’s political and economic power lies in the south, concentrated in a handful of institutions.

The “neutral” British accent is derived from RP, a speech pattern that originated from the public schools and universities of 19th-century Britain. The accent – roughly based on the southern accents of London, Oxford and Cambridge – became associated with the “establishment”, and gained status, eventually being adopted by the BBC as its broadcasting standard.

Even the name is a giveaway, in order to be “received”, as in accepted, into polite society you had to speak in a certain manner. To this day, it is the accent on which [phonemic transcriptions](#) in dictionaries are based, and it is widely used for teaching English as a foreign language.

RP has changed over time, but it is still used as a benchmark in classrooms up and down the country, and a speaker’s proximity to the accent triggers assumptions about their social and educational background. Another [study](#) led by Robert McKenzie at Northumbria University has shown that in England, there is an implicit bias against northern accents.

The study used methods borrowed from psychology to test for unconscious biases and measured reaction times for providing positive traits to speakers on either side of the trap-bath split. Overall, the speaker with the general northern English accent rated high for attributes such as friendliness and

trustworthiness compared with the southern standard British English speaker, but they ranked lower for markers such as wealth, intelligence and ambition.

In the face of such prejudice, there are some who actively seek to soften their accent in order to be taken seriously in the workplace – but changing an accent can come with a price. Before taking on a client who wants to change their accent, voice coach Ashley Howard will talk to them about the social implications of this, as family and friends may feel threatened by such a noticeable change and ask challenging questions. What was wrong with their accent, and do they think less of the communities they grew up in? He encourages people to ask themselves this question: do they want to eradicate their accent, or to communicate more clearly? One doesn't necessarily lead to the other.

I considered actively softening my accent, but came to the conclusion that to do so would be to lose a little bit of myself. In England, regional accents can be mapped directly on to the old boundaries that separated the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia and Wessex. My own accent is the result of more recent history, when my Irish and Welsh great-grandparents chatted with their neighbours who would have spoken with a Lancashire lilt.

Accents shift and change, and the only thing we should lose is the hierarchy in which we place them. They weave a tapestry across the country that tells a story of who has come and gone before us, and we're all the richer for it.

- Kirsty Major is a deputy Opinion editor for the Guardian

[OpinionEgypt](#)

World leaders at Cop27 in Egypt must demand the release of Alaa Abd El-Fattah

[Caroline Lucas](#)



While climate justice is debated at the summit, justice is failing the activist who is six months into a hunger strike

- Caroline Lucas is the Green MP for Brighton Pavilion



Sanaa Seif, the sister of writer Alaa Abd El-Fattah, protests outside the Foreign Office in London on 18 October 2022. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Thu 3 Nov 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 3 Nov 2022 06.15 EDT

You probably haven't heard of Alaa Abd El-Fattah – so let me tell you about him. He's a British citizen. He's a father to a 10-year-old son. He's a dearly loved brother. He's a writer and a pro-democracy activist in [Egypt](#), whose powerful and emotive blogging played a part in catalysing the nation's seismic 2011 uprising.

He's also been [unlawfully imprisoned](#) by the Egyptian authorities for more than nine years – that's a quarter of his life – and he has faced persecution and psychological torture. Now he could have just days to live.

Alaa has been on hunger strike for well over 200 days. Since late May, he has been limiting himself to 100 calories a day – a teaspoon of honey and a bit of milk to keep him alive – but as of yesterday, he has returned to [fully refusing food](#).

Despite this, our government has failed to act with the consistent pressure required to secure his release. The former prime ministers Boris Johnson and

Liz Truss (in her capacity as foreign secretary) deigned to “raise the case” with the Egyptian authorities. Former [Africa](#) minister Gillian Keegan has been to Cairo to visit. But since Alaa’s imprisonment nine years ago, we’ve had five different Tory-led governments – and each one has failed to secure as much as basic consular access.

Alaa’s sisters, Mona and Sanaa, are camping outside the Foreign Office, desperately urging the government to step in. What is the first duty of government if not to protect the wellbeing of its citizens?

This injustice has reached such a critical and urgent stage – not only because of Alaa’s rapidly declining health, but also because [Cop27](#), taking place in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, is merely days away. The world cup of climate diplomacy, Cop27 is likely to see world leaders from Joe Biden and Emmanuel Macron, to Barbados’s Mia Amor Mottley and Colombia’s Gustavo Petro, in attendance.

It’s a hugely significant event for Egypt – a chance to prove itself on the global stage. Yet this conference can’t be used to paper over human rights concerns in the country. The horrific mistreatment of Alaa and other prisoners at the hands of this oppressive regime cannot go ignored, so we must use this summit, and all the diplomatic leverage we can muster, to secure a positive outcome. [Cop27](#) can’t just be a talking shop, it must deliver climate justice for all – and standing in solidarity with Alaa and demanding his freedom epitomises this call.

What is climate justice? It means acknowledging that the UK led the Industrial Revolution, fuelled by coal and colonialism. Britain, and other industrialised nations, have a particular responsibility to lead the transition to a sustainable, just and resilient world. It means recognising the obscenity of continuing with business as usual, knowing that young people, especially those in climate vulnerable countries, are paying for it with their futures.

And there is no climate justice without racial justice. We’ve seen unbearable heat in India where temperatures reached [a deadly 49C](#); and [drought in the Horn of Africa](#), leaving millions on the brink of starvation. Yet this has received little media coverage. As youth climate activist Vanessa Nakate has

said: “[Africa is on the frontlines](#) of the climate crisis but it’s not on the front pages of the world’s newspapers.”

There is no climate justice without economic justice. That means a fair and equitable financial deal for the global south, with proper compensation for the harm that has been caused by rich countries burning coal, oil and gas over recent decades and centuries. Our own government has already failed to pay out more than [\\$300m](#) (£260m) it promised to two crucial climate funds. It must be the polluters who pay for the damage being caused.

Finally, there is no climate justice without social justice. Effective climate action requires the support of civil society, the right to freedom of expression, and objective, independent reporting. Grotesque new laws like the UK’s public order bill – with banning orders, more police stop and search powers, and a host of new offences to block our fundamental human right to protest – make this all the more challenging.

Climate justice, racial justice, economic justice, social justice – all are interlinked. When one is threatened, all are threatened. And this is why Alaa must be freed, and why all in the climate movement are standing in solidarity with him and his family. This matter isn’t up for negotiation: we cannot honour Egypt as Cop27 host for as long as Alaa remains behind bars.

The climate movement is coming together, as one, to demand action. And we won’t keep quiet until justice is delivered.

- Caroline Lucas is the Green MP for Brighton Pavilion

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).

[Opinion](#) **Supermarkets**

**I don't quite know how, but the
supermarket is taking me for a mug.
I'm cutting up my loyalty card**

[Adrian Chiles](#)



After years of chasing points, I now have enough olive oil to bathe in. And I just know that someone in the head office is laughing at me



‘I’m done. It’s over.’ Photograph: Witthaya Prasongsin/Getty Images

Thu 3 Nov 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 3 Nov 2022 06.13 EDT

My supermarket loyalty card has a date with a pair of scissors. It’s got to go. As an enthusiastic user, I have long wondered if this makes me a wise shopper or a feeble-minded fool. I am erring towards the latter. It has me in its grip. I’m buying stuff because it comes with lots of points rather than because I actually, you know, need it. Litre bottles of own brand olive oil, for example. For some reason they’re often worth 150 points or more. I have enough of the stuff to bathe in. This week, as it happens, I noted it was suddenly only worth 20 points a pop. A-ha, I thought. Gotcha! I’m not falling for that one. Except, of course, I have been falling for something; I just don’t know what. How does it work? How do they decide to whom to offer what for however many points? Do the points vary? Is the bloke putting the olive oil in his basket getting 150 points for it while I get but 20?

For ages, parmesan was worth 200 points a pop. Naturally, I panic-bought it. But had the price been raised to negate whatever pittance of a payback those points would be worth to me? What happens when I buy three lots of parmesan a week for six weeks running? Is this flagged up at HQ? I imagine my image, pulled from the cheese aisle’s security camera, is blown up to poster size and pinned on the wall below a sign reading: Loser User of the Month.

And staying with cheese, week in week out, a size and brand of red leicester I like appears on my app as being worth 200 points. And every week, salivating at the prospect of the points as much as the cheese, I look for it. And get this: IT'S NEVER THERE. Again, I assume I am being watched on a big screen at HQ, with the whole crew pointing and laughing. I am glad I've brought/bought them such joy.

But no more. I'm done. It's over between us.

Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).

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[US midterm elections 2022](#)

Biden urges Americans to take a stand against political violence: ‘We’re facing a defining moment’

President asks voters to reject election denying candidates in midterms to ‘preserve democracy’

‘Democracy at risk’: Biden warns against political violence as US midterms approach – video

[David Smith](#) in Washington

[@smithinamerica](#)

Wed 2 Nov 2022 21.44 EDT Last modified on Thu 3 Nov 2022 16.35 EDT

Joe Biden has [issued a rallying cry](#) for the preservation of democracy and a dark warning that America could face political violence as it barrels toward next week’s midterm elections.

The US president used a primetime address on Wednesday to argue that his predecessor Donald Trump’s “big lie” about the 2020 election being stolen has become “an article of faith” in the extreme wing of the Republican party.

Biden delivered his address to supporters under a painted ceiling in an ornate room at Washington’s Union Station, which is within sight of the US Capitol that was stormed on January 6 last year by a furious mob of Trump supporters.

Behind him were eight US flags and a blue curtain – a less dramatic backdrop than the red and blue lights of his “[Battle for the Soul of the Nation](#)” speech at Philadelphia’s Independence Hall two months ago, where he spoke on similar themes.

But just as that address was framed by [Republicans](#) as an attack on their voters, his latest remarks found little unity. The conservative Fox News channel ran captions such as “Biden ignores crime & inflation to talk about ‘threat to democracy’” and “Divider in chief”.

Its effect on an election in which 27 million people have already voted was also uncertain. A [CBS News poll late last month](#) found that 63% of likely Democratic voters say a functioning democracy is a bigger concern than a strong economy, but 70% of Republican voters say the opposite.

Biden acknowledged that there was much at stake in the midterm elections, just six days away, but insisted: “Make no mistake, democracy is on the ballot for all of us.”



Attendees look on as Joe Biden speaks about threats to Democracy and political violence on Wednesday. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

He began his remarks, hosted by the Democratic National Committee, by citing last week’s attack on Paul Pelosi, the husband of the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, at their home in San Francisco. He noted that the hammer-wielding assailant had asked “Where’s Nancy? Where’s Nancy?” – the same words used by the rioters on January 6.

Trump's false claims about a stolen election have "fuelled the dangerous rise of political violence and voter intimidation over the past two years", Biden said.

"We're facing a defining moment. We must with one overwhelming, unified voice speak, as a country, and say there's no place for voter intimidation or political violence in America."

The midterms will determine control of Congress and mark the first nationwide test of American democracy since Trump lost the White House and his supporters laid siege to the Capitol. "I wish I could say the assault on our democracy had ended that day," Biden remarked. "But I cannot."

The president warned that it is estimated more than 300 election deniers are on the ballot across America this year with an impact he described as damaging, corrosive and destructive.

I wish I could say the assault on our democracy had ended that day. But I cannot

Joe Biden

"As I stand here today, there are candidates running for every level of office in America, for governor, Congress, attorney general, secretary of state, who won't commit to accepting the results of the elections that they're running in.

"That is the path to chaos in America. It's unprecedented. It's unlawful. And it's un-American. As I've said before, you can't love your country only when you win."

He called on voters to reject candidates who have denied the results of the vote which even Trump's administration declared to be free of any widespread fraud or interference, urging them to "think long and hard about the moment we are in".

"This is no ordinary year so I ask you to think long and hard about the moment we're in. In a typical year, we are not often faced with the question

of whether the vote we cast will preserve democracy or put it at risk. But this year we are.”

Biden sought to pre-empt potential disinformation and unrest on election night, pointing out that it takes time to count all legitimate ballots so voters need to be patient. In 2020 Trump falsely claimed that mail-in votes tabulated after election day were illegitimate.



Police tape blocks a street outside the home of Nancy and Paul Pelosi in San Francisco. Photograph: Eric Risberg/AP

He again identified Trump as the architect of the chaos. “He has abused his power and put the loyalty to himself above loyalty to the constitution. He’s made the big lie an article of faith in the Maga Republican party.”

Biden described “ultra-Maga” Republicans – a reference to Trump’s “Make America Great Again” slogan – as a minority but “driving force” of the Republican party.

Pointing to mounting concerns over political violence as well as threats of America’s long tradition of peaceful and accurate elections, he argued these Republicans were “trying to succeed where they failed in 2020 to suppress the rights of voters and subvert the electoral system itself”.

Biden added: “There’s an alarming rise in the number of people in this country condoning political violence or simply remaining silent. The silence is complicity.”

He described those who are willing to use violence to achieve political ends as a “distinct minority” in America, “but they are loud and they are determined”.

Many Americans remain pessimistic about the state of democracy. An October poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that just 9% of adults think democracy is working “extremely” or “very well”, while 52% say it’s not working well.

As I’ve said before, you can’t love your country only when you win

Joe Biden

Republicans condemned Wednesday’s speech. Senator Tom Cotton tweeted: “To Biden, ‘democracy’ means one thing: [Democrats](#) having complete power.”

Ronna McDaniel, chairwoman of the Republican National Committee, said: “Desperate and dishonest. [Joe Biden](#) promised unity but has instead demonized and smeared Americans, while making life more expensive for all.

“While Republicans remain focused on the issues that matter most to voters, Biden and Democrats are flailing in the final days because they have lost touch with the concerns of families struggling to get by.”

Biden has made the global struggle between democracy and autocracy a defining theme of his presidency. In a heartfelt plea, he claimed that Americans can no longer take democracy for granted. “In our bones we know democracy is at risk, but we also know this: it’s in our power to preserve our democracy.”

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[Donald Trump](#)

Top Trump adviser granted immunity for testifying in Mar-a-Lago papers case

Kash Patel will receive limited protection from prosecution for his testimony on how and if the documents were ‘declassified’



Kash Patel was granted limited immunity from prosecution, say sources.
Photograph: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

[Hugo Lowell](#)

Wed 2 Nov 2022 19.56 EDTLast modified on Thu 3 Nov 2022 09.47 EDT

Federal prosecutors examining [Donald Trump's](#) unauthorized retention of highly sensitive government documents at his Mar-a-Lago property will obtain testimony from top adviser Kash Patel after granting him limited immunity from prosecution, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

The immunity – a powerful tool that forces witnesses to testify on the promise that they will not be prosecuted for their statements or information derived from their statements – takes effect on 2 November and signals the importance of his testimony to the criminal investigation.

The justice department's interest with Patel centers on his claims that the documents found at [Mar-a-Lago](#) were declassified, how the documents came to end up at the property, and how Trump's aides and lawyers responded to requests for their return, the sources said.

The status of the documents is important because if prosecutors can prove that those seized by the FBI in August were not declassified, it could strengthen a potential obstruction case contending that Trump used the claims as an excuse for why he did not return records that had been subpoenaed.

Trump and advisers like Patel have claimed repeatedly since the Mar-a-Lago search that the seized documents were declassified, though no such evidence has emerged and Trump's lawyers have [not repeated the assertions](#) in court filings, where they could face penalties for lying.

But the justice department's focus on the declassification suggests federal prosecutors consider it relevant to the inquiry into Trump's retention of documents at the Florida property, as well as whether Patel himself wanted to impede or obstruct the investigation if his claims were false.

As Patel is a close adviser to Trump – he maintains a personal relationship with the former president – who was also appointed as one of his representatives to the National Archives, the justice department is expected to ask Patel about the circumstances behind the documents at Mar-a-Lago.

The Guardian [first reported](#) that the justice department was considering granting Patel use immunity on Wednesday morning. The immunity order, confirmed by the Wall Street Journal, was transmitted to Patel's lawyers hours later.

The push to secure Patel's testimony intensified after he was summoned earlier this month to testify before a federal grand jury in Washington hearing evidence about Trump's mishandling of government documents and [potential obstruction](#) when he [resisted returning certain records](#).

Patel asserted his fifth amendment right against self-incrimination to an array of questions, the sources said, though the basis for some was not clear; even if the documents were not declassified, making false public statements would probably not be a crime.

In the obstruction investigation examining Trump by the former special counsel Robert Mueller, for instance, prosecutors concluded that the former president's false statements about his campaign's ties to Russia could only be considered criminal if he made them to Congress or the FBI.

But after chief US district court judge Beryl Howell in Washington agreed that Patel could justifiably believe he had reason to assert the fifth, the justice department [applied for an order](#) giving him limited immunity from prosecution that was granted late last week, the sources said.

Trump has only doubled down in recent weeks on the claim that all of the documents in his possession were declassified, while his office has said Trump issued a standing order that records taken to the White House residence were automatically declassified.

Trump also [claimed to Fox News host Sean Hannity](#), when asked what procedures he used to declassify the documents, that presidents had the authority to declassify documents by the power of thought.

"Different people say different things but as I understand it, if you're the president of the United States, you can declassify just by saying it's declassified, even by thinking about it," Trump told Hannity.

But the justice department's willingness to grant use immunity to Patel underscores how important they consider his testimony as prosecutors continue to collect evidence against Trump through his current and former aides.

Prosecutors only grant immunity to witnesses as a last resort, especially in high-profile cases, since it makes potentially prosecuting them in the future much more difficult, and the move requires internal approval at the highest levels of the justice department.

The justice department has also pressured Trump's valet, Walt Nauta, to sit for an additional interview to answer questions about how Trump instructed him to remove boxes from a storage room at [Mar-a-Lago](#) where documents marked classified were stashed, one of the sources said.

Nauta has resisted having another interview with prosecutors – on the advice of his lawyer, who also represents Patel – after they indicated they were skeptical of an initial account he gave about moving documents from the storage room and raised the prospect of charging him with obstruction.

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Cop27

Political prisoner Alaa Abd El-Fattah will escalate hunger strike during Cop27

British-Egyptian activist says he will cease drinking, raising fears he may die while officials attend summit



Alaa Abd El-Fattah's sisters Mona and Sanaa Seif are calling on the UK foreign secretary to demand their brother's release. Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

[Ruth Michaelson](#)

Thu 3 Nov 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 01.26 EDT

A British-Egyptian pro-democracy activist has said he will escalate his hunger strike inside a desert prison, raising concerns he could die while British officials attend the Cop27 climate conference in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Alaa Abd El-Fattah, a figurehead of Egypt's 2011 uprising and one of the Middle East's best-known political prisoners, has spent most of the past decade behind bars. Shortly after gaining British citizenship while in detention last year, he was sentenced to a further five years in a high-security prison on charges of "spreading false news" for sharing a social media post about torture.

The 40-year-old writer and activist, once branded "synonymous with [Egypt's] revolution" by domestic media, has been on a prolonged hunger strike since April in protest at his detention conditions, demanding freedom for himself as well as other political prisoners.

Originally taking only water and salts, Abd El-Fattah switched to a partial hunger strike of 100 calories a day in May after prison authorities relocated him to a different detention facility. He has maintained this hunger strike for more than six months and [warned his family](#) in early September that he could die in prison.

In a letter from prison released on Monday, the 213th day of his hunger strike, Abd El-Fattah wrote to his mother, the activist Laila Soueif, saying: "Today is the last day that I will take a hot drink, or rather, since I'll count the days from when the lights come on at 10am – tomorrow, Tuesday, just before the lights come on, I will drink my last cup of tea in prison."

He added that he would cease drinking water five days later, the day [Cop27](#) begins in the southern Egyptian resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh. "After five days, when the lights come on on Sunday 6 November, I shall drink my last glass of water. What will follow is unknown," he said.

News of Abd El-Fattah's escalation sparked a call to action by his family, demanding that British government officials act immediately to prevent him dying in prison. Last week, a coalition of 64 MPs and peers signed a letter demanding that the foreign secretary, James Cleverly, take urgent action on Abd El-Fattah's case. "We write now to ask for urgency. Alaa's life is at serious risk," [they wrote](#).

The last-minute [decision by the British prime minister, Rishi Sunak](#), to attend Cop27 after previously having said he would be unable to go to Egypt due to “pressing domestic issues” has raised the stakes for Abd El-Fattah’s case. The prospect that top-level British officials will be in Sharm el-Sheikh while a British national’s life is at risk in an Egyptian prison raises a potential challenge for Sunak and his government.

“We are working hard to secure Alaa Abd El-Fattah’s release and we continue to raise his case at the highest levels of the Egyptian government,” a Foreign Office spokesperson told the Guardian.

Earlier this week, the majority of living Nobel prize for literature laureates [published an open letter](#) calling on heads of state, climate ministers, envoy heads and negotiators attending Cop27 to help free political prisoners in the country, including Abd El-Fattah.

“Alaa Abd El-Fattah’s powerful voice for democracy is close to being extinguished,” they warned, asking leaders to mention him in their addresses to the conference.

Observers have grown increasingly concerned about Egypt’s crackdown on protest and civil rights in tandem with their hosting duties. Days before the conference, an Indian climate activist was [detained by security forces](#) when he walked through the outlying streets of Cairo holding a sign that said “March for our planet”.

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Rights groups reported this week that [hundreds of people were detained](#) across Egypt over demands on social media for citizens to protest concerning the country's deepening economic crisis. Protesters who do attend the conference in Sharm el-Sheikh [will probably find themselves confined](#) to a government-sanctioned area for demonstrations far into the desert, away from the conference centre.

In London, Abd El-Fattah's youngest sister, Sanaa Seif, maintained a sit-in outside the Foreign Office in London, which she began two weeks ago to demand that Cleverly speak publicly and demand her brother's release. There has been little outward sign that he has engaged with the issue. Seif said earlier this week that she intends to fly to Cop27 as an observer.

Other family members have pointed out that Abd El-Fattah's decision to stop drinking water will probably shorten the window in which British officials could act to save him.

"This means if there is no urgent action, Alaa will die before the end of the climate summit," [said](#) Mona Seif, another of Abd El-Fattah's sisters.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/03/political-prisoner-alaa-abd-el-fattah-escalate-hunger-strike-cop27>

Twitter

Twitter exodus: company faces murky future as top managers flee the nest

In the wake of Elon Musk's takeover of the company, rumors of job cuts swirl and employees report being left in the dark



Elon Musk's takeover has resulted in several top level departures and rumors that the new billionaire owner will cut about 3,700 jobs. Photograph: Chris Delmas/AFP/Getty Images

[Dani Anguiano](#) in Los Angeles and agencies

Wed 2 Nov 2022 22.12 EDT Last modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 12.42 EDT

Twitter is facing fresh uncertainty amid a growing exodus of top management and reports that mass layoffs and major changes to the platform could be coming within days.

The company's advertising and marketing chiefs have recently announced their departures, as well as the chief people and diversity officer, the general

manager for core technologies, the head of product and vice-president of global sales. Last week, [Elon Musk](#) fired the CEO, Parag Agrawal, the chief financial officer, Ned Segal, and the legal affairs and policy chief, Vijaya Gadde, shortly after taking over the company.

Sarah Personette, the chief customer officer and ad boss who had said she was looking forward to [working with Musk](#), tweeted on Tuesday that she had resigned, adding to advertisers' uncertainty over how the social media company will change under its new owner.

Dalana Brand, the chief people and diversity officer, announced on Tuesday in a LinkedIn post that she had also resigned last week. The general manager for core technologies, Nick Caldwell, confirmed his departure on Twitter, changing his profile bio to "former Twitter exec" by Monday night.

The chief marketing officer, Leslie Berland, Twitter's head of product, Jay Sullivan, and its vice-president of global sales, Jean-Philippe Maheu, have also left, a person with knowledge of the matter told Reuters. It was not immediately clear whether they quit or were asked to leave.

Reports about job cuts have swirled since even before Musk officially took over. The latest report from Bloomberg said on Wednesday that Twitter's new billionaire owner would [cut about 3,700 jobs](#) – amounting to half of Twitter's workforce, in order to reduce costs, and would also ask workers to return to the office. The outlet further reported that Musk planned to start charging for Twitter ["blue check mark" verification](#) by next week.

Multiple employees told Reuters they continue to receive little communication about the future of the company. Twitter cancelled a check-in call last week as well as an all-staff meeting that was scheduled for Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Musk's team plans to meet with advertisers in New York next week as the company's increasingly skittish customers raise alarms about the potential for harmful content to appear next to their ads.

Hateful content has risen dramatically since Musk's takeover. Use of the N-word has increased by nearly 500% on Twitter, according to the Network Contagion Research Institute, which identifies "cyber-social threats".

A coalition of more than 40 advocacy organizations including the NAACP and Free Press sent an open letter to Twitter's top 20 advertisers on Tuesday, asking them to pull their ads if Musk guts content moderation on the platform.

Mediabrand, a unit of ad holding company IPG, has advised its clients to pause advertising on Twitter for the next week until the company gives more details about its plans to protect trust and safety on the platform, Reuters reported, according to a source familiar with the matter. IPG works with major advertisers such as Coca-Cola.

Musk has attempted to reassure advertisers. "Twitter's commitment to brand safety is unchanged," he tweeted on Monday.

He previously said he would reverse Twitter's ban on Donald Trump, who was kicked off because of concerns he could incite further violence after the insurrection at the US Capitol last year. But this week, Musk indicated that [no banned accounts](#) would be reinstated until at least after the US midterms.

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Headlines

- [Manston centre crisis Minister says it's 'a bit of a cheek' for asylum-seekers to complain about conditions](#)
- [Live Mark Carney doubles down on claim that Brexit has shrunk UK economy](#)
- [UK economy Bank of England warns of longest recession in 100 years as it raises rates to 3%](#)
- [Twitter Firm sued by former staff as Elon Musk begins mass sackings](#)
- [Live Business: Twitter 'sued by staff' as layoffs begin](#)

Immigration and asylum

No 10 distances itself from minister's remark about asylum seekers' 'cheek'

Chris Philp's comments spark row as government faces pressure to fix 'chaos' at Manston refugee centre



People in a containment area inside the immigration processing centre in Manston. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

[Jamie Grierson](#)

[@JamieGrierson](#)

Fri 4 Nov 2022 11.13 EDTFirst published on Fri 4 Nov 2022 04.49 EDT

No 10 has distanced itself from a [Home Office](#) minister's remarks that it is "a bit of cheek" for asylum seekers to complain about the conditions at immigration processing centres.

The government has come under criticism for allowing 4,000 people to be held at the Manston centre, a short-term holding facility in Kent, which is

designed to hold no more than 1,600 asylum seekers for only a few days.

The policing minister, [Chris Philp](#), told Times Radio: “If people choose to enter a country illegally, and unnecessarily, it is a bit, you know, it’s a bit of a cheek to then start complaining about the conditions when you’ve illegally entered a country without necessity.”

He also said asylum seekers from Manston who were left stranded in London earlier this week had told immigration officials they had addresses to go to.

But when asked if Philp was speaking for the government, Rishi Sunak’s official spokesperson said: “Certainly it is true that Home Office Border Force officials and many others are working hard to provide safe, secure accommodation for those individuals that come via these routes. As we’ve been clear, those individuals deserve to be treated with compassion and respect.

“Obviously the current approach is not working and it is placing huge pressures – both in terms of on the government and on the local area – and that is presenting significant challenges, which is why we continue to work both with French colleagues and more broadly to try and resolve this issue.”

The immigration minister, Robert Jenrick, is understood to have written to local MPs to update them on the next steps for delivering new immigration removal centres in Hampshire and Oxfordshire. Both sites are expected to open at the end of 2023, housing 1,000 men between the two locations, according to a Home Office contract notice.

The prime minister’s official spokesperson said: “These new facilities will provide safe, secure accommodation with dedicated health facilities on site and will play an important role in efforts to control our borders, process cases and remove those with no right to be in the UK, while ensuring those going through our asylum system are treated with compassion, dignity and respect.”

The Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesperson, Alistair Carmichael, said Philp's comments "reveal a shocking and callous complacency over the disaster unfolding at Manston".

The veteran Tory MP Sir Roger Gale said in his opinion it was not a "cheek" to say children and women should be "treated humanely".

Harrowing images have shown people reaching out through packed barricades, sleeping on floor mats and cold and hungry children sharing blankets.

Philp said there had been a "misunderstanding" that had led to people arriving in London from Manston without accommodation or warm clothing, resulting in them sleeping rough.

He insisted the Manston site was now legally compliant, despite his comments coming two days after Jenrick suggested it was not.

A group of 11 asylum seekers from Manston were left at Victoria railway station on Tuesday evening with nowhere to stay, without winter coats and many of them in flip-flops, the [Guardian reported on Wednesday](#).

The Westminster city council Labour leader, Adam Hug, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme he believed the 11 people who arrived at Victoria had slept rough overnight, adding: "Clearly there has been a breakdown in communication".

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Hug said the “chaos” of the situation means local services and charities were “having to pick up the slack”.

Other council leaders have criticised the government’s approach to Manston. Stephen Evans, the chief executive of Norwich council, said the Home Office did not give its officials any warning that asylum seekers from Manston were being bussed into the city on Thursday.

Speaking to Today, Evans said he first read about the group coming to Norwich in a news article. “We hadn’t been told. I checked back with colleagues at city hall – they hadn’t been told. So we don’t know who they are and we don’t know where they’ve gone to in the city,” he said.

“I think that’s part of the problem here. As a sector, councils are asking for early engagement from the Home Office and for us to be consulted.”

Responding to Philp’s comments, Enver Solomon, the chief executive of the Refugee Council, said: “These comments are misguided and fail to acknowledge the appalling conditions at Manston that MPs and the government’s own inspectorates as well as many others have described as alarming and wretched.

“The fact remains there is nothing illegal about crossing the Channel to claim asylum in the UK. This is a fundamental right enshrined in the UN refugee convention, that the UK was one of the founding signatories of.”

Tim Naor Hilton, Refugee Action’s chief executive, said: “Chris Philp’s comments not only reflect the refusal by the government to accept responsibility for the humanitarian crisis at Manston but also the callous attitude of ministers to people who urgently need protection.

“The casual use of language by ministers like Chris Philp which devalues and dehumanises the experiences of people seeking asylum creates a context of fear and hatred that could have catastrophic consequences, like the tragic attack [in Dover last weekend](#).”

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[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

UK rail strikes suspended as RMT says employers ‘seeing sense’ and talks intensifying – as it happened

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Interest rates

Bank of England warns of longest recession in 100 years as it raises rates to 3%

UK economy faces ‘very challenging outlook’ with recession now expected to last until middle of 2024

- [Analysis: Bank signals rates probably won't go much higher](#)
- [How will the UK interest rate hike affect you?](#)



The Bank of England cautioned further action would be needed on interest rates. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

[Larry Elliott](#) and [Phillip Inman](#)

Thu 3 Nov 2022 15.05 EDTLast modified on Thu 3 Nov 2022 22.06 EDT

The [Bank of England](#) has warned the UK risked being plunged into the longest recession in 100 years after it pushed up the cost of borrowing to 3%

in the biggest single interest rate rise since 1989.

A 0.75% increase, the latest in a series of eight interest rate rises since last year, would not be enough to guarantee victory in the war against double-digit inflation, the Bank said, as it cautioned further action would be needed.

The UK economy faces a “very challenging outlook”, with a recession that began this summer now expected to last until the middle of 2024.

With the possibility of a general election being held in 2024, the Conservatives face campaigning to remain in government at the tail end of a prolonged slump, during which the Bank said it expected unemployment to rise from 3.5% to 6.5%.

However, there was some relief for mortgage holders as the central bank downplayed City expectations of a steep rise in the cost of borrowing to above 5%, arguing that the prospect of a two-year recession meant it was likely to take a much less aggressive stance.

Andrew Bailey, the Bank’s governor, said: “We can’t make promises about future interest rates, but based on where we stand today, we think the bank rate will have to go up by less than currently priced in financial markets.”

[Bank of England interest rate rises](#)

Bailey and his officials expect inflation to fall to zero by 2025, and analysts at Berenberg Bank are forecasting only one more rate rise, to 3.5%.

Bailey said higher borrowing costs were already affecting households.

“These are big changes and have a real impact on people’s lives,” he said at a press conference after the publication of the Bank’s quarterly monetary policy report.

Homebuyers with tracker or variable rate mortgages will feel the pain of the rate rise immediately, while the estimated 300,000 people who must

remortgage this month will find that two-year and five-year fixed rates remain at levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis.

The Bank said the cost of fixed-rate mortgages had already come down from the levels seen at the height of the panic in the wake of Kwasi Kwarteng's badly received mini-budget, which sent them soaring above 6%.

Bank of England raises interest rates to 3% in largest single move for 30 years – video

Hinting at the Bank's concern about the fragility of the housing market, Bailey said he hoped home loan providers would react by continuing to cut the cost of their products to homebuyers.

Bailey said he recognised the pain caused by tougher interest rate policy, but added: "If we do not act forcefully now it will be worse later on."

The Bank now expects [inflation, which hit 10.1% in September](#), to peak at 11% by the end of 2022, and then to fall "probably quite sharply" from the middle of 2023.

It blamed higher energy prices and a tight labour market for the big increase, which matched aggressive rises in the last week by the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank.

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The last time UK rates rose by more than 0.5% was in 1989. John Major's government was forced into a 2% rise during the exchange rate mechanism

crisis in 1992, though for less than 24 hours before it was scrapped.

The vote to raise rates was split 7-2 among the nine members of the monetary policy committee (MPC) after Silvana Tenreyro voted for a 0.25% increase and Swati Dhingra voted for a 0.5% jump. Both are professors at the London School of [Economics](#). They argued the full effects of eight consecutive rises should be allowed to feed through into the wider economy before more severe action was taken.

The chancellor, [Jeremy Hunt](#), said: “Inflation is the enemy and is weighing heavily on families, pensioners and businesses across the country. That is why this government’s No 1 priority is to grip inflation, and today the Bank has taken action in line with their objective to return inflation to target.”

Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, said: “Families now face higher mortgages and more anxiety after months of economic chaos.

“Working people are paying the price for Tory failure. Britain deserves more than this.”

On alternative assumptions that rates remained unchanged at 3%, the economy would still continue contracting until the end of 2023 but the cumulative fall in output would be 1.7% rather than 2.9%, and unemployment would peak at just over 5%.

The Bank said it had not factored in any action by Hunt in his autumn statement on 17 November, though the chancellor is expected to announce a package of tax increases and spending cuts worth up to £50bn.

Kallum Pickering, a UK analyst at Berenberg, said: “While a lot will depend on the upcoming [budget] announcement, today’s policy decision and guidance support our call that the Bank will hike the bank rate just once more by 0.5 points in December to a peak of 3.5%.

“Thereafter, we expect the Bank to remain on hold in the first half of 2023 before cutting the bank rate modestly, by about 0.5 points, in the second half

of 2023.”

The risks to this call are tilted slightly towards one further 0.25 point hike in February.”

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Twitter

Twitter sued by former staff as Elon Musk begins mass sackings

Ex-employees say they were not given enough notice under US federal law over job losses

- [Business live updates: Twitter sued by staff as sackings begin](#)
- [General Mills the latest firm to halt Twitter ads](#)
- [Alarm on Capitol Hill over Saudi investment in Twitter](#)



A lawsuit has been filed in San Francisco seeking orders for Twitter to comply with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act. Photograph: Constanza Hevia/AFP/Getty Images

[*Josh Taylor*](#)

[*@joshgnosis*](#)

Fri 4 Nov 2022 05.35 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 07.10 EDT

Twitter is facing a class action lawsuit from former employees who say they were not given enough notice under US federal law that they had lost their jobs, finding out they had been let go when they were locked out of their work accounts on Thursday.

In a company-wide memo, [staff were informed on Thursday](#) that they would receive an email to their personal email accounts if they were being fired as part of the mass sackings at the platform in which up to half of the company could go.

Before those emails arrived, dozens of staff began posting on Twitter that they had been fired – after discovering they were no longer able to access their work email accounts or log into their work laptops.

Musk's plans to cut up to 3,700 staff may hit a roadblock, however, after a lawsuit was filed in the US federal court in San Francisco seeking orders for Twitter to comply with the federal Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, which requires 60 days' notice for mass sackings at large employers.

The lawsuit, brought on behalf of five Twitter employees so far, says one was fired on 1 November, while three were not informed at the time of filing but had been locked out of their email accounts.

The case cited a similar situation with sackings at Musk's other company, Tesla, where the company sought to obtain full release from its obligations under the Warn Act by offering severance of one or two weeks' pay instead.

“Plaintiffs here are reasonably concerned that, absent court intervention, Twitter will engage in similar behaviour and seek releases from laid-off employees without informing them of their rights or the pendency of this case,” the filing stated.

The lawsuit was [first reported](#) by Bloomberg.

After finalising the \$44bn purchase of Twitter, Musk fired several top Twitter executives, including the chief executive, Parag Agrawal, the finance

chief, Ned Segal, and the legal affairs and policy chief, Vijaya Gadde.

The job cuts are part of an overhaul of the social media platform as Musk attempts to make it profitable after his purchase. Musk has also directed Twitter's teams to free up \$1bn in annual infrastructure cost savings by slashing funding for cloud services and servers.

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Musk is looking at other ways to make a profit at Twitter, including plans to change the verification “blue tick” system from one that proves someone is who they say they are, to one where people can get a tick only if they pay \$8 a month.

Twitter employees [shared messages of support](#) with one another on the platform on Thursday, with many using the workplace hashtag #OneTeam. Once staff began noticing they had been locked out of their work accounts, they tweeted with the hashtag #LoveWhereYouWorked.

Musk, meanwhile, tweeted: “I’m an alien trying to get back to my home planet” in response to “what’s the craziest conspiracy theory you think might be true?”

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[Business live](#)Business

Twitter layoffs: anger and confusion as multiple teams reportedly decimated - as it happened

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2022.11.04 - Spotlight

- ['We're a thorn in their side' The battle over green space in London's estates](#)
- [Housing Lewisham green space cherished by locals under threat from developers – in pictures](#)
- [Explainer Why the US midterms matter – from abortion rights to democracy](#)
- [Feel the Bern Sanders hits the campaign trail with days left before the US midterms](#)

[Access to green space](#)

‘We’re a thorn in their side’: the battle over green space in London’s estates

Councils are pushed to allow ‘infill’ building on land they own – but residents resist the loss of play space and open areas

- [Lewisham green space cherished by locals under threat from development – in pictures](#)



Jacquie Gilmartin and fellow campaigner at the Dodson and Amigo estate in south-east London. Photograph: Danny Burrows

[Harriet Grant](#)

Fri 4 Nov 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 12.00 EDT

Social housing residents on a [London](#) estate feel they are being “gagged” in discussions about the future of the place where they live, as the council

prepares one of the capital's controversial "infill" plans, which cover green spaces with homes.

Residents on the Dodson and Amigo estate in Elephant and Castle say they have been asked to sign documents promising not to speak to other residents or journalists, in exchange for taking part in meetings about new homes planned for their estates.

They showed the Guardian a document that also warned they could not campaign against the new homes if they were part of the discussions.

The council, however, argues that the documents only mean residents need permission to speak, in order to keep the discussions fair and civil.

The row is one of many heated debates on council estates across London over "infill housing" – where councils build new homes on existing estates.

The housing crisis in London is acute. About 8% of households are overcrowded, with 35% of children in social housing living in overcrowded conditions.

Southwark alone has more than 16,000 people on its social housing waiting list and aims to build 11,000 homes for social rent by 2043. The picture is similar in every borough, with thousands of families and individuals desperate to find safe and affordable places to live.

Meanwhile councils lose housing every year under right to buy policies, putting them in an impossible position. Private developers are failing to build enough social or affordable homes even when building on large sites once owned by councils.

Building on land they already own is a vital solution for councils looking for space for new homes. To this end officers have scoured estates looking for "unused" patches of land, old garages, car parks – and, to the distress of residents – green spaces, play areas and communal gardens.

This "infill" housing has been heralded as a tool in getting families out of bed and breakfasts and into safe homes.

The women, families and community leaders in some of the poorest parts of the capital who resist it have sometimes been labelled Nimbys.

But those living in flats without gardens in dense and polluted corners of London say it is wrong to take precious communal green spaces away.

“We refused to sign,” says Jacquie Gilmartin, a longtime resident of the Dodson and Amigo estate. “And in fairness to them, we really think they are listening now. The residents here – many who are very vulnerable – matter. We are the last real community in this area.”

Gilmartin argues that the plans to bring more homes to the estate are unfair. “We don’t mind them building on this estate; we could point them to unused land. We agree there is a housing crisis. But they have been talking about knocking down a building, moving out longstanding residents, taking small areas of green space that are well used and increasing the density on this estate.”

When Gilmartin was asked to sign a document earlier this year that would have required her to get permission for speaking about the discussions and even banned her from campaigning, she balked at the idea.

“We refused to sign. I felt we were being gagged. We wanted to be in the room discussing the plans, but we wanted to be able to talk openly about our concerns with the wider project.”

