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Headlines monday 15 may 2023

- **Turkish elections Vote set go to second round as Erdoğan attempts to claim victory**
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Turkey elections: Erdoğan sings to supporters as Kılıçdaroğlu attacks 'smear campaign'– video

Turkey

Turkish election set to go to runoff as Erdoğan attempts to claim victory

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ahead of rival Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu but falling short of 50% needed to avoid second round

- **Turkish elections – latest updates**

Ruth Michaelson and Deniz Barış Narlı in Istanbul
Mon 15 May 2023 02.39 EDTFirst published on Sun 14 May 2023 12.53 EDT

Record high turnout in a tightly fought election has presented the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with the greatest challenge to his leadership in two decades, with signs that the vote was heading for a runoff even as Erdoğan attempted to claim victory before an official vote count had ended.

Speaking to a jubilant crowd of supporters, an energised and delighted Erdoğan declared: “The fact that the election results have not yet been finalised does not diminish the fact that our nation’s choice is clearly in favour of us.”

Despite Turkey’s supreme election council, the YSK, declaring that the count had not yet finished in either the parliamentary or presidential election, Erdoğan claimed his alliance had won a majority.

“We believe I will finish with above 50% in the first round,” he added, projecting an outright win the presidential election without the need for a

run-off.

Erdoğan's rival, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, hit back in a more subdued speech: "Despite all of his lies and attacks, Erdoğan did not receive the desired outcome. No one should be enthusiastic about this being a done deal. The election is not won on the balcony."

He added: "We will definitely, definitely win this election in the second round. Everyone will see it. Preliminary results show that Erdoğan did not receive the public confidence vote that he expected. The need for a change in society exceeds 50%. The AKP's loss of votes demonstrates this too. The process of entering [election] data is ongoing. If the nation opts for a second round, it is more than welcome."

Presidential candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu makes a statement to the press Photograph: Dia Images/Getty Images

With 99% of ballot boxes counted, Erdoğan led with 49.4% of votes and Kılıçdaroğlu on 44.96%, the head of Turkey's election board said on Monday.

As votes came in from across the country, coverage of the ballot count became a heightened example of the storm of misinformation that has

marked the 45 days of the election cycle, including several deployments of deepfake videos.

Officials from the YSK moved to cool any tensions surrounding early results published by the state news agency, amid anger from leading opposition figures and claims the government had demanded repeated recounts of ballots in areas likely to deliver a victory for Kılıçdaroğlu, of the Republican People's party (CHP), slowing the input of opposition votes into the system.

"There are no disruptions or delays," said YSK spokesperson Ahmet Yener, during one of multiple press conferences intended to clarify the percentage of overall votes officially counted. The YSK figure has been consistently 20% fewer than that published by the state news agency, Anadolu, which instead described "ballot boxes opened" on its website.

In a brief speech, Kılıçdaroğlu said: "In the ballot boxes where our votes are high, they blocked the system with repeated objections. There are persistent objections for instance in 200 ballot boxes in Ankara and 783 ballot boxes in Istanbul. There are ballot boxes where the vote has been contested six times, 11 times. What you block is the will of Turkey. You cannot prevent it from happening with these objections."

He added: "Stop this perception management. This is serious. Let the votes come in. Let the results be announced as soon as possible. This country can no longer tolerate uncertainty. Do not be afraid of the will of the people.

"I invite the election authority to act responsibly … Let's not block the will of this nation. I'm calling out to our election observers on the ground, never abandon the ballot boxes and election votes. We're here until the last vote is counted."

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Supporters wave flags and banners as the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, gives a speech. Photograph: Necati Savas/EPA

The close race marked a vote in parliamentary and presidential elections that quickly transformed into a referendum on Erdoğan's two decades in power, amid an energised and unusually broad base of opposition united around the singular aim of toppling a leader who has reshaped Turkey in his image.

If no candidate in the presidential election receives 50% of the vote, a second round runoff will be held on 28 May between the top two candidates. The ultra-nationalist presidential candidate, Sinan Oğan, who early results indicated would probably receive about 5% of the vote, reduced the chances of either Erdoğan or Kılıçdaroğlu gaining a clear victory.

A six-party opposition coalition headed by Kılıçdaroğlu is fighting to win both a parliamentary majority and the presidency in order to enact sweeping reforms, overhauling two decades of Erdoğan policies and returning Turkey

to parliamentary democracy. If it succeeds, it would mark a rare instance of a public unseating an entrenched populist leader through the democratic process.

The forgotten earthquake survivors that could decide Erdogan's fate – video

Kılıçdaroğlu, a member of Turkey's Alevi religious minority, said he intends to step back from Erdoğan's heavy-handed control of public institutions and the media, promising a more inclusive Turkey and an end to the combative style of politics that Erdoğan is known for. The CHP leader has also promised to deport millions of Syrian and Afghan refugees who sought shelter in Turkey from conflicts at home.

Voters across Turkey said that a worsening cost of living crisis and the government's response to twin deadly earthquakes that killed more than 50,000 people were what drove them to the polls.

Many younger voters said they had turned their back on the AKP, expressing excitement that they could vote out the only political leader they had known in their adult lives. In the Istanbul district of Kasımpaşa, where Erdoğan grew up, three voters in their mid-20s said they were all voting for the CHP.

"No one in gen Z votes for the AKP," said 26-year-old Evin. "Erdoğan could absolutely lose. I don't believe he can win, there isn't even a 1% chance."

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Turkey

Turkey elections: runoff increasingly likely with Erdoğan ahead of Kılıçdaroğlu – as it happened

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Turkey

Turkey elections 2023: latest presidential and parliamentary results

Turkey's presidential election looks set to go to a runoff after no candidate won 50% in the first round. As Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seeks to renew his presidential mandate and extend his nearly two decades at the top of Turkish politics, find out how Turks have voted in a pivotal election

Seán Clarke
Mon 15 May 2023 02.42 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 07.50 EDT

Turkey presidential election 2023: first round
Latest updates from Anadolu Agency at
TRT
With about
% of boxes counted

Who's who and how it works

Latest figures from the state-owned Anadolu Agency show no candidate in the presidential first round having won 50%; as such the race will go to a run-off in two weeks time between **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan,** the incumbent, and **Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu**, backed by several opposition parties.

The official election authority, the YSK, agreed that a run-off will be needed, as things stand. It says that with a slightly lower proportion of ballot boxes opened, Erdoğan had 49.49%, with Kılıçdaroğlu on 44.49%. Both the AA and the YSK were criticised by opposition parties overnight for giving a misleading impression of Erdoğan's lead.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been at the pinnacle of Turkish politics for more than two decades. He was prime minister from 2003 to 2014 and has been president since. In the meantime he has ensured that the role of president has become the pre-eminent office of state. His Justice and Development party (**AKP**) is populist and conservative and leans away from Turkey's secularist past and toward Islamism.

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, a 74-year-old retired civil servant, has been Turkey's main opposition leader for more than a decade, leading his Republican People's party (**CHP**) to major victories in a string of big-city municipalities including Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir.

The rightwing **Sinan Oğan**, a former Nationalist Movement party (**MHP**) member, is running as an independent.

In an 11th-hour twist, the final candidate, **Muharrem İnce**, a rightwing nationalist, withdrew from the race days before polling day after the release of a sex tape that he said was a deepfake.

The presidential election runs on the same basis as the French or Brazilian presidential elections; if a candidate exceeds 50% of the vote in the first round, they are elected. If not, the top two candidates go to a runoff in two weeks' time.

Leading candidate by province

Erdoğan
Kılıçdaroğlu

At the same time as the presidential election, Turkish voters are choosing a new **parliament**. Seats are allotted by strict proportionality to any party or alliance that exceeds 7% of the popular vote. The parliament has taken a back seat in recent years, but could become significant again if Kılıçdaroğlu wins the presidency and keeps his promise to restrict its powers.

The data here is from the state-run Anadolu Agency; full results are expected from the official election authority later today.

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Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, with supporters at a polling station in Istanbul on Sunday. Photograph: AP

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Analysis

Could a diverse alliance end Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's authoritarian rule?

Bethan McKernan Middle East correspondent

Turkey's leader has restricted protests and free speech but says a transition of power will be peaceful if he loses

- **Turkish elections – latest updates**

Sun 14 May 2023 18.33 EDTFirst published on Sun 14 May 2023 13.56 EDT

Four years ago, when ballots in local elections across Turkey were still being counted, municipality workers in Istanbul had already put up billboard

posters of the president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his Justice and Development (AKP) party's candidate for mayor in the cultural and commercial capital, thanking the city's residents for their votes.

The hubris was short-lived. An opposition candidate won, and did even better in a controversial and high-stakes re-run – a moment that in retrospect many hoped would mark the beginning of the end of the political powerhouse's long career.

Since becoming prime minister in 2003, Erdoğan – Turkey's most influential ruler since the founding of the republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 100 years ago – has reshaped the country in his image.

Over the past decade, the *reis*, or boss, has cracked down on peaceful protests and freedom of speech, overturned the results of the general election in 2015, renewed Turkey's war against the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK), purged the country of his enemies in the wake of the 2016 coup attempt, persuaded Turkey to switch to a presidential system, and embarked on ambitious and unpredictable foreign policy adventures.

The conservative 69-year-old and his AKP still command deep loyalty from many religious Turks, who were marginalised by a secular ruling elite for decades: by some estimates, he still enjoys 45% support. However, after 10 years of growing authoritarian rule, the appetite for change is strong. The 2019 mayoral race in Istanbul showed that Turkey's ailing democratic institutions still had a pulse, and despite controlling much of the media and other supposedly independent institutions, that the AKP was not as all-powerful as it seemed.

The forgotten earthquake survivors that could decide Erdogan's fate – video

This time around, the government's inability to get on top of rampant inflation or the lira's collapse has once again cost it support – as has the lacklustre response to this year's devastating earthquakes. Polling – although frequently unreliable – has consistently put the 74-year-old challenger

Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu ahead, sometimes by a margin of just half a percentage point.

When polling stations closed at 5pm (3pm BST) on Sunday, preliminary data from Turkey's main election body suggested Erdoğan had an early lead of 56.7% compared with Kılıçdaroğlu, on 37.4%, with 17% of votes counted.

By the evening, however, those figures had considerably narrowed, with agencies reporting that Erdoğan had fallen below the 50% marker needed to avoid a runoff.

Turnout is usually very high, so a clearer picture is unlikely to emerge until about midnight local time, and official results could take three days. If the opposition can move the needle enough to deny the incumbent a clear first-round victory of 50%, triggering a second vote which would be held on 28 May, the already considerable tensions across the country could skyrocket.

Erdoğan and the people around him have a lot to lose, and may not be able to resist the temptation to put a thumb on the scales to engineer a victory. The question no one has an answer to except the president himself is: how far is he willing to go?