Southwark council insists the agreement was not intended to silence anybody. Kieron Williams, the council leader, said: “The wording in this document is not intended to silence people’s views – the opposite is intended. It does not say that people cannot speak to the press without the agreement of the council – it states that they can speak to the press with the agreement of the whole group, so they can represent the collective views of residents within the group. In context, there are other expected behaviours written down.

“We continue to run a sensitive and collaborative consultation with residents.”

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The frantic search for space has drawn other London councils into similar battles. Lewisham council has just won [a legal battle against their own residents](#) over plans to build 110 new social homes on the Mais House estate, taking part of the communal green that families say was well loved, and removing 19 mature trees. It has also just won planning permission to build 41 new homes on the Valentines Court estate, despite concerns over the loss of trees, light and a shared green.

Robert Roy told the Guardian that the residents felt disrespected at several parts of the process. “On a walkabout, when a resident mentioned feeling worried about losing play space, someone from the council said ‘well, where do you suggest we build then?’ in a rude way. There has always been this total lack of empathy that we are losing our green space.”

Lewisham points out that with 10,000 people on their housing waiting list they have to use land they have available. They say the new development at Valentines Court – while losing 30% of the green space overall – will upgrade the play provision and improve other areas.

On the other side of London, in Brent, Kilburn Square estate is set to lose well-used communal gardens while over 80 new homes add hundreds of residents to the reduced space.

Margaret von Stoll has lived on the estate for 30 years and watched the trees on the large communal garden grow from saplings. She says the large communal garden and trees that will disappear were their lifeline in the

pandemic. “It was our communal green space where people brought picnic rugs, where I sat in the evening.”

Now, she says: “We accept them building on the unused buildings on the site, even though it will increase the density and pressure on our shared gardens, but please, leave our green space.”

Promise Knight, Brent council’s cabinet member for housing, said: “These proposals have been brought forward in response to the chronic shortage of genuinely affordable housing and issues of overcrowding in Brent.

“We are committed to developing a scheme that works for as many people as possible and have already changed the proposals several times based on resident feedback.”

Sian Berry, a Green London Assembly member on the housing committee believes there should be ways to look for new housing without destroying green spaces. “We are seeing really valued green space being built on. Councils should think more creatively about where they find space for new housing, look at buying land or ask residents which land is not being used.”

Councils remain in a hugely difficult position – paying to buy back council properties while losing them in a steady stream under Right to Buy.

For now, residents say they will carry on pushing to save their precious scraps of green space.

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Lewisham green spaces cherished by locals under threat from development – in pictures

Valentines Court, where planning permission has been granted for the building of 41 homes Photograph: Danny Burrows

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[US midterm elections 2022](#)

[Explainer](#)

Why the US midterms matter – from abortion rights to democracy

Guardian writers lay down what's on the line and what a Republican victory could mean for the future of the country



Residents cast their ballots for the 2022 midterm election at the Franklin County Board of Elections during early voting hours in Columbus, Ohio. Photograph: Gaelen Morse/Reuters

[David Smith](#), [Lauren Gambino](#), [Joan E Greve](#) and [Sam Levine](#)

Fri 4 Nov 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 5 Nov 2022 01.12 EDT

America is hurtling towards the first nationwide test of its democracy since Donald Trump left the White House and his supporters mounted a deadly insurrection at the US Capitol. The midterm elections on Tuesday will decide control of Congress as well as 36 state governorships – but will also

be a referendum on Joe Biden's presidency, and fire the starting gun for the race to the White House in 2024.

Here's why the midterms matter for some of the biggest issues facing the US – and the world:

The 2024 presidential election

A frenzy of speculation over the 2024 presidential race is likely to begin even before the last vote is cast in 2022. Midterm elections are typically seen as a referendum on the incumbent president. If [Democrats](#) suffer heavy losses in the House of Representatives, Senate and state governors' mansions, the buck stops with Biden.

There may be calls, especially from the left, for him to announce that he is not running again. He turns 80 on 20 November and is already the oldest president on taking office in American history. His potential successor would need time to build a political brand and establish a fundraising apparatus. But there is no obvious heir apparent and Biden can point to history: both Bill Clinton and Obama suffered midterm rebukes in 1994 and 2010 only to bounce back and win re-election.

On the Republican side, Trump faces a test of his own electoral viability. A pattern of defeats for candidates he endorsed in states such as Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Ohio might prompt more pragmatic [Republicans](#) to question whether the 76-year-old former president represents the party's best shot at the White House. But victories for candidates who support Trump's big lie about a stolen election would also raise fears about democracy itself in 2024. **David Smith**

Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 shocked Americans. Eight months later, most Americans continue to support efforts to aid Ukraine though polling suggests that the war – and foreign policy more broadly – isn't one of the major issues driving their vote this cycle.

Nevertheless, the midterms could have dramatic consequences for Ukraine. The Republican leader Kevin McCarthy, who hopes to become the House Speaker if his party wins control of the chamber in November, has said [Congress would no longer](#) “write a blank check to [Ukraine](#)”. Those comments drew strong rebukes from Democrats and divided Republicans.

Biden has also repeatedly spoken about the war in the context of rising fuel prices, a top concern among voters that Republicans have used to attack Democrats’ economic policies. In response, Biden has sought to blame the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, saying high gas prices are the cost of imposing crippling sanctions on Russia for invading Ukraine. The US president has also argued that standing with Ukraine is critical to defending democratic values, which are under attack around the world.

On the campaign trail, a growing number of Republicans have criticized Biden for sending aid to Ukraine while Americans are suffering from high inflation at home, a sign of a wider fissure in the party over the war. In some instances, far-right acolytes of Donald Trump, like the Georgia congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, have even echoed Moscow talking points. Such views are only a minority in the party, but if Republicans win the House, members like Greene will surely see their political clout rise.

Lauren Gambino

Democracy

Several Republican candidates who have doubted the 2020 election are on the verge of winning gubernatorial, attorneys general, and secretary of state contests in Arizona, Wisconsin, Nevada, and other key battleground states. Those offices all play a role in ensuring that votes are lawfully cast and counted. If these candidates win, they would oversee the 2024 presidential election in their states. There is already deep concern they would use their positions to sow confusion to try to overturn the result of the 2024 vote, refusing to seat any candidate who defeats Trump.

Jim Marchant, a Republican running for Nevada’s top election official, has said explicitly this is his goal: “When I’m secretary of state of Nevada, we are going to fix it, and when my coalition of secretary of state candidates around the country get elected we’re going to fix the whole country, and

President Trump is going to be president again in 2024,” he said at a rally last month.

Meanwhile, if Republicans take control of the US House, as they are expected to, election denialism will be prominent among its members there too: 124 candidates who either denied or doubted the election are heavily favored to win their contests, [according to FiveThirtyEight](#). Republicans could use their new majority to launch investigations, hold hearings and spread misinformation about elections.

A Republican victory in either House of Congress would quickly end whatever slim chance remained of Democrats passing any kind of federal voting rights legislation. That stalemate would essentially preserve the status quo for at least another two years. Even though they have controlled both chambers of Congress since 2020, Democrats have been unable to pass any kind of voting rights legislation because of the filibuster, a procedural rule in the US Senate that requires 60 votes to advance legislation. **Sam Levine**

Judges

Trump appointed more than 200 judges to the federal judicial system during his single four-year term – arguably his most profound legacy. The judges’ decisions touch millions of lives. This was never better illustrated than in June when the supreme court – with three out of nine justices appointed by Trump – overturned the constitutional right to abortion.

Biden has been fighting back. As of 8 August, he had appointed 75 judges to the federal bench, far more than Trump or Barack Obama at the same stage of their presidencies. These included a record number of women and people of color, most notably Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first African American woman to serve as a supreme court justice.

All this has been made possible by a Senate under Democratic control. Should Republicans win the chamber, they will have the power to block Biden’s future nominations, probably forcing him to choose “moderate” candidates in the hope of picking up Republican votes. Few Democrats have forgotten how Senate Republicans froze a supreme court vacancy in the last

year of Obama's presidency and denied Merrick Garland a hearing. **David Smith**

Investigations and committees

The Biden administration and Democratic lawmakers are bracing for a legislative blockade and an onslaught of investigations. If Republicans take the House majority, one of the first orders of business will probably be terminating the work of the select committee investigating the January 6 insurrection. Members of the committee have anticipated this possibility as well, and they are racing to release a full report of their findings before the end of the year. Rodney Davis, the Republican ranking member of the House administration committee, has even indicated plans to investigate the work of the select committee, which has consistently attracted the ire of Donald Trump since its creation last year.

Such an investigation would just be one of many investigations launched by House Republicans if they take control of the lower chamber. Republican leaders have suggested they are looking to investigate the overseas business dealings of Hunter Biden, the president's son, and the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan last year, among other topics.

House Republicans' agenda may even include the impeachment of a sitting cabinet member. Multiple members of the Republican caucus have called for the removal of Alejandro Mayorkas, Biden's homeland security secretary, over the White House's handling of the US-Mexican border. "We will give Secretary Mayorkas a reserved parking spot, he will be testifying so much about this," the House minority whip, Steve Scalise, said in September. **Joan E Greve**

Abortion

The supreme court's decision to overturn Roe v Wade in June catapulted the issue of abortion to the front and center of several key midterm contests. The outcomes of governor's races in particular could have direct consequences on the future of abortion access, which will now be decided by the states.

Democrats have made abortion a core part of their campaign message amid signs that fury over the ruling – and over Republican-led efforts to ban abortion in the states – was fueling a political backlash. In several states, the number of women registering to vote surged and in conservative Kansas, voters overwhelmingly rejected an attempt to undermine abortion protections.

Abortion protections are on the ballot in four states, while competitive contests for state legislature and the governor's mansion could be critical to determining access in the state. At the federal level, Biden has vowed that his first legislative act of the new Congress would be to codify abortion rights, if Americans deliver Democrats even bigger majorities this November. By contrast, some Republicans have said they would push for a national ban on abortion if their party retakes control of Congress in November. **Lauren Gambino**

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[US midterm elections 2022](#)

Bernie Sanders hits the campaign trail with days left before US midterms



Bernie Sanders and Michelle Vallejo, a Democratic candidate for Congress, at a rally in McAllen, Texas, on 30 October. Photograph: Joel Martinez/AP

Vermont senator holding nine rallies across five battleground states, hoping to deliver winning argument to young and working-class voters

- [Bernie Sanders criticizes Democrats' economic messaging](#)

[Joan E Greve](#), and [Erum Salam](#) in Austin

Fri 4 Nov 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 08.52 EDT

San Marcos's Sewell Park on Texas State University's campus, was packed with people on Saturday. Harry Styles's 'As It Was' and Dua Lipa's 'Levitating' provided the soundtrack to a mostly young crowd, who gathered around the stage and eagerly awaited its headliner: Senator [Bernie Sanders](#).

With just days left before polls close and Republicans' midterm fortunes [seemingly on the rise](#), Sanders is hitting the campaign trail, holding nine rallies across five battleground states in the week and a half leading up to election day.

Sanders and his progressive allies hope to deliver a closing argument to young and working-class voters that [Democrats](#) are the better stewards of the US economy, in the hopes of avoiding a Republican landslide on 8 November.

Sanders' rallies come as Democratic candidates appear to be on the defensive in key races that could determine control of the House and the Senate. Republicans have regained their lead on the generic congressional ballot, according to [FiveThirtyEight](#), and voters' mounting concerns over the state of the economy appear to be hurting Democrats' prospects in the crucial final stretch of campaigning.

In an interview with the Guardian, Sanders warned that Democrats have not done enough to mobilize many of the voters who were so instrumental in the party's victories in 2020.

"Obviously everybody should be turning out for what is the most consequential midterm election in the modern history of this country," Sanders said before his rally in Austin, Texas. "But in the real world, I worry very much that Democrats have not done a good enough job of reaching out

to young people and working-class people and motivating them to come out and vote in this election.”



Supporters cheer as Sanders speaks at a rally for Michelle Vallejo in McAllen, Texas, at the weekend. Photograph: Joel Martinez/AP

Texas State University student and first-time voter Gabrielle Diedrick, 18, can easily be spotted in the crowd in San Marcos by her black 10-gallon hat, cowboy boots and blue Bernie T-shirt. For Diedrick, raising the minimum wage is her top priority as a constituent and Sanders’ position resonates with her.

Diedrick said: “It’s hard to pay off tuition here at San Marcos. Every job here is like \$10 an hour and tuition is about \$10,000 every like five months or semester.”

Sanders has repeatedly hammered his economy-based message in the closing days of the 2022 election season, expressing concern that Democrats have focused too heavily on abortion rights in their campaign messaging. In a [Guardian op-ed](#) written earlier this month, Sanders urged progressive candidates to outline a pro-worker vision for the country, saying it would be “political malpractice for Democrats to ignore the state of the economy and allow Republican lies and distortions to go unanswered”.

More Democrats have acknowledged the wisdom of Sanders' argument in recent weeks, as surveys show a large share of the electorate identifies the economy as their top priority. An [ABC News/Ipsos poll](#) taken last week found that 49% of Americans named the economy or inflation as the most important issue determining their vote for Congress, while just 14% said the same of abortion.

That trend could sink many Democratic congressional candidates, as voters consistently say Republicans are better equipped to manage the US economy. Sanders considers that widely held belief to be a misapprehension, insisting Republicans are not prepared to address the near record-high inflation currently affecting millions of American families, and he said Democrats must press their opponents on economic policy.

The rich are getting much richer, and Democrats have got to make that message

Bernie Sanders

“We should take the fight to the Republicans,” Sanders told the Guardian. “What are they doing about inflation? What are their ideas? Their ideas, among other things, is to give massive tax breaks for the rich and then cut social security, Medicare and Medicaid.”

In an attempt to turn the inflation conversation on its head, Sanders has framed the problem as a result of corporate greed, and there is some evidence to support his theory. [One analysis](#) released in April by the Economic Policy Institute, a left-leaning thinktank, concluded that about 54% of inflation could be attributed to increased corporate profits.

“People are hurting. You got 60% of our people living paycheck to paycheck. And for many workers, they are falling further behind as a result of inflation,” Sanders said. “Corporate profits are at an all-time high. The rich are getting much richer, and Democrats have got to make that message.”



Sanders stands with Representative Karen Bass, the Los Angeles Democratic mayoral candidate, in Playa Vista, California, on 27 October. Photograph: Apu Gomes/AFP/Getty Images

Joe Biden appears to have taken the hint, lambasting corporate greed in the closing days of the campaign season. On Monday, the president delivered remarks criticizing oil companies for posting record profits as gas prices have climbed. “It’s time for these companies to stop war profiteering, meet their responsibilities to this country, and give the American people a break and still do very well,” Biden said in a speech at the White House.

Sanders credited Biden with directly addressing the concerns of working Americans, but he lamented that Democratic leaders have not done enough to change voters’ minds about the party’s economic agenda, as they have instead focused more of their attention on abortion rights.

“We have not had the same unity and the same energy around the economic crisis facing working families and what Republicans would do,” Sanders said. “It’s not a question of what the president alone is doing. It’s a question of what the party is doing, where it’s putting its money, its resources, its energy.”

Joseph Geevarghese, executive director of the progressive group Our Revolution, echoed Sanders' concerns that Democrats have fallen short when it comes to presenting a unified vision around improving Americans' standard of living. But he acknowledged the inherent challenges of that task, when many of Democrats' proposals aimed at helping families struggling under the weight of rising prices failed to pass Congress.

No one can mobilize young people and working-class people like Bernie Sanders can

Cristina Tzintzún Ramirez

Democrats had originally hoped to establish a federal paid family leave program and extend monthly child tax credit payments through their Build Back Better Act, which stalled in the Senate late last year. Democrats instead passed the Inflation Reduction Act this summer, but many of progressives' economic proposals were stripped out of that bill to ensure the support of centrists like Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema.

"I agree Democrats have not delivered enough," Geevarghese said. "I don't want to belittle [Biden's] accomplishments, but what he has delivered is much less than what was originally promised, so that's the fundamental problem."

That being said, Geevarghese suggested Biden and fellow Democrats could use the hurdles they have encountered to their advantage. After all, if more progressives are elected to Congress, Democrats could revive portions of Build Back Better that were left on the cutting room floor.

"Biden should level with the American people," Geevarghese said. "He tried to pass transformative legislation that would improve the standard of living of working-class voters, and he was stymied by people in his own party like [Sinema and Manchin], and you know what? That's why he needs Democrats who will vote with the Democratic caucus."

Sanders could serve as a pivotal messenger on that front in the final days of the campaign. In his two presidential runs, Sanders demonstrated how a

platform of economic populism could invigorate young and working-class voters.

“We know that he is the most popular youth vote candidate. He’s one of our oldest, but he’s one of the most popular hands down,” said Cristina Tzintzún Ramirez, president of the youth voting group NextGen America, which is co-hosting Sanders’ rallies. “No one can mobilize young people and working-class people like Bernie Sanders can.”



Sanders visits the University of Oregon campus in Eugene on 27 October. Photograph: Chris Pietsch/AP

When Sanders traveled to the border town of McAllen to rally for congressional candidate Michelle Vallejo’s campaign, Vallejo described “a packed house”.

Vallejo told the Guardian: “To have Senator Bernie Sanders come join us was really exciting. It meant a lot to me. And it meant a lot to the people of [district] 15, because we want to be heard, and we want to be seen for who we are and be respected for the solutions, opportunities and resources that we know that we need in order to live the best quality life possible.”

Although House Democrats’ campaign arm, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), has chosen not to invest heavily in Vallejo’s

race in the face of a potential Republican wave election, she expressed optimism about her chances on 8 November.

“While we did not see any large TV buys on our behalf of the DCCC, we are focusing on connecting with our voters and running this campaign the way that we’ve run it since day one: which is just centered on our community members and on the efforts that really are rooted from our home and on the ground,” Vallejo said.

[Early voting data](#) has raised alarm among some Democrats that younger Americans will not cast ballots at the record-breaking levels seen in 2020, which could prove disastrous for the party’s hopes of maintaining control of Congress. But Ramirez expressed confidence that young voters will once again turn out in large numbers because they understand exactly what is at stake on November 8.

“What we’re going to be telling young people is that, in 2020, we beat back fascism. We beat it back for an election cycle. We didn’t kill it or destroy it,” Ramirez said. “We have to beat it out of the political body for our democracy to be truly healthy, and we’re not there yet at all.”

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2022.11.04 - Opinion

- If British police forces recruit abusers and criminals, good candidates are surely running a mile
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[OpinionPolice](#)

If British police forces recruit abusers and criminals, good candidates are surely running a mile

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



Thanks to disturbingly lax vetting revealed this week, there could be thousands of officers who shouldn't be in uniform



‘Even at its best policing is a tough job, requiring the judgment of Solomon, physical courage and high tolerance for risk.’ Photograph: Tolga Akmen/EPA

Fri 4 Nov 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 02.02 EDT

Imagine working in an office where the men routinely watch porn and openly call their mates over to look.

Imagine working alongside a colleague who sexually assaults three of his female colleagues on a night out but isn’t sacked, merely offered “advice about his behaviour”. Imagine that you daren’t complain about things like this, for fear of reprisals. Now imagine that these toxic men you work with have power not just over their colleagues but over all of us, including the power to stop cars on the street; and that some of them joke about deliberately targeting pretty female drivers, a practice they call “booty patrol”. Last of all, imagine knowing that whenever a woman dials 999 she runs a risk, however small, of a man like this turning up just when she is at her most acutely vulnerable.

But you don’t have to imagine it; you can just read all about it, in [a report published](#) this week by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Services, which was commissioned by the then home secretary Priti

Patel after the [murder of Sarah Everard](#) by a serving Met police officer. The stories the [inspectors unearthed](#) are by now grimly familiar, but what's unusual about this report is that it goes beyond platitudes about “canteen culture” – the idea that rogue officers flourish where bad behaviour is tolerated – to look at how on earth men like this get into the force in the first place. Did you, like me, still vaguely imagine that having previously being caught groping, flashing, robbing or (in one case) reportedly carrying a gun and being chased by the police would be a barrier to joining the police? Think again.

All wannabe officers are vetted on joining, and at regular intervals through their careers. But of the 725 vetting files the inspectors examined, in 131 the decision was deemed “questionable at best”, and in some cases it gave a green light to applicants with family members involved in organised crime or with criminal records themselves. A wannabe special constable with a juvenile conviction for indecent exposure, involving exposing himself to the same woman seven times by masturbating at his bedroom window after coughing to get her attention, was cleared to join after successfully appealing against previous rejections.

Another candidate passed vetting to become an officer despite a final warning two decades earlier for knocking an 80-year-old woman to the ground and stealing her handbag. So did a wannabe police community support officer cautioned for slapping his partner across her face, and a man investigated five years previously for an alleged sexual assault at a nightclub (the victim later withdrew her complaint, not unusually given the trauma of going to court). According to the report, only 10% of applicants make it through the recruitment process. If this is what gets through, God only knows what's filtered out.

The inspectors also uncovered some worrying instances of officers with serious black marks against them being allowed to move forces, including one, accused of “improper sexualised touching” of colleagues and members of the public, being granted a transfer after the chief constable overruled the vetting panel, “largely on the grounds that accepting the transferee would make the force more diverse”. (National targets for recruiting more black and minority ethnic officers, introduced after the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, were ditched long ago but local police and crime commissioners

can still set targets for chief constables.) We have ended up with a police service that rules out anyone with visible tattoos, but might in a pinch consider an erstwhile sex offender.

Why would any force embrace such ticking timebombs within its ranks? Clumsy recruitment practices, the continued trivialisation of sexual offences, and even perhaps corruption spring to mind. But the inspectors concluded that in some cases the willingness to take a punt “may be influenced by the need to meet certain recruitment targets”. Forces under pressure to plug gaps are, in other words, perhaps prone to conclude that beggars can’t be choosers.

In 2019, Patel set a target of boosting officer [numbers by 20,000](#) over three years – at a time of relatively full employment, in what turned out to be the eve of a pandemic, following years of pay freezes and a string of toxic scandals which may well have made careers in policing a tougher sell to idealistic Generation Z.

Even at its best policing is a tough job, requiring the judgment of Solomon, physical courage and high tolerance for risk – to quote the old cliché, officers must run towards what the rest of us would run away from – but never hotheadedness, or the kind of risk-taking behaviours that leaves officers open to corruption.

That’s a very specific personality type, yet some forces don’t actually meet applicants personally until they’re being fitted for uniforms (post-pandemic, the national [assessment process](#) has moved online) and some appeared to be in such a hurry they didn’t even pursue references from previous employers. If this report is right – and it echoes the findings of Louise Casey’s recent [review of misconduct](#) in the Met – then there may be hundreds or even thousands of officers nationwide who probably shouldn’t be in uniform, and the race must now be on to find them.

But rooting out the rogues is just the first step. Somehow, British policing needs to be helped to pick itself up off the floor afterwards and find ways of persuading good people to join again. If not, it risks descending into a vicious spiral where decent people are put off joining a seemingly toxic

institution, while bad ones actively seek it out – and all too often, slip through the net.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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Gen Z aren't 'intolerant': we're just poor, fed-up and want real change

[Sammy Gecsoyler](#)



New research suggests my cohort is illiberal, but we're surely nothing on Britain's protest-banning Conservative government



‘No generation has a monopoly on illiberalism.’ A protest against the police, crime, sentencing and courts bill (since passed into law) in London, March 2021. Photograph: David Cliff/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

Fri 4 Nov 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 06.37 EDT

Pampered, illiberal, woke snowflakes: the slurs that are made against [Gen Z](#) are so well-worn, so boring, yet they just don’t seem to go away. Despite what some of our elders seem to think, the reality is that our lives are pretty bleak. We are [poorer than generations before us](#), deal with high levels of depression, and face the very real prospect of living through runaway climate breakdown for the rest of our adult lives. Instead of this being seen as an indictment of a society that has betrayed young people, it is instead used to berate us as “fragile” or “entitled”.

[New research](#) by Channel 4, which looked at more than 1,500 13- to 24-year-olds, sheds some fresh light on a debate that seems to go round in circles. It found that the cost of living, a lack of affordable housing and uncertainty about the future were Gen Z’s top three concerns. Contrary to the belief that we spend all our free time doxing C-list celebrities who don’t acknowledge their white, cis, hetero privilege, it turns out our priorities are fundamentally material.

It is little wonder why. As a 26-year-old, I'm on the older edge of the Gen Z cohort, having experienced what happens when you're on the other side of education. The job market is full of insecure, low-paid work, enabled by decades of union-busting. Flying the nest and moving out of your parents' home is a pipe dream for many, given the exorbitant cost of rent and house prices – and with interest rates set to rise. In 1997, when I was less than one year old, the [average house price](#) where I live was 5.2 times average annual earnings; now the corresponding figure is 14.7.

What makes this all the more anguish-inducing is the fact that avenues for change are limited. Addressing our concerns is seen as parliamentary kryptonite by both major political parties. Labour is terrified of repeating anything resembling the modestly transformative policies of its previous leader, because it is worried about how older voters might react. Younger MPs in the party, such as [Zarah Sultana](#) and [Nadia Whittome](#), are marginalised like naughty schoolchildren for daring to speak on issues that many people their own age care about, agree with or are affected by.

Older generations have held us electorally captive in every vote in our lifetimes. A [survey](#) by YouGov found that in the 2017 general election, a majority of voters under 47 years old voted for Labour, with support particularly high among the very youngest. This “tipping point” age was 39 in the 2019 general election. A [similar age pattern](#) was found in the Brexit vote, with a majority of under 50s voting to remain. We know who prevailed in each of these contests – not us.

But what about the idea that Gen Z is “illiberal”? The Channel 4 study also found that [almost half](#) of 13- to 24-year-olds surveyed thought “some people deserve to be cancelled”, compared with one-third of over-25s. A quarter have “very little tolerance for people with beliefs [they] disagree with”.

My first reaction to this is to point out that it is the ruling Conservative party, which I don't believe has been captured by a secret Gen-Z cabal, that has introduced the most illiberal legislation of recent times; the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act](#), along with the upcoming [public order bill](#), more or less criminalises effective protest in Britain. No generation has a monopoly on illiberalism, but if every call-in show or TV debate about “cancel culture” spent more time focusing on actual government legislation

such as this, perhaps the stereotypes attached to my generation might have less traction.

But I don't want to dodge the issue either. While views among Gen Z are nuanced on this issue, and many believe that cancellations go too far, I think there is some truth to the notion that we have less patience in the realm of debate. It might be that the way social media structures our social lives – where people can be “blocked” – has bled out into real-world attitudes. We're also more used to following self-authored content, which can provide a front-row, empathic insight into the lives of others, rather than the Punch-and-Judy debates you might associate with TV.

But, more importantly, we are a generation that is very diverse and less likely to inhabit a social world that is straightforwardly Christian or straight or cis-gendered. Being intolerant of intolerance is, for many of us, not a performative game of woke point-scoring, but is a matter of respect for ourselves and those around us.

The demands of Gen Z are pretty fair and simple. We want a world where we and those around us are treated with respect and without prejudice, and to live in a future where we could maybe put a deposit down on a studio flat before the floodwater is lapping at the door. Is that too much to ask?

- Sammy Gecsoyler is [a 2021/22 recipient of the Scott Trust bursary](#).

OpinionFishing industry

Brexit promised to end the overfishing of UK waters. It hasn't, and now it's time to revolt

[Charles Clover](#)

Our cod populations – which belong to King Charles on behalf of the people – are declining precipitously



‘With the right management, cod could be nursed back to profusion. Is that not where the public interest lies?’ Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

Fri 4 Nov 2022 05.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 12.46 EDT

There are few sadder symbols of post-Brexit Britain, or of its deliberate assault upon nature, than the national dish, fish and chips, and the fate of one of its principal ingredients, the cod. Cod are tasty creatures but they are [severely overfished](#) in UK waters, a fact masked by plentiful supplies

reaching fish and chip shops until recently from Iceland, Norway, and – ah yes – Russia.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has given us one of two reasons why we urgently need to save our favourite fish from 40 years of mismanagement. The first is to protect our own future food security. Just when the price of cod and other materials has rocketed, leading our fish and chip shops to call for more cod from our own waters, stocks are around their worst levels on record. These national assets – which, under British law, belong to the king on behalf of the people – have declined precipitously in the past four decades.

Through the lens of the cost of living crisis, what has gone on looks like a flagrant sellout of the public interest. Take the west of Scotland cod, one of five breeding populations in UK waters and the one that has [suffered the worst declines](#). Catch limits for the west of Scotland cod have been set above scientific advice, ludicrously, every year for the past 35 years. Inevitably, the west of Scotland cod has [declined by 92%](#) since 1981.

Trawl fishers in the west of Scotland prefer to [catch langoustines](#), which are more valuable than cod and present all the year round. But the huge bycatch of juvenile white fish, such as cod, means these species never recover. The Scottish parliament's rural affairs committee heard recently that there could be about [3.5m baby cod](#) in the Firth of Clyde and yet 2m of them are being killed every year by langoustine trawlers as bycatch.

With the right management – more creeling or potting for scampi, for instance, and an inshore [prohibition on trawling](#) – cod could be nursed back to profusion. Is that not where the public interest lies? Instead, the tendency of politicians and officials has been to defer to the most damaging and heavily indebted fleets, in defiance of scientific rationality or wise stewardship of a national asset.

This perverse behaviour is not exclusive to Scotland. In the Celtic Sea and the Irish Sea, fishing for other species continues apace, though scientists [advise a zero catch](#) of cod, which is not enforced. In the North Sea, where there was a recovery plan for the cod a decade ago, stocks actually began to

recover. Then politicians and officials gave in and set catch limits at levels that made recovery impossible.

The travesty of setting quotas above scientific advice was supposed to have been stopped by the post-Brexit Fisheries Act. It was said this was going to deliver a “gold standard” of sustainable fisheries and make Britain a “world leader” in protecting the sea. The result has been [rather different](#). Last December ministers and officials signed an [agreement with the EU](#) that allowed 65% of all catch limits to be set above scientific advice. Even allowing for a degree of chaos as the EU started working with Britain as an independent coastal state, that is a total disgrace.

Which brings us to the second reason why it is time to bring back British cod: because we can. [Brexit](#) creates an opportunity to do our seas and our fishers a favour by managing fish stocks for recovery. We need to make our Fisheries Act work, or politicians and officials will go on managing our fish stocks and our seas as badly as they did before.

To that end, a group of us – including Blue Marine Foundation, the charity I work for; the National Federation of Fish Friers; the Angling Trust; and Our Seas, a Scottish coalition of 100 fishing and environmental groups – are asking people to sign a [parliamentary petition](#) calling on the government to negotiate with the EU sustainable catch limits for all five populations of cod in UK waters this year. We need 10,000 signatures for the government to respond and 100,000 to trigger a debate in the House of Commons.

The proposition is uncontroversial: it simply asks the government to do what it always claims to do, but never actually does – manage fish stocks sustainably so they can rebuild. It effectively says that after two decades in which public consciousness about the state of our seas has been raised by television programmes such as [The Blue Planet](#), [The End of the Line](#) and [Hugh's Fish Fight](#), we expect better.

We wait to hear whether the environment secretary Thérèse Coffey's team will scrap the “attack on nature” in Liz Truss's growth plan – the insane repeal of 570 hard-fought-for pieces of [environmental legislation](#). I hope

they will. What is certain is that the attack on nature represented by the annual setting of fisheries catch limits is about to begin.

Only, this time things may be different. The EU is coming under pressure in the European court to obey its own, unheeded law that says it should have [banned overfishing by 2020](#). Meanwhile, lawyers are looking at the many pieces of UK legislation that say fish catches should be set at levels that enable fish such as cod to recover. If catch limits are set far above scientific advice again this December, I have a new year's prediction: the UK government could be in court, charged with squandering the king's fish.

- Charles Clover is executive director of the Blue Marine Foundation and author of *Rewilding the Sea: How to Save our Oceans*

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OpinionTwitter

Does anyone really think Elon Musk cares about supporting creatives on Twitter?

Samantha Floreani

The digital platform is about more than just news and politics. It's also a place for culture, creativity and community



‘Elon Musk’s Twitter charges forward, and is slated to launch within two weeks. It’s very ‘move fast and break things’ a la Facebook of the early 2000s.’ Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

Fri 4 Nov 2022 01.07 EDT

After a seven-month saga, and a visit to Twitter HQ [carrying a bathroom sink](#), Elon Musk now owns Twitter.

In April, digital rights experts warned of [the dangers](#) of online spaces being subject to the whims of billionaires. Many have expressed concern that under Musk's leadership, online safety, public debate and democratic participation on Twitter may falter, while there is fear that [misinformation and hate speech](#) will rise.

But [Twitter](#) is about more than just news and politics. It's also a place for culture, creativity and community. Digital platforms wouldn't be worth anything without those who populate them with content, so what are Musk's proposed changes going to mean for creative industries?

After quickly [firing](#) executives and [among fears he might reinstate Donald Trump's account](#), Musk announced the first major change to Twitter less than a week after acquiring it: users will have to [pay for](#) the blue check.

"Twitter's current lords & peasants system for who has or doesn't have a blue checkmark is bullshit" Musk tweeted. "Power to the people! Blue for \$8/month."

Nothing says "power to the people" quite like paying Twitter's new feudal overlord your monthly dues. It may just be the epitome of modern capitalism that Musk can create a wealth hierarchy for something that was previously free, and call it populist. It is also darkly ironic that a billionaire whose company has [blocked efforts](#) by employees to unionise is claiming to be a man of the people.

In addition to a blue checkmark, Musk has promised that those who are willing (and able) to fork out for the privilege will also receive "priority in replies, mentions & search". Musk claims that this will "give Twitter a revenue stream to reward content creators".

It's tempting to laugh at the absurdity of this suggestion, and content creators themselves were quick to point out the logical shortcomings of requiring them to pay a fee based on a feeble promise that they might be rewarded later.

For anyone who isn't chronically on Twitter, the blue tick is only available to "verified" users – anyone can apply to be verified, but you have to meet certain [requirements](#), including being "authentic, notable and active". Over the years, the blue check has become perceived as a status symbol, but it's also an important misinformation prevention measure, and a way to prevent trolls from impersonating famous people online. It wasn't a perfect system, but undermining the verification process by putting a price tag on it will undermine trust, and ultimately lead to an increase in misinformation, with possibly drastic outcomes for safety both online and off. It certainly won't help creators.

We need to start strongly considering what publicly controlled platforms might look like

Musk is also [reportedly](#) planning on launching "Paywalled Video" to let people charge a fee to access video content, with Twitter taking a cut. It has been reported the team working on it have flagged it as high risk, citing issues with copyright, safety and legal compliance. None of these risks serve creators in the long run. But Musk's Twitter charges forward, and is slated to launch within two weeks. It's very "move fast and break things" a la Facebook of the early 2000s.

It's likely this feature would be used for adult content, especially given Twitter has historically been one of the most friendly platforms for nudity and consensual pornography. In theory, this could be a big step in supporting sex workers and adult content creators. But there's concern that Musk could turn out to be a perfidious friend, only an ally to marginalised creators as long as it might make him a buck.

Paying for verification and for video content would mark a significant shift for Twitter and its relationship to content creators. But in the off-chance that these ideas work, an increase in profit for Musk does not necessarily translate to supporting creative and cultural workers, nor general users. In fact, if the other major (and more profitable) social media platforms are anything to go by, it's more likely that Twitter under Musk's leadership will find yet another way to wedge itself between audiences and creative or media workers to capture the value that flows between them.

This is an issue that Digital Rights Watch has been actively considering in a recent [community-based research project](#) examining the imbalances of power in the internet economy. After talking with people across creative and cultural fields, we found that the growing power and profit of big tech platforms is undermining creative industries, rather than empowering and liberating people in creative industries as was promised in the early days of the internet.

One participant in the research, Melbourne-based singer-songwriter Eilish Gilligan, said that “digital platforms get so much value from the contributions of artists and creators – it’s what makes them vibrant and interesting. And while the platforms are making billions in profit off the backs of creative workers, the artists themselves are left without a livable wage.”

Despite Musk enthusiastically tweeting “Creators need to make a living!”, does anyone really think that the richest man in the world cares about supporting creatives?

Given that Musk [needs to come up with](#) about \$950m in annual interest on the debt he accrued when buying the company, it’s hard to imagine how his priorities will be anything other than economic.

Digital platforms are the essential social infrastructure of modern life, and the cultural content that populates them is what makes them interesting and worthwhile. Rather than hoping Musk will pass on some crumbs to creators, we need to start strongly considering what publicly controlled platforms might look like. Why should we willingly let yet another billionaire build his own nightmare playground to exert power and control? We deserve to have a real say in shaping how online spaces work, and who they work for.

Samantha Floreani is a digital rights activist and writer. They are the program lead at Digital Rights Watch

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[Bernie Sanders](#)

‘They haven’t tried’: Bernie Sanders on Democrats’ economic messaging

In a Guardian interview, the Vermont senator urges people to turn out for next week’s ‘consequential’ midterm elections



Bernie Sanders campaigning in Texas for Democratic candidate Michelle Vallejo. Photograph: Joel Martinez/AP

[Erum Salam](#) in Austin

Fri 4 Nov 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 08.16 EDT

Bernie Sanders has criticized Democrats for not doing enough to motivate voters around the economic issues that have an impact on everyday life, as he warned next week’s midterm elections are the most “consequential” in modern American history.

In an interview with the Guardian in Texas, the leftwing Vermont senator said: “Obviously, everybody should be turning out for what is the most

consequential midterm election in the modern history of this country. Democracy is on the ballot. Women's right to control their own bodies is on the ballot. Climate change is on the ballot, so everybody should come out."

But Sanders said he worried "very much that [Democrats](#) have not done a good enough job of reaching out to young people and working-class people and motivating them to come out and vote in this election".

Sanders, a Democratic socialist who ran for president in 2016 and 2020, maintains a strong core of support in the Democratic party. He has been a fierce critic of Republicans, particularly Donald Trump, but has also been unafraid to point out what he sees as flaws in Democratic strategy.

Sanders was in Texas last weekend as part of a barnstorming trip across the US ahead of next week's midterm elections that he wants to use to highlight economic issues, which are emerging as the primary concern for many voters.

"People are hurting. You got 60% of our people living paycheck to paycheck, and for many workers, they are falling further behind as a result of inflation. Oil company profits are soaring, food company profits are soaring, drug company profits are soaring. Corporate profits are at an all time high. The rich are getting much richer, and Democrats have got to make that message," he said.

In assessing his party's success at communicating the threat of corporate profiteering to the cost of living, Sanders said, "It's not a question of [Democrats being] successful. They haven't tried."

On Wednesday, Biden urged oil companies to pass their [massive profits](#) on to consumers, seeking to address what he sees as the real reason behind the high gas prices Americans have seen in the past year: corporate profiteering. It's the kind of message Sanders hoped to see earlier in an election in which many Democratic candidates have focused more on the loss of abortion rights and the growing threat to US democracy.

“The truth is that about half of inflationary cost increases are a result of corporate greed. So if people can’t afford to fill up their gas tanks, if they can’t afford food, if they can’t afford their prescription drugs – what Democrats should be explaining to them is why that is so,” Sanders said.

Sanders said he is showing up for progressive candidates he feels were abandoned by many other Democrats. In San Marcos, Sanders appeared with the congressional candidate Greg Casar who is, according to Sanders, successfully underscoring the idea that Democrats are the party of economic leadership.

In the Rio Grande Valley, the southern region of the state where Latino voters play a critical role, Democrats still maintain their hold but are slowly losing control. Across south Texas counties in 2020, Biden either won against Trump by lower margins compared with Hilary Clinton in 2016, or he lost outright.

In a June special election for district 36 – which covers parts of the Gulf coast, including Brownsville – the rightwing conspiracy theorist Mayra Flores won and flipped a historically Democratic district.

On Sunday night, Sanders showed up in person to throw his weight behind Michelle Vallejo, a progressive in a tight congressional race with Monica De La Cruz, a fellow Latina endorsed by Trump in newly drawn congressional district 15.

It’s reminiscent of another race in the region back in 2020, when the progressive congressional candidate Jessica Cisneros lost by just a few hundred votes to the conservative Democrat Henry Cuellar, the incumbent representative and the only House Democrat to vote against legislation to codify Roe v Wade.

In that primary election, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), the organization responsible for helping Democrats get elected to Congress, endorsed Cuellar over Cisneros, to the disappointment of Sanders, progressives and many other Democrats within the party.

Now, Sanders is hoping for a change of tune within the party.

“We worked hard for Jessica and she lost by a few hundred votes. And unbelievably, the Democratic leadership ended up supporting the most conservative Democrat in the caucus there [Henry Cuellar]. Look – what I would simply tell you ... is that along with Greg, you’re gonna have some great new members of Congress from Illinois, from Pennsylvania, from around the country. And you’re going to have more strong progressives in Congress than in history this month in this country.”

While Sanders is still in disagreement with aspects of the strategy of the Democratic political apparatus, it remains unclear if this dissatisfaction extends to Joe Biden. Referring to the supreme court’s undoing of *Roe v Wade*, the case that enshrined the constitutional right to abortion into law, Sanders said it was an issue that is “enormously important”.

But it’s not the only issue.

“We’ve got a fight every step of the way with the supreme court. You’ve seen a pretty much united Democratic party on [the abortion] issue, have you not? Zillions of dollars on ads and so forth. But we have not had the same unity and the same energy around the economic crisis facing working families and what Republicans would do. So it’s not a question of what the president alone is doing. It’s a question of what the party is doing, where it’s putting its money, its resources, its energy.”

When asked if he supported a 2024 Biden presidential run, Sanders said: “Right now, we’re worried about 2022.”

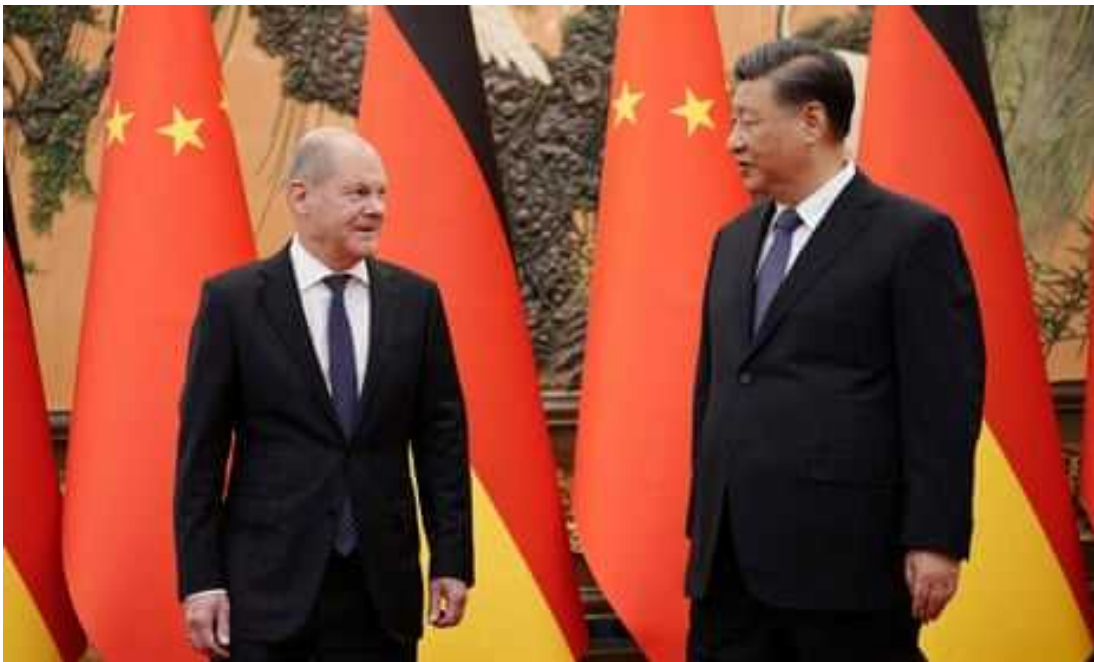
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China

China and Germany condemn Russian threat to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine

Xi Jinping tells Olaf Scholz of the need for greater cooperation during ‘times of change and turmoil’

- [Russia-Ukraine war – latest news updates](#)



Olaf Scholz and Xi Jinping. Scholz said Russia was in danger of ‘crossing a line’. Photograph: Reuters

[Kate Connolly](#) in Berlin and agencies

Fri 4 Nov 2022 12.05 EDTFirst published on Fri 4 Nov 2022 01.41 EDT

Xi Jinping and [Olaf Scholz](#) have condemned Russia’s threat to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, with both leaders expressing their desire for the conflict to end.

The Chinese president stressed the need for greater cooperation between China and [Germany](#) in what he referred to as “times of change and turmoil”, and said both leaders “jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons,” although he stopped short of criticising Russia or calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops.

The German chancellor said Russia was in danger of “crossing a line” in the international community if it used atomic weapons, in what was the first meeting with his Chinese counterpart.

Scholz’s inaugural one-day visit on Friday was the first by a leader of a G7 nation to [China](#) in three years, and was viewed as testing the waters of relations between Beijing and the west after years of mounting tensions, analysts say.

Observers said Scholz’s visit was being viewed in China as a welcome development as the country’s leadership looks to consolidate its relations with the outside world after years of isolation during the pandemic.

For his part, Scholz was looking to achieve greater market access at a time when the German economy is struggling with inflation and an imminent recession, largely fuelled by the energy crisis.

Scholz defended his decision to travel to China with a group of industrial representatives, which has been viewed with controversy at home, telling journalists: “It is good and right that I am in Beijing today.” He said in time of crisis, such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, bilateral meetings were all the more important.

In a meeting with China’s outgoing premier, Li Keqiang, Scholz said he had urged Xi to use China’s influence as a permanent member of the UN security council on Russia to bring an end to the invasion of Ukraine. “I told president Xi that it is important for China to exercise its influence on Russia,” he said.

During their meeting, which was held in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Xi said that as large nations with influence, China and Germany

should work together all the more during “times of change and turmoil” for the sake of world peace, according to the state broadcaster CCTV.

“As long as the principles of mutual respect, seeking common ground while reserving differences, exchanges and mutual learning, and win-win cooperation are upheld, the general direction of bilateral relations will not be deviated, and the pace of progress will be stable,” Xi was quoted as saying by CCTV.

“At present, the international situation is complex and changeable. As influential powers, China and Germany should work together in times of change and chaos to make more contributions to world peace and development.”

Over lunch Scholz told Xi it was important both leaders were meeting in person during tense times, with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine creating problems for the rules-based global order, according to a Reuters reporter accompanying Scholz’s delegation.

At a news conference after his meeting with Li, Scholz said he had raised the issue of Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory over which it will not exclude using weapons in order to bring it under its control. “Like the US and other countries, we are pursuing a one-China policy,” he said. “But I have made equally clear that any change in Taiwan’s status quo must be peaceful or by mutual consent.”

The two leaders also discussed Europe-China relations, the climate crisis and global hunger, as well as how to develop China-Germany economic ties, which Scholz said had “become more difficult for German companies recently” because of China sealing off access to many of its market sectors. Li nominally has responsibility over China’s economy.

According to German media who accompanied him, Scholz indirectly admonished China over its failures to protect minorities in China. He told Xi that human rights were universal, especially the rights of minorities and pledged to “want to remain in discussion” with China about the situation in

the province of Xinjiang, which is allegedly home to hundreds of interment camps in which more than 1 million Uyghurs are believed to be held.

China's strict zero-Covid policy and growing tensions with the west have made it unfeasible for leaders of major western powers to visit China. Xi himself has only just resumed foreign trips.

Scholz's visit is probably a welcome development for China's leadership, which will be looking to shore up relations with the outside world after the conclusion of the 20th party congress, where [Xi consolidated his status](#) as the core of the ruling Communist party.

In the run-up to the visit, there had been [criticism](#) from within the EU and the German government coalition, mainly from the Green party and the Liberals.

With Reuters and Associated Press

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Sydney

Sydney axe murderer who Googled ‘what part of body to go for’ before killing partner jailed for 27 years

The 34-year-old woman killed the man with an axe purchased from Bunnings in a jealous quest for revenge, court hears

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A 34-year-old Sydney woman who killed her partner with an axe has been sentenced to 27 years in jail. Photograph: Dave Hunt/AAP

Australian Associated Press

Fri 4 Nov 2022 05.19 EDT

A [Sydney](#) axe murderer who Googled “what part of body to go for” before killing her partner has been sentenced to 27 years in jail.

The 34-year-old mother, who cannot be named for legal reasons, killed her partner with an axe purchased from Bunnings in a jealous quest for revenge.

“It is clear the deceased’s senseless death has had a severe impact on those who love him,” the [New South Wales](#) supreme court Justice Natalie Adams said at the woman’s sentencing on Friday. “No sentence could possibly ease the grief of those that were close to him.”

The woman pleaded guilty to murdering her long-term partner as he was lying down looking at his iPad in a Sydney townhouse in September 2020. The woman earlier made Google searches about murder including: “Killing someone with axe what part of body to go for.”

Earlier that month, she had conducted searches on her phone for information including “Can you kill someone with hot boiling water” and “Is it really easy to murder somebody with a knife”.

Before the murder, she did more searches, including: “What is the fastest part of body to kill someone with the axe.”

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At the time of the murder, she was subject to an apprehended violence order after her partner told police she stabbed him with a meat cleaver, the court heard previously. He had three convictions involving violence against her.

The pair’s on-and-off relationship was “volatile” and “marred with domestic violence”, the judge said on Friday.

The murder victim had been convicted of violent offences against her in 2010, 2011 and March 2019. The woman had no prior convictions.

According to the agreed facts of the case, he was with a different woman when his partner rang and messaged him. He told the woman it was his ex-

partner – describing her as dangerous, violent and abusive. “She hit me with a big machete, she is fucking wild,” he said.

The woman sent 19 text messages suggesting he was having sex with someone and she tried to call him from about 5.30am to 1pm, the agreed facts stated.

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In the early evening, she called a cab to take her to Bunnings, asked the driver to wait, went inside and bought a Trojan brand half axe.

She later sent texts including: “You guys might hear something on the news I might be in prison I can’t deal with it any more.”

The 34-year-old later went to the police station and confessed to the murder but told a string of lies including that her partner had produced a knife, the court heard.

The victim was found to have died from multiple chop wounds to his head.

The woman appeared via video link on Friday and showed little emotion during her sentencing. She will be eligible for parole in November 2039.

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Animals farmedJapan

Japan makes squid farming breakthrough as wild catches plummet

Scientists have long sought to farm the scarce seafood staple, but critics say animals are not suited to intensive methods



A bigfin reef squid: smaller catches in Japan have been blamed on rising sea temperatures. Photograph: Dr Ryuta Nakajima/OIST

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[About this content](#)

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Fri 4 Nov 2022 03.30 EDT Last modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 04.51 EDT

Scientists in [Japan](#) say they have developed a groundbreaking method of farming squid that could solve shortages of the seafood staple, amid warnings from environmental groups that aquaculture is incompatible with the animal's welfare.

Researchers at the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST) say their system produced a reliable supply of squid and has the potential to be commercialised.

Squid is widely consumed in Japan, where it is an essential part of the diet and is often eaten raw as sushi or sashimi. But stocks in the country's waters have been declining for decades.

The [annual squid catch in Japan](#) peaked in 1989 at 733,594 tons; by 2018, it had plummeted to 83,593 tons. To fill the gap, the country now imports huge quantities of processed squid from South America.

Smaller catches in Japan have been blamed on rising sea temperatures caused by [global heating](#) – which inhibits the creatures' ability to spawn and

grow – as well as inadequate regulation and overfishing.

Scientists have spent decades attempting to farm squid – a method long considered particularly challenging due to the animal’s behaviour – but have had little success, [according to OIST](#). The creatures are known to be aggressive and sensitive to water flow, and have particular food preferences and a complex lifecycle.



Squid skewers on sale in Tokushima. The cephalopod is widely consumed in Japan. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

But experts at OIST claim to have made a breakthrough, having perfected a method that is cheap and efficient, and results in high hatching and survival rates among oval squid.

“By keeping a single squid lineage for 10 generations in very restricted laboratory conditions, we demonstrated that squid aquaculture can work safely,” said Zdeněk Lajbner, an OIST researcher who leads the project. “I believe it is our duty to offer such valuable technology for commercial applications.”

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Whereas wild squid catches can be unpredictable, the institute's aquaculture technology has the potential to "reliably and predictably" produce live squid, and at an affordable cost, Lajbner said.

Animal rights campaigners, however, say that farming carnivorous species, such as squid, is unsustainable because it would require extracting other marine species from already strained fisheries using inhumane fishing practices.

"Animal welfare is not a consideration for any aquaculture system in Japan – not just for squid," said Chihiro Okada from the Animal Rights Centre Japan. "As farming systems expand, so too will the suffering of animals. Sustainability will not be achieved simply by seeking to harvest more and eat more."

Okada said there was no such thing as sustainable cephalopod farming.

"Farming carnivorous species such as octopus and squid requires fish or other seafood products, and squid farming will put pressure on other animal species," said Okada, who called for an immediate halt to the project, and for aquaculture to be replaced by sustainable fishing and the promotion of a plant-based version of the animal.

"The intensive rearing of many animals in one place, even in the sea, can be a source of water pollution, parasites and infectious diseases," she said. "In addition, cephalopods are sentient beings, and confining such animals in small farms will inevitably cause animal welfare issues."

Similar concerns have surfaced over the farming of other marine species. [Critics warned in March](#) that the world's first commercial octopus farm, due

to open in the Canary Islands next year, would cause “great suffering” to the animals, which [the UK recognised as sentient beings last year](#).

In October, the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, which oversees a global certification scheme for farmed fish, announced plans to introduce new welfare rules after accepting that fish can feel “[pain, stress and anxiety](#)”.

The team at OIST insist that their project, which they say has attracted commercial interest, will reduce pressure on local and global squid stocks and continue to provide healthy, sustainable seafood to Japanese consumers.

Lajbner also dismissed concerns voiced recently by the [Aquatic Life Institute](#) and dozens of other [animal welfare](#) groups that farming squid and other carnivorous animals would require using marine species sourced from strained fisheries, and inhumane [fishing](#) practices.

“Species that are carnivorous in the wild do not need to be carnivorous in captivity,” Lajbner said. “For instance, I know vegan cats and dogs that are healthy, happy animals. You can now find a strong trend in the replacement of fish-based protein with plant-based protein in aquaculture feeds, and this trend is likely to continue.”

You can send us your stories and thoughts at animalsfarmed@theguardian.com

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/04/japan-makes-squid-farming-breakthrough-as-wild-catches-plummet>

Global development

Stop Eritrea's 'war-funding diaspora tax', say MPs and lords

UK parliamentarians call for inquiry into 2% levy on Eritreans abroad, amid fears that it fuels Tigray war



A patriotic poster in Asmara, Eritrea. The government imposes a tax on Eritreans abroad that one critic called 'extortion'. Photograph: AFP/Getty

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A Guardian reporter

Fri 4 Nov 2022 05.22 EDT Last modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 13.10 EDT

A group of UK parliamentarians is calling for an urgent investigation into the collection of a “diaspora tax” by the Eritrean authorities, which they say could have helped fund war in neighbouring [Ethiopia](#).

MPs and members of the [House of Lords](#) want the government to launch a “full, formal, and fully funded” public inquiry into the collection of the 2% tax in the UK, and take “robust action to stop the practice”.

They also called on the Metropolitan police and its parliamentary and diplomatic protection department to investigate both recent and past evidence it has received about the tax, publish its findings and “pursue those accused of crimes, including past consular staff”.

The tax, levied on Eritreans living abroad to fund, according to the Eritrean government, development projects, is collected by Eritrea’s diplomatic and consular offices around the world. Failure to pay it in effect bars people from receiving consular help or assistance from the state, for example, if they want to get a passport or sell property in [Eritrea](#).

In 2011, a [UN security council resolution](#), supported by the UK, condemned the tax and accused Eritrea of using the money to destabilise the Horn of Africa. It is unclear how much money Eritrea makes from the tax, or how it is spent because the country does not publish its financial records.

But a [report](#) released by the parliamentary group this week said: “It is likely that funds gathered using the tax are spent on war efforts, in ways which mirror the circumstances that gave rise to the UN security council’s criticism of the tax’s collection in 2011.”

Eritrean troops have been [fighting alongside the Ethiopian government](#) in its war against the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), which began in 2020. A permanent cessation of hostilities [was agreed](#) on Wednesday.

The crossbench peer Lord Alton, co-chair of the group, said: “Eritrea is cash-poor, but despite this is calling up its citizens to fight in its neighbour’s costly, pitiless, brutal and cruel war, which has been marked by mass atrocity crimes and accompanied by a scale of human suffering that is scarcely conceivable.

“Stopping the collection of this 2% diaspora tax would have a direct impact on Eritrea’s ability to wage war with neighbours – tragically all too evident in the horrific carnage of Tigray – and hamper its efforts to destabilise the Horn of [Africa](#) region,” Alton said.

“We will now be pushing our own government, as well as allies, to conduct their own investigations, and to take action to halt the collection of this tax.”

The British government has previously raised [concerns about the tax](#) with the Eritrean authorities.

In testimonies gathered by the parliamentary group, Eritreans said the embassy in London had stopped collecting the money directly, but now required payment to be made in Asmara or through other means.

Fathi Osman , a former Eritrean official now living in France, said he believed the tax was being spent on the war in Tigray. “[The government] doesn’t have other revenues, what can they do? I remember with the war

with Ethiopia in 1998, they issued bonds and let Eritreans living abroad buy them so they could fund the war.”

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Osman, who was the deputy ambassador in Saudi Arabia until 2012, said the Saudi embassy received about 3m Saudi riyals (£715,000) every three months from Eritreans living in the country. “That’s about \$4m every year just from the huge Eritrean diaspora who are living in Saudi,” he said.

One Eritrean woman, who has been living in the UK since 1993, stopped paying the tax in 2002, “when I saw that it was just extortion and there was no accountability, and we don’t know where the money goes or [what it is] used for”.

As a result, the woman, who did not want to be named, said: “I can’t go back home or sell my property there. Even if you are dead, and you want to be buried in your home country, you must pay and have a clearance to allow the body to be buried.”

The Eritrean embassy in London was approached for comment.

In a response to a parliamentary question about Eritrean funds, the government urged “anyone with evidence that coercion has been used in pursuit of payment of the Eritrean diaspora tax to report this to the police”.

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[Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#)

Lula stages astonishing comeback to beat far-right Bolsonaro in Brazil election

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the former leftist president, has reclaimed the leadership and vowed to reunify his country

- [Live results page](#)
- [Profile: the rise and fall and rise again of Lula](#)

'I'm going to cry': euphoria on Brazil's streets as Lula wins – video

[Tom Phillips](#) in São Paulo and [Constance Malleret](#) in Rio de Janeiro

Sun 30 Oct 2022 19.02 EDT Last modified on Wed 2 Nov 2022 17.55 EDT

Brazil's former leftist president, [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#), has sealed an astonishing political comeback, beating the far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro in one of the most significant and bruising elections in the country's history.

With 99.97% of votes counted, Silva, [a former factory worker who became Brazil's first working-class president exactly 20 years ago](#), had secured 50.9% of the vote. Bolsonaro, a firebrand who was elected in 2018, received 49.10%.

Addressing journalists at a hotel in São Paulo, Lula vowed to reunify his country after a toxic race for power which has profoundly divided one of the world's largest democracies.

“We are going to live new times of peace, love and hope,” said the 77-year-old, who was sidelined from the 2018 election that saw Bolsonaro claim power after being jailed on corruption charges that were later annulled.

“I will govern for 215m Brazilians ... and not just for those who voted for me. There are not two Brazils. We are one country, one people – a great nation,” he said to applause. “It is in nobody’s interests to live in a country that is divided and in a constant state of war.”

Lula celebrates after declared winner in election – video

A few streets away on Paulista Avenue, one of the city’s main arteries, ecstatic Lula supporters gathered to celebrate his victory and the downfall of a radical rightwing president whose presidency produced an environmental tragedy and saw nearly 700,000 Brazilians die of Covid.

“Our dream is coming true. We need to be free,” beamed Joe Kallif, a 62-year-old social activist who was among the elated throng. “Brazil was in a very dangerous place and now we are getting back our freedom. The last four years have been horrible.”

Gabrielly Soares, a 19-year-old student, jumped in joy as she commemorated the imminent victory of a leader whose social policies helped her achieve a university education.

“I feel so happy ... During four years of Bolsonaro I saw my family slip backwards and under Lula they flourished,” she said, a rainbow banner draped over her shoulders.

Ecstatic and tearful supporters of Lula – who secured more than 59m votes to Bolsonaro’s 57m – hugged and threw cans of beer in the air.

“This means we are going to have someone in power who cares about those at the bottom. Right now we have a person who doesn’t care about the majority, about us, about LGBT people,” Soares said. “Bolsonaro ... is a bad person. He doesn’t show a drop of empathy or solidarity for others. There is no way he can continue as president.”

There was celebration around the region too as leftist allies tweeted their congratulations. “Viva Lula,” said Colombia’s leader, Gustavo Petro.

Argentina’s president, Alberto Fernández, celebrated “a new era in Latin American history”. “An era of hope and of a future that starts right now,” he

said.

Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, commemorated what he called a victory for "equality and humanism".

Joe Biden issued a statement congratulating Lula on his election "following free, fair and credible elections".

"I look forward to working together to continue the cooperation between our two countries in the months and years ahead," the US president said.

Justin Trudeau said: "The people of Brazil have spoken. I'm looking forward to working with [@LulaOfficial](#) to strengthen the partnership between our countries, to deliver results for Canadians and Brazilians, and to advance shared priorities – like protecting the environment. Congratulations, Lula!"

Brazil's former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who governed before Lula's historic election 20 years ago, tweeted: "Democracy has won, Brazil has won!"

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, said Lula's election "kick starts a new chapter in Brazil's history" while Spain's prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, called Lula's triumph a move towards "progress and hope".

The speed of the international reaction reflected widespread fears that Bolsonaro, a former army captain who has spent years attacking Brazil's democratic institutions, might refuse to accept defeat. In the lead up to the election he indicated he would contest a result he considered "abnormal". He is yet to concede to his rival.

Outside Bolsonaro's home in west Rio there was dejection and anger as the news sunk in. "I'm angry," said Monique Almeida, a 36-year-old beautician. "I don't even know what to say."

João Reis, a 50-year-old electrician, said he was convinced the vote had been rigged.

"It's fraud without a doubt, they manipulated the count. The armed forces must intervene," he demanded.

And if they didn't? "The population must take to the streets to demand military intervention so that we don't hand power over to the communists."

At Lula's celebrations the mood was very different as the veteran leftist vowed to wage war on hunger, racism and to combat environmental destruction which has soared under Bolsonaro. "We will fight for zero deforestation in the Amazon ... Brazil and the planet need the Amazon alive."

"We are going to restart the monitoring and surveillance of the Amazon and combat any kind of illegal activity," he vowed. "We are not interested in a war over the environment but we are ready to defend it from any threat."

This article was amended on 31 October 2022. Pedro Sánchez is Spain's prime minister, not its president as an earlier version said.

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[Brazil](#)

World leaders rush to congratulate Lula on Brazil election victory

Biden, Macron, Trudeau and Maduro were among those quick to share their congratulations

- [Lula stages astonishing comeback](#)

Lula celebrates after declared winner in election – video

[*Helen Sullivan*](#)

[@helenrsullivan](#)

Mon 31 Oct 2022 08.08 EDTFirst published on Sun 30 Oct 2022 23.37 EDT

Leaders from around the world have been quick to offer congratulations to Brazil’s president-elect, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, known as Lula, after his [narrow victory over the far-right incumbent](#), Jair Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro had cast doubt on the voting process leading up to the bitterly divisive election, and hinted he might reject the outcome if he lost. He has yet to concede.

In a statement, the US president, Joe Biden, strongly backed the legitimacy of the result, congratulating Lula “following free, fair, and credible elections”.

“I look forward to working together to continue the cooperation between our two countries in the months and years ahead,” he said.

Canada’s prime minister, Justin Trudeau, said on Twitter: “The people of [Brazil](#) have spoken,” adding that he looked forward to working with Lula “to strengthen the partnership between our countries, to deliver results for

Canadians and Brazilians, and to advance shared priorities – like protecting the environment”.

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, also offered his good wishes, saying the poll opened “a new page” in Brazil’s history. “Together, we will join forces to take up the many common challenges and renew the ties of friendship between our two countries,” he said on Twitter, minutes after the announcement of the final election results.

All eyes have been on the outcome of the election, with the future of the Amazon rainforest and its impact on the global climate emergency at stake. With 156 million voters, Brazil is one of the world’s largest democracies.

Lula celebrates after declared winner in election – video

Spain’s prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, said Brazil had “decided to bet on progress and hope”.

The German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, said in a tweet that he looked forward to cooperating with Lula, especially on trade and climate protection.

Australia’s prime minister, Anthony Albanese, who recently secured his own leftwing victory, tweeted: “Huge congratulations to [@LulaOfficial](#) on a tremendous victory in the Brazilian elections. Look forward to working with you on protecting our global environment.”

Norway said it would resume sending Amazon protection subsidies to Brazil, which it had halted in 2019 under Bolsonaro.

“We had a good and very close collaboration with the government before Bolsonaro, and deforestation in Brazil declined greatly under Lula da Silva’s [previous] presidency”, the environment minister Espen Barth Eide, told Agence France-Presse. “Then we had a head-on collision with Bolsonaro, whose approach was diametrically opposed when it came to deforestation.”

Rishi Sunak, the British prime minister, also congratulated Lula and said he looked forward to working with him on issues that mattered to the UK and Brazil.

China's leader, Xi Jinping, congratulated Lula and wished the country "new successes".

"I am willing to work with president-elect Lula to make joint plans from a strategic height and long-term perspective, and take the China-Brazil comprehensive strategic partnership to a new level," Xi said in a congratulatory message.

Xi said deepening bilateral cooperation would be "conducive to maintaining regional and world peace and stability, and promoting common development and prosperity".

Brazil and China are both members of the Brics group of emerging economies, which Beijing sees as a potential counterweight in a US-dominated world order.

Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia – another Brics member – expressed hope for the further development of Russian-Brazilian cooperation. Last week, Putin said Brazil was his country's "most important partner in Latin America", and that he had good relations with Lula and his opponent, Bolsonaro.

President Alberto Fernández of the neighbouring Argentina said Lula's win "opens a new era for the history of Latin America. A time of hope and future that begins today".

"After so many injustices you lived through, the people of Brazil have elected you and democracy has triumphed," he added.

Lula became the country's first working-class president in 2002. He stepped down after two terms in 2010 with approval ratings close to 90%. In 2018, he was [jailed on corruption charges](#) and barred from running in that year's election, which Bolsonaro went on to win.

Lula was freed after 580 days and his convictions quashed on the grounds that he was [unfairly tried by Sergio Moro](#), a rightwing judge who later took a job in Bolsonaro's cabinet.

Lula's return to power in Brazil follows a string of leftwing gains in Latin America. Gustavo Petro, who became Colombia's first leftist president after his election this summer, tweeted simply: "Long live Lula". He later shared a map showing that the majority of Latin American countries were now led by leftist governments.

Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, also from the left, tweeted: "Lula won, blessed people of Brazil. There will be equality and humanism."

The Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro, offered a "big hug" to Lula, saying in a tweet: "Long live the peoples determined to be free, sovereign and independent! Today in Brazil democracy triumphed."

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[Brazil](#)

[Analysis](#)

Poverty, housing and the Amazon: Lula's in-tray as president-elect of Brazil

[Andrew Downie](#) in São Paulo

After four years of Jair Bolsonaro's far-right rule, Lula da Silva says his first priority will be helping the 100 million Brazilians living in poverty

'I'm going to cry': euphoria on Brazil's streets as Lula wins – video

Sun 30 Oct 2022 22.02 EDT Last modified on Tue 1 Nov 2022 01.11 EDT

The euphoria of an election victory is fleeting and while many Brazilians will wake up with a hangover after celebrating [the defeat of Jair Bolsonaro](#), president-elect [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#) will soon have his own headaches to deal with.

Lula takes power on 1 January 2023 and will be charged with rebuilding and reuniting a nation that has been left [damaged and bitterly divided after four years of Bolsonaro's anarchic far-right policies](#).

The challenges are immense: 33 million Brazilians face acute hunger and 100 million live in poverty, the highest numbers in years. Bolsonaro's policies, particularly in the Amazon, have led to [Brazil](#) becoming an international pariah.

Lula addressed these and myriad other issues in his victory speech but made it clear his first priority was the one that has accompanied him throughout his long political career: improving the lot of Brazil's poor.

“We can’t accept it as normal that in this country millions of men, women and children don’t have enough to eat,” he told an adoring crowd. “If we are the world’s third biggest producer of food and the biggest producer of animal protein ... we have the duty to guarantee that every Brazilian can eat breakfast, lunch and dinner every day.”

The speech was a more emotive version of a letter he wrote to the Brazilian people last week outlining his priorities.

The letter is filled with ambitious – critics say barely credible – proposals, including equal pay for men and women, clearing all waiting lists for surgeries and medical exams, and getting every infant a place in creche.

The plan was issued without any clear details or costings, but Lula is betting that voters will trust he can repeat his feats from 12 years ago when he left power with approval ratings above 80%.

Like his vow to eradicate hunger, many of his promises are similar to those he made during his first terms in office between 2003 and 2011.

He is promising to build more affordable housing, and take electricity and water cisterns to unconnected and far-flung villages.

Major infrastructure projects like public transportation, energy and water will also be managed as before, with the state banks providing funding.

He has promised tax reform and an increase in the minimum wage.

In a revamp of the [internationally lauded Bolsa Familia poverty-relief program](#), the poorest families will get 600 reais (\$110) a month and those with children under six years of age will get an additional 150 reais (\$30). The handout comes with a requirement to keep children in school and get all vaccinations.

Quite how he does it all is still an open question – and a very big one.

The commodities boom that financed many of his programs the first time around is over, and he will face a hostile Congress, where [Bolsonarismo](#) remains strong.

Many prominent backbenchers are funded by agribusiness and they could be a major obstacle in what will be one of Lula's highest priority areas, the Amazon.

Deforestation has increased every year since Bolsonaro took power. Lula will halt Bolsonaro's development-at-all-costs policies that encouraged ranchers, prospectors and loggers to besiege the Amazon and plunder its natural resources.

He promised to "aim for zero deforestation" but will be satisfied if his government can lower deforestation by 83% as was seen under Lula and Dilma between 2003 and 2014.

Much focus will also be on Indigenous issues. A quick rebuild of the Indigenous and environmental organisations that were hollowed out by Bolsonaro will signal just how serious Lula's government is and will also help combat deforestation.

"Instead of being world leaders in deforestation, we want to be world champions in facing up to the climate crisis and in socio-environmental development," Lula said. "That way we will have healthy food on our plates, clean air to breathe and water to drink and lots of quality jobs with green investment."

The focus on reindustrialisation and public works projects might be necessary but they are also a sign of how Latin American politics has failed to fully grasp 21st-century realities, said Shannon O'Neil, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"What I find dispiriting sometimes for the future of Latin America is that the kind of discussions they are having is based on 20th-century economies," O'Neil said, without naming Lula directly.

"It is not about human capital, which is really the future of any workforce, it is not about automation or creating intellectual property, or research and development. Too much of it is about looking back at economies that are disappearing. It is not what the next 25 years are going to bring."

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[Brazil](#)

Brazil election 2022: live results as Lula beats Bolsonaro to return as president

The Superior Electoral Court of Brazil has announced that Lula is elected president, after a nailbiting count that went to the wire. Find out how every state voted

- [Latest reaction and analysis](#)

[Seán Clarke](#)

Sun 30 Oct 2022 19.01 EDTFirst published on Sun 30 Oct 2022 15.38 EDT

Brazil presidential election runoff 2022

Latest updates at

BRT

With

% of districts counted

Leading candidate by state

State breakdown

About the election

Brazil's president is elected directly by the people; any candidate with more than 50% of the vote wins, and there is no role in the election for parliament and no electoral college.

A first round was held on Sunday 2 October, with 11 candidates. Because no single candidate won more than 50% of the vote, the leading two candidates were put through to a run-off.

The former president [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#), known as Lula, led with 48.4% of ballots. Lula is a leftist from the Workers' party; he was convicted of corruption and spent time in jail, but his conviction was later annulled.

The second-placed candidate in the first round was the incumbent president, [Jair Bolsonaro](#), a rightwing populist. He secured 43% of the vote, which was more than pollsters had predicted.

Because the largest municipalities are often the last to declare, early results can be misleading. In the first round, Lula's support was strongest in the north and east of the country, and Bolsonaro's in the south. The state of Minas Gerais is often held to be a bellwether.

This article was amended on 31 October 2022 to remove an incorrect reference stating that Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva had previously been impeached.

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2022.10.31 - Spotlight

- ['I've had hundreds of death threats, hundreds of violent assaults' Peter Tatchell on homophobia, hope and Qatar](#)
- [A new start after 60 I joined a garage band and found my inner punk](#)
- [Interactive Mapping Iran's unrest: how Mahsa Amini's death led to nationwide protests](#)
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‘I’ve had hundreds of death threats, hundreds of violent assaults’: Peter Tatchell on homophobia, hope and Qatar

[Zoe Williams](#)



‘The roll of issues that need to be addressed is endless’ ... Tatchell.
Photograph: Jessica Hromas/The Guardian

The veteran LGBT+ and human rights activist took a stand in Qatar last week - and was swiftly told to leave the country. He talks about his many critics, his evangelical Christian mother and what drives him to keep putting himself in danger



[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Mon 31 Oct 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 31 Oct 2022 08.04 EDT

I speak to [Peter Tatchell](#) by Zoom from Sydney, where he has recently arrived after his day in [Qatar, protesting against that nation's human rights abuses](#). He hasn't slept in three days but is perfectly lucid and the weariness only tells in his minute corrections: "No, let me rephrase that"; "Sorry, let me think." He is 70 years old, wrung out, back in Australia where he was born and raised, talking to me while fielding frequent phone calls. Has he no plans just to hang out for a bit, see some cousins? He's a bit bemused by the question: "That'd be a very fine thing. But after Qatar I've got two other campaigns coming up – quiet time would be a stretch. I, with many others, have contributed to so many positive changes. It's a great motivator."

The protest in Qatar, which happened on 25 October, comprised only Tatchell and a colleague, Simon Harris, from Tatchell's [eponymous foundation](#). It featured a single placard, which they had smuggled into the country between the pages of a copy of the Daily Telegraph. "The only existing broadsheet newspaper today," he says, pleased at the irony of the paper coming in handy, despite itself. The wording on the placard was: "Qatar arrests, jails & subjects LGBTs to 'conversion' #QatarAntiGay." "I never dictated the terms," he says. "I took the message directly from my contacts in Qatar."

Tatchell held up his placard outside the National Museum of [Qatar](#) in Doha at 11.30am. "A Muslim woman walked past," he says, "a horrified look on her face. She said: 'You'd better put that away, you'll end up in prison.'" He corrects himself. "Maybe those weren't her exact words; she basically warned me that it's not permitted." He didn't put it away, and 35 minutes later, state security officials arrived in big white Land Cruisers, the police soon joining them, nine men in all. Harris managed to upload some video of the protest – on Instagram, Tatchell looks dignified, solitary and incongruous, stood on sandy pebbles in front of the statement architecture of the museum – before the police took his camera and deleted the rest. The pair's details were taken, their documents scrutinised. Tatchell says they were told, "what you're doing is illegal, it's not permitted in Qatar, the conversation was a mixture of broken English and broken French. It was very clear that we were not free to leave. We were there for 49 minutes before they eventually said: 'OK, we advise you to go to the airport and get your flight.' I interpreted that as a warning."



‘I took the message directly from my contacts in Qatar’ ... Tatchell staging his protest in Doha. Photograph: Peter Tatchell Foundation

There was some beef on social media later, as Tatchell’s YouTube channel had described the men as being “seized by the Qatari security services”; one academic at Qatar’s research university complained that Tatchell had misled people, lied even, since they were not arrested. It was just the fog of protest, the office losing contact briefly with Tatchell and Harris. Maybe Tatchell himself puts things a little strongly at times, but it’s hard to overstate how much sheer cortisol is coursing through the man during actions like these. “I knew that it was possible I’d spend some time in a police cell and possibly be prosecuted, even jailed. The view was that was unlikely and more likely that I’d be deported straight to Sydney. But I was very anxious, and we were always worrying that we’d made some inadvertent misstep and put the security services on to us. On Sunday night [before they left London], I hardly slept, rehearsing in my mind all the different scenarios. On the Monday night – it was an overnight flight – I was so anxious I couldn’t sleep a wink. In Doha on the day of the protest, my stomach was churning over, I had a very strong headache and despite the heat, I felt cold and a bit shivery. I had a constant urge to urinate and defecate.” The idea that he does this stuff blithely, for self-promotion, is for the birds, I think.

Yet, as last year's Netflix documentary, [Hating Peter Tatchell](#), puts it pithily, he is the focal point of an awful lot of hatred: "I've got a lot of bile and hatred against me over the decades because I ruffle feathers. I have made powerful people and their apologists very angry. It's led to tens of thousands of hate mails, hundreds of death threats, hundreds of violent assaults." He says this in a matter-of-fact kind of way, but has said in the past that the assaults have left him with PTSD and minor permanent brain and eye injuries. Much less violent, but still a drumbeat, is the criticism from the liberal left, which clusters round the idea that he does it all for attention and is a little bit ridiculous.

But if you engage seriously with what Tatchell is saying, I feel that [he's only doing what we all should be doing](#): the World Cup is about to take place in a country where LGBT+ people, women and migrant workers are oppressed and victimised. In waving this through on the promise that Qatar would somehow change, between the decision in 2010 and now, Fifa has legitimised the nation's impunity and traduced the idea of universal human rights as a minimum entry requirement into the international club. The foreign secretary James Cleverly – this was presumably inadvertent, like so many of his remarks – distilled what this actually means, when he asked football fans to be ["respectful of the host nation"](#), concluding: "I think with a little bit of flex and compromise at both ends, it can be a safe and secure World Cup." Be a bit less gay, fellas, just for a couple of weeks, and it'll all be fine. Prince William has just announced he won't be attending, citing a diary clash. Given that he's president of the FA, and the dates have been well known for a year, this is, as Tatchell points out, implausible.

The method of Tatchell's protest wasn't new – he staged a similar one [in 2018 outside the Kremlin](#), in Moscow, which was not his first rodeo there, either. [He got his head kicked in in 2007](#) "when I went to support the very brave Russian LGBT+ campaigners who were seeking to hold a lawful pride parade," he recalls. But the Qatar one was months in the planning, because "it is one of the world's most highly surveilled societies." Tatchell says he and Harris studiously avoided being seen together, or even making eye contact, from the moment they arrived at Heathrow, so that if one of them was arrested, the other might not be. "We were advised that there was a high probability that I would be refused entry at the airport," Tatchell says, and he

had a made-up story prepared about “having to go back to Australia to deal with my mother’s death and to clear up her property and possessions”.

I am moved to check at this point whether or not his mother is still alive; no, he says, she died in July. Would she have approved of this subterfuge? Or would she be looking down, going: “Son, I’m barely even cold in the ground and you’ve turned me into a campaign tactic”? He considers this carefully. “She grew up in the 1930s in a very conservative working-class family. She wasn’t political but she was an evangelical Christian, in the pentecostal faith. Pretty hardcore but what is interesting is that, over the years, she grew. She supported my human rights work. She still does believe ...” He corrects himself. “She still did believe until the day she died that homosexuality is wrong. But she came to the point that it’s certainly not a major sin and that homophobia is a worse sin.” This is an extremely conflicted moral position, that it’s bad to be gay and to be anti-gay. One can’t help but notice the contrast with her son’s moral clarity, which is absolute. “The primary motivation of my work has always been a love of other people and a love of freedom, justice and equality of all human beings on this planet. I wouldn’t like to suffer. If I was suffering, I’d want other people to help.”



Tatchell being led away by Russian authorities in Moscow after his one-man protest at the World Cup, 2018. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

Tatchell recently celebrated on social media that it was 53 years since his first LGBT+ protest, at the age of 17. His quest for justice predates even that: in 1963, four young girls were killed in a racist bombing of a black church in Birmingham, Alabama, and this seeded his lifelong fight against prejudice of all kinds. It's a very telling origin story, because he was in Melbourne at the time, and 11 years old; Alabama was impossibly far away and he was just a kid.

Tatchell arrived in London in 1971, fleeing the draft in Australia, and was at the vanguard of LGBT+ activism from the start, as one of the organisers of the first Pride events in 1972 and a key member of the Gay Liberation Front until its demise in 1974. To the self-styled “hippies, anarchists, feminists and counter-culturalists”, he was a well-known figure, but this activism was extremely niche, partly because it was so high risk. Violent assault by organised gangs of racists and homophobes was common. By the mid-80s, though, he was beginning to be a household name, as the visibility of the cause grew, and thanks in part to the Bermondsey byelection, which, if you want a whistle-stop tour of savage British homophobia in the political and media classes, you should definitely Google. In the 90s, he started OutRage!, a direct action LGBT+ group, and by this time, he was a household name. Yet he never became a mainstream figure, having little interest in the media element of activism, the sofas on current affairs shows. He has a long-term partner – whose close relationship with his mother he describes to illustrate how much she changed. “She was always supportive of my partner. And that’s an incredible thing for someone of quite an extreme religious upbringing.”