"During the campaign period, we already witnessed ruling elites' efforts to intimidate voters and to delegitimise a possible opposition victory by tainting it as a 'coup' and an 'invasion,'" said Sinem Adar, a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

"One could expect objections to vote counts at the provincial and district levels and recounting of votes, especially if the opposition wins in the first round, but the difference between the top two candidates is marginal. This means that a high-level mobilisation by political parties and civil initiatives will continue to be important to safeguard the votes in the following days after tonight."

As the 2019 mayoral election in Istanbul proved, one of the most crucial moments in Turkish elections now begins after the polls close. Four years ago, many *Istanbullus* who had dejectedly shown up at polling stations to

carry out their democratic duty earlier in the day watched the televised outcome at first with curiosity, and then excitement. When the live stream of results from the government news agency stopped altogether at about 9pm, people across the country realised that Erdoğan's party was losing.

After weeks of AKP appeals, Turkey's electoral board upheld a complaint regarding ballot counting and annulled the opposition victory. The decision sparked outrage even within the ruling party's ranks, as it severely dented the AKP's already damaged democratic credentials.

The opposition has learned lessons from that incident. An alliance of six ideologically diverse opposition parties has presented a united front in this year's election, trying to attract votes from Turkey's Kurdish minority and working-class conservatives disillusioned by economic pain and the lack of support after February's earthquakes. Parties and civil society organisations have also mobilised a record number of volunteers to monitor polling stations and witness vote counts.

In remarks on the eve of the election, the pugnacious president struck an unusually conciliatory tone, saying he would accept the results of Sunday's ballot, and if he lost, a transition of power would be peaceful.

As mayor of Istanbul in the 1990s, Erdoğan made a comment to an interviewer that has come back to haunt him on several occasions. "Democracy is like a train … You get off when you arrive at your destination," he said.

The president departed the train some time ago. In the coming days, we will find out if the rest of Turkey is willing to follow him on that journey.

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2023.05.15 - Spotlight

- **Keep calm and carry on Why are so many young Americans adopting fake British accents?**
- **‘I’d tell myself: you’re a loser, a failure, ugly’ Matilda’s Mara Wilson on the price of fame**
- **‘It turns the stomach’ The biggest mistake from the 2023 TV Baftas**
- **Bafta TV awards The full list of winners**
- **‘I was sick with pain – but doctors thought I was a hypochondriac’ The spreading agony of kidney stones**

The reality show Love Island has fueled a habit among young Americans of shifting into a British accent in awkward situations. Photograph: ITV/REX/Shutterstock

Life and style

Why are so many young Americans adopting fake British accents?

Whether deflecting an awkward moment or lightening the mood in an argument, affecting an accent has become a Gen Z verbal tic

Alaina Demopoulos in New York
Mon 15 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 10.49 EDT

Kyra Green lives with anxiety, and when she misplaced her boarding pass at the airport gate just before her flight was due to leave, the 26-year-old's nerves started acting up. As she looked around for it, the native New Yorker began speaking in a British accent.

“I was throwing shit all over the place, and I was like, ‘No, I cannot do this. This is terrible,’” Green said, with the posh inflection of someone who went to a British boarding school. “I was literally scrounging through the trash looking for my boarding pass, but that voice added a little bit of confidence and pizazz when I didn’t feel it internally.”

Americans have long been called out for their phony British accents – think Madonna in her Guy Ritchie era, or the friend who just came home from studying abroad in London. But Gen Z has embraced bad imitations of Cockney slang or a Yorkshire dialect, using obviously fake, theatrical voices to make light of low-grade daily dramas.

What’s behind the trend? Green, who is 26 and appeared on the US version of Love Island, blames it on her love for the original UK dating show.

“The accent really took over when I started watching the show,” she said. “It blew the accent the fuck up, and everyone was obsessed with their cute little sayings, like ‘doing bits’.” (For the uninitiated, that means getting intimate but not having sex.)

It’s not just Love Island: “fake British accent” videos have over 188,000 views on TikTok, where young people say they use the voice whenever they feel uncomfortable.

Asher Lieberman, a 21-year-old college student and content creator from Miami, said he picked his voice up from watching old X Factor auditions on YouTube.

Then there’s H20: Just Add Water, an Australian teen drama about girls who turn into mermaids whenever they swim or bathe. Old clips of the show – a relic full of mid-aughts cringe – often go viral on TikTok. The actors have Australian accents, but Lieberman said those were “harder to do” than a British voice. So he launches into a cheesy Essex dialect whenever he feels *knackered*, as his character might say.

The Only Way Is Essex is part of a shift in UK culture exported to the US. Photograph: ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

“I was on a date recently ordering something, and the name of what I wanted came out wrong when I asked for it,” Lieberman said. “So I just talked in a British accent for the rest of the order. It’s a defense mechanism, a kind of buffer from my actual personality.”

He also uses the voice as a conflict-management tactic. “I asked my roommate, ‘Can you please take out the rubbish,’” Lieberman explained, sounding like an EastEnders guest star. “It’s me being playful. It’s the British part of me asking for something that needs to be done, not the real me.”

Brinton Parker, a 30-year-old who lives in the Bay Area, works in tech marketing. The deluge of bad news out of Silicon Valley has her feeling like she’s approaching burnout, and she recently asked her manager for support at work.

“I said, ‘It’s affecting me mental health, innit?’” she explained. “And my boss was like, ‘Why did you say it like that?’ I think it adds levity to a vulnerable situation. The tougher the conversation, the more Cockney I become.”

For Critter Fink, a 26-year-old New Yorker who works in high-end retail, speaking in a British accent can soften the blow of a dark joke. “When you slightly change how you say things with a little accent, it gives you space from a stressful thing,” they said. “It’s similar to when you add “lol” to the end of a dramatic text – it gives you distance.”