Tatchell campaigning in Bermondsey, 1983. Photograph: Bill Cross/Daily Mail/REX/Shutterstock

Throughout his life, Tatchell's campaigns have had this roaming, slingshot quality, David on tour, looking for Goliath. What does this guy, who lives in Elephant and Castle, south London, think he's doing in Memphis, [confronting Mike Tyson](#), as he did in 2002, with some more homemade placards: "Mike Tyson! Stop your homophobia!" and "Knock out Tyson's sexism and homo hatred"? Who does he think he is, staging (in 1999) a citizen's arrest of Robert Mugabe on his way into Harrods? The mixture of naivety, audacity, certainty, single-mindedness, all of it so intense, isn't unique – you could probably build a through-line all the way from Joan of Arc to Greta Thunberg – but it's exceptional. These are "issue saints", people who see things very simply, to whom the world responds in emotionally complicated ways. To him, of course, his choice of causes is obvious: "I tend to focus on campaigns where activists or victims in communities have asked for my support," he says. "So I completely support the struggle for democracy in Myanmar but lots of people are supporting that campaign. I choose the campaigns that aren't getting the same focus."

Precisely because he concentrates on the niche, the untended, the obscure, he often becomes the story, which is what leads to the accusation that he has "white saviour complex", a top-down, great-man-of-history approach that

fails to properly respect both the grassroots campaigns and their cultural context. This was levelled at him after Qatar, on social media (since deleted), and he gives it short shrift – he was deeply involved with civil rights activist groups in Qatar, not just LGBT+ causes, as well as feminist and migrants’ rights. The malcontents were a side group: “For many weeks, I offered to help amplify Qatari LGBT+ voices. I arranged trusted journalists and secure interview encryption methods. But no one in the online group that is now criticising me was willing or able to give interviews, not even anonymously. That’s another reason why I did the protest.”

More broadly, though, he thinks this is part of the problem, that relativism has become a fashionable stance among liberals in the west – the collision of postcolonial guilt (no regime can be as bad as anything we were, in our pomp) and cultural sensitivity (maybe those women are more comfortable wearing a hijab). “It’s as if non-white people don’t merit the same solidarity,” he says, indignantly. “Every year, on International Women’s Day, women in Iran rally to demand an end to the hijab. Those women are beaten, and imprisoned, but there’s hardly a squeak in the western media.” I can just imagine him, on his own, in Valiasr Square, with a placard saying, “women demand an end to patriarchal oppression” and a load of haters on TikTok asking: “Why is a dude saying this?” Because that is no ordinary dude: that is [Peter Tatchell](#).



‘I choose the campaigns that aren’t getting the same focus’ ... Tatchell.
Photograph: Jessica Hromas/The Guardian

The last time I met Tatchell was six years ago, when he was embroiled in a row with the NUS – their LGBT rep wouldn’t share a platform with him, because he’d signed an open letter against “no-platforming”, which she said was transphobic.

“The level of toxic vitriol,” he says, “is completely off the scale compared to just six years ago. My response is always that biological sex and gender identity are two different things, but both are equally valid. There doesn’t need to be a conflict between the two. When I was supporting the women’s liberation movement in the early 1970s, the slogan was ‘biology is not destiny’. Now some sections of the women’s movement seem to be saying that biology *is* destiny.”

He draws on decades of deep knowledge to illustrate his points; the importance of international amplification he remembers from the anti-apartheid campaigns of the 70s; what he sees as the left’s problem with female and LGBT+ emancipation (“I was denounced by many on the left as an apologist for capitalism and imperialism”) reminds him of the first ever gay rights protest in a communist country, East Germany, in 1973. He hasn’t come out unscathed from this life. “It’s very tough,” he says at one point. “I have periods of real emotional meltdown and depression, feeling that despite the efforts of myself and many, many other people, we haven’t been able to prevent some terrible abuses.” But “lots of the issues that I and others championed decades ago are now mainstream,” he adds. Besides, “when you’re living under a tyrannical regime, you need international solidarity. The roll of issues that need to be addressed is endless.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/31/ive-had-hundreds-of-death-threats-hundreds-of-violent-assaults-peter-tatchell-on-homophobia-hope-and-qatar>

[A new start after 60Life and style](#)

A new start after 60: I joined a garage band and found my inner punk

With barely any musical experience, Cathy Loughead signed up for an all-female rock band. Now she's painting her nails, shopping for outfits and 'thrashing it out' on stage.



'It gives me absolute freedom from anything else that's going on in my life' ... Cathy Loughead (left) and the other members of Velvet Crisis. Photograph: Polly Hancock

[Paula Cocozza](#)

[@CocozzaPaula](#)

Mon 31 Oct 2022 03.00 EDT

As she approached her 60th birthday, Cathy Loughead made a short list. She wanted to learn a new skill, and go on an adventure. But deciding what sort

of adventure was tricky. She imagined something physical – “a mountain somewhere”.

One day, a friend shared a post on Facebook for [Unglamorous Music](#), a project calling for women of all ages in Leicester, where she lives, to start playing instruments and form bands. The meeting was on a Sunday afternoon. “I thought: ‘It will get me out of the house,’” she says.

In the wake of Covid, she worked (as a project manager in the NHS) mostly from the home she shares with her husband, Steve. “I was getting really conscious that I was spending a lot of my day not seeing other people,” she says. “It just wasn’t fulfilling.”

Loughead would never normally have entered the [Stayfree music studio](#) by the canal in Leicester. When she arrived for the introductory session, there were “young lads in black hanging out on the steps”.

Inside, all the instruments provided were electric. “I hadn’t realised it was about being [in a rock band](#),” she says. She gravitated to a keyboard: as a student she had bought a piano for £14 in a jumble sale and “tinkled” on it. She joined the “absolute beginners” group. “It didn’t matter that I didn’t know anything,” she says. “It felt *good*.”

She went back the following week, and the next. When the organiser spotted Loughead playing chords, she moved her into a different room, with a drummer and three guitarists. “Right, you’ve got a keyboard player now,” they were told. Loughead was suddenly in a band, with a gig lined up for International Women’s Day. She gasps at the memory. The band – they quickly came up with the name [Velvet Crisis](#) – had 66 days to get ready.

Loughead had grown up in Liverpool, working-class, she says. Her dad worked as a printer, and loved opera. She preferred house, funk and rap. Now, at 60, she was keyboardist and a vocalist in a garage punk band. But then, “with all music, you use it to tell a story or to say something”. She has written songs against capitalism, and about her son and daughter leaving home.



On stage ... Cathy Loughead on vocals with Velvet Crisis. Photograph: Polly Hancock

Garage punk is “incredibly forgiving ... If you’re thrashing it out, nobody knows that you’re pressing a G instead of an A.” Velvet Crisis have performed six gigs so far, at bars and pubs, and the [Chainmakers festival](#) in Cradley Heath. At their last show, Loughead says: “People were saying to us: ‘Have you got any merch?’”

Her four bandmates range in age from their 30s to 70. Loughead sports purple nail polish. She wouldn’t have worn that before, she says. These days, when she tours the charity shops for new clothes, she’s thinking: “Will that look good on stage?” She is drawn to “more Doc Marteny styles ... I’m being more adventurous,” she says.

It sounds as if she found what she was looking for. “It was perfect,” she says. “Getting some affirmation, learning something new, being with a really diverse group of women. It’s given me a confidence that I didn’t have before.”

She remembers being called “ugly” as a child. The hurtful comment stuck with her and made her think: “I’m not attractive because I’m not pretty, and also I’m big.”

“For me to be on a stage – singing, for goodness sake!” she says. “And have people look at me, and for that not to be crushing, or for me to walk away.”

Loughead takes singing lessons now. She and her bandmates have acquired their own instruments, “our own amps and bits of kit”. They have a gig next month at the Soundhouse, Leicester, and are recording two of their songs for an Unglamorous Music EP.

“We practise, we play, we sing ... It gives me absolute freedom from anything else that’s going on in my life,” she says. “I come out of the studio, and I am always buzzing and elated.”

As she says: “The adventure doesn’t have to be on the other side of the world. It can be just around the corner.”

- [Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?](#)

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[Iran](#)

Mapping Iran's unrest: how Mahsa Amini's death led to nationwide protests

Interactive map shows spread of demonstrations over five weeks after woman's death in custody

[Niels de Hoog](#) and [Elena Morresi](#)

Mon 31 Oct 2022 03.18 EDTLast modified on Mon 31 Oct 2022 05.13 EDT

Iran has been gripped by protests since [the death in custody on 16 September](#) of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin who had been arrested three days earlier for allegedly breaching the Islamic dress code for women. This interactive map shows how protests spread between 16 September and 21 October, fuelled by public outrage over a crackdown that has led to the deaths of other young women and girls. Now in their seventh week, the protests [show no sign of ending](#).

Methodology

The data used to map protests in this article comes from the [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project](#).

Acled demonstration events data is derived from a wide range of local, regional and national sources. Events that share characteristics, such as date, location, participants, may be counted as one event.

Locations in the Acled dataset are coded to named populated places, geo-strategic locations, natural locations, or neighbourhoods of larger cities. For some events we have provided a more specific location based on our own reporting.

Acled is a living dataset. The data available at the time of publication covers the period of 16 September to 21 October and is subject to future revisions.

For further information, see the [Acled codebook](#), [resource library](#) and [searchable FAQ](#).

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Culture

‘Just too frightening’ – the most terrifying art, from horror films to haunted ruins and sinister songs

A bear-infested casino, a horse-drawn hearse, a humanoid stalker and the ghost of Mr Pipes who was eaten by his cats ... in a Halloween special, Guardian critics pick their scariest ever work



Even the roads were creepy ... The Returned. Photograph: JEROME PREBOIS

Guardian writers

Mon 31 Oct 2022 02.00 EDT

A slow unsettling chill

In 2012, French series [The Returned](#), or Les Revenants, introduced us to a small town in the mountains where the dead simply reappear as if no time has passed. It combined other spooky standards, such as creepy children, roads that circle back on themselves and serial killers, with only the occasional trip to the “lek poob” (the pub on the lake) to try to work out what the hell was going on. I am a fan of the good old-fashioned jump scare, but nothing really gets to me like the slow, unsettling chill of a situation that is not quite right. Best not mention season two, or the US remake, though.
Rebecca Nicholson



Left to rot ... the ruin of Bokor Palace. Photograph: travelbild.com/Alamy

The ghosts of 900 enslaved labourers

“We should turn back now – before the wild bears come!” This was not a reassuring thing to hear while exploring the mist-shrouded ruins of Bokor Palace, an abandoned casino at the top of a mountain in Cambodia. Hollywood set designers couldn’t have conjured a more spooky structure. Built as a symbol of colonial decadence by the French in the 1920s, it had been left to rot, its ruined walls encrusted with moss and lurid orange lichen. When I visited in 2003, I started to notice strange symbols carved into the walls – marked by the ghosts of the 900 indentured labourers who died while building the place? Or victims of the murderous Khmer Rouge, who

used the place as a stronghold? As dusk settled, and I realised I was alone in this damp, sprawling carcass, I didn't want to stay to find out. *Oliver Wainwright*



‘I’m still haunted’ ... Die Familie Schneider. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

Door-to-door doom

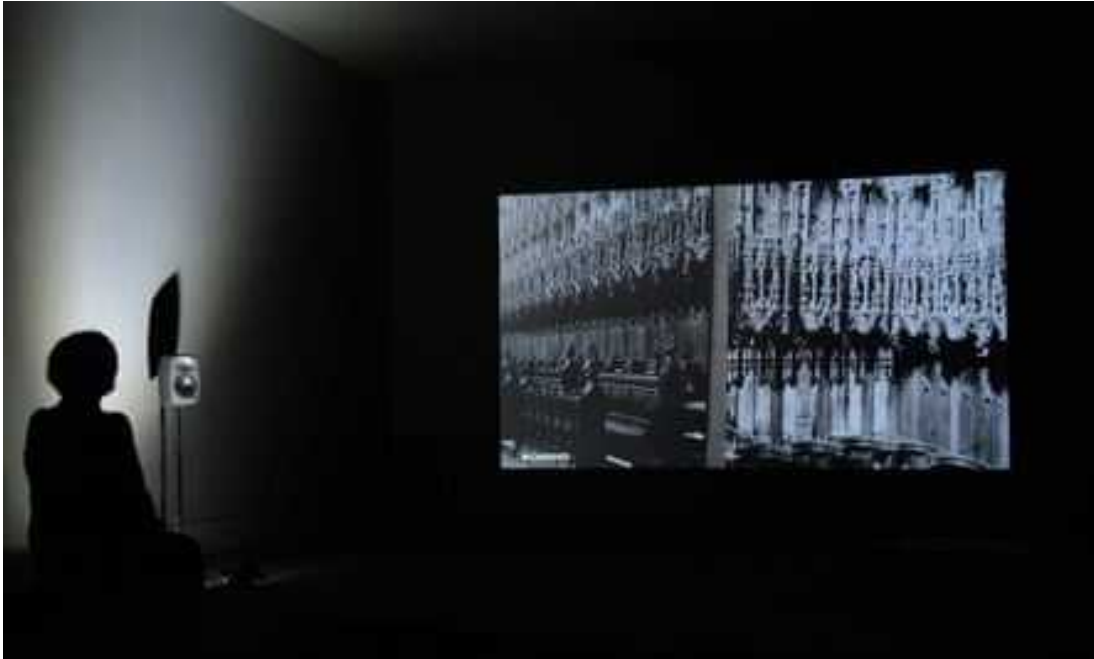
Two adjacent terrace houses in Whitechapel, London. In one, a woman is doing the dishes and a man is masturbating behind the shower curtain. They ignore the visitors who’ve been given the keys and are free to snoop and rummage about. You must visit alone. A boy is breathing under a bin-bag on the bedroom floor and there’s a cot in the coal-hole. The atmosphere is sickening. Somewhere a baby is crying. When you go next door, the same thing is happening. The same woman, the same man. Almost. Populated by twins, German artist Gregor Schneider’s 2004 Artangel project, [Die Familie Schneider](#), remains the creepiest art work I’ve ever seen. I am still haunted. *Adrian Searle*



Death rattle ... Alan Vega and Martin Rev of Suicide. Photograph: Ebet Roberts/Redferns

‘We are all lying in hell’

In 1977, three years before Dolly Parton sang 9 to 5, [Suicide](#) offered a much less FM-friendly take. “He’s working from seven to five,” blurts Alan Vega, about a desperate factory worker’s descent into insanity. “He’s just trying to survive.” Frankie Teardrop has never scored high on listenability, but it remains a feat of tension and release, a chilling takedown of the capitalist death machine. Paired with Martin Rev’s stifling synth minimalism, Vega’s screams hit like a death rattle. The closing reveal after the gunshots – “We’re all Frankies. We’re all lying in hell” – nods to the terror lingering beneath just trying to make ends meet. *Brian Coney*



Bury it ... The Woolworths Choir of 1979 by Elizabeth Price. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

Scary, satanic and true

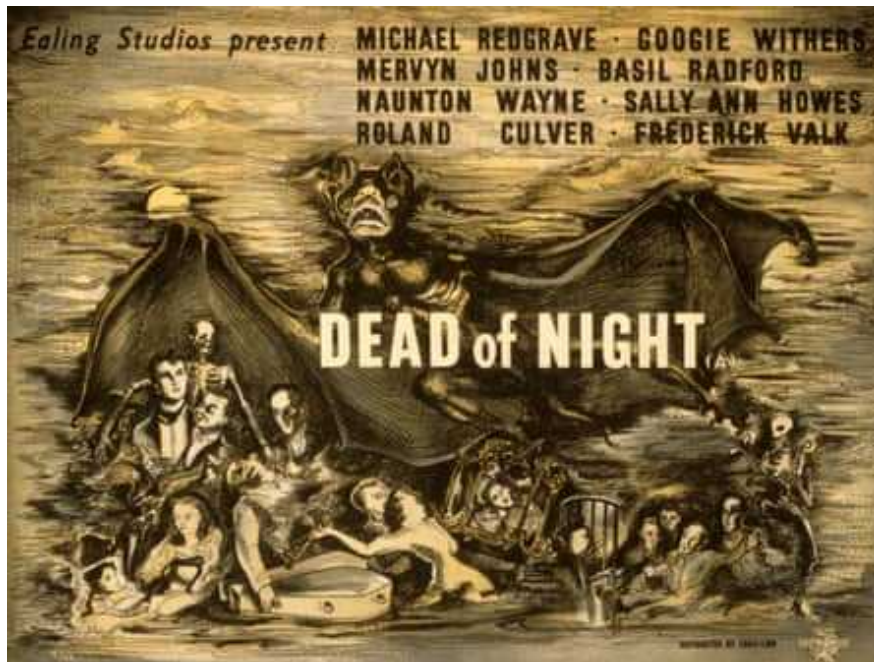
[The Woolworths Choir of 1979](#), the title of a piece of video art that 10 years ago won Elizabeth Price the Turner prize, is pure heartstopping horror. It creates a creepy atmosphere from the start with grotesque medieval carvings in the choir or “quire” of a gothic church, but this MR James-style spookiness is just the prelude to the disturbingly true story of a lethal shop fire in 1970s Britain. The soundtrack makes the Shangri-Las as sinister as The Exorcist rendered Mike Oldfield, as Price weaves together images and sound to suggest a dark satanic pattern of fate and conspiracy. Bury it in the vault. It’s just too frightening. *Jonathan Jones*



Judgment day ... Liam Brennan as Inspector Goole in *An Inspector Calls*.
Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

A very plausible apocalypse

When I studied the JB Priestley play *An Inspector Calls* at school, the imposing Inspector Goole made his way into my nightmares. I was an angsty teen and very hard on myself, so the idea of being judged by a moral arbiter was too much. Today, the books I find scary tend to be about the most terrifying issue of our age: the climate crisis. Last year I read [The High House by Jessie Greengrass](#), which imagines a very plausible apocalypse. It still fills me with dread. For a more classic horror, *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson is brilliant – and very, very scary. *Lucy Knight*



Uncanny wrongness ... Dead of Night. Photograph: Ronald Grant

A hospital awakening

The Hearse Driver was a tale in *Dead of Night*, the 1945 Ealing Studios ghost story portmanteau classic. A racing car driver is laid up in hospital after a crash. In the dead of night, the man awakens, puzzled and aware that something is strange: his bedside clock is wrong and the building is silent. He gets out of bed and opens the curtains to discover it is broad daylight. From the window, he sees a Victorian horse-drawn hearse, whose driver gestures to the coffin in the back and shouts up to him amiably: “Just room for one inside, sir!” Baffled, the man returns to his bed. Out of hospital a few days later, he is about to board a bus. The conductor, who has the same face as the hearse driver, tells him: “Just room for one inside, sir.” Fearful in ways he can’t understand, the man doesn’t get on – and sees the departing bus crash. What for me is scary is not the prophetic revelation but the basic detail from its opening: that unearthly daylight in the middle of the night, that eerie uncanny wrongness flooding the screen. *Peter Bradshaw*



A constant feeling of being watched ... It Follows. Photograph: Icon Film Distribution/Allstar

Primed to kill you

In 2014, I saw [It Follows](#), a horror film about a teenage girl who, after a sexual encounter, is stalked by some kind of humanoid that's constantly walking behind her. David Robert Mitchell gave his film a dreamy, perpetual sunset aesthetic – so when it began to swing towards deep dread, I was unprepared. It's not a jump scare film. Instead, it counters its soft aesthetic with a constant feeling of being watched, as if anyone you see in the street might be primed to kill you if you get too close. I ran all the way home and found myself looking over my shoulder for months after. *Shaad D'Souza*



Creepy ... Bette Davis in *The Watcher in the Woods*. Photograph: Disney/Kobal/Shutterstock

Steer clear of the woods

In the late 1980s, I made the earth-shattering mistake of switching on the telly one afternoon and watching ... a Disney film. It was the most terrifying straight-to-TV release known to childkind: *The Watcher in the Woods*. Oh god. Just writing the title makes me want to run screaming from my laptop, even though I can recall only vague horrifying snippets. The little blond girl wearing a blindfold trapped in a mirror. The other little blond girl running after her golden retriever into the woods. Bette Davis standing at the window of a creepy manor, watching said woods. A chapel seance in the woods. Oh god, *THE WOODS*. Basically, this obscure piece of 1980s daytime trash ended my childhood. I learned three things: trust no one, fear Bette Davis and never, ever follow a dog into the woods. *Chitra Ramaswamy*



Group hysteria ... Lily Allen in 2.22. Photograph: Dave J Hogan/Getty Images

Towards the haunted hour

Somewhere in the middle of [2.22, a haunted house play by Danny Robins](#), the audience flipped. One minute, we were sitting decorously watching Lily Allen and Hadley Fraser play a couple who kept being woken up every night at 2.22am. The next, the auditorium was in the grip of group hysteria. As a clock on stage hurtled towards the haunted hour, the tension was cranked up with jump scares and sudden plunges into darkness. On one side of me, a colleague sat frozen in his seat. On the other, a woman juddered, clutching at the arm rests – and at me. When a teddy bear was found drowned in the couple's bathroom, I started to clutch back. *Arifa Akbar*



Genuinely unsettling ... The Hamburger Lady on Throbbing Gristle's DoA album

Throbbing with gloom

Unlike films and literature, rock and pop music struggles to instil fear. It can do preposterous grand guignol horror – Alice Cooper, the Misfits – but seldom actually scares you. Yet [Hamburger Lady](#), a track from industrial pioneers Throbbing Gristle's 1978 album DoA, remains a genuinely unsettling listen 44 years on. The backstory is grim: the lyrics are taken from a letter describing the plight of a horribly burned woman kept alive “by medical advances”. But the matter-of-fact vocal is so distorted you can only make out occasional lines. Its effect is predicated on its sound: the slow thud of a bass drum; a guitar that emits arcs of distorted noise; a persistent, mournful whine (actually made by a duck call); phrases like “qualified technicians” and “burned from the waist up” emerging from the gloom. It's all oddly quiet, almost becalmed, but the sense that something terrible has happened – and something worse might be *about* to happen – is impossible to shake. *Alexis Petridis*



Indie horror game ... Slender. Photograph: BrendenFrank/Midnight City

Slender Man gets closer and closer

Based on the ultra-creepy Slender Man meme mythology that swept the internet in the 2010s, 2012's Slender is an indie horror game in which you are trapped in the woods with nothing but a flickering torch. There is a tall, faceless man stalking you as you run through the trees and look for shelter in battered cabins. Every time you turn around, there is a chance you will see him in the distance, getting closer over time until you can hear his footsteps and his breathing. Eventually, he finds you, and the screen goes black. The game only lasts a few minutes, but at night I kept thinking I could see Slender Man in my peripheral vision FOR YEARS. *Keza MacDonald*



‘The sleepover had to be called off’ ... BBC spoof documentary Ghostwatch. Photograph: BBC

Possessed by Mr Pipes

I can't remember that much about [Ghostwatch](#), only that the sleepover had to be called off and both Rachels were crying. I was 13: the prime age for permanent traumatising by the BBC's now-notorious staged paranormal documentary, broadcast one Halloween. Children's presenters Sarah Green and her husband Mike Smith, along with a camera crew played by real BBC technicians, investigate a haunting in Northolt, London. What they find is pretty conclusive: Mr Pipes possesses a homeowner called Suzanne, scratches her face, then retreats shrieking to his "glory hole" in the basement. Everyone basically dies. Back in the studio, Michael Parkinson takes a call from a probation worker who confirms that Pipes was a paedophile who hanged himself and was eaten by cats. At the end, Parky stumbles about, apparently possessed himself. The show was preceded by a "Screen One" banner to indicate fictionalisation, but few appreciated its import. Anyone who got through when phoning in to share their own paranormal experiences was told it was made up, but the lines were so mobbed by terrified viewers – as well as Parkinson's elderly mother – that most people just got an engaged tone. Afterwards, there were 100,000 letters, mostly of complaint. I've never rewatched it. Me and my

schoolfriends have never discussed it. None of us have the guts. *Catherine Shoard*

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2022.10.31 - Opinion

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Opinion**Rishi Sunak**

Yes, Sunak at No 10 is a ‘win’ – in exposing the emptiness of elite diversity rhetoric

Nesrine Malik



If Britain's first Asian prime minister is meant to be a high mark for progress, let's not forget the inequalities his politics create



Prime Minister Rishi Sunak holds his first cabinet meeting in Downing Street, 26 October. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Mon 31 Oct 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 31 Oct 2022 04.02 EDT

There is a TikTok meme doing the rounds where users mime along to an audio clip. “A win is a win,” it goes, as an unseen crowd objects and jeers, “a win is a win, I don’t care what y’all saying.” The joke is that sometimes things are so bad that you have to massively inflate tiny mercies in order to cope. Stuck on a flight that was so delayed that you missed your own wedding but got free drinks? A win is a win.

Celebrating Rishi Sunak’s rise to the premiership feels very much like “a win is a win” territory. The first British Asian prime minister finally walked into No 10 after a historic meltdown of government (twice); after he was rejected by his party membership; and then after not giving that membership the choice at all the second time. It was truly *not* our “Obama moment”. Still, recognition of this “historic” occasion was issued by his party and the opposition frontbench. A win is a win.

This is now the template for measuring racial progress – take what you’re given and be grateful. As another [Black History Month](#) draws to a close, it is becoming clear the occasion is becoming more corporate, performative and depoliticised with every passing year. In my head now, it is just another

secular event on the calendar, like Halloween or Thanksgiving. Instead of pumpkins, it's black people decorating the premises. For a few weeks, a few of them get paid, some white people sit through their mandated talks, and maybe some kids get to learn something not deemed important enough to be included in their curriculum every other month. The Black Lives Matter summer of 2020 began as an epic global movement of street protests, and it's ended up as an annual presentation.

These are the wins we are allowed to have, a blah blend of "raising awareness" and "diversity and inclusion". There must be nothing too close to the bone, nothing that suggests racial inequality cannot be rectified by anything more than white people educating themselves out of unconscious bias. Political and commercial institutions, so enthusiastically on the right side of the [Black Lives Matter movement](#) when it took off, with their black squares and their kneeling, chewed on the demands of racial equality and spat out the bits they didn't like – rethinking policing, drug legislation, foreign policy and immigration. It wasn't enough that these elements just be rejected, they had to be roundly trampled on as radical and communist.

In doing so, the goal of racial equality was watered down and redefined. It is now not about ensuring people from ethnic minorities are safe and supported so that they may rise out of the bottom of [poverty and social exclusion](#), but about finding those already close to the top, giving them a seat at the high table and calling it a big heave-ho of progress. Racial justice has become about including people of colour into the winners category of the status quo, then using them as evidence that the system works if you are brilliant and hard-working enough.

The Tories now weaponise their diversity against other ethnic minorities, whose experiences of racism may happen at the hands of the police, at the jobcentre, at the border – not at Eton, Winchester or the City. Sajid Javid, never one to miss a cue, called Britain "the most successful multicultural democracy on Earth" in response to claims that Sunak's appointment was not met with unalloyed joy by all. Black and brown people are allowed to have any politics they like, but they are only truly welcome if they bring with them this eager, feelgood testimony about the end of racism. No pompoms, no power.

'It's a pity you don't pay them more': Sunak confronted by hospital patient in Croydon – video

The philosopher Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò describes this as “elite capture” – a process whereby white elites co-opt and disarm political movements that go against their interests by rebranding themselves through symbolic performances. The result is an over-celebration of the way the system secures equality in elite spaces for a few; everything else that is required to create a new system that promotes true racial equality for all is stigmatised as too radical.

Just look at how anyone questioning the significance of Sunak’s premiership has been chastised for not “putting politics aside”. Diversity in itself has become such a highly prized and stabilising feature of a system that is obsessed with maintaining illusions of social mobility, that a farcical orthodoxy has emerged: we must celebrate diversity at all costs. This is even if those costs are borne by the very people “diversity” is meant to serve: the ethnic minorities struggling with [disproportionately high](#) rates of poverty under Conservative rule, those Sunak is happy to remove to Rwanda, others who are sick and suffering in [overcrowded detention centres](#) in apparent violation of the law under Sunak’s pick of home secretary.

In this co-opted world, a Labour MP of the same ethnic background as Sunak, Nadia Whittome, can be ordered to delete a tweet in which she says Sunak is not a “win” for Asian representation because he’s a “multimillionaire who, as chancellor, cut taxes on bank profits while overseeing the biggest drop in living standards since 1956. Black, white or Asian: if you work for a living, he is not on your side”. White deference to Sunak’s symbolism is so important that it literally erased another brown MP’s opinion about his political substance. What a curveball.

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When asked if he had weighed in on the decision, Keir Starmer said: “Let me be very clear with you about the position of the Labour party – and I was able to say that at prime minister’s questions – and that was to welcome the first British Asian prime minister as a real milestone for our country.” That is, indeed, very clear.

Bleak as this all sounds, we are not doomed to the endless hijacking of racial progress by the ruling classes. The very elite nature of this discourse will be its downfall. Sunak, as rumbled in Whittome’s tweet, has actually been useful in giving up the game. His extreme wealth and rightwing politics have been clarifying in exposing the vacuity of diversity as an end goal in itself. If having a first brown prime minister whose household is richer than the king, whose politics penalise asylum seekers and the poorest members of society, was what was required to unlock this realisation, then I’ll take it. A win is a win.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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OpinionRishi Sunak

Sunak's Covid decisions tell us how he might act now. It doesn't look good for the NHS

Devi Sridhar



His choices as chancellor played a crucial role in the pandemic's second wave, so will he really stand up for public health?

- Prof Devi Sridhar is chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh



Then Chancellor Rishi Sunak placing an ‘Eat out to help out’ sticker in the window of No 11 Downing Street, 21 December 2020. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Mon 31 Oct 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 31 Oct 2022 08.45 EDT

It’s easy to feel we’ve moved on from the politics of the pandemic now the disease plays less of a role in our lives, and with other crises having since emerged. But the [UK Covid inquiry](#) and the [privileges committee investigation](#) into Partygate – which will be hearing evidence from Boris Johnson next month – act as a reminder that the decisions made in that period still matter, and that those involved in them should still be held accountable.

The prime minister, Rishi Sunak, rose to prominence during the pandemic [as chancellor](#), and played a crucial role in decisions around lockdowns and healthcare spending. At several key moments, his values and ethics were tested – and his responses act as a clear window on to his political priorities.

In the summer of 2020, early trial results indicated that a highly effective vaccine (or even multiple vaccines) would be ready to be rolled out by winter, and [contracts were being drawn up](#) for the advance purchasing of [AstraZeneca](#), [Moderna](#) and [Pfizer](#). This meant that only a few more months

of containment were needed before the most vulnerable could be protected from the virus's worst effects: death and ICU admission. Yet Sunak was instead pushing people back into one of the riskiest indoor settings for Covid-19: indoor hospitality. His “[eat out to help out](#)” scheme offered subsidised meals to those “eating in” at restaurants, pubs and cafes.

While supporting struggling businesses was a necessary objective, there were many far more Covid-safe ways to do this: by supporting takeaway and delivery from these restaurants, increasing outdoor dining and ventilation, and working towards creating Covid-secure spaces where people could socialise, eat, and spend their money. Research has shown that “eat out to help out” [resulted](#) in a steep increase in infections, and probably accelerated the second wave, which was even more deadly than the first. Imagine how many could have lived if a balance had been struck between supporting business and the safety and control of an infectious disease that spreads through the air. Sunak's was a populist move to win support among the electorate instead of a public health move to protect people from a dangerous virus.



“‘Eat out to help out’ resulted in a steep increase in infections, and probably triggered the second wave.’ Photograph: Will Oliver/EPA

A few months later, when the cabinet was split by disagreement over how to manage the rise in infections in autumn 2020, the idea of a short, “circuit breaker” lockdown was floated. In response, Sunak brought in experts from the scientific community to [turn Johnson against it](#). These voices (which went against the consensus of the scientific community, including all four nations’ chief medical officers and numerous scientists across the world) argued that letting Covid-19 spread through a strategy of mass infection was acceptable, and was similar to the approach taken to seasonal flu. By September 2020, the UK had already experienced a devastating first wave in which [37,000 people died](#). Despite this loss of life, the fringe view of “it won’t be so bad” was invited into No 10 and Johnson decided to delay government intervention. Because of this decision, an estimated 7,000 to 11,000 people died, according to a Sunday Times investigation. All because Johnson was convinced to gamble again with the virus spreading. Of course livelihoods matter – but so does life.

These decisions suggest little regard for the health and wellbeing of the British people, all in the context of underinvestment in the NHS by successive Conservative governments over the past 12 years. The NHS was struggling over staff and resources even before Covid overloaded it to breaking point. One of the main objectives of restrictions on mixing before vaccines was to ensure that the health service could keep providing care to all those who needed it, so people wouldn’t die because they couldn’t get a hospital bed. If you’re in a bubble of extreme privilege (which Sunak is, given his estimated [£730m wealth](#)), it’s hard to relate to the challenges of daily life – which includes access to healthcare. People who are able to afford private insurance and pay for services know they will always have access to the best care, even during the height of a pandemic. But this is not the case for the rest of the population, which is dependent on the NHS. In addition, growth requires a healthy workforce, but economic inactivity due to long-term illness is a [huge problem](#) in Britain. We all know people waiting for knee operations, cancer treatment, mental health support, help with chronic back pain or who have long Covid. Cutting the NHS further through planned austerity measures makes no sense in this context.

What I would love to see is a prime minister who stands up for public health, and for the health of all the people who live in Britain. A crucial part of this

is the fact that the NHS and public services rely on taxation, which is a form of risk-pooling. Risk-pooling – given the uncertainty of who will need cancer treatment, be in a car accident or need urgent care for their child's asthma – means that those who are healthy support the ill during their times of need. It also means using a general pot of taxation and national insurance contributions to keep these services funded. Yet we now have the bizarre situation of a prime minister whose wife has claimed non-dom status to avoid paying tax in the UK on overseas income. While this might have been technically legal, if you live in the UK, your children go to school in Britain, and you're part of the community and indeed leading it, then there is surely a clear imperative to pay tax on all your income. It was only when Akshata Murty's non-dom status threatened to derail Sunak's career that the couple agreed she would [give it up](#).

Of course, it's early days yet. Maybe Sunak will surprise us in coming months with effective public health policies and support for the [NHS](#). But based on recent history and his Covid policies, don't hold your breath. When someone shows you who they are, believe them.

- Prof Devi Sridhar is chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh

[OpinionHalloween](#)

Move over pumpkins! A swede, which looks like a preserved head dug up from a bog, is far more terrifying

[Emma Beddington](#)



I have memories of my stepfather carving them out in the 1980s – but they are not for the faint-hearted



Swedes: ‘pretty scary and awful’. Photograph: Radharc Images/Alamy

Mon 31 Oct 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 31 Oct 2022 05.02 EDT

Halloween is a time of tradition and I have two: reminiscing about my former homeland Belgium’s surly semi-capitulation to this unwelcome US import – an uncarved, often green squash dumped unceremoniously on the doorstep – and tirelessly talking up turnips.

Why is a swede (turnip for Scots – my heritage) lantern better than a pumpkin one? First, pumpkins – garish and slimy, the worst of vegetables but with peerless PR – are due a comeuppance. What other gourd is uppity enough to become a leisure activity in its own right? My local farm shop has pivoted entirely to “pumpkin patch” for the month, with costumed helpers and themed snacks: an incongruously wholesome way to contemplate our own mortality.

Swedes, in contrast, are innately terrifying. Even before carving, their natural skull shape means they look like a peat-preserved head you might excavate from a bog, unwittingly unleashing an ancestral curse. Clodagh Doyle, the keeper of terrifying carved roots (OK, the keeper of the folklife division) at the National Museum of Ireland, rightly describes the model of

an early 20th-century turnip lantern in its collection as “pretty scary and awful”.

Second, unlike the too-conveniently hollow pumpkin, swede is one of the hardest substances known to humanity. I have treasured childhood memories of watching my stepfather, hunched over the kitchen table, grimly whittling the unyielding, adamantine mass with a small knife and a teaspoon – truly “[the austere and lonely offices of love](#)”, that. He claims there were “no pumpkins in York in the 1980s” but his eyes light up with masochistic pleasure at the memory; he also dismissed pumpkins as “contemptible” recently. Swedes are not for sissies: I have used multiple knives and nearly amputated a finger trying to carve the one I bought today (62p, bargain hunters) without making much of a dent.

But when the carving is finally complete, a candle illuminating the primitive face you have exhaustedly scratched into your fibrous enemy, you can enjoy the delicious smell of a job well done: acrid, scorched swede and blood, so much blood. Doesn’t that feel fitting? In conclusion, for a truly horrifying experience this Halloween, go swede-ish.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)Halloween

Go trick-or-treating this Halloween, and help bring Britain back from the undead

[Paul Westmoreland](#)



Halloween always seemed like a consumerist American import, but that all changed when we dressed up as zombies and knocked on our neighbours' doors



A Halloween-decorated house in Rainham, Kent, attracts onlookers and raises money for charity in 2021. Photograph: James Bell/Alamy

Mon 31 Oct 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 09.53 EDT

Scrooge famously hated Christmas, so I shudder to think what he would've made of [Halloween](#). Armies of children roaming the streets demanding sweets, all dressed as devils and vampires, mummies and witches, werewolves, skeletons and, dare I say it ... ghosts. Not to mention the shocking amount of money people spend on costumes and decorations that fall apart in seconds and refuse to biodegrade.

But the moral of his story is the same as this one: while Scrooge hid indoors counting his farthings, he missed out on the good things in life. Sure, the cost of living crisis means we can all do without another splurge of wild consumerism, but if you can enter into the spirit of Halloween, even in a small way, I really think you should.

When I was a kid, Halloween was one of those things that was only a big deal for American families on TV. We had the odd trick-or-treater who refused to leave until we'd emptied the biscuit barrel, but that was all. Over the years, it's steadily caught on in the UK – spending on the event has more than [doubled since 2013](#), and it's more and more common to see outlandish,

house of horror displays and pumpkins lining doorsteps as the end of October looms.

It's tempting to roll our eyes and dismiss Halloween as yet another US-imported spending spree on a par with Black Friday, but there's more to it than sweets and decorations – as I found out when I had kids.

When my children first discovered Halloween, I wasn't sure how trick-or-treaters would be received in our part of town – or whether it could even be dangerous. But as they got older they wore down my resolve, until one year I agreed to take them out, and my perception of Halloween changed for ever.



‘Halloween serves as an annual reminder that most of our neighbours are rather sweet people.’ Trick-or-treating in a village in North Yorkshire. Photograph: Veryan Dale/Alamy

We trooped out and started knocking on doors, and after a few short exchanges with strangers, as my children rummaged in bowls of treats, I realised I was also taking away something rather sweet. It was the feeling that I live near a lot of very nice, friendly and kind people who, regardless of their backgrounds, had decided to spend their evening answering the door to strangers and handing out sweets.

The whole experience came as a revelation. I realised I'd been living under a misconception fuelled by fears of knocking on strangers' doors, but the truth is it's safer than I ever thought it was, and I'd been missing out on the chance to meet my neighbours.

Over the years, I've learned the rules – and there are rules – of successful trick-or-treating. The first is the most sacred. If a house doesn't have so much as a pumpkin on display, it's off limits, so there's no need for anyone who doesn't want any callers to worry. Anyone who doesn't recognise this rule will soon realise they're wasting their time, and that there's more fun to be had by knocking on the doors of those who are playing along.

The next rule is that, even when you knock and ask "Trick or treat?" no one ever says "Trick!". I discovered this the year my kids went out armed and ready to perform the electric cattle prod scene from *Terror*, the classic Halloween-themed episode of [Bottom](#). They came home gutted no one asked for a trick, but their buckets of candy cushioned the blow.

Of all the traditions and cultural trends Britain has adopted, I think Halloween is easily one of the greatest community events we have. For me it beats jumble sales, school fetes, street parties and even football on a big screen. When our communities embrace it, Halloween also brings a whole bagful of benefits to local businesses.

Round our way there's a Halloween trail offering pumpkins to kids who collect stamps from our local shops and cafes. It's a bit of fun that's designed to reacquaint people with the area and breathe life back into our high street before it joins the undead. Halloween is also a welcome boost for the pubs and nightclubs that had stakes driven through their hearts by the pandemic

It's easy to forget, but this time last year taking part in Halloween meant taking a tentative step out of the houses we'd spent most of the year locked inside. So, this year, instead of saying, "Bah, humbug!" to Halloween, I say put on a zombie mask, get out into your community, knock on some doors and shout: "Trick or treat?". Halloween isn't there to scare anyone: it serves

as an annual reminder that most of our neighbours are rather sweet people who are happy to open their doors to total strangers.

- Paul Westmoreland is the author of [Rudy and the Wolf Cub](#) and [Rudy and the Monster at School](#)

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2022.10.31 - Around the world

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- [Twitter Musk posts baseless conspiracy theory about Paul Pelosi attack](#)
- [Singapore Richard Branson refuses invitation to debate death penalty](#)
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[India](#)

India bridge collapse: death toll rises to at least 130 as recovery efforts continue

About 400 people were on the bridge in Gujarat to celebrate a Diwali religious ritual when it collapsed, with many children among the dead



At least 130 people have died after the collapse of a bridge in the western state of Gujarat, India, on Sunday. Photograph: Reuters

[Amrit Dhillon](#) in New Delhi with agencies

Mon 31 Oct 2022 00.17 EDTLast modified on Mon 31 Oct 2022 08.04 EDT

The death toll from the [collapse of a pedestrian bridge](#) over a river in Gujarat, western India, has risen to at least 130 as more stories emerge of the terrifying moment the structure gave way .