Jessie Brown, a hairstylist in Brooklyn, will pop into a British accent when they feel they’ve overshared with a client during an appointment. “I use it when I try to segue from something weird I said, or if I trauma-dump by accident,” Brown, who is 29, said. “I’ve always done accents when I’m uncomfortable. Maybe my brain thinks it makes whatever weird shit I just said more palatable.”

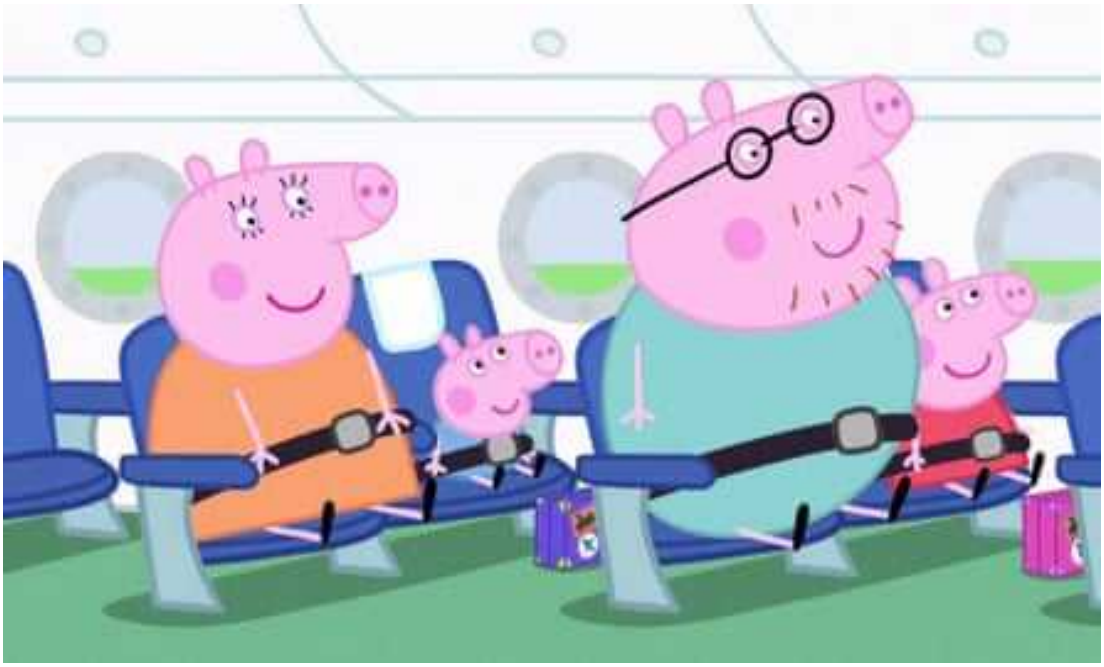
Call it the Gen Z version of keeping calm and carrying on: Amy Walker, an actor and dialect coach, said Brits had long been associated with keeping a stiff upper lip. “We think of them as cerebral and not super emotional,” she said. “The voice can elevate something that feels a little too real in the moment.”

Thanks to streaming hits like The Crown and Bridgerton, the voice is everywhere. But Americans are not necessarily rushing to imitate the upper crust anymore. After decades of exported British pop culture revolved around heritage films and period dramas, stateside viewers have come to appreciate reality shows like Love Island, The Only Way Is Essex and Too Hot to Handle. Those shows are filled with petty disagreements and missed encounters, so young Americans feel a connection with the accent when their own lives feel awkward.

“Back when I was growing up, British people were just the villains in Disney movies and Mary Poppins,” Walker said. “Now, you get a broader range of different voices and perspectives.”

In 2019, American parents on Twitter reported that their children were developing British accents because of all the Peppa Pig they watched. The “Peppa effect” had them speaking like the show’s cartoon pig, saying “Mummy” instead of “Mommy” and “to-mah-to” instead of “to-may-to”. Peppa Pig started airing in the US in 2005 and was a significant part of some

younger Gen Zers' toddler years (the generation was born between 1996 and 2013, according to the Pew Research Center).



American parents have reported their kids developing British accents thanks to Peppa Pig. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

But back to adults: Matt Lundquist, a psychotherapist and founder of Manhattan's Tribeca Therapy, wonders if some of us use the accent when we know we're being a little too demanding.

"If you like to think of yourself as somebody who's easygoing, you might adopt a certain voice to express frustration, because you don't feel totally comfortable with that part of yourself that complains," he said.

Gabrielle Pedriani, a 32-year-old New Yorker who lives in Paris, said that she sometimes uses a fake British accent in a way that feels "slightly passive aggressive".

"I'll say 'no problem' in that cheery voice, when something is actually a problem but I'm trying to sound chill," she said. "I might put it on if someone's asking me a question I don't want to answer. It's like playing the character of an obnoxious, but chill, girl."

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The Guardian - Back to homeThe Guardian

‘I was an earnest, very literal child’ … Mara Wilson. Photograph: Elizabeth Weinberg/New York Times/Redux/eyevine

The G2 interviewMovies

Interview

‘I’d tell myself: you’re a loser, a failure, ugly …’ Matilda’s Mara Wilson on the price of fame

Emine Saner

A star at nine, the actor was soon struggling with the death of her mother as well as nosy journalists and demanding fans. Angry, confused and thoroughly lost, how did she ever find her way back?