Local officials say about 400 people were on the suspension bridge over the Machchu River in the city of Morbi on Sunday and the atmosphere was

festive. Families had come out on to the bridge to celebrate a post-Diwali religious ritual in which idols are immersed into the river.

The bridge is more than a century old and dates back to the British Raj, but it had just re-opened on 26 October after extensive repairs carried out over six months by a private company.

“There were a lot of young children among the dead,” one rescuer told NDTV news channel. “It was a Sunday evening so families had come out for a stroll because it’s a popular tourist spot.”

Staff at the nearby hospitals where the victims were taken told NDTV that many children died, with some couples losing more than one child.

[map of Gujarat](#)

Prateek Vasava, who swam to the riverbank after falling from the bridge, told a local news channel that he had witnessed several children fall into the river.

“I wanted to pull some of them along with me but they had drowned or got swept away,” he said.

Another survivor said: “The cables snapped and the bridge came down in a split second. People fell on each other and into the river.”

The lucky ones were able to swim to safety or were rescued by a 200-strong team including staff from the navy, army, and air force and the National Disaster Response Force.

In video footage, people can be seen clinging to the twisted remnants of the bridge that were still above water.

Footage shows people swimming to safety after Indian bridge collapse – video

Early on Monday, an official told NDTV the death toll had risen to at least 130. Reuters reported the death toll was 132, citing senior official, NK

Muchhar.

Rescue operations were still under way but the purpose was primarily to find the bodies. Rescuers have been hampered by the thick algae lying on the river's surface.

“The layer of algae made the search operations in the dark a daunting task,” a local politician told The Times of [India](#).

About 77 people have been taken to hospital, some with serious injuries. Chaotic scenes were seen at local hospitals as the staff were faced with a sudden and massive influx of victims.

The 230-metre-long (750ft) bridge, known by locals as the Hanging Bridge, was built during British rule in the 19th century.

Gujarat is the home state of India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, who was in the state on a three day visit. Mr Modi announced compensation of 200,000 rupees (£2,000) to the families of the victims.

The state government has formed a five-member special investigation team to conduct an investigation into the disaster. Gujarat ministers have said those responsible for the collapse will face severe punishment.

Reuters contributed to this report

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[Elon Musk](#)

Musk posts baseless conspiracy theory about Paul Pelosi attack on Twitter

Post comes days after Musk takes over social media platform amid concern that hate speech will run rampant under his leadership



Musk responded to Hillary Clinton tweet by tweeting that ‘there is a tiny possibility there might be more to this story than meets the eye’.
Photograph: Dado Ruvić/Reuters

[Victoria Bekiempis](#)

Sun 30 Oct 2022 16.07 EDTLast modified on Mon 31 Oct 2022 11.40 EDT

[Elon Musk](#) was criticized on Sunday after posting a baseless conspiracy theory about the assault of [Paul Pelosi](#) to Twitter – the social media giant he took over several days ago with a promise to impose fewer restrictions on its content.

Paul Pelosi, husband of US House speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#), was attacked with a hammer at their California home on Friday. The attacker, identified by authorities as David DePape, allegedly said “Where is Nancy?” during the attack; Joe Biden said that she [appeared to be the intended target](#).

Musk’s sharing of the conspiracy theory stemmed from a tweet by Hillary Clinton on Saturday. The Democratic former senator shared a [Los Angeles Times](#) story about DePape’s apparent far-right leanings.

“The Republican party and its mouthpieces now regularly spread hate and deranged conspiracy theories,” Clinton said, [according to the Los Angeles Times](#). “It is shocking, but not surprising, that violence is the result. As citizens, we must hold them accountable for their words and the actions that follow.”

Musk responded by tweeting that “there is a tiny possibility there might be more to this story than meets the eye,” and shared a link to a post that presented an unfounded conspiracy theory on the hammer attack, the Times reported. This conspiracy post was in the Santa Monica Observer, which the Times described as being “notorious for publishing false news”.

Dan Moynihan, a public policy professor at Georgetown University, [said](#) in the wake of Musk’s tweet: “A big problem in contemporary American politics is that one party has become obsessed with conspiracy theories, encouraging radical responses including anti-democratic actions and violence. Musk will just make the problem worse.”

Musk deleted the response by early Sunday afternoon, [according to NBC News](#). Prior to its deletion, however, it had received in excess of 24,000 retweets and 86,000 likes.

“The latest conspiracy theory about Paul Pelosi’s attack is frankly too disgusting to print,” said NBC News reporter Ben Collins, in response to Musk’s retweet.

The world’s richest man’s apparent sharing of this post comes amid [concern](#) that hate-speech and harassment will [run rampant](#) under his leadership.

Musk has tried to ease concerns about an increase in harmful posts [under his ownership](#), such as his announcement that there would be a new content moderation counsel.

Musk suggested that a better approach would be to divide [Twitter](#) into various strands. This approach would see users applying content ratings on their posts, and engaging in online disputes, within a special space on the platform.

The Guardian has reached out to Twitter for comment.

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Singapore

Richard Branson refuses Singapore invitation to debate death penalty

UK entrepreneur turns down live TV debate and says government should instead engage with local activists



Panchalai Supermaniam (centre), the mother of Nagaenthran K Dharmalingam, executed for trafficking heroin into Singapore, at his funeral in April. Photograph: Yosoff Ahmad/AFP/Getty Images

[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) *South-east Asia correspondent*

Mon 31 Oct 2022 07.26 EDTFirst published on Mon 31 Oct 2022 03.52 EDT

The British entrepreneur [Richard Branson](#) has rejected an invitation from Singapore's home affairs minister to debate the death penalty, urging him to instead engage with local activists who oppose the "inhumane, brutal practice".

Branson had been invited by the ministry of home affairs to debate capital punishment live on TV, after he described it as “a serious stain on Singapore’s reputation”, and condemned the [execution earlier this year of Nagaenthran K Dharmalingam](#).

Singapore, which has some of the world’s most severe drugs laws, provoked an outcry in April when it executed Nagaenthran, a Malaysian man, who campaigners say had learning difficulties. He had spent more than a decade on death row for attempting to smuggle 43g of heroin – about three tablespoons – into [Singapore](#).

In a [blog posted on his website](#), Branson declined Singapore’s offer to debate the issue, saying that more constructive dialogue was needed. He said: “A television debate – limited in time and scope, always at risk of prioritising personalities over issues – cannot do the complexity of the death penalty any service. It reduces nuanced discourse to soundbites, turns serious debate into spectacle.”

The “brave thing”, he said, would be to engage Singaporean activists and human rights lawyers. “They deserve to be listened to, not ignored, or worse yet, harassed.”



Richard Branson said activists ‘deserve to be listened to, not ignored, or worse yet, harassed’. Photograph: Roberto Finizio/Getty Images

The Singaporean ministry of home affairs had [offered to pay for Branson’s flights and accommodation](#) so that he could attend a TV debate, writing: “Mr Branson may use this platform to demonstrate to Singaporeans the error of our ways and why Singapore should do away with laws that have kept our population safe from the global scourge of drug abuse.”

It said that, while Branson’s views may be widely held in the UK, “we do not accept that Mr Branson or others in the west are entitled to impose their values on other societies. Nor do we believe that a country that prosecuted two wars in China in the 19th century to force the Chinese to accept opium imports has any moral right to lecture Asians on drugs.”

The Singaporean government has defended its use of the death penalty, including its handling of Nagaenthran’s case, denying he had learning difficulties. It argues that its use of capital punishment ensures public safety. In the four years after the mandatory capital sentence was introduced for opium trafficking, there was a 66% reduction in the average net weight of opium trafficked into Singapore, it said in its statement to Branson.

“Our priority is to protect Singapore and Singaporeans from the scourge of drugs,” it added.

Activists, however, say there is no convincing evidence that the death penalty prevents crime more effectively than other punishments. They also point to the disproportionate number of racial minorities on death row, and say the system imposes the harshest punishment often on people from deprived backgrounds.

Kirsten Han, a Singaporean journalist and activist, described the offer of a TV debate as “political theatre”. It was an attempt to set up Singapore’s minister for home affairs and minister for law, K Shanmugam, as “a Singaporean nationalist standing firm against a sanctimonious western interloper ... It’s a red herring designed to distract from a growing local abolitionist movement,” Han wrote in her recent newsletter [We, The Citizens](#).

Singaporean efforts to save Nagaenthran had gathered more momentum than any other death penalty campaign she had witnessed in the 12 years she had worked on advocacy related to the issue, Han added.

Following Nagaenthran's death, more than 400 people turned out for a rare protest in April at Speakers' Corner at Hong Lim Park, the only place where demonstrations are permitted in Singapore, to call for executions to be halted.

At least 10 death row inmates have since been executed. Death penalty cases are rarely reported in any detail in Singapore's tightly controlled media.

A 2018 study suggested the death penalty is [supported by the overwhelming majority of Singaporeans](#). However, support fell when people were presented with different scenarios and asked to choose whether the person convicted should be executed.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/31/richard-branson-refuses-singapore-invitation-to-debate-death-penalty>.

[Spain](#)

Guggenheim effect: how the museum helped transform Bilbao

The Basque city locals remember as grimy and industrial has changed a lot since the Frank Gehry-designed building sprang up 25 years ago



The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, September 1997, the month is opened.
Photograph: Raphael Gaillarde/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images

[Sam Jones](#) in Bilbao

[@swajones](#)

Mon 31 Oct 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 31 Oct 2022 01.09 EDT

Evening approaches Bilbao's old port, bringing with it the joggers who pinball along the promenades, the tourists mulling a cruise on the dark green waters of the estuary, and the woman in the artisan ice-cream booth who keeps vigil behind tubs of *dulce de leche*, passionfruit and bubblegum-flavoured "blue smurf".

Close by, its titanium scales glowing yellow in the last of the sun, lies the building that helped make such now-mundane scenes possible. Before the [Guggenheim Museum](#) opened in the Basque city 25 years ago this month – and before the massive urban regeneration project it helped to drive – Bilbao looked, felt and smelled very different.

“Back then, it was a much greyer, dirtier city whose skies were polluted by the smoke from the steel factories and the shipyards in the centre of the city,” says the mayor, Juan Mari Aburto, of the Bilbao of his childhood and adolescence.

“I remember a terribly dirty estuary – and it wasn’t just the industrial activity; there weren’t proper sewage channels and the smell that came off the water was pretty unbearable.”



Bilboa's port in the 1970s, a time when many locals remember a dirty city and estuary. Photograph: Paolo KOCH/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images



In the 1990s, the Basque government and regional authorities struck a deal to build a new Guggenheim. Photograph: Gerard Sioen/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images

By the late 1980s, that industrial powerhouse was in decline – and in the throes of an identity crisis. Devastating floods in 1983 were followed by years of economic upheaval that left many parts of the city's heavy industry sector struggling to survive. Some managed to restructure; some did not.

Realising that Bilbao would have to diversify from its traditional economic bases, the Basque authorities embarked on a mega-project to overhaul the city, which included a €1bn programme to restore the polluted estuary and a new metro network.

As the push to move Bilbao from an industry-based economy to a service-based one continued, word arrived that the Guggenheim foundation was looking to increase its European presence.

In 1991, the Basque government and the regional authorities struck a deal with the foundation that would see the building of a new museum, designed by Frank Gehry, which would host some of the Guggenheim's famous art collection.

The project, however, was not without its critics.

“The idea of using culture as a transformative element wasn’t that clear back then; it was a bit of a dream,” says the museum’s director general, Juan Ignacio Vidarte. “And there was opposition and criticism from those who thought the resources should go on supporting businesses in crisis and helping to prop them up for a few more months or years – and from those who thought the money should go on healthcare or infrastructure.”

There was also profound disquiet from some within the Basque cultural world, who saw the arrival of the Guggenheim as an “imperialist intervention” and an affront to native Basque culture.

“It was very difficult,” remembers Vidarte. “But none of it was surprising.”



The Guggenheim Bilbao director, Juan Ignacio Vidarte, its foundation director, Richard Armstrong, and the city’s mayor, Juan Mari Aburto, at the 25th anniversary celebrations for the museum this year. Photograph: Vincent West/Reuters

A little over 30 years ago, the site of the museum and the office where Vidarte now sits was a forgotten corner of the old port, a no man’s land of disused industrial units, cranes and warehouses that was close to the heart of Bilbao but decidedly not a part of it.

“This whole area wasn’t an urban zone because, even though it was very close to the city centre, it wasn’t accessible,” says the director. “I think one of Gehry’s greatest ideas with the building – which was meant to be the beginning of the re-urbanisation process and rather define the character of everything that followed – was to make the museum a connection between the city and the estuary.”

As Gehry’s building grew – and as Barcelona and Seville reaped the respective civic and tourist rewards of the Olympics and the Expo in 1992 – so, too, did confidence in the Bilbao project.

A few months before the Guggenheim opened, it hosted the 1997 Pritzker architecture prize. And when it was inaugurated in October 1997, the opening made the evening headlines on CNN.

“That really surprised me,” says Vidarte. “But it showed that something was happening and that we were moving towards a time where a peripheral city such as Bilbao could become a place of global interest. And that’s what’s happened.”

Triumphant as the museum’s opening was, it came at the end of a long and bloody summer during which the Basque terrorist group Eta committed some of its most infamous atrocities. In July 1997, [Eta kidnapped and murdered Miguel Ángel Blanco](#), a 29-year-old councillor for the conservative People’s party. And then, less than a week before the Guggenheim opened, [a Basque police officer called Txema Aguirre was fatally shot by Eta](#) as he foiled a grenade attack on the museum.

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A forensic team examine the debris after a car bomb exploded in Bilbao in 1997, killing a Spanish police officer. The bomb was thought to be the work of Basque separatists ETA. Photograph: Javier Bauluz/AP

A quarter of a century on, the Guggenheim is a glittering and essential part of the city's fabric, attracting almost 25 million visitors since opening its doors and bringing an estimated €6.5bn (£5.6bn) to the Basque country. Industry today is concentrated on the outskirts of the city and tourism now accounts for 6.5% of the city's GDP – a far cry from the days when few people chose to go to Bilbao unless on business or to see family.

But how much of the transformation can be attributed to the “Guggenheim effect”? The phrase elicits a mixed response in the city itself.

“We can't reduce Bilbao's transformation to the arrival of the Guggenheim,” says the mayor, who sees it as the fruits of a far longer period of inter-institutional collaboration and investment.

“The Guggenheim was the engine of that transformation, and then we had very important elements. The entire city has been transformed in a way that's probably unprecedented on an international level. The recovery of our

estuary and our environment – and that €1bn investment – is paradigmatic in that.”

The museum’s director is similarly circumspect.



A busy tapas bar in Bilbao, where tourism accounts for 6.5% of the city’s GDP. Photograph: Travelstock44/Alamy

“If people use the phrase ‘Guggenheim effect’ to communicate the idea that cultural infrastructure can have a transformative effect that goes beyond the purely cultural sphere – that it can have a social, architectural, planning and economic impact – then I’d go along with that,” says Vidarte.

“But they need to understand what all that involves. I don’t like it when that phrase is associated with projects that have nothing in common with this one besides a spectacular building, or with grabby projects. It’s about having the other ingredients that are fundamental to understanding why it worked here but hasn’t worked in many other places.

“This project was part of a much bigger plan and it fitted in with that plan and didn’t happen in isolation – it wasn’t done on a whim.”



The Iberdrola skyscraper, also a sign of the city's regeneration. Photograph: Vincent West/Reuters

Roberto Gómez, who runs the Bilboats estuary tour company, stands on the promenade not far from the thrusting Iberdrola skyscraper, which somehow manages to look a little underdressed next to the Guggenheim.

He points across the city to another tower as he explains Bilbao, past and present. Once upon a time, the 25-metre brick chimney in the Parque Etxebarria belched the smoke from a steelworks. Today, it is a relic, just like the stretches of industrial ruins that offend the eyes of those of his passengers who come in search of the new Bilbao.

“I remember when I was a kid how when the factories started pumping out smoke, the women in the neighbourhood would call out, ‘Shut your windows! Shut your windows’ because the grime got everywhere – and I was asthmatic,” says Gómez.

“Everything was industrial here and it was like that until the end of the 1980s. The sky was pretty brown back then, and so was the estuary. But a lot of work went into the river and now there's life there once again.”

Some things were lost, he says, and some were found. “And we carried on going forwards. It's what you have to do.”

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Eurozone inflation hits record high of 10.7%; UK mortgage approvals, credit card borrowing fall – as it happened

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- [Immigration and asylum Jenrick refuses to criticise Braverman over 'invasion' comment](#)
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Immigration and asylum

Jenrick refuses to criticise Braverman over ‘invasion’ comment

Minister says remark referred to ‘sheer scale of the challenge’ of dealing with people arriving in small boats

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



A ship arrives in Dover carrying people picked up in the Channel.
Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty Images

[*Jessica Elgot*](#)
[@jessicaelgot](#)

Tue 1 Nov 2022 05.24 EDTLast modified on Tue 1 Nov 2022 06.48 EDT

The UK immigration minister, Robert Jenrick, said he would “choose his words very carefully” when asked if he would defend [Suella Braverman](#)

calling migrant boats “an invasion”, but refused to criticise the home secretary.

Jenrick also said the government was not the root cause of deteriorating conditions at a controversy-hit centre for asylum seekers.

Manston, in Dover, is at the centre of an overcrowding scandal after Braverman was reported to have ignored legal advice that the government was detaining asylum seekers at the site for unlawfully long periods by refusing to book hotels.

Jenrick, a close ally of the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, said he would “never demonise people coming to this country in pursuit of a better life. I understand and appreciate our obligation to refugees.”

But he said the phrase “invasion” – for which Braverman has been criticised – was “a way of describing the sheer scale of the challenge”.

He told Sky News: “She was also speaking, I think, and this is an important point, for those people who live on the south coast who day in, day out are seeing migrant boats landing on their beaches.”

Robert Jenrick refuses to criticise Suella Braverman over 'invasion' comments – video

Jenrick told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: “It is not a phrase that I have used, but I do understand the need to be straightforward with the general public about the challenge that we as ministers face.”

He said the number of arrivals was a “major challenge for the country” and that infrastructure was being “overwhelmed”. He said the government could not have foreseen the number of people travelling across the Channel, which was twice the number of last year.

“This has also been a year, remember, where quite rightly we've done a number of other things like Homes for Ukraine, like our Afghan resettlement scheme, like Hong Kong families coming over, and so the confluence of these factors has put immense pressure on our system,” he said.

Jenrick said conditions at Manston were improving and that the government was moving people out to hotels where it could.

“It is not designed to be somewhere where people stay for a prolonged period of time,” he said of the centre, admitting that people had been sleeping on mats on the floor. “It is, by necessity, relatively austere. The task now is to ensure it gets back to its normal working pattern.

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“I would just say that the root cause of what we’re seeing at Manston is not the government. It’s certainly not the brilliant Border Force staff who are managing the site, the contractors, the catering staff. The problem is that thousands of people are crossing the Channel illegally every day.”

Lucy Moreton, a spokesperson for the Union for Borders, Immigration and Customs, said staff were deeply concerned about conditions in the centre and the potential for further attacks on the site.

“There’s been a lot of drones flying over the site in the last 24 hours. There’s a lot of tensions on the site. The migrants are very keen to be moving, to be moved on, to get their freedom back,” she told the Today programme.

“Staff face, on a daily basis, sitdown protests, being chanted at, being shouted out. Constant searches going on, improvised weapons are always being found. It’s a really frightening time for the staff and no prison in the UK has over 4,000 people uncontained face to face with those who are responsible for controlling them. That’s an utterly unsustainable position.”

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[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

MP for Manston constituency says he does not trust Suella Braverman – as it happened

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[Home Office](#)

Home Office must ‘get a grip’ over Manston asylum-seekers centre, says watchdog

Prison inspector says conditions have ‘significantly deteriorated’ in last three months



Manston is supposed to be a short-term holding facility where immigration documents are issued. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

[*Jamie Grierson*](#)

[*@JamieGrierson*](#)

Mon 31 Oct 2022 20.01 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 13.03 EDT

Conditions at a controversy-hit centre for asylum seekers have “significantly deteriorated” in the last three months, a watchdog has warned, urging the [Home Office](#) to “get a grip” on the escalating problems.

Charlie Taylor, chief inspector of prisons, said an inspection of the Manston short-term holding centre in July revealed early signs of risks materialising, including asylum seekers being held for far longer than was appropriate for the site.

Manston is at the heart of an overcrowding scandal with the home secretary, [Suella Braverman](#), under pressure over reports she ignored legal advice that the government was detaining asylum seekers at the site for unlawfully long periods.

The [Sunday Times reported](#) that Braverman had been told to transfer the asylum seekers from Manston to hotels to ease the pressure but she refused.

In his report published on Tuesday, Taylor revealed that even back in July asylum seekers were being “crowded” into a single facility and exhausted detainees were sleeping on floor mats, and prevented from going into the fresh air despite some lengthy stays.

Taylor said while there were some improvements noted in July at Manston and other facilities, risks remained.

“When I visited Manston in September, some of these risks had begun to materialise and I met detainees who had been held for more than four days in a facility that was not designed for overnight stays and in which there was no access to the open air,” he said.

“I was also concerned that there were still no mobile phones available, which meant that many detainees, including some who were very young, had been unable to contact their families.

“Recent intelligence from a number of credible sources, including the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration, the independent monitoring boards and staff associations, suggest that the current situation at Manston has significantly deteriorated since our July inspection.

“We are hearing that detainees are now being held in greater numbers and for much longer periods of time in cramped and uncomfortable conditions, often supervised by staff who have not been suitably trained.

“As a result of these concerns, the inspectorate is planning a swift return to Manston and will expect to see substantial improvements. In the meantime, the Home Office and its contractors need to get a grip and urgently act on the findings of this report to make sure all detainees are held in safe, decent and humane conditions.”

Taylor’s report said that there had been “considerable improvements” since inspections of short-term holding facilities in early 2020, which found hundreds of wet and cold people [were forced to spend hours in cramped containers](#) on a “rubble-strewn building site”.

But concerns were raised in the report with Manston and other facilities at Western Jet Foil and Lydd airport.

Manston, on a disused airfield site near Ramsgate in Kent, is supposed to be a short-term holding facility where immigration documents are issued and some people begin the asylum screening process. They are only meant to stay for a maximum of 24 hours. While there is food, water, showers and toilets, the prisons watchdog said there are no beds or access to fresh air and exercise.

The report found “some aspects of governance were weak, especially in safeguarding and healthcare” with some asylum seekers denied access to mobile phones and others “inexplicably” not allowed to close toilet doors fully.

It said length of detention was far too long, often more than 24 hours and sometimes far in excess of this. The longest recorded detention of a child was 48 hours, which the inspectorate added was “unacceptable”.

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Home Office data showed that, in the three months to June 2022, 4,161 people had passed through Manston and 636 had been held for more than 24 hours. The longest time of detention at Manston was more than 70 hours.

“It was particularly disappointing once again to see exhausted detainees forced to sleep on floor mats between rows of seats or on wooden benches,” the report said, later adding: “Detainees could not go outside for fresh air regardless of the length of detention.”

The inspection also found detainees were searched too many times and not always with sufficient sensitivity by Home Office staff, while detainees at the screening building were not allowed to use toilets in private. There were concerns raised about respect during searches.

“Detainees were then searched in full view of others, including rub-down searches of women and children,” the report said.

“Some staff were abrupt and impatient, including with children. We observed one member of Border Force staff pulling a young child by the arm with no explanation to start the rub-down search. The parent of another young child was instructed via gestures to remove the child’s earrings despite the child experiencing pain and distress as the parent struggled to do this.”

Last week, another watchdog, the chief inspector of borders and immigration, David Neal, said that during a visit to Manston he had met families who [had been at the facility for more than a month](#).

A Home Office spokesperson said: “We welcome the report’s finding that there have been considerable improvements to the infrastructure and processes in place to accommodate record numbers of people arriving in the UK illegally via small boats.

“As a result of these numbers, our asylum system has been put under incredible strain, but we recognise there is more to do to provide alternative

accommodation for people arriving in the UK. We continue to work hard to resolve the current pressures at Manston as an urgent priority.

“Manston remains resourced and equipped to process migrants securely, and we will provide alternative accommodation as soon as possible.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/nov/01/home-office-must-get-a-grip-over-manston-asylum-seekers-centre-says-watchdog>

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[Suella Braverman](#)

Embattled Braverman insists she is not at fault for Manston crisis

Home secretary says she never blocked hotels for refugees and was not to blame for overcrowding at refugee centre

Braverman denies ignoring legal advice or blocking hotels for asylum seekers – video

[Pippa Crerar](#), [Rajeev Syal](#) and [Aletha Adu](#)

Mon 31 Oct 2022 17.15 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 13.03 EDT

Suella Braverman has insisted she was not to blame for the crisis at Manston refugee centre, as she attempted to shore up her precarious political position by aggressively [ramping up her rhetoric over immigration](#).

The embattled home secretary claimed [she had “never blocked” the use of hotels](#) to ease pressure on the asylum processing centre in Kent or ignored legal advice on the matter – despite multiple sources insisting that she had been warned over the conditions.

Senior government sources told the Guardian she had “commissioned” external legal advice because she disagreed with the internal Home Office view that more hotel accommodation should be procured for refugees to address [overcrowding](#).

Braverman, already under fire over the security breach that saw her sacked as home secretary less than a fortnight ago, faced growing pressure over the situation at Manston on Monday. The centre is now housing 4,000 migrants, more than double its capacity, leading to disease and a heightened the risk of unrest.

Tory MP Sir Roger Gale, the local MP, blamed Braverman for the situation. “That facility operated absolutely magnificently and very efficiently indeed until five weeks ago, when I’m afraid the home secretary took the policy decision not to commission further accommodation, and it is that that has led to the crisis at Manston,” he said.

Other Conservative MPs and Whitehall officials were alarmed at the home secretary’s handling of the situation. One minister said: “She’s just not up to the job. She’s only there because Rishi [Sunak] needed her backing to get the leadership. We can’t see her lasting.”

In her first statement to MPs since her re-appointment, Braverman put herself on collision course with her own department, claiming she was “appalled” by some aspects of its response to the [Channel migrant crisis](#) and appearing to blame officials for the chaos.

Echoing remarks made by her predecessor, Priti Patel, she claimed the asylum system was “broken” and that illegal immigration was “out of control” despite her own party having been in power for 12 years.

Yet she appeared to take some responsibility for overcrowding at the centre by admitting that she had “refused to prematurely release” people without having somewhere else to stay.

Dramatically escalating her language as she pitched to the right in the fight for her political future, Braverman described the Channel migrant crisis as an “invasion” and reminded MPs that [40,000 people had arrived on the south coast of England](#) this year.



A detainee inside the immigration processing centre in Manston.
Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

“Let’s be clear about what is really going on here: the British people deserve to know which party is serious about stopping the invasion on our southern coast and which party is not,” she told MPs.

“Let’s stop pretending that they are all refugees in distress. The whole country knows that is not true ... We need to be straight with the public.

“The system is broken. Illegal migration is out of control and too many people are interested in playing political parlour games, covering up the truth, than solving the problem.”

Braverman claims she is victim of 'political witch-hunt' – video

Braverman told MPs she had not blocked the use of hotels to ease pressure on Manston – but it was unclear whether that also meant she had not blocked their procurement. “I’ve never ignored legal advice. As a former attorney, I know the importance of taking legal advice into account,” she said.

However, one source told the Guardian: “She was warned time and time again that something had to be done about Manston. Over several weeks.” It is understood that Grant Shapps, who briefly replaced Braverman as home

secretary, reversed the policy and booked several hotels as an emergency solution to overcrowding.

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Manston, a former Royal Airforce base, currently houses 4,000 migrants, more than double its capacity. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Care 4 Calais condemned the home secretary's language as "incredibly offensive". They added: "Refugees are escaping from conflicts – they know what being invaded feels like. We are lucky that many of us do not. To suggest they are committing an act of war when that is what they are fleeing is indefensible."

Charlie Taylor, the chief inspector of prisons, said the [Home Office](#) and its contractors must speed up the processing of migrants and make “suitable provisions” so that people can be moved out of Manston as quickly as possible.

A report by the watchdog, released on Tuesday, found that an inspection of the facility in July showed there were already serious challenges for the government department if it was to safely and humanely process asylum seekers.

Manston, a disused airfield near Ramsgate, is supposed to be a short-term housing facility to process migrants who have just arrived in the UK. They are only meant to stay for 24 hours, but the prison watchdog found that there were no beds or access to fresh air or exercise.

Inspectors highlighted “failings” in procedures at Manston that “undermine the resilience of the centre for dealing with increasing volumes of detainees”. They also found that the accommodation was suitable for short-term detention and noted efforts by staff to “create a calm and even welcoming atmosphere”.

Last week, the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, David Neal, said that on a visit to the centre, he had met families who had been at Manston [for over a month](#).

Braverman is also under pressure over her use of her personal email for government business, which led to [her first resignation](#). In a letter to the home affairs committee chair, Diana Johnson, she apologised for her “errors of judgment”.

However, she also revealed that she had sent government documents to her private email six times during her first 44 days stint as home secretary – but claimed none of the emails sent between 6 September and 10 October “concerned national security, intelligence agency or cybersecurity matters”.

Her letter revealed that [she did not confess to the leak](#) “as soon as I realised my mistake”, as she had claimed in her resignation letter to Liz Truss.

Instead, she admitted that she was alerted to the error at around 10am, but only told her private secretary at 12.56pm.

One government insider said: “She only told the officials after being confronted by the chief whip. No 10 and the Cabinet Office had already been told. The rest is neither here nor there.”

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Is the IMF fit for purpose?

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Crowd crushes: how disasters like Itaewon happen, how can they be prevented, and the ‘stampede’ myth

Crowd crushes are wholly preventable, predictable and avoidable, experts say. Here is what we can learn from the Halloween crowd crush in Seoul

Seoul: at least 153 dead after crowd crush at Halloween celebrations – video

[Samantha Lock](#)

[@Samantha_Lock](#)

Tue 1 Nov 2022 00.30 EDTLast modified on Tue 1 Nov 2022 23.58 EDT

More than [150 people have died](#) in a crowd crush while celebrating Halloween in one of Seoul’s most popular nightlife districts. South Korean authorities have [opened an investigation](#) into the disaster. But how do crowd crushes like the one in Itaewon happen?

What happened in Seoul?

On the evening of Saturday 29 October, as many as 100,000 people – mostly in their teens and 20s – poured into Itaewon’s narrow, sloping streets for one of the first major celebrations since Covid restrictions were lifted.

Just after 10pm, chaos erupted on a narrow, steep sidestreet near Itaewon station that connects to a slew of bars and clubs from the main road.

Witnesses reported seeing crowds surging in different directions and people losing their footing on the slope, causing a domino effect.

People fell and knocked others down, piling one person on to another and trapping them. Others tried to scale the sides of the buildings to escape.

What is a crowd crush?

“Overcrowding, unmanaged crowds and wide paths filtering into narrow paths are a recipe for disaster,” crowd behaviour expert at the University of Greenwich, Prof Edwin Galea explains.

This combination of factors – all present in Seoul’s Itaewon district – will lead to a high risk event, Galea says.

If crowd densities rise above four people a square metre, and especially if they get to six, the risk of an accident rises.

A crowd crush can occur when too many people push into a confined area – either on the way in, or trying to get out. People can be squeezed to such an extent that they can no longer inflate their lungs, and are at risk of compressive asphyxiation.

Often those who die in crowd crushes are the ones pushed against a wall. No matter how calmly a crowd behaves, it can only fit through a narrow exit at a certain rate.

John Drury, an expert on the social psychology of crowd management at the University of Sussex, says crowd crush disasters usually involve three interlinked factors: overcrowding, waves or movement in an already extremely dense crowd, and crowd collapse. When there is an obstruction, the effects are exacerbated.

“My impression is that all of these factors were present at Itaewon this Halloween,” he says. “First, it’s apparent that density was over five people per square metre, which is very dangerous. Second, there were waves of people that lifted people off their feet. When people are closely packed together, a small movement can ripple through the crowd and cause further pressure. Third, I understand that there was a crowd collapse as some people fell over and others fell on top of them.”

The layout of the location also didn't help – “People were walled in on two sides,” Drury adds.

Compounding the problem is that those entering a crowd are oblivious to the impending danger. “Members of the public entering a crowd event can't see that there might be dangerous levels of density at the front,” he says.

“People often seek out, endure, and enjoy what are objectively dangerous levels of density at many crowd events,” Drury adds.

[Risk of accidents in a moving crowd](#)

How can these disasters be prevented?

Crowd management for large-scale planned events is essential, experts agree.

Galea and his Fire Safety Engineering Group at the University of Greenwich use behavioural experiments and mathematical modelling to understand how crowds move in different scenarios. The aim is to prevent dangerous densities from building up.

[How progressive crowd collapse happens](#)

Crowd safety isn't complicated, according to G Keith Still, a crowd safety expert and visiting professor of crowd science at the University of Suffolk in England.

A management plan can entail lots of simple parts: know the crowd limits, the routes used, the area itself, the movement of the people within it and monitor the crowd density at the time.

Still advises architects, police and event planners on handling large events, and insists that crushes are wholly “preventable, predictable and avoidable”.



Rescue workers arrive at the scene where more than 150 people were killed during Halloween festivities. Photograph: YONHAP/Reuters

Why crowd ‘mass panic’ is a myth

The word “stampede” is often used to describe crowd behaviour. But it’s wrong.

“Stampede is not only an incorrect term, it is a loaded word as it apportions blame to the victims for behaving in an irrational, self-destructive, unthinking and uncaring manner,” Galea says. “It’s pure ignorance, and laziness ... It gives the impression that it was a mindless crowd only caring about themselves, and they were prepared to crush people.

“In virtually all these situations this is not the case, and it is usually the authorities to blame for poor planning, poor design, poor control, poor policing and mismanagement.

“The truth is that people are only directly crushed by others who have no choice in the matter, and the people who can choose don’t know what is going on because they’re too far away from the epicentre.”

The language used after these events is often misleading, Drury concurs.

For Still, this sort of language shifts the blame and responsibility from the authorities to the crowd.

“At what point did anyone in this crowd think ‘Let’s become a mob’,” he asks. “They didn’t – they reacted to the extreme density and could not escape, leading to a progressive crowd collapse and mass fatalities.

“People don’t die because they panic. They panic because they are dying.”

Seoul mayor makes tearful apology over Halloween crush – video

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Behind the scenes at the Onion: ‘Trump is the emperor who admits he’s naked’



A 2009 issue of the Onion. It stopped its print edition in 2013. Photograph: Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

As the celebrated satirical news site turns 35, it tackles a world that seems to parody itself

[Matthew Cantor](#)

[@CantorMatthew](#)

Tue 1 Nov 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 1 Nov 2022 09.39 EDT

On the night of the 2016 election, writers at the Onion gathered to watch the unexpected results. One had made an ice-cream cake. “Nobody touched it the entire night,” says Mike Gillis, the Onion’s head writer. The melting treat was decorated with a face that gradually became “more distorted and horrific” as the night went on.

“That was a good symbol of everybody’s feelings. And I think that was a moment where we all had to pause and reflect on how we were covering politics.” Coverage became more critical, Gillis says, but finding the jokes could be a challenge.

“Part of it was finding ways to pin a joke on somebody who’s already a self-parody,” Gillis said. “Trump was very good at creating a parody of himself and anticipating that people would see that it was ridiculous that he was this corrupt businessman who was actively talking about how he could get away with anything.” Trump gleefully admits to the hypocrisy satire would typically target, Gillis says.



Donald Trump directly observes a solar eclipse. Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP

“The textbook example of satire is something like the emperor’s new clothes. And this was an example of the emperor openly saying, ‘Hey, everyone, I’m naked. What do you make of that?’”

Over the past three and a half decades, the Onion has developed a reputation as the go-to place for fake news long before fake news was a thing. Headlines like “Supreme court rules supreme court rules,” “Fun toy banned because of three stupid dead kids” and “Drugs win drug war” have endured; other stories, such as “No way to prevent this, says only nation where this regularly happens” – published after every prominent mass shooting – have offered more biting social commentary.

But in recent years, “That sounds like an Onion headline!” has become a familiar remark – whether about the US trying to buy Greenland or a billionaire planning to colonize Mars. The phrase proves how deeply the satirical newspaper-turned-website has penetrated our culture: everyone knows their Onion.

Yet when the day’s real-life headlines are regularly compared with the Onion’s, how do its writers tackle the news? How do you parody the world when reality has jumped the shark?

When it comes to Trump specifically, one method is targeting those close to him who take a much more traditional approach – the Jareds and Ivankas, “who have this image that they really desperately want to project on to the world. Puncturing that is something that satire is very good at,” Gillis says.



The Onion's writers in the staff room. Photograph: Courtesy the Onion

But the Trump era also tested satirists in its insistence on “alternative facts”. “If you can’t have an established truth, it’s really hard to play off of things,” says Chad Nackers, the Onion’s editor-in-chief since 2017 and a staff member since 1997. “It divides your audience. Half the country is like: ‘Well, I don’t believe in that truth. So this joke makes no sense.’”

But the mockery abides. “Satire only goes away when there’s no more humans,” he adds. You just “have to be a little more innovative”.

That, he says, is partly why the Onion is launching a revamped opinion section on Tuesday. While the current political era has brought new pitfalls for satirists, it’s also brought new targets – including the endless stream of media and social media chatter.

In the past, the site’s fictional commentators have included the likes of the overeager Jean Teasdale and the slacker Jim Anchower, who offer readers updates on their personal trials. Both characters, Nackers says, reflect more of a local-news format. Beginning on Tuesday, however, the Onion will offer comment pieces from figures based on America’s insufferable political pundits, providing their strongly held views in a round-table format. Expect

direct amalgamations of all your least favorite media voices, from earnest broadsheet columnists to desperate would-be influencers.

Under the skin

A typical day at the Onion's headquarters, now in Chicago, begins with writers and editors perusing the day's real-life headlines for inspiration. Then the staff gathers in the writer's room – the heart of the operation, where bright-green office chairs surround a large table beneath a whiteboard. Various odds and ends around the room serve as inspiration: a newspaper box from the Onion's print era, which ended in 2013 (last headline: "Onion print revenues up 5,000%"); a model owl sitting on the vents, one of several around the office ("I have no idea why they're there," says Gillis); an expired container of ham and chicken paste as a centerpiece on the table (the staff may use it as baby Jesus in a nativity scene this year).



Chad Nackers, the Onion's editor in chief, at a 2016 event. Photograph: Brad Barket/Getty Images

Before the meeting, each writer sends a list of potential headlines to Nackers, which he reads out loud. After a two-round voting process, staff work together brainstorming "and sometimes massaging the headlines if they're not fully where we want them to be", says senior editor Lauren

Moser. Finally, the headlines are sent to individual writers to create the accompanying articles.

This collaborative approach has served the publication well over the years, seeing it through a series of dramatic shifts in the cultural and comic landscape.

Founded in 1756, and long published by the bespectacled news baron [T Herman Zweibel](#), the newspaper today boasts 4.3 trillion daily readers and maintains news bureaus and labor camps worldwide, not to mention its business interests in global transoceanic shipping lanes and animal-testing operations. Or [so it claims](#).

In reality, the newspaper first appeared in 1988 as the [work of two students](#) at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Tim Keck and Chris Johnson, who sold it the following year to their cartoonist Scott Dikker, and Peter Haise, the publisher. That pair gradually expanded the newspaper's distribution to other US cities, and its website launched in 1996. It cemented its place in American pop culture when, in 1999, it released *Our Dumb Century*, a collection of imaginary editions of the Onion spanning the 20th century, including such memorable headlines as "Kennedy Slain By CIA, Mafia, Castro, LBJ, Teamsters, Freemasons" and "Holy shit, man walks on fucking moon." The book was a [No 1 New York Times bestseller](#).

A year later came the 2000 US election debacle, which left Americans unsure for weeks about who the next president would be. The Onion's initial take – "[Bush or Gore: 'A new era dawns'](#)" – proved more apt than expected. When staff wrote the headline, they expected the answer to become clear before the piece was published – the joke hinged on the idea that the writers had been stymied by publication deadlines. Instead it accurately, and amusingly, reflected an electoral crisis.

Confronting that election was among the most memorable moments of Nackers' Onion career. In the 1990s, the jokes had tended toward pure silliness, "wacky and crazy stuff" that's "written in a news voice", he says (for instance: "Perky 'Canada' has own government, laws", from 1996, or "Jurisprudence fetishist gets off on a technicality," two years later). But

“from that moment on, America gets kind of crazy,” Nackers says. “I do think that the Onion entered a new era of satire.”

[side by side images of onion articles as screengrabs - first one says ‘supreme court rules supreme court rules’, second says ‘new bomb capable of creating 1,500 new terrorists in a single blast’](#)

The 9/11 attacks came mere months after the Bush-Gore election – and shortly after the Onion had moved its headquarters from Madison to New York, making the attack feel personal. Nackers recalls attempting to head to work in the aftermath of the attacks, seeing signs for missing people and empty ambulances in air that “reeked of electrical fires”. “That’s where it kind of hits home,” he says.

In the ensuing years came the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and “satire went to a darker place”, Nackers says. The Onion, he noted, was one of the few publications not to beat the drum for an Iraq invasion, with [lauded pieces](#) including a point-counterpoint – “This war will destabilize the entire Mideast region and set off a global shockwave of anti-Americanism vs No it won’t” – and headlines such as “New bomb capable of creating 1,500 new terrorists in a single blast” and “Dead Iraqi would have loved democracy”.

“I think the Onion’s always been kind of counter-culture. But that’s where we kind of took this stand and the real truth-to-power started happening,” Nackers says.

That strain of commentary continued through the election of Barack Obama – whose use of drones the Onion hammered to the end, with a 20 January 2017 headline reading, “Departing Obama tearfully shoos away loyal drone following him out of White House.” Then, of course, came Donald Trump and the melting ice cream cake.

A real-world intervention

But even Trump’s best efforts can’t stand in the way when humorists take action outside the sphere of satire. Last month, the Onion [submitted a very](#)

[real amicus brief](#) – a legal document from an outside party weighing in on a case – to the supreme court.

The case in question hit at the heart of what the Onion does every day. An Ohio man, Anthony Novak, sued after local police arrested him over a Facebook page parodying the police’s own website. The case wound its way to the highest court in the country, and a friend of the Onion staff brought it to their attention.

“We all thought it was a big fat first amendment parody law case that we all were excited about getting behind,” Gillis says. He wrote much of the [23-page document](#) immediately after their first conversation.

Unlike your typical court filing, it’s highly readable – and very funny, using humor to make its point about the importance of legal protections for parody. The website is weighing in “to protect its continued ability to create fiction that may ultimately merge into reality”, the filing asserts. “The Onion’s writers also have a self-serving interest in preventing political authorities from imprisoning humorists.”



An Onion newspaper box in San Francisco in 2009. Photograph: Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

“The thing that we lucked out with was that everybody involved with the case on Anthony Novak’s side is a huge fan of the Onion. So they were very much behind the idea of making this kind of totally weird and out of the ordinary,” Gillis says.

The Onion submitted the brief in early October. Since then, “everybody from the director of the Cato Institute to Webster’s dictionary has issued a statement about it”, Gillis says. “We’ve gotten emails from people at Harvard Law and Universidad Federal in Brazil – a professor there is going to translate it into Portuguese so they can teach it to their students.”

But if dramatic political shifts have forced Onion writers to find new ways to confront a troubled nation, at its core, the process remains the same, say Moser and the site’s managing editor, Jordan LaFlure.

“The news cycle has gotten crazier, and this job has gotten crazier, but we as writers absorb the news and react to it,” says Moser, who began at the Onion in 2014. “My writing process hasn’t changed.”

LaFlure agrees. “While the world has gotten crazier, the tools of comedy are immutable,” he says. “I think one outcome of the world having gotten crazier is that jokes are willfully misunderstood because they don’t fit with the person’s ideology. But we’re just going to stubbornly press forward.”

“Satire is a powerful tool,” Moser adds. “It reflects the world back in on itself to the readers, and no matter what the world is, it will hopefully shine a light on the craziness underneath it all.”

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The trail blazer: the rewards of setting up a walking group



Rhiane Fatinikun, centre, with some hiking friends. Photograph: Sebastian Barros

Wanting to stride out into the countryside with like-minded people, our writer established Black Girls Hike in 2019 and has never looked back

Rhiane Fatinikun

Tue 1 Nov 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 1 Nov 2022 09.35 EDT

I became a walking group leader by chance. In 2019, I was on a train going through the Peak District, and I watched all these hikers getting on and off. I wanted to do something new for my wellbeing, so I set up a [Black Girls Hike Instagram](#) page a few days later. I didn't want to go by myself and I wanted to feel safe and supported so I set up a group for black women.

It absolutely took off – for our first walk we had 14 people. A group is good for making connections. Manchester's quite a transient city. People move here for work, or stay on after uni, and their friends are elsewhere. It's a good way to make new friends. Everyone's on the same page – you're a group of strangers looking to meet people and do something you all enjoy. If it were a speed dating event, you'd have ticked loads of boxes already.

When I started BGH I couldn't read a map or use a compass. I've been lost – I've got the group lost, too, out on Saddleworth Moor in low visibility and horizontal rain. But through adventures you learn so much about yourself. It changes your mindset. I used to have loads of reservations about going out into the countryside, but when you actually go there and realise it's overwhelmingly positive and friendly, then you start thinking about all the other barriers you've created in your mind to trying things. It opens doors.

You do get people with old-fashioned values and set ideas about what a traditional walker is and sometimes you just have to forget about bringing them into 2022. But a lot of people are just happy to see you in the countryside. They enjoy it, so why would they not want you to enjoy it?

The language of hiking – endurance, challenging – makes it sound like you've got to up Everest, but it's just walking

A lot of people are put off by the language of hiking and the outdoors – endurance, challenging, etc – it makes it sound like you've got to up Everest, but it's just walking. If you're looking for some places to start, then [coastal walks](#) are pretty decent. You get great views and they're all signposted and

only go one way, so you can't get lost. Or check out local reservoirs, they're usually flat terrains and have benches to rest on. I really love the [Peak District](#) because it's so accessible. There's a train that goes from Manchester to Sheffield that stops at all the cute little villages along the way. There's a range of hikes you can do.

Social media's a really great place to find like-minded people. Look for applicable hashtags – for me, that's things like [diversifytheoutdoors](#). If you find a community, that takes the pressure off you. They'll tell you when to turn up and what to do. Do get the right equipment, make sure you've got a decent waterproof coat, because English weather doesn't love us, and some decent walking boots. Take loads of snacks and water. And enjoy it. Don't overthink it.

If you want to lead a group, check the route beforehand. I also use mapping apps like OS Maps, Komoot and AllTrails. They tell you when you go off track. Though if you're using apps, make sure you have a power bank and be mindful that you won't always have signal.

If you want to set up a more official group, look for help from voluntary sector organisations. With BGH, I did everything back to front. We're only now going through our governance. If you just want to set up a meeting, just create a social media profile and engage with people. They say your tribe will attract your tribe: people will find you.

For more information, go to [Black Girls Hike](#)

2022.11.01 - Opinion

- Rishi Sunak's only been in office for a few days – and the errors are already piling up
- It is getting genuinely hard to tell the difference between a real Tory MP and a spoof
- Could Elon Musk's era spell the end of social media billionaires?
- Ben Jennings Jair Bolsonaro's defeat in Brazil – cartoon

OpinionRishi Sunak

Rishi Sunak's only been in office for a few days – and the errors are already piling up

Polly Toynbee



The prime minister promised Britain a 'new age of optimism'. On the evidence of his first week, the worst is yet to come



Rishi Sunak at No 10 Downing Street, London, October 2022. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

Tue 1 Nov 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 1 Nov 2022 06.23 EDT

His first week has not gone well. It's felt long and eventful with a pile-up of errors that augur trouble ahead: politics is not a grasp of flow charts, but a subtle art. [Rishi Sunak](#) is a relative beginner and not, it seems, a quick learner.

His first great blunder, knowingly done, was appointing [Suella Braverman home secretary](#). What can he have been thinking? What Keir Starmer called a “grubby deal” boomeranged back within days. She will be nothing but trouble, with her [unravelling account](#) of her leak to rightwing allies. Her adamant pledge to cut net immigration to an impossible “tens of thousands” shuns facts: over [270,000 people arrived](#) in the year to March 2022, mainly with visas, while people arriving in small boats are a small but – thanks to the media – disproportionately visible minority. Her “dreams” of Rwanda and cruelty in cramming arrivals into squalid detention at the [Manston processing centre](#) has caused policy mayhem. But she relishes a firefight with ministers who want to both fill vacancies for scientists and IT specialists, and offer visas for Indians as part of a trade deal. Sunak left Michael Gove to pretend on TV that Braverman is “a first-rate front rank politician”. So much for the new honesty.

But she will be gone and forgotten soon. Sunak's dreadful error in [refusing to attend Cop27](#) is a far more serious act of political and moral stupidity. The insouciant arrogance of telling Joe Biden and Emmanuel Macron that he is busy, as if they had no "pressing domestic issues", ignores how much he needs them. He squanders the residual goodwill of the Cop26 leadership, the one remaining shard of the UK's diminished reputation, battered since Brexit by Boris Johnson and Liz Truss.

Banning the [king from Cop27](#) looks clumsy. News that Sunak could make a U-turn dash to Egypt having learned that [Johnson may go](#) looks panicky. If he only stays for a brief grip-and-grin, that too will offend. His downgrading of the climate crisis and removal of Alok Sharma from the cabinet is not just disgraceful, but politically clumsy: he's been warned that the right in Australia lost power after failing to take sufficient action on the climate crisis. While Sunak opposes onshore wind, with tax breaks for oil exploration, Labour's green prosperity plan and [Great British Energy company](#) to invest in renewables is proving popular and has been spontaneously mentioned in focus groups.

Nonetheless, Sunak has his expected new leader poll bounce; after [hitting 14%](#), his party had nowhere to go but up. Labour has only "dipped" to 44%, to the Tories' 28% [according to Opinium](#). Prof John Curtice is not risking his reputation when he says that historically, "any government presiding over a financial crisis doesn't survive at the ballot box". But the one chart Labour watches most anxiously is "trusted to run the economy", and here Opinium gives Sunak the edge by 33% to 29%. We'll see how long that survives brutal "choices" in the 17 November budget.

The expectation management has been comic to watch: be afraid of bitter medicine and "incredibly difficult decisions", with savings as high as £70bn threatened. In his budget this time last year Sunak proclaimed, "the Conservatives are the real party of public services", but now ministers are warned of stringent "efficiencies". George Osborne, the grim reaper of austerity, has been in to advise: he was good at devolving the axe so councils took the hit, and now ministers are told to take responsibility for "choosing" their own cuts of 10-15%. Look at the state of the public realm, largely caused by the Osborne years. The courts backlog means thousands of cases are likely to be delayed until 2024. The asylum application backlog means

[100,000 people](#) wait in limbo for processing, which takes on [average 480 days](#). School cuts are causing the social class gap in children's achievement to rise steeply. Health and defence are said to be protected, but the NHS needs far more than stasis to survive winter and contain its [waiting list of 7 million](#) and rising, let alone start that workforce plan Jeremy Hunt campaigned for: the service will fall over without real money for social care to release patients from its beds.

All manner of frights are threatened, such as cutting benefits and even the vote-winning pension triple lock. Freezing tax thresholds is a silent income killer. Cutting capital spending is anti-growth and anti-levelling up when it comes to northern projects. For once, Conservative county council leaders are protesting against the axe falling on the safety of children and the frailest adults, but they should be threatening mass resignation from their party. Expect maximum pain for these vital but largely unseen care services, along with slashed international aid and arts budgets.

Remember this: these public deficits will need repaying. Beware of protecting pensioners at the expense of children's education: neglect of the latter will build a greater future deficit in damage and lost productivity.

Expect clever thefts from Labour, stealing its idea of a windfall tax on oil, though the PM for Goldman Sachs will spare the banks, rolling in high-interest profits. He may cunningly cleanse his family's tax record by taking on the Labour policy of abolishing non-dom status. As was leaked to the Sun, he may [tax the UK homes](#) of foreign millionaires living abroad. But whatever he does, Labour will respond with iron fiscal prudence, anxious to recapture that hard-won economic reputation: without it elections are always lost.

But even if the very worst threats don't materialise, this budget will please few. Note the divisions in Torydom, with the Murdoch press playing it both ways: one Times leader is a paean to state-shrinking Trussonomics pushing for tax cuts for business, while the Sunday Times tells Sunak to go easy and "resist the urge to drag us back to austerity". On his benches, MPs from Sharma to Jacob Rees-Mogg to Roger Gale are all already protesting: this unruly party will not sit quietly through abhorred policies while fearing for their seats. The [Covid inquiry](#) will not leave Sunak unscathed, while

collapsing government in Northern Ireland is a result of Brexit, which he backed. Strike ballots go out to teachers this week, as waves of workers protest at average public sector pay rises of 2.4%, compared with the private sector's 6.4%.

Perhaps no leader could have shown unwavering leadership at this time, but his bad decisions in week one hardly suggest the "future full of opportunity" or the "new age of optimism" he promised Mail readers. He pledges rashly to keep to Johnson's 2019 manifesto, despite surely knowing that cakeism was always a delusion. The worst is yet to come.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionPolitics](#)

It is getting genuinely hard to tell the difference between a real Tory MP and a spoof

[Zoe Williams](#)



Given some of the unbelievable nonsense being spouted by ministers, it is no surprise that anyone should have been fooled by Sir Michael Take



Tory minister Mark Spencer, who defended Liz Truss over her use of a personal mobile phone for government business. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

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The minister for food, Mark Spencer, was on Sky News discussing Liz Truss's phone and the security breaches that led to its being locked in a government safe, like a lump of uranium. "We all talk on personal phones, don't we?," he said. "I ring my wife. Maybe there's some little man in China listening to the conversation between me and my wife." I guess what stood out wasn't the disconnected randomness – yeah, minister, *sure*, you calling your wife and the former foreign secretary calling her officials to talk about Ukraine, those two things are definitely the same – but that ["little man" and the strange immaturity of tone](#). He is a minister, so why does he sound like a big baby bigot? Is he definitely real? He must be – there he is on the telly, unless the clip is a deep fake – but if you were going to that much trouble, would you start on the minister for food?

Meanwhile, the former Conservative MP for Dorset East Sir Michael Take CBE, was [featured on the website of the Daily Mail](#), sparking outrage with [his remarks about sewage dumping in the sea](#), viz: "This is sewage being sensibly dispersed at St Agnes in Cornwall today. You'll see the beach is

empty so NO ONE is being harmed. This would of course have been stopped by the nit-picking EU.”

A sharper-eyed news source might have double-checked whether that constituency even existed, though fair play, North, West and South Dorset all do, so it's a mistake any of us could have made, had we cleared the hurdle of that name without wondering whether it was a hilarious play on “taking the mick”. Yet I have an unfamiliar sensation of sympathy with the MailOnline. We are in endgame territory with the Conservative party: it is genuinely hard to distinguish which MP is real and which is a spoof. If you want to know who is an anti-vaxxer and who has just had enough of experts for parodic purposes, it's getting to the point where you'd have to go back to the pages of Hansard, and a time before the internet.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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OpinionTwitter

Could Elon Musk's era spell the end of social media billionaires?

[Richard Seymour](#)

Twitter's biggest tryhard has taken over the platform, but the social media industry could be heading for multiple crises



‘With 112 million followers, Elon Musk is the attention economy’s biggest attention-seeker.’ Photograph: Dado Ruvić/Reuters

Tue 1 Nov 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 1 Nov 2022 05.37 EDT

Twitter has been taken over by its least interesting troll for \$44bn. When Elon Musk took a stake in the platform, he claimed it was to ensure the “future of civilisation” and preserve a “[common digital town square](#)”. Roughly translated, that means the world’s richest man has bought his favourite megaphone.

Musk, with 112.1 million followers, is an obsessive Twitter tryhard: the attention economy's biggest attention-seeker. From baselessly calling a British diver a "[pedo](#)", to his baffling stunt at Twitter HQ – [turning up with a kitchen sink](#) and uttering the punchline, "let that sink in" – he clearly thinks comedy is his metier. He reminds me of Christopher Hitchens' barb about an enemy: he "thinks he's a wit and is half right".

Musk says that buying Twitter is "[not a way to make money](#)". That's certainly true. The company struggled for years to make a profit. It makes 90% of its current revenues from advertising to just 217 million "monetisable" users (and [illegally using their private data](#) to target ads at them). But this is just a fraction of monthly active users on sites like Facebook (2.8 billion), TikTok (1.2 billion), YouTube (2 billion) and Instagram (1.4 billion).

However, [Twitter](#) has been great publicity: not just for Musk's zeppelin-sized ego, but also for his businesses. Tesla spends next to nothing on advertising, but Musk's actions generate acres of free coverage.

Like Donald Trump, Musk has a grasp of the potential of Twitter. Its salience has never been due to business success, still less to technology. As editor Nilay Patel points out in an article on The Verge, [its success is political](#). Twitter attracts a disproportionate share of addicted opinion-formers like journalists, politicians, writers and celebrities, the sort of people Musk wants thinking about him.

Yet, in buying his platform, Musk has also bought \$13bn of debt. Twitter was previously repaying over \$50m a year to its creditors. It will now, according to some analyses, have to find [more than \\$1bn a year](#) to merely pay back the interest. Even if Musk *isn't* out to make a profit, he can't ignore such losses. Stemming the haemorrhage will now be a top priority for him, either by [charging users](#) a subscription fee for verified accounts or, more likely since charges might drive away users, cuts.

The notoriously capricious boss had already indicated that before backtracking, he would sack 75% of the workforce to help balance Twitter's

books. But now, having already [sacked four of Twitter's top executives](#) – he allegedly claims to have done so “for cause”, apparently in a bid to avoid tens of millions of dollars in compensation – he is also looking for job cuts across Twitter.

Among the easy cuts for Musk would be staff who enforce measures to restrict disinformation, spamming and abuse. [Only illegal speech](#) should be restricted, he says. This position – allegedly that of a “free speech absolutist” – would mean that Twitter, already a [frequent alibi of repressive governments](#), would march in step with those regimes. More free speech for trolls and racists, [less free speech for dissidents](#). But it's a throwback to the years during which Twitter claimed that the best response to “bad speech” was more speech (meaning, more content to monetise).

For all the talk of a “common digital town square”, Twitter has always thrived on angry disputation driven by news and entertainment. This puts the company in a bind. On the one hand, the relentless nastiness is what makes the system so compulsive: the gut-punch of an insulting, racist or stupid tweet in your feed incites the cathartic banging out of quick, angry replies. Likewise, it has thrived on the emotional contagions that drive the [viral spread of far-right disinformation](#), from Islamic State to QAnon. Without them, Twitter would be more boring than it is. And the advertisers would have a less captive audience.

On the other hand, it has repeatedly [lost high-profile users](#) over trolling and disinformation. It has been forced, over the years, to ramp up its moderation efforts and ban high-profile users like Trump who, in 2017, was estimated to bring in \$2bn a year for Twitter. Despite such gestures, it has been [losing its most active and profitable users](#), who are losing interest – no doubt in part due to sheer exhaustion – in Twitter beefs over politics and celebrities.

Musk may think he can relight the old fires, but Twitter is not alone in struggling. Facebook user growth in Europe and North America [flatlined](#) years ago. Instagram growth is slowing. Average time spent on platforms, after soaring in 2020 due to Covid-19 lockdowns, is likely to slide. All social media platforms, indeed most tech firms, are facing tough times as advertisers [slash budgets](#). Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg has been

searching for the next profit model for years: witness his [failed cryptocurrency enterprise](#) and his struggling [“metaverse” project](#) causing the parent company, Meta, to [plummet](#) in stock markets.

The social industry may be approaching a moment of crisis wherein growth, revenue and long-brewing problems of political legitimacy coalesce in favour of a rupture. The industry has already fragmented on the right, as far-right users alienated by the moderation policies of industry giants form their own social media ecologies. But many others have long hankered for an alternative to the exploitative, manipulative and addictive systems designed for the enrichment of billionaires like Zuckerberg, Musk and TikTok boss Zhang Yiming.

The difficulty has not been the absence of open-source alternatives, like Mastodon. Indeed, some Twitter users responded to Musk’s takeover by trying to trigger an [exodus](#) to Mastodon. The problem is the “network effect”. The old platforms offer users advantages precisely because of the number of users they have. To make a dent in that would require a migration numbering in more than just thousands.

But we should keep our eyes open. It is just possible that – Musk being Musk – he will do something stupid and offensive enough to catalyse the crisis that at last loosens the grip of the billionaire monopolists.

Richard Seymour is a political activist and author

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[Guardian Opinion cartoon](#)
[Brazil](#)

Ben Jennings on Jair Bolsonaro's defeat in Brazil – cartoon

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[Seoul crowd crush](#)

Seoul crowd crush: PM and police admit failures as anger grows



Shoes retrieved by police from the scene of the fatal Halloween crowd surge in Seoul. Photograph: Anthony Wallace/AFP/Getty Images

Death toll rises to 156, as authorities admit crowd control measures were inadequate before Halloween disaster in Itaewon

Raphael Rashid in Seoul

Tue 1 Nov 2022 10.37 EDTFirst published on Tue 1 Nov 2022 00.46 EDT

South Korea's prime minister has called [Saturday's deadly Halloween crush in Seoul](#) a "disastrous accident that should not have happened", as authorities responded to growing public anger with a series of apologies.

Expressing sorrow to bereaved families as the first memorial services were held, Han Duck-soo admitted that institutional failures in managing crowds played a role in the disaster, and said the government would work with all ministries, agencies and medical institutions to ensure such problems during spontaneous events never happened again.

The country's police chief, Yoon Hee-keun, apologised for an "inadequate" emergency response. "We've judged that the response to the emergency calls was inadequate," he said, noting the large number of calls placed before the disaster unfolded.

Announcing an independent investigation, Yoon said: "We will thoroughly check the facts to see whether we took proper actions after receiving emergency reports informing us of the danger in advance."

The crowd surge was South Korea's deadliest disaster since [the Sewol ferry sinking in 2014](#), which killed 304 people and exposed lax safety rules and regulatory failures. Saturday's crush has raised public questions about what South Korea has done since then to prevent human-made disasters.

"I deeply apologise to the people to whom the recent accident occurred despite the state bearing infinite responsibility for the people's safety," the interior and safety minister, Lee Sang-min, told a parliamentary session on Tuesday.

Seoul's mayor, Oh Se-hoon, also tearfully apologised during a media briefing and said the city government would put all available administrative resources "until every citizen can return to their normal lives".

Seoul mayor makes tearful apology over Halloween crush – video

The death toll from Saturday's crowd crush during Halloween celebrations in the nightlife district of Itaewon increased to 156 on Tuesday, amid public anger over what some have called a human-made disaster.

A [Buddhist ceremony was held](#) at a funeral hall in Suwon on Tuesday for an office worker who died. The victim's mother and sister held hands and comforted each other while listening to chants and the sound of a wooden bell.

The previous day, students in school uniforms had come to pray for their classmate, a middle-school student who had joined the Halloween festivities with her mother and aunt. None of them survived. After paying their respects, some students sat on the floor in the hallway and [sobbed](#).

At a makeshift altar in front of Seoul's city hall, several citizens heckled government officials and politicians as they came to pay their respects.

Many young people came to the memorial site. Choi Ji-yoon, 22, told the Guardian that most of the victims were her age or younger, so they did not feel like strangers. "I wanted to commemorate them," she said. The majority of those killed were young women.

Several factors are being [blamed for the disaster](#), including a lack of preventive measures and crowd control owing to the absence of an organising body for Halloween. That night, an estimated 100,000 people descended on Itaewon in Seoul's Yongsan district. Only 137 officers were on the scene, mostly for traffic and crime prevention.



People mourn at a group memorial at Seoul City Hall Plaza. Photograph: Heo Ran/Reuters

The [Hankyoreh newspaper said](#) in an editorial on Tuesday that the Itaewon disaster was “predictable”, stemming from “a lack of a safety management manual in the event of a crowd crushing accident and authorities’ complacent response”.

While South Korea has a safety manual for festivals with more than 1,000 attendees, [the manual assumes an organising body is in charge of safety planning](#), which was not the case on Saturday.

In a Yongsan district meeting held days before the disaster, the conservative newspaper [Chosun Ilbo said “virtually no safety measures were prepared”](#).

“The damage could have been minimised and crowds spread out had the police and local government set up safety plans to block traffic to Itaewon-ro [the main street], which connects to the alleyway where the accident occurred. It could have also taken measures to make the subway not stop [at Itaewon station].”

South Korean president Yoon Suk-yeol has [instructed the government](#) to come up with a crowd control system for spontaneous events that have no organisers. He also [called on his cabinet](#) to take “heavy responsibility”.

The interior minister [expressed regret](#) on Tuesday for previously stating that more police would not have prevented the tragedy.

Collective trauma is setting in as South Koreans come to terms with what has happened. On Tuesday, the [prime minister promised](#) that the government would provide psychological support to all citizens affected by the tragedy, regardless of whether they were in Itaewon at the time.

A high school teacher in Gyeonggi province, who did not wish to be identified, told the Guardian that she recently taught a class about various holidays such as Halloween so students could learn about cultural diversity.

On Monday morning, the students removed all Halloween decorations they had put up last Friday, even though no one had asked them to. “Everyone, both students and teachers, are extremely sad,” she said, saying that it reminded her of the 2014 ferry disaster, in which most of the dead were high school students. “I am sorry and feel guilty that our promise to create a safe country was not kept.”

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Israel

Israel election: Netanyahu may be able to build coalition with far-right allies, exit polls suggest

Turnout for fifth general election in just four years reaches 23-year high as voters attempted to break political deadlock



Benjamin Netanyahu, chairman of the Likud Party, and his wife, Sara, vote in Jerusalem. Photograph: Debbie Hill UPI/REX/Shutterstock

[*Bethan McKernan*](#) and [*Quique Kierszenbaum*](#) in Jerusalem

Tue 1 Nov 2022 17.25 EDTFirst published on Tue 1 Nov 2022 05.35 EDT

The former Israeli prime minister, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), may have scraped a razor-thin election win with the help of new far-right allies, according to exit polls in the country's fifth vote in four years.

His Likud party is projected to win 30 or 31 seats, Israel's public broadcaster and two private channels said when polls closed at 10pm (8pm GMT) on Tuesday. The longtime leader's rightwing religious bloc is set to win 61 or 62 seats overall – just clinching a majority in the 120-seat Knesset.

Netanyahu appeared to strike a cautious tone in the early hours of Wednesday, saying that his party is “alive and kicking” but supporters would need to wait until final results arrived to celebrate.

The longtime premier's main rival, incumbent prime minister [Yair Lapid](#) of the centrist Yesh Atid, was predicted to win 24 seats, with his camp at 54 seats overall. Another four seats would go to a pro-Arab rights alliance, which may or may not lend its support to Lapid's centre-left bloc.

Worried about turnout among an [exhausted electorate](#), all 36 parties engaged in an energetic last campaigning push to encourage voters to leave the house during the 15-hour voting window on Tuesday.

A surge for Netanyahu's new partners, the rightwing extremist Religious Zionist party, might be what propels him to a third term as prime minister. The Religious Zionists appear to be set for unprecedented success, with 13 or 14 seats, up from six in the 2021 vote.

The polls are preliminary, however, and final results could change as votes are tallied in the coming hours. In Israel's fragmented politics, no single party wins a parliamentary majority, and coalition-building is necessary to govern.

A struggling Arab nationalist party appeared to be approaching the electoral threshold, Israeli media reported an hour after the exit poll, which would give it four seats and erase Netanyahu's narrow projected margin. Coalition horse-trading in the next few days could also paint a very different final picture.

Turnout on Tuesday was higher than it had been in decades in the high-stakes contest, as voters attempted to break the paralysing political deadlock of the past few years.

Election officials said that by 8pm local time (6pm GMT) – two hours before the polls closed – turnout stood at 66.3%, over five points higher than the same hour in the 2021 election and the highest since 1999.

As with the four previous elections since 2019, Tuesday's poll was largely a single-issue vote on whether the scandal-plagued Netanyahu is fit for office. Final polls published on Friday suggested that the race was once again too close to call, with neither the pro- nor anti-Netanyahu camps predicted to win a majority. Many Israelis were already bracing for a sixth election next year.

At lunchtime at a voting station in Talpiot Mizrach, a gentrifying Jewish neighbourhood in Jerusalem, many of those who had cast ballots said they had voted for Lapid. His coalition does not have a clear path to remaining in power unless turnout in the [disillusioned Arab 20% of the population](#), still not fully counted, is high enough to counter the Netanyahu bloc's slight edge.

“We are worried about a far-right government, and supporting Yesh Atid seems like the best way to keep them out,” said Laura Solomon, 55, who moved to Israel from the US last year. “Honestly though, it feels better voting here than in the US. Here there is at least a plurality of voices, and it feels like your vote really matters.”

Ze'ev, 66, a greengrocer from Jerusalem's middle-class Beka neighbourhood, said he would be voting for Netanyahu's Likud: “He's experienced and successful. Other people are jealous and try to bring him down.”

The scene at a school in the Arab neighbourhood of Beit Safafa was much quieter: of 5,600 registered voters in the area, only 100 had showed up by lunchtime, said Rami Ghita, who voted for the Arab nationalist Ta'al party.

According to a forecast from the aChord Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, based on samples from the Central Election Committee, Arab Israeli turnout stood at 44% at 8pm, which means Ta'al's slate, a small anti-occupation voice in Israeli politics, should be able to clear the Knesset threshold.

Ghita's friend Ibrahim Kamal said he was not going to vote. "They're all thieves, it doesn't make any difference," he said. "Every election, one party pops up and incites hatred against the Arabs to get votes. This time it's Itamar Ben-Gvir."

Perhaps the only major change in the political stalemate gripping Israel for the last four years is the rise of Ben-Gvir, the top candidate of the Religious Zionists. A former follower of the banned Kach terrorist group, with a conviction for inciting racism, he has promised to support legislation that would alter the legal code, which could help Netanyahu evade a conviction in his [corruption trial](#).

As a senior member of a rightwing coalition government, Ben-Gvir would also lobby for the deportation of "disloyal" Palestinian citizens of Israel.

His [rocketing popularity](#) has horrified the Israeli mainstream as well as international allies: the US and the UAE have reportedly warned the Likud that giving the Religious Zionists cabinet minister roles would damage bilateral relations. Netanyahu, however, has said such a choice cannot be made by outsiders.

Writing in the Yediot Ahronot daily on Tuesday, the columnist Nahum Barnea said such a rightwing coalition would threaten Israel's future.

"Netanyahu nurtured [Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, the slate's leader] and persuaded them to run together because he thought of them as the messiah's donkey: he's the messiah, and they will do his bidding. He may soon come to discover that they are the messiah, and he is their donkey ... That same combination produced fascist movements in Europe," he wrote.

The closing chapter of Lapid's campaign had focused on urging voters to block the far right.

"These elections are [a choice] between the future and the past. So go out and vote today for our children's future, for our country's future," he said after voting in his upmarket Tel Aviv neighbourhood.

Lapid was the architect of the “government of change”, a broad coalition of eight parties that banded together to remove Netanyahu from power in June 2021 but collapsed a year later because of infighting.

After the votes are tallied, the parties have nearly three months to thrash out a coalition configuration. If they cannot, Israel will head to yet another election.

Anna, 19, from Baka, cast a vote for the first time on Tuesday, opting for the Labor party, which governed the country for decades but is now part of a shrinking leftwing.

“I wasn’t going to sit this out but my friends with similar politics are still undecided on who to vote for,” she said. “It’s grating that my first election is the fifth one in four years. I hope we don’t have to keep doing this again and again.”

Tuesday’s election is being held amid a particularly bloody chapter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the UN warning recently that 2022 is on course to be the deadliest year for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank since the organisation started tracking fatalities in 2005. A total of 25 people have been killed in attacks on Israel and [Israeli settlements](#).

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Denmark

Danish election: PM may need new party's support to stay in charge

Former prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen could be in the position of kingmaker



Mette Frederiksen meets supporters in Køge, Denmark. Photograph: Mads Claus Rasmussen/AP

[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*

[@jonhenley](#)

Tue 1 Nov 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 2 Nov 2022 05.51 EDT

Mette Frederiksen's Social Democrats are on course to win Denmark's general election, but whether they stay in government – and she keeps her job as prime minister – could depend on a new party led by one of her predecessors.

Frederiksen was forced to [call Tuesday's election](#) when a smaller party that was propping up her minority government withdrew its support. She has said she now wants “a broad coalition with parties on both sides of the political centre” to pilot the country through tough times.

But in a political landscape split between 14 parties, both her left-leaning “red bloc”, polling at about 49%, and the rival right-wing “blue bloc”, on 41%, look likely to fall short of the 90 seats needed for a majority in the 179-seat parliament.

In the middle is Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the former prime minister who this year left his centre-right Liberals to form the Moderate party, which since its creation in June has surged in the polls to become the country’s third-biggest party.

Rasmussen has not said he will back either bloc, but if, as projected, the Moderate party secures about 10% of the vote, its 20-odd MPs would hold the balance of power in parliament – putting the former prime minister in the position of kingmaker.

Analysts have said he could use his post-election clout to engineer a broad coalition of more moderate parties from both the red and the blue blocs, something Denmark has not known since 1978, and even to argue that he should be the next prime minister.

The Moderates are “ready to work with the candidate who will facilitate the broadest cooperation around the centre to implement necessary reforms”, chiefly in areas such as healthcare and pensions, a party member, Jakob Engel-Schmidt, said.

But many observers have said they suspect that Rasmussen, who was prime minister from 2009 to 2011 and again from 2015 to 2019, and is known as a particularly tough negotiator, could hold out for a very senior post or perhaps even the top job.

“He’s a ferocious guy in negotiations,” Martin Ågerup, of the liberal thinktank Cepos, told Agence-France Presse. “He can basically manoeuvre

until somebody gets scared enough to point to him and say: ‘Look, yes, you could be prime minister.’”

Both Rasmussen and Frederiksen have said they believe energy shortages, rampant inflation and the security concerns raised by Russia’s war on Ukraine – such as the [apparent sabotage](#) of the twin Nord Stream gas pipelines near Danish waters – mean the country would be best served by a broad-based coalition.

With surveys showing the Danes rank security and defence issues higher than at any time in the past three decades, Frederiksen’s party has begun a nationwide advertising campaign with the slogan “Safely through uncertain times”.

The prime minister won praise for navigating Denmark through the pandemic but her popularity has slipped, partly over a decision to cull the country’s entire captive mink population of 15m for fear of a Covid-19 variant moving to humans.

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A parliament-appointed commission said in June that the government had lacked legal justification for [the cull](#), which devastated Europe’s largest fur exporter, and that it had made “grossly misleading” statements when ordering the sector to be shut down.

Her centre-right rivals, however, have also lost ground, with the Conservative leader, [Søren Pape Poulsen](#), hit by revelations about lies told

by his former husband and the Liberals suffering from internal splits. Both reject the idea of consensus government.

Analysts say negotiations to form the new government could take weeks, with the right bloc likely to try to match or surpass every offer made to Rasmussen's Moderates by the red bloc in an effort to regain power.

Denmark's ever-stricter immigration policies have led to support falling for the far-right Danish People's party, but a new party formed by another former Liberal politician, the former immigration minister Inger Støjberg, is on 8% and together, the three parties of the populist, anti-immigration right are forecast to win about 15% of the vote.

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[Malawi](#)

Ethiopians found in Malawi mass grave thought to have suffocated

Bodies tentatively identified as adults being secretly transported to South Africa on perilous ‘southern route’



Authorities in Malawi discovered a total of 29 bodies in two graves in the remote Mtangatanga forest reserve last month. Photograph: Kenneth Jali/AP

[Jason Burke](#) in Johannesburg and [Charles Pensulo](#) in Lilongwe

Tue 1 Nov 2022 02.30 EDTLast modified on Wed 2 Nov 2022 01.09 EDT

Dozens of Ethiopian people whose [remains were found in mass graves in northern Malawi last month](#) most likely suffocated to death while being secretly transported, investigators and campaigners believe.

The tragedy came amid a spate of incidents underlining the dangers faced by tens of thousands of people who entrust their lives to criminal networks that

promise passage to [South Africa](#), the most developed country on the continent.

Authorities in [Malawi](#) discovered 29 bodies in two graves in the remote Mtangatanga forest reserve in the northern district of Mzimba last month. These have now been tentatively identified as the remains of migrants aged between 25 and 40 on their way to South Africa from Ethiopia.

Compared with the plight of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean or the deserts of northern [Africa](#), the dangers facing those moving within the continent receives limited attention, even though the “southern route” – as the 5,000km journey from east Africa to South Africa is known – is as perilous as any other.

“All irregular migration routes are dangerous, and the southern route is no exception,” said Dr Ayla Bonfiglio, the east and southern Africa head at the Mixed [Migration](#) Centre.

Campaigners fear the true death toll on the southern route is much greater than currently thought.

“There are thousands and thousands in transit ... There could be so many [dead] we don’t know about,” said Caleb Thole, national coordinator at the [Malawi](#) Network against Trafficking.

[In a report earlier this year](#), the IOM noted that those travelling on the southern route faced “harsh experiences including violence, exploitation, abuse and a severe lack of access to basic needs and services”.

Police in Mozambique last week found [almost 100 people hiding in an empty tanker](#). Local officials told reporters that the men and 10 women had agreed to pay 2,500 Rand (£110) each to the driver to be taken to South Africa.

One told local reporters: “We left Malawi inside the tanker. Our destination was South Africa to look for jobs. In our country, life is tough. That is why we tried at all costs to go to South Africa.”

Two years ago, immigration authorities in Mozambique discovered the remains of 64 Ethiopian men [who had suffocated in a sealed shipping container](#) on the back of a truck believed to be travelling from Malawi to Zimbabwe. The final destination of the victims was thought to be South Africa.

[map](#)

Officials and activists in Malawi, a key staging post on the southern route, believe the victims whose remains were found in the mass graves found died in a similar tragedy. Early examination suggests the deaths occurred in late September, probably from suffocation.

A police spokesperson said [authorities were alerted to the mass graves by villagers](#) in the Mzimba area, about 155 miles (250km) north of the capital, Lilongwe, who had been collecting wild honey in a forest.

Thole said the forest was favoured by smugglers because it was remote and inaccessible. “This is a place where people can stop and do what they want. Our borders are porous and law enforcement officials are aiding and abetting this traffic,” he said.

Earlier this year, one of Malawi’s political parties, United Transformation Movement, [suspended its regional secretary](#) amid claims she had used a party vehicle to transport people into the country illegally.

A hub for trafficking is Dzaleka, a sprawling refugee camp about 50km from Lilongwe, the capital city.

The camp, which was built decades ago to provide shelter for refugees fleeing genocide and war in [Burundi](#), Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, now houses more than 48,000 people from east and southern African countries – four times its initial capacity.

In June, an investigation by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Malawian police revealed widespread exploitation of men, women and children by a highly organised international syndicate based in the camp. Undercover [UNODC](#) staff witnessed what they described as “a kind of

Sunday market, where people come to buy children who were then exploited in situations of forced labour and prostitution”.

Inhabitants of Dzaleka told the Guardian that traffickers used the camp as “a transit place for migrants they are smuggling to South Africa”.

A community leader who asked not to be identified said there were “bosses” there who ran networks spanning the region. “They work with people from [Ethiopia](#) and they have their people all over Here in Malawi they work with Malawians including taxi drivers, immigration officers and police officers,” he said.

They added that though the shipping containers were the most dangerous mode of transport, other migrants had died after falling ill when weakened by lack of food and dehydration after trekking through “the remote and wild parts of the bush to cross borders”.

“The way they transport them and feed them, they can only give them bread and some vegetables. Last time, two people died because of lack of food. They came to Dzeleka with a group of about 40 and two people passed away. The bosses paid us to bury them. They were transported at night and we buried them at night,” he told the Guardian.

There are increasing reports of abductions of those being transported, who are only freed after families pay substantial ransoms to traffickers.

Abdissa Bayissa, a community leader in Johannesburg, said that though families often paid money in advance to major smugglers in Ethiopia who were in contact with counterparts in South Africa, other less significant actors often sought to make further cash by exploiting Ethiopian migrants and refugees on the way.

“It becomes a relay, with the migrants taken from one to another agent and each charging their own money. They hijack them and demand ransom money,” he said.

Abductions often occur immediately after people have been smuggled across the border from Zimbabwe into South Africa – after weeks of travelling

from east Africa.

“The kidnappers wait for them and then hide them and send to their relatives asking for more money ... It is big business. Even police and immigration officials are [involved],” Bayissa told the Guardian.

The IOM report found that close to 51,000 Ethiopian migrants had gone missing since 2016. According to official statistics, 4,265 deaths and 1,707 disappearances from the districts of Hadiya and Kembata Tembaro were recorded along the southern route to South Africa between 2012 and 2019.

An overwhelming number of migrants said they had experienced a severe lack of food, water or shelter on their journey, the IOM researchers found. Most had suffered abuse, violence, assault or torture, while one in four had been asked to find additional money for bribes, despite already paying an average of US\$5,000 for the journey.

One suspected recent victim is Osama Saleh Mohammed from Amhara province, close to the frontline in the conflict between [Tigrayan and federal Ethiopian forces](#).