@eminesaner

Mon 15 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 12.10 EDT

It never made sense to her, Mara Wilson writes in Good Girls Don’t, that the enduring image of a child actor is of a spoilt brat. “A bratty child is one who won’t do what they’re told; child actors *only* do what they’re told. Brats are selfish and greedy; child actors often support their families. A spoilt and misbehaving child will not get very far in the entertainment industry.” Wilson, the star of some of the biggest family films of the 90s, including Mrs Doubtfire, Miracle on 34th Street and Matilda, only wanted to please.

She wrote the short-form memoir – an ebook and audiobook for the digital platform Scribd – after thinking a lot about what a "good girl" she had been and the impact it has had on her life. It opens at a teen disco on a cruise with her family; Wilson, then about 16, was made to feel she had to dance with a boy, just because he was a fan (he didn't really speak, just grinded on her). Rather than think of herself, she was worried about what everyone else would think when they saw: "Matilda's a slut!" What she felt, or wanted, didn't come into it. Eventually, in her later teens and 20s, Wilson rebelled against all this pressure and became, she says, angry and "a bitch".

Wilson, now 35, has been thinking about this a lot. "I'm at an age where I'm reflecting on a lot of my life and thinking, 'I wish I could apologise for this, I wish I could explain'," she says (we're talking over video call; she's at home in LA, sitting beneath a big canvas painted by her sister, an artist). "I never thought of myself as a people-pleaser because I thought they were laid-back happy-go-lucky types, and that's not what I was. I was more emotional, angry, easily frustrated and overwhelmed." But it was, she realised, in response to the people-pleasing she had done all her life. "This was something that a lot of people, particularly women, told me they dealt with. They felt obliged to be the good girl. You end up acting out because you don't really feel there's any other way to live."

Breakthrough role … as the youngest in Mrs Doubtfire. Photograph: SNAP/Rex/Shutterstock

For Wilson, the expectations started at birth – she was a longed-for girl after three boys. What would have happened had she been another boy, she wonders: “How much sooner would I have had to face my greatest fear of disappointing someone?” She was loved, she says, but not spoiled. Her mother, Suzie, was Jewish; her own parents had escaped persecution in eastern Europe and come to the US. “She was also, in her way, a people-pleaser,” says Wilson. “She had to please her parents, to take care of her family. Both her parents were severely mentally ill, and often had physical problems too.” It meant Suzie looked after them, as well as her younger siblings. “Her way of rebelling was to move away and try to reject everything they had done.”

Suzie’s family was competitive. “She had a mother who was very into keeping up appearances. We were constantly pitted against each other when we went to see my aunts and uncles,” says Wilson. “They all thought they were the smartest, the most talented. My mother couldn’t stand that.” She loved her daughter, and was proud of her, but she was determined to instil in her the idea that she wasn’t better than anyone else. “I was an earnest, very literal child, so I think I took that too far – I took confidence to mean conceitedness, and modesty to mean self-denial and self-loathing.” It was probably what helped her get the roles in the first place; she wasn’t a smiles-and-jazz-hands theatre kid. “I think they saw my earnestness and eagerness to please.”

The family lived in Burbank, California. “It was a company town,” says Wilson (it had several production studios and the headquarters of some of the biggest entertainment companies). Her father was an engineer for the TV network NBC, and it wasn’t uncommon to see their school friends in an advert or Nickelodeon show. One of Wilson’s older brothers had done a few adverts, and she wanted to have a go. It was never about becoming a star, she says – like other children in their town, it was a way to put a bit of money away for college.

In Miracle on 34th Street with Richard Attenborough. Photograph: Moviestore/Rex/Shutterstock

She did a few commercials, then went to her first audition for a film, Mrs Doubtfire, and got it. Even then, the family didn't really think of it as a career – her mother made a scrapbook of Wilson's time on set, including photos with the film's star Robin Williams, as something she would probably look back on as a funny thing she had done as a six-year-old. But, she says, "it kind of snowballed". She was cast in the Christmas film Miracle on 34th Street, then Matilda, which was released in 1996 and became a huge and enduring hit. Wilson, then nine, was famous.

This newfound fame all happened around the same time that her mother died from breast cancer. "I felt completely lost, completely unmoored," says Wilson. "There was who I was before that, and who I was after that. She was like this omnipresent thing in my life. I really believed that she would never die and as I've gotten older, she's taken on even more of a mythical quality in my mind. To lose her felt like this incredible upheaval. I didn't really know who I was."

Dealing with grief, and fame, felt doubly unsteady. "I don't think you can be a child star without there being some kind of lasting damage," she says. "The thing that people assume is that Hollywood is inherently corrupt, and

there's something about being on film sets that destroys you. For me, that was not necessarily true. I always felt safe on film sets. There were definitely some sketchy, questionable things that happened at times – adults that told dirty jokes, or sexually harassed people in front of me. People who did things like ask me if it was OK if I worked overtime, instead of asking my parents, but I never felt unsafe. I think that's because I worked with a lot of really wonderful directors, who were used to working with children."

> I made the mistake of Googling myself when I was 12 and saw things that I couldn't unsee

Her mother had been protective. "If she didn't like the way that something was going, she would not hesitate to make her concerns known." Her parents thought she would be safe if she only worked on children's movies, "but I was still sexualised," she says – not by the people she was working with, but by the world at large. Adult men would try to contact her. "I had people sending me inappropriate letters and posting things about me online," she says. "I made the mistake of Googling myself when I was 12 and saw things that I couldn't unsee." Her photo was on porn sites, her head superimposed on to other girls' bodies.