The 22-yearold mobile phone parts salesman disappeared shortly after telling his brother in Johannesburg that he had been taken across the border into South Africa in September, after flying from Ethiopia to Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe. His family have since received a series of demands from anonymous callers for 100,000 South African rand (£4,750) for his release.

“He called to say he was across the border and then said he had been hijacked. When they called me, I told them we don’t have the money and they rang our mother and told her they would kill him. But we still don’t have the money and we are just praying now,” said Amir Saleh Mohammed, a 27-year-old taxi driver in the South African commercial capital. “It is very painful.”

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Evolution

Rhino horns have become shorter in past century, study finds

Researchers say change could be result of selection pressures as human hunters preferred to target animals with larger horns



The study showed that rhinoceros horns have gradually shrunk across all species over the past few centuries. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

[Nicola Davis](#) *Science correspondent*

[@NicolaKSDavis](#)

Tue 1 Nov 2022 02.01 EDT

Rhinoceros horns have become shorter over the last century, researchers have found, adding the development could be a result of hunters and [poachers](#) targeting larger prizes.

Rhino horns were much sought after among hunters over the centuries, while modern poachers sell them for use in traditional medicines in China and [Vietnam](#).

“In the case of rhinos, people basically have always wanted the largest horn,” said Oscar Wilson, a doctoral student and first author of the research at the University of Helsinki, adding that bigger horns will fetch modern poachers a higher price.

Wilson and colleagues say a study of archive images of the animals suggests the size of a rhino’s horn, relative to its body length, has decreased over time.

A similar trend has been recorded for creatures such as elephants and wild sheep.

“Preferential hunting selection for individuals with larger horns or tusks resulted in individuals with smaller features surviving and reproducing more, passing on these traits to future generations, and resulting in an evolutionary change,” the researchers [write in the journal People and Nature](#).

They made their discovery by examining artwork and photographs of rhinos held by the Rhino Resource Center (RRC) in Utrecht. Some of the art dates back to the 15th century.

The team focused on 80 photographs of rhinos that show the creatures side on. They then calculated the length of the horn relative to that of the animal’s body before taking an average of these values and calculating the difference compared with the ratio seen for each particular image. As a result, the team were able to explore whether the relative size of rhino horns got larger or smaller over time with respect to the average ratio.

The results reveal that, relative to their body length, black and white rhinos had the longest horns, while Sumatran rhinos had the shortest. However, for all five species of rhino, the relative length of the horn has decreased over time.

While 65 of the rhinos photographed were in captivity, Wilson noted that the majority came either directly from the wild, or were born to rhinos who had previously lived in the wild. That, he said, suggests the decrease in horn length likely reflects selection pressures that the animals face in their natural habitat, although the researchers are now carrying out further work with wild populations to explore whether the same trend is seen.

While the impact of the shrinkage is not known, Wilson said it could be detrimental.

“Rhinos use their horns, so losing them [is] probably not going to be good for them,” he said.

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Russia-Ukraine war live: Kherson looted ahead of expected battle for city; Russian conscripts receiving ‘little or no training’ – as it happened

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Immigration and asylum

Harmondsworth detention centre to be emptied by the end of the day

Detainees say they have not been told where they are going as minister announces closure after protests over conditions



Detainees at Harmondsworth say toilets were unusable with no running water. Photograph: Guy Corbishley/Alamy

[Diane Taylor](#)

Sat 5 Nov 2022 17.48 EDTFirst published on Sat 5 Nov 2022 05.25 EDT

The minister for immigration has announced that a detention centre near Heathrow will be emptied by the end of Saturday after power cuts and a disturbance at the site.

A power outage that began just after midnight on Friday morning plunged the Harmondsworth immigration removal centre, in west London, into darkness.

About 100 people had protested in the centre's exercise yard, according to earlier reports. No injuries were reported at the scene.

According to detainees the Guardian spoke to, some inside one wing refused to go into their cells to be locked up for the night on Friday evening in protest against the conditions they were subjected to as a result of the power cut.

The minister for immigration, Robert Jenrick, said "perpetrators" of the disturbance "would be held to account and, where appropriate, removed from the country as swiftly as is practicable."

"There was disruption overnight at Harmondsworth immigration removal centre after a loss of power. Thankfully no staff working or individuals detained there were hurt, despite clear evidence of unacceptable levels of violence and disorder," he said. "The priority now is to move people to other centres while engineers fix the power fault and repair any damage."

One detainee who spoke to the Guardian accused the Home Office of subjecting people to conditions that [should not exist in a first world country](#) like the UK and said the water supply was also interrupted during the prolonged power outage, meaning people were unable to wash or use the toilet.

Another group of detainees said they were not involved in the protest and were outside getting fresh air in the yard when officials locked the gates. A detainee who spoke to the [Mirror](#) said he and others had been locked out in the exercise yard for several hours. Home Office sources deny that the gates were locked.

One detainee said: "I woke up just after midnight on Friday and everything was pitch black.

"The detainees on one of the wings refused to 'bang up' when it was time for them to go into their cells. They were saying: 'We don't have lights, we don't have hot water, we can't charge our phones, there's no air coming into our cells.'"

He added that there was no protest among detainees on his wing. “We went outside to get some fresh air and then the officers locked the gates so we couldn’t get back inside. We were outside for about four hours and it was absolutely freezing.”

He added: “We couldn’t use the toilets because there was no running water so a lot of us decided not to eat or drink so we wouldn’t need to go to the toilet. The conditions the [Home Office](#) put us in are not what we would expect in a first world country.”

On Saturday evening detainees said they had been told to pack their bags but did not know where they were being taken. It is understood that some who the Home Office say were involved in the disturbance will be taken to prisons while the others will be taken to different detention centres.

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About 100 people were due to be moved out of the centre to make way for new arrivals from [the troubled and overcrowded centre at Manston](#), but this process had to be put on hold while Home Office contractors and emergency services dealt with the incident on Friday.

John McDonnell, MP for Hayes and Harlington, who has Harmondsworth in his constituency, called for the centre to be shut down.

“Harmondsworth and next door Colnbrook have expanded into huge establishments with a history of problems for detainees who should not be locked up in this way,” he said. “The detainees are trapped in a system that is slow and demeaning and the frustrating factor is that most have their cases

for asylum are accepted and they are eventually released. The plain fact is that we detain too many people completely unnecessarily and these centres should be shut down.”

A Home Office spokesperson said earlier on Saturday: “There has been a power outage at Harmondsworth immigration removal centre, and work is currently under way to resolve this issue. We are aware of a disturbance at the centre and the appropriate authorities have been notified and are on scene. The welfare and safety of staff and individuals detained at Harmondsworth is our key priority.”

A Metropolitan police spokesperson said: “Police officers have been providing support to staff dealing with a disturbance at the Harmondsworth immigration removal centre. Met officers attended the location at approximately 19:45hrs on Friday 4 November. Officers remain at the location.”

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Twitter

Twitter slashes nearly half its workforce as Musk admits ‘massive drop’ in revenue

Claims that the social media platform’s entire curation team was dismissed prompts fears content could become ‘more toxic’



Some Twitter staff woke to find they were locked out of their laptops on Friday. Photograph: Mary Altaffer/AP

[*Dominic Rushe*](#) , [*Gloria Oladipo*](#) and [*Johana Bhuiyan*](#) in New York and [*Dan Milmo*](#) and [*Joe Middleton*](#) in London

Fri 4 Nov 2022 20.21 EDTFirst published on Fri 4 Nov 2022 11.35 EDT

Elon Musk ended his first week as Twitter’s owner with an indelible mark by slashing, by some estimates, up to half of the company’s workforce with little notice and abruptly cutting off employees’ access to their computers and work systems.

Many employees spent the day tweeting their goodbyes, as Musk revealed brands had begun pulling their advertisements, leading to what he said was a “massive drop in revenue”. He tweeted late Friday the cuts were needed as “unfortunately there is no choice when the company is losing over \$4M/day”.

Audi, General Motors, General Mills and Pfizer were among those who halted advertisements, amid concerns Musk will scale back misinformation and security protections on the platform. Advertising accounts for 90% of Twitter’s revenues.

Yoel Roth, Twitter’s head of safety and integrity appeared to confirm reports that 50% of the company’s global workforce of 7,500 was cut.

Yesterday’s reduction in force affected approximately 15% of our Trust & Safety organization (as opposed to approximately 50% cuts company-wide), with our front-line moderation staff experiencing the least impact.

— Yoel Roth (@yoyoel) [November 4, 2022](#)

Just four days before the US midterm elections, in which hundreds of politicians are running for election, there were claims Twitter’s “entire” curation team had been affected, potentially jeopardizing the company’s ability to counter misinformation, with one moderator warning of a risk content could become “more toxic”. [Reports indicate](#) that the public relations team responsible for managing communications with journalists and other organizations has also seen deep cuts. Other groups that have been dissolved, according to members of those departments, include the company’s [human rights](#) team as well as the [machine learning](#) and algorithmic ethics teams.

Yesterday was my last day at Twitter: the entire Human Rights team has been cut from the company.

I am enormously proud of the work we did to implement the UN

Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights, to protect those at-risk in global conflicts & crises including Ethiopia,

— Shannon Raj Singh (@ShannonRSingh) [November 4, 2022](#)

Some staff awoke on Friday to find they were locked out of their laptops and their access to the company Gmail and Slack had been revoked. Chris Younie, who works for Twitter in entertainment partnerships in the UK, tweeted: “Well this isn’t looking promising. Can’t log into emails. Mac won’t turn on. But so grateful this is happening at 3am. Really appreciate the thoughtfulness on the timing front guys ... ”

One employee told the Guardian that the platform could not “function as usual” on Friday because so many members of staff had been locked out of their employee work accounts.

The cuts come as the company’s new billionaire owner scrambles to turn a profit one week after he purchased the platform for \$44bn, a far higher cost than it was valued. Last month, Musk had said he was [“obviously overpaying for Twitter right now”](#).

Meanwhile, organizers including the NAACP are pushing advertisers to consider pausing their spending, citing fears over content moderation and hate speech on the platform.

Several companies have already done so. Musk blamed “activist groups pressuring advertisers”, accusing activists of “trying to destroy free speech in America”. The trend, however, appears to have started with the advertisers themselves.

Twitter has had a massive drop in revenue, due to activist groups pressuring advertisers, even though nothing has changed with content moderation and we did everything we could to appease the activists.

Extremely messed up! They’re trying to destroy free speech in America.

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [November 4, 2022](#)

Musk also claimed there hadn't been any changes to content moderation, despite internal sources reporting the curation team had been gutted. That team plays a key role in coverage of "civic integrity" events such as elections, breaking news and sports, ensuring users have vetted information presented as moments, trends and topics products. It is viewed internally as a key filter against misleading posts.

The employee added that flags from partner news organizations about possible misinformation on the platform were going unanswered. "The platform is likely to become more toxic with less healthy information to counter the disinformation or misinformation narratives," said the employee, who was speaking on condition of anonymity.

Twitter's policy on misleading content includes labelling contentious posts or flagging contextualizing information next to such posts. The employee said they had been informed by email that their position was under review.

Roth said the layoffs "affected approximately 15% of our Trust & Safety organization (as opposed to approximately 50% cuts company-wide), with our frontline moderation staff experiencing the least impact". He added that most of Twitter's "2,000+ content moderators working on frontline review were not impacted".

"With early voting underway in the US, our efforts on election integrity – including harmful misinformation that can suppress the vote and combatting state-backed information operations – remain a top priority," he said.



Elon Musk imposed vast cuts on the company just a week after taking over.
Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

Musk later tweeted the company's "strong commitment to content moderation remains absolutely unchanged". He later claimed – without evidence – that hateful speech declined on the site in recent weeks.

Staff had been informed in an email on Thursday they would receive word about their employment status by the following day.

"In an effort to place Twitter on a healthy path, we will go through the difficult process of reducing our global workforce," the email said. "We recognize that this will impact a number of individuals who have made valuable contributions to Twitter, but this action is unfortunately necessary to ensure the company's success moving forward."

"Looks like I'm unemployed y'all. Just got remotely logged out of my work laptop and removed from Slack. [#OneTeam](#) forever. Loved you all so much. So sad it had to end this way," tweeted one former Twitter employee.

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The firings have already prompted legal action in the US. In the UK, union leaders compared Musk's moves to the controversial firing of [800 P&O ferry workers](#) this year and called for the government to act.

Mike Clancy, general secretary of Prospect, which represents tech workers, said: "Twitter is treating its people appallingly. The government must make clear to Twitter's new owners that we won't accept a digital P&O and that no one is above the law in the UK, including big tech barons."

Musk has already fired the company's top executives, including the former CEO Parag Agrawal. He also removed the company's board of directors and installed himself as the sole board member.

The sackings come at a difficult moment for Musk, who paid \$44bn for the company and last month said he was ["obviously overpaying for Twitter right now"](#).

Musk has called himself a ["free speech absolutist"](#) and his takeover has been celebrated by many on the right who believed Twitter's former leadership was censoring them. Immediately after his takeover, [trolls flooded](#) the service with hate speech.

The sudden nature of the layoffs may also have fallen foul of California employment law and already looks set to land Musk in court.



Twitter's headquarters in San Francisco on Friday. Photograph: David Odisho/Getty Images

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (Warn) statute requires employers with at least 100 workers to disclose layoffs involving 50 or more employees, regardless of whether a company is publicly traded or privately held.

Barry White, a spokesperson for California's employment development department, said on Thursday the agency had not received any such notifications from Twitter.

A class-action lawsuit [was filed on Thursday](#) in federal court in San Francisco on behalf of one employee who was laid off and three others who were locked out of their work accounts. It alleges that Twitter intends to lay off more employees and has violated the law by not providing the required notice.

The prominent trial lawyer Lisa Bloom said she had been in contact with many Twitter employees now facing redundancy. "Elon Musk has a history of violating California's labor laws, as Tesla has been hit with a shocking number of sexual and racial harassment lawsuits. His workers are human beings who are all entitled to respectful treatment. This time a hard-hitting

class-action lawsuit will finally educate him that even the world's richest man is not above the law," she said.

Musk claimed in a [tweet](#) that every employee laid off was offered three months of severance. But the New York Times reported that employees were given few details about severance.

Simon Balmain, a former senior community manager at Twitter, told the Guardian he was "shocked, but not surprised" at the sudden job cuts at the tech firm. Balmain, who had worked at the company for a year, said: "I had finished work but still had my laptop open and we all received an email from the company about a reduction in head count. An hour after that my laptop flashed and was wiped, I no longer had access to my apps."

He said that the suddenness of removing such a large chunk of the workforce overnight didn't come as a huge shock as he had heard "credible rumours" that job cuts were coming and that the staff were "braced for impact". Balmain said Musk's comments since he indicated an interest to buy the company had been "bad for morale" at the firm.

He added: "I've spoken to a few people in the same position as me and what is very apparent is we had a very good corporate culture and since the news people have been really looking out for each other, including a number of former employees who have reached out and offered their support."

Maanvi Singh and the Associated Press contributed to this story

This article was amended on 5 November 2022. The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification statute requires employers with at least 100 workers to disclose layoffs involving 50 or more employees, not 500 or more employees as an earlier version said.

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Twitter

Twitter's mass layoffs, days before US midterms, could be a misinformation disaster

Internal chaos at the company – and the decimation of its staff – has created ideal conditions for falsehoods and hateful content



A sudden lack of staff and resources dedicated to countering misinformation has created ideal conditions for falsehoods ahead of the US midterm elections. Photograph: Mary Altaffer/AP

[Kari Paul](#)

Sat 5 Nov 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 5 Nov 2022 01.02 EDT

The mass layoffs at Twitter that diminished [several teams](#), including staff on the company's safety and misinformation teams, could spell disaster during the US midterm elections next week, experts have warned.

The company has laid off around 50% of its workforce, according to news reports; a figure that Musk and others have not disputed, amounting to an estimated 3,700 people.

The internal chaos unfolding at [Twitter](#), in addition to a sudden lack of staff and resources dedicated to counteracting misinformation, has created ideal conditions for election misinformation to thrive, said Paul Barrett, an expert in disinformation and fake news at New York University.

“Twitter is in the midst of a category 5 hurricane, and that is not a good environment for fostering vigilance when dealing with inevitable attempts to spread falsehoods and hateful content on a very influential platform,” he said.

Elon Musk and other senior figures have sought to re-assure the public. Twitter’s head of safety and integrity, Yoel Roth, [said](#) in a tweet on Friday that the layoffs affected “approximately 15%” of the trust and safety team – responsible for combating misinformation – with its “frontline moderation staff experiencing the least impact”. Musk also stated that he had spoken to civil society leaders at the Anti-Defamation League and the nonprofit Color of Change about “how Twitter will continue to combat hate and harassment and enforce its election integrity policies”.

However, members of those groups claimed on Friday that in laying off the teams responsible for retaining election integrity, Musk had “betray[ed]” those promises. They called on advertisers to pull funding from Twitter as risks around elections continue to mount.

“Retaining and enforcing election-integrity measures requires an investment in the human expert staff, factcheckers, and moderators, who are being shown the door today,” said Jessica J González, co-CEO of civil liberties group Free Press.

In addition to a portion of its trust and safety team, Twitter appears to have axed the entire curation team, responsible for creating guides to authoritative information often surfaced alongside topics with high risk of

misinformation. A London-based team member [tweeted](#) on Friday that the group at Twitter “is no more”. Another former team member echoed the claims on Friday, [stating](#) that the changes “will make Twitter noisier, more dangerous and less interesting”.

Twitter also appears to [have eliminated](#) its ethics, transparency, and accountability team, which is in charge of opening up the platform’s algorithm for external review and studying the amplification of misinformation and other content.

Although Musk has not made any concrete policy changes, nor allowed back any high-profile banned figures such as Donald Trump, the lack of staffing could pose a major problem for enforcing existing policies, Barrett said. Although automated systems are likely to continue to run, “you need human beings to pick up subtle forms of misinformation”.

“It does not seem like there will be many people at the desk in the office prepared for oversight of content that could contribute to the continuing erosion of trust in our election system,” Barrett said.

In addition to misinformation concerns on Twitter, cuts to infrastructure have raised alarm that the platform itself may not survive the influx of traffic expected during the elections. The issue was called into focus earlier this year when a whistleblower [accused](#) the company of “egregious” failings in security and safety.

An internal source at the company told Reuters that the infrastructure cuts were “delusional”, adding that when user traffic surges, the service can fail “in spectacular ways”.

While it is too soon to measure concrete impacts of Twitter’s restructuring, early tracking shows hate speech is increasing. Researchers from Montclair State University [found](#) in the 12 hours immediately after Musk took ownership on Twitter, “vulgar and hostile” rhetoric saw an “immediate, visible and measurable spike”, including a rise in racial slurs.

“What we have seen so far has been a canary in the coal mine for what might come in the days immediately before and – crucially – in the days after the election,” Barrett said. “This is an all-hands-on-deck situation, and unfortunately many of those hands are out the door.”

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Twitter layoffs raise questions about future of infrastructure and moderation

[Kari Paul](#) in San Francisco

With advertisers cutting ties and pressure to pay back loans worth \$13bn, the new direction for revenue has come under questioning



The layoffs come as the company's new billionaire owner scrambles to turn a profit. Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

Fri 4 Nov 2022 19.32 EDTFirst published on Fri 4 Nov 2022 17.54 EDT

Layoffs of hundreds of Twitter employees have raised alarm about the future of the platform as it continues to restructure under the ownership of [Elon Musk](#), who purchased the company for \$44bn last week.

Musk, upon taking the helm of [Twitter](#) has made sweeping changes to the company, on Friday beginning mass layoffs across a number of sections –

including marketing, product, engineering, legal and trust and safety.

The layoffs come as the company's new billionaire owner scrambles to turn a profit at Twitter after purchasing the company at a far higher cost than it was valued, facing immediate pressure to pay back approximately \$13bn in loans.

On Friday afternoon, Twitter's head of safety appeared to confirm that roughly half of the company's workforce has been cut, which would amount to an estimated 3,700 jobs.

The company has confirmed few details about the layoffs, including which teams had been affected. [News reports](#) and announcements from terminated employees suggested that among the teams that had been impacted were the curation team, the communications department, the human rights team, the machine learning ethics, transparency and accountability team, the internet technology team and the accessibility engineering team.

Combined with news earlier this week that Musk had directed Twitter teams this week to find up to \$1bn in annual infrastructure cost savings, the cuts signaled new directions for Twitter in terms of revenue streams and raised questions about the future of critical infrastructure and content moderation on the platform.

With possible cuts to spending on critical resources such as cloud storage and servers, experts are particularly concerned as the US midterm elections approach, when larger numbers of users than usual go to the platform to follow breaking news and share information.

An internal source at the company told Reuters the infrastructure cuts were "delusional", adding that when user traffic kicks up, the service can fail "in spectacular ways".

The layoffs are also calling into question Twitter's ability to keep the platform safe and secure, and come after a whistleblower [accused](#) the company of "egregious" failings in security and safety.

“Elon Musk’s layoffs to Twitter’s policy enforcement teams will destroy the platform’s capacity to stop the spread of hate speech, misinformation and disinformation at a time when the American public and voters need access to facts and civil discourse more than ever,” said Jim Steyer, founder and CEO of digital rights group Common Sense Media.

The reports of [drastic](#) cuts to the communications staff raised concerns Twitter may follow in the path of other Musk companies like Tesla, which do not communicate with the press. Musk, who has historically had an adversarial relationship with media, [dissolved](#) the electric car company’s public relations department in 2020 in an unprecedented move.

In response to Musk’s changes at the platform, advocates are calling for advertisers to pull out. The large number of employees being laid off at Twitter will make it “impossible for the company to uphold critical brand safeguards and content moderation standards”, said the #StopToxicTwitter Coalition, a group of more than 60 civil rights groups formed to sound the alarm about the direction of the company.

“Elon Musk has demonstrated that it’s not possible for him to keep the brand safeguards that have existed on Twitter in place,” said Angelo Carusone, president of Media Matters for America, part of the coalition. “There’s no more time for trust but verify, it’s time for escalation.”

The group had [publicly urged](#) Twitter’s top 20 advertisers to leave the platform if Musk followed through on plans to undermine content moderation practices. After Friday’s layoffs, it is encouraging those companies to follow through and pull advertising from Twitter.

Several companies have already done so, with Volkswagen AG’s Audi, General Mills and General Motors all pausing advertising spend at Twitter indefinitely. Musk responded to the effort in a tweet on Friday morning, saying: “Twitter has had a massive drop in revenue, due to activist groups pressuring advertisers.”

Advertising made up 90% of Twitter revenue last year, making the ongoing battle over brand perception of the platform critical to Musk’s business plan. He assured advertisers in an earlier meeting that Twitter would not [become a](#)

[“free-for-all hellscape”](#) and said he would [not reinstate any accounts](#) or make major content decisions before convening a new “content moderation council”.

The billionaire has also floated a number of ideas for other streams of revenue, including a plan to [charge](#) for “verified” badges, and creating an “everything app” that would combine several platforms into one, but has not taken concrete action on either of those ventures.

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- 'The man is an idiot' Constituents respond to Matt Hancock appearing on I'm a Celebrity
- Elizabeth Debicki on playing Diana 'I never watched The Crown and thought, this is a documentary'

[The watcher](#)[Television](#)

The English: Emily Blunt's incredible western leaves every other cowboy show eating its dust

This brutal, beautiful tale of the Old West is all oil-dark humour, elite-level acting and gorgeous, lingering wide shots. It's so fresh it makes you wonder if we've only just scratched the genre's surface



On a mission ... Emily Blunt as Cornelia Locke and Chaske Spencer as Eli Whipp in *The English*. Photograph: Diego López Calvín/Drama Republic/BBC/Amazon Studios

[*Joel Golby*](#)

Sat 5 Nov 2022 03.00 EDT

Hwushoo, pya-ya-ya-yang! Oh, what, that? It's nothing. It's – it's a perfect bullet shot from a rifle 700 yards away. Straight into my — yep, it's torn

straight through my torso. Little bloom of blood on the front of my shirt, look. Going dark quickly, isn't it? Actually I think it might be monologuing time for Ol' JG. Think I'll take a few steps out beneath the perfect starscape above us, you know. See that star? No? Oh I really am losing a ... Ah. I can see my own corpse collapsed blue in the dust. That's not ideal.

We're in the Old West, then, which was hell. There is no account of the Old West that does not touch upon this. It was just constant wooden-toothed men drinking liquor and dying over a card game, or families who travelled across the world for the promise of fortune and succumbed to wagon accidents along the way. Or it's thousands of animals slain in a concerted effort to starve out the indigenous Americans, or it's viciousness and inexplicable wasting illnesses and everyone is always spitting. The only people who seemed to have any sort of good time in the Old West were the guys selling bullets and shovels, and it's never really made sense that we so romanticise an era of backstabbing and hucksterism and people with bad breath wearing the same pair of long johns for six months straight. Still: cool, isn't it.

Are the rivers of the western not thoroughly sifted, though? The English – the new Emily Blunt-led six-episode miniseries (Thursday, 9pm, BBC Two), a collaboration between the BBC and Prime Video – proves that, in fact, we may have barely scratched the surface. The elevator pitch is: Blunt's Cornelia Locke, an English lady newly landed in America and looking for revenge, teams up with Chaske Spencer's Eli Whipp, a just-retired cavalry scout and member of the Pawnee Nation who just wants to ride up north and claim a few acres of homestead. Obviously, it's not going to be as easy as that, and, obviously, they're going to fall in love along the way. But The English is so, so much better than any quick explanation of it is ever going to be.

First: it looks absolutely gorgeous – rich skies, lingering wide shots, ominous shadows on distant hills, brand new towns being built in the middle of nowhere. One of the many things The English does particularly well is capture all the eccentric offshoots of the western genre that makes it such a rich vista to spend an hour or two in: weird little guys playing accordions, well-I-say gentlemen with strange motivations, eerie widows with no eyelids, verbal standoffs and physical ones, too. The two leads are acting at

an elite level – Blunt, who also produced, plays a really interesting new flavour of damsel without the distress, hardened but not hard, smart but with room to grow – while Spencer does an amazing job of making Whipp (Skill level 100, Nerve level 100, Luck level 100, Heart level 100, Speaking in Long Sentences level 0) feel like a person who could exist and not an unkillable superhero.

Created by Hugo Blick ([Marion & Geoff](#), [The Shadow Line](#), [The Honourable Woman](#)), it has dialogue undercut with just the right level of oil-dark humour to stop the whole thing from turning too earnest (do you hear me, [Westworld](#)?!) and drama that feels “actually dramatic”, rather than constantly trying to overreach towards being epic. I am not going to ruin it, but: you are going to want to stick around until Rafe Spall turns up. You are really, really going to want to do that.

There is a lot of visceral violence, though, and The English may well raise the question: how do you harness the brutality of the Old West and tell a textured story without in any way glorifying (or – possibly worse – diluting) the reality of the violence of the time? It was sort of fine for [House of the Dragon](#), because Matt Smith can’t actually ride dragons and I think people vaguely know that now, so seeing someone get their head chopped in half felt detached. I think the short answer is going to be: The English is, simply, not going to be for everyone. But anyone who can endure “a cool execution” is going to find an awful lot to love about this surprisingly brilliant – and funny and tender and interesting and cinematic – show.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/nov/05/the-english-emily-blunt-cowboy-show-western>

Blind dateLife and style

Blind date: ‘A compliment would’ve been nice. He was flirtatious with the ladies behind’

Dick, 80, retired architect, meets Nicole, 71, opera singer and language coach



Composite: Christian Sinibaldi; David Levene/the Guardian

Sat 5 Nov 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 5 Nov 2022 04.18 EDT

Dick on Nicole



What were you hoping for?

To meet a new friend and have a great meal.

First impressions?

Open, vivacious, lively and very friendly.

What did you talk about?

Our families. Our mutual interest in sketching, drawing and painting – we even showed each other our sketchbooks. Nicole's were full of lovely studies of people.

Any awkward moments?

Having arrived too early, I wandered around and eventually arrived at about 10 to seven in the hope of being there to greet Nicole. I found that she was already there and had been waiting some time. Oh dear! We had a flurried embrace.

Q&A

Want to be in Blind date?

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

What questions will I be asked?

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?

Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply

Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Good table manners?

Certainly. I only hope mine were as good.

Best thing about Nicole?

Her open gaiety and cheerful charm.

Would you introduce Nicole to your friends?

I would love to have the chance, and I am sure they would enjoy her company.

Describe Nicole in three words.

Lively, open and vivacious.

What do you think Nicole made of you?

Too talkative and a little disappointed, I fear.

Did you go on somewhere?

Nicole was staying with a friend who normally goes to bed by 10.30 – it was later than that when we left the restaurant, so we only had time to hurry to the station together. I feel bad that I did not deliver Nicole safely to her friend. I hope she got there safely.

And... .. did you kiss?

A chaste peck on the cheek, Brief Encounter-style, at the ticket barrier!

What would you change?

Many things, but top of the list would be quieter music in the restaurant and I should talk less.

Marks out of 10?

9.

Would you meet again?

I would love the chance to. We talked of visiting the Winslow Homer exhibition at the National Gallery but we did not exchange contact details. Silly me – or was it deliberate on Nicole's part? Only time will tell.



Dick and Nicole on their date

Nicole on Dick

**What were you hoping for?**

A good dinner with a nice, intelligent man, some witty conversation. Maybe a bit of flirting.

First impressions?

I arrived uncharacteristically early, so was already sitting at our table as there was no bar. But I made the most of the occasion. I had olives and focaccia with my negroni while I was waiting. He apologised for being late, which he wasn't. He was shorter than I expected, but had a kind face.

What did you talk about?

The menu. This dating process. His previous career, which he described, surprisingly, as boring. His amateur choir. My bilingual background. Regrettably too much about my history as a singer and coach. The art of Winslow Homer. Why I moved away from London and why he moved back. I'd like to have heard more about his adventures in his boat and his trip to Antarctica, which he seemed reluctant to expand upon. We laughed at his inability to take selfies or send pictures from his phone.

Any awkward moments?

He brought me a pink rosebud, which he produced between simultaneously trying to greet me with kisses on the cheek and accepting my proffered hand.

He immediately warned me he hates opera and lieder, and never gives a 10!
I feared the worst.

Good table manners?

Probably better than mine. He apologised for eating slowly. I tried not to appear greedy. Not sure I succeeded.

Best thing about Dick?

Unsurprisingly for an architect he draws really well, and I suspect his watercolours are charming. He draws really well – I was delighted to find we both carry a sketchbook. He was complimentary about my efforts.

Would you introduce Dick to your friends?

I'm not sure.

Describe Dick in three words.

Polite, self-deprecating, old-school.

What do you think Dick made of you?

Maybe a bit scary.

Did you go on somewhere?

No. But he gallantly carried my heavy bag and saw me to my train.

And... .. did you kiss?

Do people kiss on a first date at our age?

What would you change?

More mutual interests please. I would hope also for a quieter restaurant. It was deafening by the end of the evening. I loathe straining my voice to shout, and we often had to repeat what we were saying to each other, rather ruining the chance of any subtlety.

Marks out of 10?

7.

Would you meet again?

Unlikely. There was no flirting. A compliment or two would've been nice! He was charmingly flirtatious with the ladies on the table behind at one

point – he needs to bring that twinkle to his date. I also think he would prefer that I live locally.

Dick & Nicole ate at [Trullo](#), London N1. Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

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[Matt Hancock](#)

‘The man is an idiot’: Constituents respond to Matt Hancock appearing on I’m a Celebrity

Locals unimpressed by their West Suffolk constituency being left without parliamentary representation when the MP appears on ITV show



Matt Hancock (right) pictured with Andy Drummond, the chairman of Newmarket Conservatives. Photograph: PA



[Caroline Davies](#)

Sat 5 Nov 2022 04.00 EDT

Business is brisk at a local Newmarket butchers where the town's famous trademark sausages are a big seller. Less popular is tripe. "But that's exactly what he's been dishing out, pure tripe," said Dave Diaper, 75, of his local MP [Matt Hancock](#).

"I hope they feed him a whole kangaroo. Tail first," he added. "There's a few things in there I'd like to see him eat raw," he said nodding towards the offal section and contemplating a more local Bushtucker Trial.

Hancock's decision to appear on ITV's I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!, has not gone down well with the retired police officer, who until recently also acted as presiding officer at local elections. "I just think politics in general has been devalued so much recently," he adds.

Leaving his West Suffolk constituents without parliamentary representation at this economically rocky time jars others too, judging from the comments of local shoppers.

Hancock's justification, that he will bring politics to a younger, previously less engaged audience, "is a load of drivel," said Anne Rogers, 65, an administrator. The way the show is edited, and its format, doesn't lend itself to political discussion, she said. "It's not the sort of programme where people talk politics."



Hancock's justification that he will bring politics to a younger, previously less engaged audience, 'is a load of drivel,' said Anne Rogers. Photograph: Linda Nyland/The Guardian

He might fare better with his other stated aim, raising awareness of dyslexia, she thought, "but I am disappointed". There are pressing local issues, she said, including the recent axing of some local bus routes and a battle over plans for a giant local solar farm, that should command his attention.

To Matt Le Cocq, 25, who with colleague Oli Winfield, 30, is promoting an organic food business in the town's Guineas Shopping Centre, Hancock's decision merely confirmed a continued debasement of politics. "I am disappointed with politics in general," he said. "It's dumbing down politics for increasingly dumbed down voters," added Le Cocq, who lives in a village 10 minutes from Newmarket. How did he feel? "Disillusioned", he replied.



Matt Le Cocq, who with colleague Oli Winfield, is promoting an organic food business in the town's Guineas shopping centre. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

Brian Parsley, 75, a Remembrance poppy seller, voted for Hancock in the past, and would vote for him again, even though he believes “the man is an idiot”. “But look at the alternative”, he said.

He thought Hancock did “quite well in office”, as health secretary. “But I think the nail in the coffin was when Sunak walked right past him,” said Parsley, referring to the moment the newly appointed prime minister failed to shake Hancock’s hand outside No 10.

“I think he’s finished. There is talk of deselecting him, I’ve heard,” said Parsley. But he believes Hancock going into the jungle “is a brave thing to do”. “People will want to see him suffer in those Bushtucker Trials,” he added.

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‘I think he’s finished,’ said poppy seller Brian Parsley. Photograph: Linda Nyland/The Guardian

Labour councillor Pat Hanlon said Hancock should resign “so that the West Suffolk constituency can have a byelection and try to solve some of the problems in his largest town of Haverhill”. These included the axing of local bus routes, the bird flu epidemic affecting local turkey farms and issues over a local anaerobic digestion plant.

Andrew Stringer, the opposition Green party leader of Suffolk county council, said: “Boiling it down, this is more about self-serving than serving the public. Are we terribly surprised? I think there’s just a feeling of being let down frankly.

“Most insulting is when he said it was because he no longer has a job in frontline politics. Well, I’ll be in a village hall tonight, explaining policy to people. And I bet that my job will be made harder by the ridicule this clown is bringing upon politics.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/nov/05/the-man-is-an-idiot-constituents-respond-to-matt-hancock-appearing-on-im-a-celebrity>.

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[Elizabeth Debicki](#)

[Interview](#)

Elizabeth Debicki on playing Diana: ‘I never watched The Crown and thought, this is a documentary’

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)

She found stardom in *The Night Manager* and *Tenet* but how will she cope with the attention that comes with playing the most scrutinised woman of all time?



Elizabeth Debicki: ‘Am I going to tell you what I had for breakfast, or who I’m dating?’ Photograph: Hollie Fernando/The Guardian. Bralette and skirt: [Emilia Wickstead](#). Shoes: [Christian Louboutin](#)



Sat 5 Nov 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 5 Nov 2022 13.41 EDT

Elizabeth Debicki has had Diana, Princess of Wales on her mind for at least five years. When she first auditioned for [The Crown](#), the soapy royal family saga that doubles up as a tabloid flashpoint, it wasn't to play Diana at all. She read for a part way back in season two, though she won't say which, because someone else played it "beautifully". "Also, if I told people, they'd be like, *what?*" she adds, as if the idea is absurd, which means we can only speculate that she was up for the part of Prince Philip.

She thought she had blown it. "Well, I *did*, in the fact that I did not get the part," she deadpans. The Crown's creator, Peter Morgan, spotted something else, however. "They obviously saw something Diana-ish in my audition, which is really not what I was going for at that time." Her agent called her and asked if she'd be interested in playing Diana at some point in the future. She filed it away in the back of her mind, where it lurked until a couple of years ago. Then she got the call. "It was a much more formal, will you do this role?" She'd had plenty of time to think about it. She said yes.

Debicki lives in London, but we are speaking on a video call as she is in Mallorca filming The Crown's sixth and reportedly final season. She has come to my rescue, giving me clear instructions about how to make the

windows bigger, which she finds funny, as usually she's the one in need of tech support. "Any technology I use is running on some ancient program. People open it up and they're like, why is this from 2004? Why do you have 874 unread emails?" She picks up her phone and shows me her email app. It's actually 23,460 unread emails. That's disgraceful! "It's utterly, utterly revolting," she grins. She has friends who, when they meet her for coffee, open up her phone, just so they can delete some of her messages.

This is a rare day off for her and she is feeling tired. It is easy to understand why; much of *The Crown's* fifth season is Diana-heavy and deals with the final collapse of her marriage to Prince (now King) Charles. We talk for almost an hour and a half, and she fidgets admirably. She puts her glasses on and takes them off. She wears her hair up, and down, up, and down. She scratches her forehead, her nose, touching her mouth, her face, always moving, just a bit. This is all the more striking because most of her characters, from Jed in [The Night Manager](#) to Kat in *Tenet*, are glacially still, regally sombre, near-encased in their own sadness. One of the reasons she doesn't often get recognised in the street, she suspects, is because she doesn't much resemble her characters off-duty, and in the case of *The Crown* that's certainly true. Even after two years of filming, her long, straight blond hair came as a surprise to one of the makeup artists on set, who had assumed that the Diana hair was real and that Debicki's real hair was a wig. "At least we're selling it," she says.

On set someone went, God, you're so like her! I went, I'm not even doing it any more. Where is the line? I've lost the line

She has a dry sense of humour. She briefly swoops the camera around to show me the little flat she has called home for the past few weeks. The cast were in Barcelona, but [postponed filming](#) when the Queen died, as a mark of respect; she is about to head back to pick up those scenes again. It is a charming, sunny room that gives nothing away, not entirely unlike its current inhabitant. "It looks like this," she says, pausing to point out a giant clock fascia on the wall above the sofa. "I'm really confused as to why the clock is so big. Also, it doesn't work, but it still ticks. Which is basically me." If self-deprecation is an Australian trait, then Debicki, born in Paris, raised in Melbourne, is doing her bit to uphold the national stereotype.



As Diana, with Dominic West as Charles, in *The Crown*. Photograph: Keith Bernstein/Netflix/PA

After a decade as an actor, the 32-year-old appears, on the surface, to be smashing it. Her first job, straight out of acting school in Melbourne, was in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby*, with Leonardo DiCaprio and Carey Mulligan. She stole the show from [Tom Hiddleston's bare bottom](#) in the BBC's hit spy thriller *The Night Manager*, did a play with Cate Blanchett and Isabelle Huppert, more telly, more films, then moved into her blockbuster era, starring in Christopher Nolan's confounding *Tenet*, Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 2* and now she has the most talked-about role in the most talked-about TV series of the moment. After all of that, is she starting to feel more secure in her success? "Mmmmm," she says. "Yes and no. Still waiting for that big penny to drop."

She is aware of how her career looks on paper. "Kind of like a linear, upward-looking journey? But for multiple reasons, I'm not someone who considers anything a given. Not that long ago, I remember leaving a big movie set and thinking, well, if that's the last one, I'm happy I got to do it." Where does that doubt come from? A few places, she thinks. Partly it's just the nature of the business, and partly it might be that Australian thing again, which gave her a sense that to even get a job in the first place meant she was

one of the lucky ones. “It just felt like a big jump [to leave Australia] when I was younger. Maybe that’s cemented in my psyche.”

If the penny hasn’t dropped yet, surely, with *The Crown*, it is about to crash down with a loud thud. Was she ever reluctant to enter into the circus of it, knowing Diana is such a sensitive role and, inevitably, her part in it will be heavily scrutinised? “No, I wasn’t,” she says, firmly. “I went off instinct, and I didn’t overthink it. I’ve watched this show and loved it for years. I knew I was stepping into working with people who were extremely intelligent and very sensitive about how they went about creating the script and making decisions. So I never felt like I’d jumped on unstable ground.”