"People don't realise how much constantly talking to the press as a child weighs on you," she says. When she was seven, journalists would ask her if she knew what french kissing was, or which actor she found "sexiest". The idea of having a fanbase came with pressure. She was grateful, she says – and aware that gratitude was non-negotiable – but also, "when you have fans, you can no longer be yourself when you're out in public, and there were times that I was having a bad day, because I was an emotional teenager, or because my mother had just died."

Wilson was aware, she says, that in real life she didn't measure up. "I saw that they were disappointed that I wasn't as smart, pretty, nice, as they expect you to be. I think they were expecting me to be Matilda, and she's wonderful, but she's not real. She's brilliant in every single way. She's smart, and kind and powerful. Then they met me, this nerdy, awkward teenager who got angry sometimes, but couldn't even channel her anger into powers." While Matilda uses her anger for telekinesis, Wilson's anger just

lost her friends. “I was never going to live up to that,” she says, adding that she felt she lived in Matilda’s shadow, “the way you would with a fabulous older brother or sister”.

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‘She’s brilliant, but she’s not real’ … Matilda. Photograph: Tri Star/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

The pressure of expectations lasted well into her 20s. “There’s still this fear I have: if [fans] actually knew who I was, would they really like me?” She smiles. “The answer to that is some would and some wouldn’t.” She writes about being in awe of the girls at school who misbehaved and didn’t care what people thought. “I couldn’t stand to disappoint people.” She remembers reading about the toll the constant requirement to be cheerful and friendly takes on airline cabin crew, and realised it was the same for child actors – and it lasts long after their films are released. “They have to perform this cheerfulness, and this don’t-be-a-brat-iness their entire lives.”

She was also aware of what she calls “the narrative” – that child stars go off the rails. “If you put that much pressure on somebody, how do you expect them not to fail? If you let them know you’re watching their every move, they rebel, and try to form their own identity.” Her parents had put her money away and she couldn’t touch it. “But there were a lot of children whose parents didn’t do that. If you have a lot of pressure and a lot of money, it’s no surprise that so many of us get into drinking, partying, drugs. I definitely had a self-destructive streak, but it took a different mode. For me, it was a lot of hating myself and saying, like, you’re a loser, you’re a failure, you’re ugly.” Outwardly, she was easily frustrated and quick to anger. “I wasn’t a brat,” she writes, “I was a bitch.”

Her career had been slowing because she had hit puberty. Hollywood, she says, “was kind of done with me”. Earlier, on one film when she was 12, her body changed between stints of filming and she was asked by the director to wear a sports bra, ostensibly to flatten her developing breasts. Wilson was no longer considered “cute”. “It affected me for a very long time because I had this Hollywood idea that if you’re not cute any more, if you’re not beautiful, then you are worthless. Because I directly tied that to the demise of my career. Even though I was sort of burned out on it, and Hollywood was burned out on me, it still doesn’t feel good to be rejected. For a long time, I had this kind of dysmorphia about the way that I looked and I obsessed about it too much.”

‘I was just like, “Get over your ego – people don’t care about you that much”’ Photograph: Ari Scott

At one of the last auditions she went to, the job went to a young Kristen Stewart. “You think, ‘I’m ugly, I’m fat’ – and there were actual websites and newspapers and movie reviewers saying that about me. It got to the point where I became much more guarded, more anxious and depressed and cynical, and when you’re like that, it’s very hard to land a role, because in an audition, you have to be open and honest. It took a toll on me.”

Wilson was eventually diagnosed with OCD by a psychiatrist, who also mentioned she could have post-traumatic stress disorder. “I was starting to realise stuff about my sexuality [she came out as bisexual in 2016] that I tried to ignore, because I thought, ‘There’s already too much going on with me – I can’t have this as a problem, too.’ I had obsessions and compulsions that were driving me crazy. I worried all the time about God and religion, and the world. I was angry and stressed out, and my dad said, ‘You can always take time off acting.’ So I did.”

The first stage of Wilson’s career was over. She went to a performing arts boarding school, paid for with her own earnings, where she discovered a love of writing – she wrote about her mother’s death for the first time – and theatre, then to New York University. She wrote, and appeared at spoken

word clubs, while working as a barista or nanny and worried she would be recognised and end up in one of those where-are-they-now? articles on the internet. A couple of years ago, she considered going for a job at a shop in LA, but decided that in a place like that, people would recognise her. “That is also part of ‘the narrative’ – feeling sad for child actors. I was just like, ‘Get over your ego – people don’t care about you that much.’ But there is always part of me that thinks are people going to feel sorry for me.”

Wilson mainly writes now – there was a previous memoir in 2016 – and does voice acting work including audiobooks and the fiction podcast Welcome to Night Vale. She’s not sure she would want to return to TV or film. “I don’t know if they really know what to do with a short, curvy, Jewish brunette. I don’t want anybody telling me, ‘You need to lose 30lb and get a nose job.’” At last, she’s not interested in changing herself. “I defined myself for so long by the media’s terms, by Hollywood’s terms,” she says, “instead of defining myself by my own goals, my own relationships, my own life.”

Good Girls Don’t is available exclusively on Scribd in audio and ebook formats

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A name like a cheap SEO hack … Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story. Photograph: Netflix

Baftas 2023

‘It turns the stomach’ – the biggest mistake from the 2023 TV Baftas

Here is the most egregious shock from the TV Bafta awards – and the many other miraculous shows that went home empty-handed

Stuart Heritage
@stuheritage
Mon 15 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 16.32 EDT

If this year's TV Baftas are to be remembered for anything at all, then I am afraid they will be remembered for a mistake. This year's best international category was already notable for its absences (where for the absolute love of god was Better Call Saul?) but at least we could console ourselves with the fact that a couple of bangers made it in. In The White Lotus, it recognised the sort of wild word-of-mouth sensation that can only come about organically. And in The Bear, it recognised what must surely, hands down, be the very best television show in the world.

And yet, once the Southbank Centre had been crammed to the gills, the winner of the category was announced as Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story. The state of that series! Not only was it genuinely witless – less a compelling drama, more a rough clod of true crime dug up and listlessly tossed into the streaming quarry for the sake of it – but the glee it

took in fetishising a real-life serial killer turned the stomach. All that, plus look at the title. Nobody in their right mind should ever give an award to a series that not only contains both a colon and an em-dash in its title, but also repeats the name of the subject like a cheap SEO hack.

This was by far the most egregious shock of the TV Bafta ceremony, but it was not the only one. Although Channel 4's Friday Night Live wasn't a bad show – if nothing else, it was a timely reminder that Ben Elton should dust off his standup chops more often – for it to win the comedy entertainment programme award over Taskmaster does beggar belief. Taskmaster might be an old television standard by now, but that shouldn't diminish what it is. Taskmaster is miraculous. It deserves to be carried through the streets in a sedan chair. Also, I have a personal issue with Platinum Jubilee: Party at the Palace winning best live event, because I remember liveblogging that last year and writing 'I hate this and I wish I was dead' about it.

More than anything, though, two of my favourite British shows walked away empty-handed. Channel 4's Somewhere Boy was soaring and heartfelt and sad and resolutely weird, and there hasn't been anything even close to it on television for as long as I can remember, so it would have been nice to see it win something. On the same note, The Responder strolled into the ceremony with more nominations than anything else, but left with nothing. It deserved more, and will hopefully gather a more appropriate haul next time around.

Thoroughly deserved … Adeel Akhtar in Sherwood. Photograph: Neil Sherwood/BBC/House Productions

Still, it would be churlish to only concentrate on the negatives of the night. The last time Adeel Akhtar won a Bafta was for 2016's Murdered by My Father, in a performance so visceral it was hard to watch. Since then he's managed to explode in every direction at once, excelling at comedy, drama, sci-fi and anything else he's chosen to try, so his best supporting actor win for Sherwood was thoroughly deserved. On a similar note, if only because his acceptance speech was the funniest and most sincere of the night, Lenny Rush completely earned his Bafta for male comedy performance for Am I Being Unreasonable?

Props to a buzzworthy hit … Claudia Winkleman on The Traitors. Photograph: Llara Plaza/BBC/Studio Lambert Associates

Similarly, The Traitors winning best reality and constructed reality was a vindication of the year's most buzzworthy hit. Almost as soon as the series began it started to gain the sort of fervent following we haven't seen since back in the days when The Apprentice wasn't awful. The Traitors landed with such an explosion that we may well still be talking about it two decades from now, so it was smart to chuck an award at it early. For the same reason, Claudia Winkleman won a very well deserved award for hosting it, not least for remaining identifiably human despite the continued two-pronged assault from her fringe and scarf.

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Baftas 2023: Meera Syal calls for more diversity and The Traitors win big – video highlights

But none of this means anything. These were the Baftas that thought Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story deserved recognition. How are we supposed to trust their judgment at all?

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Ben Whishaw in This Is Going to Hurt. Photograph: Ludovic Robert/BBC/Sister/AMC

Baftas 2023

Bafta TV awards 2023: the full list of winners

Who took home the biggest prizes in British TV? Here are all the winners, from Ben Whishaw to Kate Winslet, Mood to Mo Farah and more

Meera Syal calls for more diversity in TV industry as she wins Bafta award
On the red carpet with Kate Winslet and Dannii Minogue – in pictures

Guardian TV
Sun 14 May 2023 12.37 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 06.09 EDT

Female performance in a comedy programme

Daisy May Cooper – Am I Being Unreasonable? (BBC One)
Diane Morgan – Cunk on Earth (BBC Two)
Lucy Beaumont – Meet the Richardsons (Dave)
Natasia Demetriou – Ellie & Natasia (BBC Three)
Siobhán McSweeney – Derry Girls (Channel 4) WINNER
Taj Atwal – Hullraisers (Channel 4)

Reality and constructed factual

The Traitors. Photograph: Mark Mainz/BBC/Studio Lambert Associates

Freddie Flintoff's Field of Dreams (BBC One)
RuPaul's Drag Race UK (BBC Three)
The Traitors (BBC One) WINNER
We Are Black and British (BBC Two)

Short form programme

Always, Asifa (Together TV)
Biscuitland (All 4)
How to Be a Person (E4) WINNER
Kingpin Cribs (YouTube/Channel 4)

Specialist factual

Aids: The Unheard Tapes (BBC Two)
The Green Planet (BBC One)
How to Survive a Dictator With Munya Chawawa (Channel 4)
Russia 1985-1999: Traumazone (iPlayer) WINNER

Daytime

The Chase (ITV1)
The Repair Shop: A Royal Visit (BBC One) WINNER
Scam Interceptors (BBC One)

Sport

Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games (BBC One)
UEFA Women's Euro 2022 (BBC One) WINNER
Wimbledon 2022 (BBC One)

Male performance in a comedy programme

Lenny Rush in Am I Being Unreasonable? Photograph: Simon Ridgway/Boffola Pictures

Daniel Radcliffe – Weird: The Al Yankovic Story (The Roku Channel)
Jon Pointing – Big Boys (Channel 4)
Joseph Gilgun – Brassic (Sky Max)
Lenny Rush – Am I Being Unreasonable? (BBC One) WINNER
Matt Berry – What We Do in the Shadows (Disney+)
Stephen Merchant – The Outlaws (BBC One)