‘When I go to Sainsbury’s, is it gonna be weird?’ Photograph: Hollie Fernando/The Guardian. Dress: [By Malene Birger](#)

The Crown’s stable ground includes a massive research department, which helped Debicki in her preparation. When she was cast, formally, in 2020, she asked for “all of it. And when I got all of it, I remember thinking, well, that’s *a lot* of research.” I ask if she spoke to Emma Corrin, who played Diana in season four, from the age of 16 to 28 (Debicki picks up the story a few months later). “I absorbed the performance. I learned from it,” she says. But it was the scripts that brought it all into focus. “Suddenly what feels like a vast field of information is very quickly, extremely narrowed down to

existing within the framework that Peter [Morgan] has built for you. It was a huge relief. I remember thinking, now my responsibility is to bring to life what he has written, and his interpretation of these events and these people.” Then, she says, it’s like playing any other character. There are layers to peel back or pile on. “The physical ones, how they look, how they dress ... ”

It’s strange that I’m always on yachts. Maybe the universe of casting people were like, you know what? She gives good boat

Debicki does a slow blink, tilts her head down and looks up, her eyes set at a very familiar angle. Hang on, I say. Are you doing her now? Is that a Diana blink? She smiles, though I suspect it is more with patience than agreement. “You know, I did something the other day on set and someone went, God, you’re so like her! And I went, I’m not even doing it any more. Where is the line? I’ve lost the line,” she jokes. “But that’s understandable, because I’ve been in this for a long time.”

On the outside, though, the controversies rumble on. The Crown has reached the 90s, the decade of the annus horribilis, the divorces, Diana’s infamous interview with Martin Bashir. Many of the people depicted are still alive. John Major, [played by Jonny Lee Miller](#), has complained that aspects of the show are a “[barrel-load of nonsense](#)”, such as its depiction of a secret meeting between the then prime minister and Charles, in which Charles hints that he has doubts about whether the monarchy is in “safe hands”. On the morning Debicki and I speak, Dame Judi Dench has made headlines with a [letter to the Times](#), calling the show “cruelly unjust to the individuals and damaging to the institution they represent”.



With Tom Hiddleston in *The Night Manager* ... Photograph: Des Willie



... and as Ayesha in *Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol 2*. Photograph: © Marvel Studios 2017

Debicki is well prepared for this line of questioning. Does she feel defensive about it? “I don’t really,” she says, calmly. “I understand what the show is, and what it’s trying to do. I also understand the reaction to it. I think this is a period of time that’s been told many times over and will continue to be told,

and I know the degree of care and respect people enter into these stories with.” She says that to her mind, it’s a television drama, based on real events. “I mean, it is clearly fictional. I feel like audiences know that, because there are actors, playing parts. I never watched *The Crown* and thought, this is a documentary, or this is obviously true.” Even so, shortly after we speak, Dench gets a victory; the fifth season will include a new [“fictional dramatisation” disclaimer](#).

Recent paparazzi pictures showed Debicki, as Diana, filming on a yacht. This level of attention feels like a shift for the actor who is, as she says, more used to flying under the radar. Has she noticed it creeping in? “No, but I don’t go anywhere,” she says. “I’m very supported by the show. I think that this lead-up into the show coming out, and then people watching it, has a kind of energy which is quite heightened at the moment. Also, temporary?” she says. But surely, I counter, you have thought about it? “But what can I do with that information?” she bats back. “I mean, yeah, maybe, when I go to Sainsbury’s, is it gonna be weird? I don’t really know. I also feel like I’ve gotten away with it for a while. I have been really lucky to work on great, often big things, and also be completely incognito.”

She will admit that this is uncharted territory for her. “Of course there’s a part of me that goes, God, will that happen? But then I think the Australian in me is like,” – she puts on a nasal, extra-Australian accent – “well, I dunno, just sit down and have a cup of tea, let’s see if anyone watches it. That self-deprecating Australian thing really bolts you to the ground, which is helpful, in times like these.”

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Debicki was born in Paris in 1990. Her parents were both ballet dancers who met while working in Europe. Her father is Polish and her Australian mother had lived in France for years, and England before that. The family moved to “a very normal, very boring suburb” in Melbourne when Debicki was five. “They brought a lot of that [European lifestyle] with them to Australia. That used to straight-up embarrass me. I’d be like, why can’t you be like Julie’s mum? They have very white carpets and she bakes bread. And why do we have this stuff on our walls and why is there always incense?” She is grateful for her upbringing now, she says. “Maybe for that otherness, I don’t know. And the thing about having parents who come from other places is that the people we loved were always away from us, and we had to travel to them, and the world felt pretty small, in that sense.”

She was academic at school and often spent her lunch breaks in the library. “It was a happy place for me,” she says. “I think I liked the order of it, of learning, and someone pinning a gold star on your chest. That was extremely satisfying. Maybe it was because my home was floaty, and not like that.” She can imagine an alternative version of her life where she went to university, as she once thought she might, and studied history or literature, perhaps the ancients, maybe the Tudors. “I definitely have this alter ego that wants to be a historian, locked away studying something incredibly niche. My greatest form of peace and joy is the History Extra podcast.” Her parents were excited that she might go down an academic route, “because it was something other than what they had done”. But instead, it turned out to be the age-old story – a drama teacher spotted her potential and helped her audition for drama school.



In the 2020 movie Tenet. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

She got in, won a prestigious scholarship and put her historian dream on the back burner. In 2011, the year she graduated, Luhrmann cast her in *The Great Gatsby*, which mostly filmed in Sydney. She says that experience, her first job on a film set, was like a fever dream. “And then it was done. Then I went back to the shared house I was living in at the time, which was exceptionally dilapidated and exceptionally colourful. I thought, well, what the hell was that? And what do I do now?”

She had a while to wait until the film came out, but has worked solidly ever since. When watching her projects back to back, a common thread appears: sad women on boats. “It’s strange, right?” she laughs. “Trust me, I’m the first person to say, why am I always on yachts?” She’s on a yacht in *The Night Manager*, as the unhappy partner of an arms dealer, played by Hugh Laurie; in [Tenet](#), she plays the unhappy partner of an evil oligarch, played by Kenneth Branagh, and spends a lot of time on their boat. And now there’s Diana, unhappily married, hanging out on yachts ... “I love being on boats, don’t get me wrong, but I certainly didn’t grow up being a boat person,” she says. “I think the first time it happened was *Night Manager*, and maybe the universe of casting people were like, you know what? She gives good boat.”

Why does she think she keeps getting cast as these sad, affluent women? “I couldn’t really tell you, but it’s something people must see.” She shrugs. “What the camera picks up on, what directors see, what energy you give, is often quite counter to what the reality of the person is. Some people have said, could it be the way you look? Weirdly, it’s sort of not my business,” she smiles. “I’m just like, OK, if that’s what you see, and the character’s interesting for me to play, then I will play that.”



‘I definitely have this alter ego that wants to be a historian.’ Photograph: Hollie Fernando/The Guardian. Styling: Lucy Walker at One Represents. Hair: Dayaruci at The Wall Group. Makeup: Emma White Turle at The Wall Group. Prop styling: Lee Flude. Dress: [Tove](#)

In many of Debicki’s characters, there is a sense that there are countless hidden mysteries bubbling away beneath that still surface. In real life, she chooses not to reveal too much. It was a choice she made early in her career, she says, though she laughs at that now. “In the beginning, nobody cared, so why was I so protective? Also, what am I going to tell you? What I had for breakfast, or who I’m dating? Again, I think it’s the self-deprecation saving me. And as an actor, I remember thinking quite early on, isn’t it more helpful if you don’t know anything about me?”

We do know that she turned 30 in the early days of the pandemic, while she was in the US. “It was a very strange year to turn 30,” she says. “All my friends were very far away from me, on other planets.” She catches the slip and shakes her head. “Other places! I couldn’t get on planes to see them, and I remember thinking, apart from being around all these people, I’d rather just be in the desert, looking at the sky.” So she took herself off to New Mexico, one of her favourite places in the world, and spent the day in the middle of the desert. She is bad at birthdays anyway. “I am usually working, and I also find doing parties extremely stressful, because I’m always worried no one will come, so I usually avoid them. I definitely didn’t feel sad about it. I remember thinking, this is fine. I’ll just do this really small thing.”

Earlier, Debicki mentioned that when her agent first suggested she might be up for Diana, a few years down the line, she squirrelled it away in her brain. “Most actors have a little list of roles, we’d really like to give that one a go, and that’s where it sat, kind of detached,” she says. As we finish, I ask what else is on her list. “I knew you were gonna ask me that,” she says, squirming; strangely, for someone so composed, it’s the one topic that seems to throw her. “I’m really superstitious about that kind of stuff,” she explains, but she will say she’d like to go back to doing theatre. “Something really obscure. Non text-based,” she says, drily. “Maybe if you write it down, someone will call me. ‘You can play a clown, as you descend from the sky,’ or something,” she adds, wagging her hands in the air. For now, though, she has to pack up her little flat and move on. Tomorrow, it’s back to Barcelona, and back to Diana.

Season five of The Crown will be released on Netflix on 9 November.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/nov/05/elizabeth-debicki-interview-princess-diana-the-crown>

2022.11.05 - Opinion

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- The US is on a knife-edge. The enemy for Trump's Republicans is democracy itself
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[OpinionIran](#)

I am free while the women of Iran are not afforded the same luxury – but now they are spearheading a revolution

Setareh Vaziri

There should be no mistake about what this fight is for. It is a fight against a theocratic regime which denies the most basic human rights



Hundreds protest in London in solidarity with Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman who died while in police custody. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Fri 4 Nov 2022 20.00 EDTLast modified on Sun 6 Nov 2022 02.23 EST

I am a free woman. It's a luxury not afforded to the women of my motherland, [Iran](#). As an Australian with Kurdish Iranian heritage, the past six weeks have been a whirlwind of emotion. A cocktail of fear, grief, guilt, pride and hope. Fear for the safety of millions of Iranians living under an

oppressive rule. Grief for the hundreds of innocent lives lost, the thousands imprisoned and being brutally tortured. Guilt for not having been a stronger voice for a pain I know only too well. Death is the ultimate price for freedom in Iran. This disparity should not be lost on anyone living with basic human rights.

Iran is a country of contradictions. It possesses intense natural beauty, deep cultural and historical roots, and a formidable people from a kaleidoscope of ethnic origins. For 43 years Iran has been under theocratic rule, led by a supreme leader and a power structure that has instilled fear in the very people it governs, and that has ostracised the country from the global community. Its regime has a scathing report card of human rights abuses against political dissidents, minorities such as the Kurds, Baluch, Sunni Muslims, Bahá'ís, and the LGBTQIA+ community, among others.

The regime has used censorship to stifle the voices of dissent from poets, writers, journalists and free thinkers daring to criticise it. Most scathing of all has been the regime's denial of basic human rights and freedom for half of the country's population, its women.

Women have been denied freedom of dress, expression, equal rights before a court of law, and the ability to hold senior decision-making authority in the government or judiciary. Despite this, young Iranian women are reported to have the [highest literacy rate](#) in the Middle East, with a high percentage of university graduates, and have one of the highest percentage of university graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics when compared with other countries.

On 16 September, the death of young Iranian Kurdish woman Mahsa (Jina) Amini while in custody of the morality police for allegedly not observing the strict mandatory hijab laws, sparked a movement by Iranian women, largely high school and university students, who are now spearheading a revolution. This movement has galvanised Iranians' resolve to stand up and seek the freedom they deserve.

[Discover the Australia Weekend app](#)

There should be no mistake about what this fight is for. It is not a fight against religion but rather a system of government, and a fight for liberty that has transcended gender, class and religious divides. [Women](#), veiled and unveiled; men, young and old; and religious and secular Iranians stand shoulder to shoulder to call for regime change. In a country where a woman can be persecuted for revealing an inch too much of her hair, young women are out on the streets of Tehran and every major city in Iran, chanting “zan, zendegi, azadi” (woman, life, freedom).

Action by the government will send a clear message that we are watching and questioning their legitimacy to govern Iran

They are being arrested, beaten, raped and killed and still they continue to show up, day after day, demanding their voices be heard. To say that as a fellow Iranian woman I am proud is an understatement. I am in awe of the bravery and courage of these lionesses. Their iron will to combat tyranny and rise against hatred and darkness is an act of defiance that has astonished and humbled the Iranian diaspora and the global community, who are also rallying across major cities around the world, including in Australia, to show their solidarity and amplify the voices of those in Iran.

The Iranian women’s revolution has tapped into a collective struggle for women across the globe as we continue to face issues of equality and fairness, such as a continued lack of representation in all levels of government and business; the gender pay gap; and most concerning, the continued erosion of women’s rights in places such as Afghanistan, India and even the US. It heralds a strong message to all authoritarian and patriarchal societies that a paradigm shift is on the doorstep.

As the uprising escalates, so does the anger of Iranian women – intensified in response to the incredible savagery by the regime. There is no price for human life and no death is justified. The resolve of the Iranian people and the images on social media of young lives lost in this fight clearly demonstrates they have accepted that their freedom as a nation will come with sacrifice. There is no power greater than the collective human resolve. This is the realm of hope and where the promise of liberty lies.

Australia's response to this crisis matters. As members of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, with a strong international standing and a large Iranian diaspora, our response needs to be commensurate with our commitment to protect the universality of human rights and the promotion and progress of social inclusion by ensuring equal rights for women and young girls. Action by the Australian government will send a clear message not only to the Iranian regime, that we are watching and questioning their legitimacy to govern Iran, but also to all migrants who lovingly call Australia home, that they matter and that our government will not remain a spectator while humans suffer.

The Australian government has provided a message of solidarity and [publicly condemned](#) the barbaric response of the regime against innocent protesters, however, to date I have seen no announcement of definitive actions. The Canadian government, for instance, [several weeks ago](#) announced targeted sanctions against officials and their affiliates within the regime's power structure.

Without action we fail in our commitments and the very human rights we claim to protect. We fail in recognising that inequality and injustice against women and the vulnerable anywhere in the world is injustice against all.

Human beings are members of a whole, in creation of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain, other members uneasy will remain." Saadi, 13th-century Persian poet.

Setareh Vaziri is an Iranian-Australian with Kurdish heritage. Born in Iran, she migrated to Australia with her family in the early 90s and resides in Melbourne. She is a mother of two girls, a writer and an advocate of women's rights. She works in financial crime mitigation in the banking industry

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[OpinionUS midterm elections 2022](#)

The US is on a knife-edge. The enemy for Trump's Republicans is democracy itself

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



Most candidates from the GOP in these midterm elections refuse democracy's most basic tenet: accepting the voters' verdict



Donald Trump with Kari Lake at a rally in January. Lake has refused to say whether she would accept the result if she is not elected governor of Arizona on Tuesday. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 4 Nov 2022 13.36 EDT Last modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 14.45 EDT

As in all the best horror movies, at first glance everything looks normal. It's a classic scene of the American autumn: campaign rallies outside community centres, battle buses emblazoned with candidates' smiling faces, kids wearing badges and holding up signs, while TV screens fill with debates, punditry and an endless loop of focus-grouped ads. Even the predicted outcome of Tuesday's US midterm elections fits a template as familiar as falling leaves. Most experts agree that the [Democrats](#) will take a hit, losing control of at least one or perhaps both chambers of Congress, because they are the incumbent party – and incumbent parties almost always suffer in midterm – and because times are unusually tough. Inflation, interest rates, petrol prices, fear of crime: they're all up. Couple that with a president set to turn 80 this month whose approval ratings have often plumbed the depths, and all the elements are in place for the Democrats to take a midterm beating, losing ground even in states they once counted as solidly their own.

But look closer and you see something else. Because next week's results will decide more than just whether the red team or the blue team takes control of the House of Representatives and the Senate, on which hangs Joe Biden's

ability to get things done. Next week's elections will also help determine whether, and for how much longer, the US will remain a genuine democracy.

It sounds hyperbolic and that, too, is an American tradition. Candidates always tell the crowds, "This is the most important election of my lifetime" and plenty will have heard Biden's warning, delivered on Wednesday, that democracy itself is on the ballot in that same spirit. They will have assumed that when the president said, "[In our bones, we know democracy is at risk](#)" it was so much campaign talk. But Biden was scarcely exaggerating.

[More than 370 Republican candidates](#) for some of America's highest offices have joined Donald Trump in his big lie of election denial, either casting doubt on or wholly rejecting the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential result. That means a majority of Republicans running for those key positions refuse democracy's most basic act: accepting the verdict of the voters.

It's comforting to pretend they're doing it solely to soothe Trump's ego, to avoid angering him by conceding that the ex-president lost to Biden fair and square. Keeping Trump sweet is a necessary tactic in a Republican party where he remains the dominant figure, [reportedly set to launch another presidential bid](#) later this month, whose endorsement or disapproval is enough to make or break a career. But Republicans' election denialism is not confined to the past; it applies to the future, too. Several of the party's candidates have refused to say that they will accept the outcome of Tuesday's vote should they lose. "[I'm going to win the election, and I will accept that result,](#)" is how Kari Lake, would-be governor of Arizona, puts it. Some might spin that as mere election eve bullishness, but without losers' consent democracy cannot function.

More sinister still, several of these democracy deniers are running for the very state-level posts that will oversee and certify future elections, including the presidential contest of 2024. And they are brazen in their admission that they will abuse the powers of those offices to boost their side and shut out their opponents. "Republicans will never lose another election in Wisconsin after I'm elected governor," is the promise of one Tim Michels, who seeks to lead that state – and it was not a promise that he would be popular. It's worth recalling that it was in Wisconsin two years ago that a group of Republican

office holders [moved to ignore the democratic choice](#) of that state's voters, who had backed Biden, and instead declare Wisconsin for Trump in the electoral college. If they were to try that trick again in 2024, they might have an ally in the governor's mansion.

If all of this seems too abstract, consider the Republicans' new attitude to political violence. Once it would have been a matter of bland consensus that no political objective should ever be secured by brute force. But only a handful of [Republicans](#) could bring themselves to hold even that fundamental position following the storming of Capitol Hill and the attempted insurrection of 6 January 2021. The rest refused to vote for the impeachment of Trump for his role in fomenting that violence and, if they condemned the rioters themselves, it was usually in terms qualified and mealy-mouthed.

We've seen it again in the last week, after the vicious assault in his home of the 82-year-old husband of House speaker Nancy Pelosi. Paul Pelosi had his skull fractured with a hammer, the alleged assailant a man whose head had been filled with [far-right shibboleths](#) including the supposedly stolen election of 2020. And yet the likes of Lake saw the attack as [a laughing matter](#), while other [Republicans \(and their ally Elon Musk\)](#) concocted or spread conspiracy theories that cast doubt on the attack. This in an era when recorded [threats against members of Congress rose tenfold](#) in the five years after Trump was elected in 2016.

The Republican party's shift away from democratic norms is no longer confined to one man, even if he embodies it and accelerates it. It is embedded in the ethos of the party now. Reversing that trend is a daunting prospect because of another shift, one that has been apparent for a while but which is taking especially vivid form in these midterm elections. It is the polarisation of information, so that Americans now exist in two distinct spheres of knowledge, each one barely touching the other.

I witnessed it for myself this week, as I covered an [especially intense senate race in Georgia](#). News came that, in a previous age, would have been devastating for a candidate. A second woman stepped forward to say, [on camera](#), that the staunchly anti-abortion Republican Herschel Walker had pressured her to have an abortion and had paid for it. Yet when I put that

news to Republicans gathering at a Walker rally in Madison, not one of them was fazed by it. They just assumed it was the false concoction of the “mainstream media”.

This poses its own danger for democracy. Because there can be no collective decision-making – which is what democracy amounts to – without a collective, agreed-upon basis of facts. If we can’t first agree that the house is on fire, we can’t begin to talk about putting out the flames.

Whatever the outcome on Tuesday and in the long days of counting that may follow, this is a moment of peril for the United States. The world’s most powerful democracy is losing the reflexes and habits that make democracy possible. And, as in all the most terrifying horror movies, the threat is coming from inside the house.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist. Listen to his Politics Weekly America podcast [here](#)

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OpinionNuclear weapons

Sixty years ago, true statecraft avoided a nuclear war. We need that again over Ukraine

Jonathan Steele



The danger of a quick slide into all-out nuclear war between Russia and the US is less, but in other ways the risk we face is more alarming



US president John F Kennedy (right) and USSR leader Nikita Khrushchev at talks in Vienna, a year before the Cuban missile crisis. Photograph: Interfoto/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 4 Nov 2022 12.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 4 Nov 2022 14.02 EDT

Anyone who hoped that [Vladimir Putin](#) would declare victory in Ukraine and withdraw his failing troops must now admit that no such outcome is realistic. In a revealing quote during a meeting last week with about a hundred academics from 40 countries, Putin rejected it.

Fyodor Lukyanov, a highly respected thinktank editor who was the meeting's moderator, had the courage to [ask the Russian president](#) if he would retreat like the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev did in the 1962 Cuban crisis. "Certainly not," Putin replied. To general laughter, according to the Kremlin transcript, he went on: "I cannot imagine myself in the role of Khrushchev. No way."

The amusement was presumably prompted not just by the physical and attitudinal contrast between Putin, the cold disciplinarian and fitness freak, and Khrushchev, the pot-bellied and jolly reformer who ruled Russia erratically after Stalin's death. Everyone remembered how Khrushchev was [dumped out of power](#) by his colleagues two years after the Cuban adventure.

Putin's comment leaves us facing the bleakest of scenarios. We now have no prospect of unilateral Russian retreat. It comes on top of the grim reality that there is no basis for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine since Putin made the stupid mistake in September of [annexing four Ukrainian provinces](#), thereby undermining any chance of mutual concessions and an agreed pull-back, since the Russian parliament now considers the regions part of Russia.



A Soviet short-range missile deployed during the 1962 crisis on display at the Morro Cabana complex in Havana. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

As the fighting has intensified, both sides have increased their demands and hardened their positions. Back in March, a month after the Russian invasion, [a deal was possible](#). Putin had recognised his dispatch of troops to occupy Kyiv and effect regime change had failed on the battlefield. Reports suggest Putin mainly wanted Ukraine to renounce its ambition to join Nato and accept autonomy for Donetsk and Luhansk, in line with the Minsk agreements of 2015. Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the Ukrainian president, was willing to consider Russia's demands in exchange for a ceasefire and a Russian withdrawal, while the status of Crimea was left for later discussion.

That did not happen. Enter Joe Biden and Boris Johnson, their interventions, and the sense that what had been a war to defend and restore Ukraine's sovereignty had become a proxy war between the west and Russia.

And at the back of it all lurks the nuclear mushroom cloud. Not since 1962 has the world been in such danger. The [crisis of October 1962](#) was worse than today's confrontation in one key respect. The working assumption was that any use of force by the US president, John F Kennedy, to stop Soviet ships carrying nuclear-tipped missiles to Cuba would quickly escalate into a launch of nuclear weapons at American and Soviet cities. Both superpowers put their arsenals on high alert. The world faced the existential threat of global suicide.

In today's crisis the talk is of using so-called tactical nuclear weapons. Tactical is an elastic concept, of course, and today's US nuclear bombs, like the B61s that Biden is [sending to US bases in Britain](#), are 30 times as powerful as the one dropped on Hiroshima. The Pentagon released the unclassified sections of its long-delayed [Nuclear Posture Review](#) last week. They show that efforts by arms control experts to persuade the Biden administration to support "[no first use](#)" have failed. The US will not abandon its longstanding readiness to escalate to the nuclear level and respond with nuclear weapons to a non-nuclear conventional attack. Russian doctrine is depressingly similar, and Putin has said he will use whatever weaponry is needed if Russian territory comes under attack.

Biden has shown some restraint. He [has resisted Ukrainian requests](#) for long-range rockets that could hit Russian cities and provoke an all-out war between Russian and Nato forces. He has turned down Zelenskiy's call for Nato to enforce a [no-fly zone](#) over Ukraine. He has not sent US troops to Ukraine, and made sure no other Nato country sends troops either.

But even though the risks of a quick slide into all-out nuclear war are less today than in 1962, there are other dangers inherent in today's crisis that make it more alarming.

First among them is the absence of any negotiating forum or an agenda for mutual concessions. Both sides want military victory and are lured by the mirage that it is obtainable. There is not even a basis for a ceasefire, since each side is sure its opponent will use a truce to train more troops, obtain more weaponry and regroup its forces into better positions.

In 1962 there was a relatively simple basis for de-escalating and resolving the crisis quickly. Khrushchev's dispatch of nuclear missiles to Cuba was not prompted by strategic necessity or the need to defend Soviet territory. It was a gamble and an effort to achieve strategic parity with US power on the cheap. Faced with Kennedy's determination to use force, Khrushchev could and did make a U-turn. To make it less humiliating for him, and give the impression of mutual concessions, Kennedy publicly pledged not to invade Cuba. He also agreed to withdraw the outdated medium-range Jupiter missiles that were deployed close to the Soviet border in Turkey. As a gesture of goodwill Khrushchev offered not to publicise this US concession.

After 13 days of nail-biting tension, the 1962 crisis ended with a breath of common sense and statecraft on both sides. If only the same qualities could be revived over Ukraine today.

- Jonathan Steele is a former Guardian correspondent in Moscow

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[Guardian Opinion cartoon](#)
[Rishi Sunak](#)

Martin Rowson on the British politics bonfire — cartoon

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2022.11.05 - Around the world

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US midterm elections 2022

Republicans appear better positioned than ever ahead of midterms

History shows that the president's party typically loses seats in midterm, and Democrats seem likely to follow that pattern



Republicans' prospects have grown brighter as more voters identify the economy as their top priority, after many Democrats spent the summer campaigning on the importance of abortion rights. Photograph: Paul Ratje/Reuters

[Joan E Greve](#)

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Sat 5 Nov 2022 02.00 EDT

With just a few days left before polls close in America's crucial midterm elections, [Republicans](#) appear better positioned than ever to regain control of the House of Representatives and potentially the Senate as well.

History shows that the president's party typically loses seats in midterm elections, and despite some optimistic signs over the summer, [Democrats](#) now seem likely to follow that pattern on 8 November.

Republicans' prospects have grown brighter as more voters identify the economy as their top priority, after many Democrats spent the summer campaigning on the importance of abortion rights following the supreme court's reversal of Roe v Wade in June.

An [ABC News/Ipsos poll](#) taken last week showed that 49% of Americans named the economy or inflation as the most important issue determining their vote for Congress, compared to 14% who said the same of abortion.

Surveys show Republicans enjoy an advantage with voters when it comes to economic concerns, and the party's candidates have gained steam in the polls as Americans fret over rising prices and the possibility of a recession. Republicans now hold a 1.3-point advantage over Democrats on the generic congressional ballot, [according to the FiveThirtyEight average](#). One survey from the Republican polling firm Cygnal found the party with a three-point lead on the generic ballot, representing a four-point swing in five weeks.

"I expect the GOP to add another one to two points to their generic lead in the closing week," Brent Buchanan, Cygnal's president and founder, said. "It's much better to be a Republican candidate right now than a Democratic one."

Given Democrats' narrow majorities in both chambers of Congress, Republicans only need to flip a handful of House seats and a single Senate seat to regain control, and they are heavily favored to capture control of at least one if not both chambers.

This week, the Cook Political Report [moved another 10 House seats](#) in Republicans' direction, underscoring how Democrats have been forced to fight on an expanded map in the final weeks before election day. Congressional districts that Joe Biden won by double digits two years ago now appear to be in play, which has forced Democrats to defend seats previously considered to be safe. Republicans will also enjoy the benefits of

a favorable round of redistricting following the 2020 census, which allowed the party to reconfigure the House map in a number of battleground states.

On Wednesday, the Congressional Leadership Fund, a Super Pac supporting House Republicans, announced a \$5.6m ad blitz in Democratic-held districts that had attracted little attention earlier in the campaign cycle. The CLF is spending \$1.8m to try to unseat Congressman Sean Casten, whose seat was just moved from likely Democratic to lean Democratic by the Cook Political Report. Biden carried Casten's district in the suburbs of Chicago by 11 points in 2020.

“Enthusiasm behind Republicans’ fight to win the House majority continues to grow every day,” said Dan Conston, the president of CLF. “All cycle we made it our priority to expand the map as far as possible and late breakers are giving us the opportunity to press even deeper in the final stretch.”

Democrats’ Senate prospects appear similarly grim. As of this week, FiveThirtyEight gives Republicans [the narrowest of advantages](#) to take back the Senate, marking the first since July that Democrats were not favored to maintain control of the upper chamber. Democratic incumbents previously expected to hold on to their seats have watched their polling advantages vanish in the past month.

[One poll](#) conducted by the Saint Anselm College Survey Center showed the Democratic senator Maggie Hassan trailing her Republican opponent, Don Bolduc, by one point, marking a seven-point swing in a month. On Thursday, Republican Herschel Walker also took the lead in the Georgia Senate race for the first time since June, according to [FiveThirtyEight’s polling average](#). The Democratic senator Raphael Warnock has been unable to establish a clear lead in the race, despite [recent accusations](#) that Walker pressured two women into having abortions.

Democrats contend that [early voting data](#) provides a reason for optimism about keeping the Senate, as more than 35 million Americans have already cast their ballots. In states such as Arizona and Pennsylvania, which could determine control of the Senate, Democrats make up a greater share of the early voting population than they did in 2018. But given Donald Trump’s attempts to raise baseless doubts about the legitimacy of voting by mail,

more Republicans are expected to show up at the polls on election day, and that could erase Democrats' early advantage.

In a speech delivered near the Capitol on Wednesday, Biden sounded clear-eyed about his party's midterm prospects. Expressing grave concern about the recent attack on the husband of the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, and the rise in violent rhetoric among some Republican lawmakers, Biden urged Americans to consider the fate of their democracy as they head to cast their ballots.

"This is no ordinary year. So I ask you to think long and hard about the moment we're in," Biden said. "In a typical year, we're often not faced with questions of whether the vote we cast will preserve democracy or put us at risk. But this year, we are. This year, I hope you will make the future of our democracy an important part of your decision to vote and how you vote."

As of now, Biden's pro-democracy message does not appear to be resonating with enough voters to avoid a Democratic rout on Tuesday. If current trends hold, a Republican wave could crash over the country next week.

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[Donald Trump](#)

House January 6 panel grants Trump's request for extension to subpoena

The ex-president sought more time to produce responsive records and cooperate with the committee's Capitol attack investigation



The select committee informed Trump's lawyers he must produce documents next week Photograph: Kena Betancur/AFP/Getty Images

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Washington

Fri 4 Nov 2022 20.40 EDT Last modified on Sat 5 Nov 2022 18.22 EDT

Donald Trump responded to the House January 6 select committee's subpoena deadline for documents with a letter that sought more time to produce responsive records and cooperate with the investigation into the Capitol attack, according to a source familiar with the matter and a statement from the panel.

The details of the former president's requests were not clear. But the select committee, appearing to grant Trump an extension, informed Trump's lawyers that he must produce documents next week and that the summons for his appearance under oath remains in place.

"We have received correspondence from the former president and his counsel in connection with the select committee's subpoena. We have informed the former president's counsel that he must begin producing records no later than next week and remains under subpoena for deposition testimony," the select committee said.

The letter from Trump's lawyers appears to indicate that the former president is engaging in negotiations with the select committee to stave off the threat of a potential contempt of Congress referral to the justice department, while at the same time slow-walking his cooperation.

Trump has been counseled in recent days that he might not need to cooperate with the panel, depending on the results of the midterm elections next Tuesday, the source said, since any contempt referral would almost certainly be withdrawn by Republicans if they take control of Congress in January.

But if Democrats retained their House majority, the former president has been told, then he might need to more seriously consider the extent of his cooperation with the panel – while also making sure his responses to the select committee's questions do not leave him with potential legal exposure, for instance by making false statements.

Back at his Mar-a-Lago resort for the winter, Trump has for weeks been at the center of diverging advice from a coterie of lawyers and aides, who have suggested everything from ignoring the subpoena in its entirety to make good on his own idea about testifying as long as he could do so before a live public audience.

The former president, at least for now, appears to have empowered the lawyers suggesting a cautious approach until the midterms. The Dhillon Law Group has been retained to lead talks with the select committee and drafted the letter, which has not been made public, the source said.

A Trump spokesman did not respond to a request for comment and a spokesman for the select committee declined to comment further on the former president's letter.

Last month, the select committee transmitted a historic subpoena to Trump and his lawyers making sweeping demands for documents and testimony, raising the stakes in the highly-charged congressional investigation into the Capitol attack that could yet end up before the supreme court.

The panel demanded that Trump turn over records of all January 6-related calls and texts sent or received, any communications with members of Congress, as well as communications with the far-right Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, extremist groups that stormed the Capitol.

The expansive subpoena ordered Trump to produce documents by 4 November and testify on 14 November about interactions with key advisers who have asserted their fifth amendment right against self-incrimination, including the political operatives Roger Stone and Michael Flynn.

“Because of your central role in each element,” the panel’s chairman, Bennie Thompson, and vice-chair, Liz Cheney, wrote, “the select committee unanimously directed the issuance of a subpoena seeking your testimony and relevant documents in your possession on these and related topics.”

The subpoena also sought materials that appeared destined to be scrutinized as part of an obstruction investigation conducted by the select committee, such as one request that asked for records about Trump’s efforts to contact witnesses and their lawyers before their depositions.

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Seascope: the state of our oceansOceans

Scientists discover ‘world’s largest’ seagrass forest – by strapping cameras to sharks

New study, carried out using tiger sharks in the Bahamas, extends total known global seagrass coverage by more than 40%



Scientists fixed bio-logger tags equipped with cameras on tiger sharks in the Bahamas to map the ocean’s seagrass meadows. Photograph: Diego Camejo/Beneath the Waves

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[About this content](#)

[Laura Paddison](#)

Sat 5 Nov 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 5 Nov 2022 04.01 EDT

Tiger sharks are notoriously fierce. The huge animals, [which can grow to more than 16ft](#), are ruthless predators and scared of absolutely nothing – recent research found that while other shark species fled coastal waters during strong storms, tiger sharks “[didn’t even flinch](#)”.

But recently they have a new role that could help burnish their reputations: marine scientists.

In an attempt to measure the extent of seagrass meadows in the Bahamas, researchers attached cameras and trackers to the dorsal fins of tiger sharks to give them access to hours of ocean floor footage.

The data they collected revealed what the researchers say is the world’s largest known seagrass ecosystem, stretching across up to 92,000 sq km (35,000 sq miles) of Caribbean seabed. This discovery extends the total known global seagrass coverage by more than 40%, according to the [study](#) published in Nature Communications on 1 November.

“This finding shows how far are we from having explored the oceans, not just in the depths, but even in shallow areas,” said the report’s co-author, Prof Carlos Duarte, of Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah University of Science and Technology.

Seagrass meadows have long been under-researched – estimates of their total global area range wildly from 160,000 sq km to 1.6m sq km. Mapping is hugely challenging: meadows in deep or cloudy water cannot always be spotted by planes or satellites, while smaller ones can be sparse or interwoven with other marine plants making them tricky to identify.

This means seagrass meadows have to be “ground truthed” ie confirmed by someone – or something – at the site. But sending human divers to photograph vast tracts of ocean floor is expensive, logistically challenging and very slow.

Tiger sharks are a different story. The highly mobile animals are able to reach significant depths, have a large range and spend a lot of time in seagrass meadows. They are also unburdened by mundane human constraints such as needing a boat, having to surface frequently and reliance on calm ocean conditions.

Between 2016 and 2020, researchers fixed camera packages, equipped with satellite and radio tags, to the dorsal fins of seven sharks. They caught the animals using circle hook drumlines, which hook into the animals’ jaws. It is the “safest way to catch sharks” and causes no long term damage, said Oliver Shipley, a senior research scientist at Beneath the Waves, a marine science non-profit, and co-author of the report.

They reeled in the animals to affix the cameras in an operation Shipley likened to a that of a “Nascar pit crew”. It took about 10 minutes to tie on each bright orange camera using biodegradable cable ties and a dissolvable time-released swivel. After about six hours, the swivel corroded in the seawater and the whole package floated to the surface, where scientists could pick it up.

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Tiger sharks help scientists map seagrass in the Caribbean – video

Using marine animals like this opens “a window on to the marine world” and can help answer questions about the climate and biodiversity crises, said Richard Unsworth, an associate professor at Swansea University and the founder of the Project Seagrass charity. Unsworth, who wasn’t involved in the study, said mapping seagrass is vital. “If we don’t know where it is we can’t protect it,” he said.

Seagrasses are important nurseries and feeding grounds for many marine species, they support commercial fisheries and provide a buffer against coastal erosion. They are also a significant [source of “blue carbon”](#), trapping and storing vast amounts of carbon in the seabed, making them a vital tool in mitigating the climate crisis.

Yet they are threatened by a variety of factors including boating and shipping, coastal development and increasingly severe extreme weather. [About 7%](#) of seagrasses are estimated to be lost globally every year. The UK has lost 90% of its seagrass meadows over the past few centuries.

The researchers hope their discovery will mean better protections for seagrass in the Bahamas – which is threatened by dredging for coastal development as well as a [push to mine for aragonite](#) – but also worldwide. Seagrass, and other coastal ecosystems, are “probably one of the best allies and assets that we have in terms of naturally trying to mitigate the effects of climate change,” Shipley said.

He predicts there will be many more projects partnering with marine animals to map ocean habitats. “They are going take us to new places that we didn’t

know existed.”

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US news

‘I’m selling my blood’: millions in US can’t make ends meet with two jobs

More Americans have been working two or more jobs over the past few decades, census data shows



People speak with recruiters at a job fair in Los Angeles. Photograph: Étienne Laurent/EPA

[Michael Sainato](#)

Sat 5 Nov 2022 05.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 5 Nov 2022 05.02 EDT

Millions of Americans are currently working two or more jobs in order to make ends meet, as global inflation and corporations [jacking up prices](#) have sent prices of food, gas, housing, health insurance and other necessities [soaring](#) in the past year.

Cashe Lewis, 31, of Denver, Colorado works two jobs and is currently trying to find a third job to cover the recent \$200 monthly rent increase to her

apartment. She works days as a barista at Starbucks, but claims it's been difficult to get enough hours even with taking extra shifts whenever she can due to scheduling cuts as part of the [crackdown](#) on union organizing by management.

At night she works at a convenience store because the hours are reliable, and works six days a week, often 16 hours a day.

"I'm exhausted all the time," said Lewis. "On the one day I have off a week, I donate plasma for extra money. I'm literally selling my blood to eat because I have no choice."

Her partner suffers from epilepsy and can't work full-time hours because of it. Even with insurance, their medication is expensive and she spends about half of a two-week paycheck at Starbucks to cover the health insurance premiums.

Over the past five years, she has struggled with homelessness, and was previously fired from her job for sleeping in her car behind her place of employment.

"All of my friends and family work multiple jobs as well, just trying to keep our heads above water. Nothing is affordable and the roadblocks set up to keep people in the cycle of poverty benefit the most wealthy members of our society," added Lewis. "We aren't living, we're barely surviving and we have no choice but to keep doing it."

More Americans have been working two or more jobs over the past few decades, according to [data](#) from the US census, with women more likely than men to have multiple jobs and multiple jobholders most prevalent among low-wage workers.

Laura Richwine of Omaha, Nebraska, works two jobs, one in fraud prevention and the other doing administrative work, and had previously been working three jobs to keep up with hefty medical bills she's been facing since being [hit by a car in 2014](#).

“It’s rough and I barely have any energy to keep up with much else,” said Richwine. “I’ve got a bachelor’s degree and have been working for over 10 years, but up until this year I had never had a job that paid more than \$15 an hour. Many places around me still only offer Nebraska minimum wage, which is \$9 an hour. You can hardly even buy food with that amount.”

Based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, [more than 400,000 Americans](#) work two full-time jobs. In September 2022, 4.9% of all [the more than 164 million](#) US workers held two or more job positions, [over 7.7 million workers](#).

Though US census data estimates these rates and numbers to be [much higher](#), at 7.8% in the most recent year where data is available, 2018, [about 13 million workers](#), while BLS data at the time estimated [5.0%](#) of the workforce holding multiple jobs.

Both data sets are considered an [underestimate](#) of the number of multiple jobholders in the US labor market due to [constrictions](#) on what is defined as a multiple jobholder and the lack of data on self-employment, such as gig workers.

An annual [survey](#) sponsored by the Federal Reserve Board estimated an even higher number of workers in multiple jobs, at 16.4% in 2019, about 26.5 million workers.

Many of these workers holding multiple jobs are doing so to try to make ends meet and often working longer than 40 hours a week.

Robert Weaver of Lawrence, Kansas, currently works two jobs as a theater technician and delivery driver, 30 to 35 hours a week at his primary job and about 20 at his second job.

He explained that he works two jobs because he cannot find a single, full-time position in his area that matches with his college degree. Most of his disposable income goes toward paying off credit cards, taxes, surprise bills like car repairs, and medical expenses.

“There isn’t enough money to be able to afford a home or even rent from just one job on your own,” said Weaver. “Everyone is in debt and it’s looking like we will never pay it off, ever.”

Liora Engel, 37, of Vermont, took on two additional jobs, working at a deli and another at a convenience store, earlier this year on top of her full-time job in media, to try to boost her income and cover expenses while going through a divorce.

After working 70-hour weeks, she left her full-time job due to burnout, but still works two jobs while trying to get a side hustle off the ground and limiting her work hours to no more than 50 hours a week.

“It’s kind of like, how much of your soul are you willing to sell in order to be financially independent or to make sure that you can pay your bills?” said Engel.

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