Entertainment programme

Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway (ITV)
Later … With Jools Holland (BBC Two)
The Masked Singer (ITV) WINNER
Strictly Come Dancing (BBC One)

Supporting actress

Anne-Marie Duff with Claes Bang in Bad Sisters. Photograph: Natalie Seery/Apple TV+

Adelayo Adedayo – The Responder (BBC One)
Anne-Marie Duff – Bad Sisters (Apple TV+) WINNER
Fiona Shaw – Andor (Disney+)
Jasmine Jobson – Top Boy (Netflix)
Lesley Manville – Sherwood (BBC One)
Saffron Hocking – Top Boy (Netflix)

Current affairs

Afghanistan: No Country for Women: Exposure (ITV1)
Children of the Taliban (Channel 4) WINNER
The Crossing: Exposure (ITV1)
Mariupol: The People's Story – Panorama (BBC One)

News coverage

BBC News at 10: Russia Invades Ukraine (BBC One)
Channel 4 News: Live in Kyiv (Channel 4) WINNER
Good Morning Britain: Boris Johnson Interview (ITV1)

Single drama

Kate Winslet and Mia Threapleton in I Am Ruth. Photograph: Joss Barratt/Channel 4/PA

I Am Ruth (Channel 4) WINNER
The House (Netflix)
Life and Death in the Warehouse (BBC Three)

International

The Bear (Disney+)
Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story (Netflix) WINNER
Wednesday (Netflix)
Oussekine (Itineraire)
Pachinko (Apple TV+)
The White Lotus (Sky Atlantic)

Features

Big Zuu's Big Eats (Dave)
Joe Lycett vs Beckham: Got Your Back (Channel 4) WINNER

The Martin Lewis Money Show Live (ITV1)
The Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan (BBC Two)

Mini-series

Mood. Photograph: Danika Magdelena/BBC/Bonafide

A Spy Among Friends
Mood WINNER
The Thief, His Wife and the Canoe
This Is Going to Hurt

Factual series

Jeremy Kyle Show: Death on Daytime (Channel 4)
Libby, Are You Home Yet? (Sky Crime) WINNER
Vatican Girl: The Disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi (Netflix)
Worlds Collide: The Manchester Bombing (ITV1)

Single documentary

The Real Mo Farah. Photograph: Andy Boag/BBC/PA

Chernobyl: The Lost Tapes (Sky Documentaries)
Escape from Kabul Airport (BBC Two)
Our Falklands War: A Frontline Story (BBC Two)
The Real Mo Farah (BBC One) WINNER

Comedy entertainment programme

Friday Night Live (Channel 4) WINNER
The Graham Norton Show (BBC One)
Taskmaster (Channel 4)
Would I Lie To You? (BBC One)

Soap and continuing drama

Casualty (BBC One) WINNER
EastEnders (BBC One)
Emmerdale (ITV1)

Live event

Concert for Ukraine (ITV1)
Platinum Jubilee: Party at the Palace (BBC One) WINNER
The State Funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II (BBC One)

Entertainment performance

Big Zuu, Big Zuu's Big Eats (Dave)
Claudia Winkleman, The Traitors (BBC One) WINNER
Lee Mack, The 1% Club (ITV1)
Mo Gilligan, The Lateish Show With Mo Gilligan (Channel 4)
Rosie Jones, Rosie Jones' Trip Hazard (Channel 4)
Sue Perkins, Sue Perkins: Perfectly Legal (Netflix)

Supporting actor

Adeel Akhtar – Sherwood (BBC One) WINNER
Jack Lowden – Slow Horses (Apple TV+)
Josh Finan – The Responder (BBC One)
Salim Daw – The Crown (Netflix)
Samuel Bottomley – Somewhere Boy (Channel 4)
Will Sharpe – The White Lotus (Sky Atlantic)

Drama series

Bad Sisters. Photograph: Natalie Seery/Courtesy of Apple

Bad Sisters WINNER
The Responder
Sherwood
Somewhere Boy

Scripted comedy

Am I Being Unreasonable? (BBC One)
Big Boys (Channel 4)
Derry Girls (Channel 4) WINNER
Ghosts (BBC One)

Baftas 2023: Meera Syal calls for more diversity and The Traitors win big – video highlights

Leading actor

Ben Whishaw – This Is Going to Hurt (BBC One) WINNER
Chaske Spencer – The English (BBC Two)
Cillian Murphy – Peaky Blinders (BBC One)
Gary Oldman – Slow Horses (Apple TV+)

Martin Freeman – The Responder (BBC One)
Taron Egerton – Black Bird (Apple TV+)

Leading actress

Billie Piper – I Hate Suzie Too (Sky Atlantic)
Imelda Staunton – The Crown (Netflix)
Kate Winslet – I Am Ruth (Channel 4) WINNER
Maxine Peake – Anne (Channel 4)
Sarah Lancashire – Julia (Sky Atlantic)
Vicky McClure – Without Sin (ITVX)

P&O Cruises Memorable Moment

Derry Girls, The Finale – the people of Northern Ireland vote overwhelmingly for peace (Channel 4)
Heartstopper – Nick and Charlie's first kiss (Netflix)
Platinum Jubilee: Party at the Palace – Paddington meets the Queen (BBC One) WINNER
Stranger Things – Max is rescued from the demonic Vecna by playing her favourite song, Kate Bush's Running Up That Hill (Netflix)
The Real Mo Farah – Sir Mo Farah reveals he was illegally trafficked to the UK (BBC One)
The Traitors – the final roundtable (BBC One)

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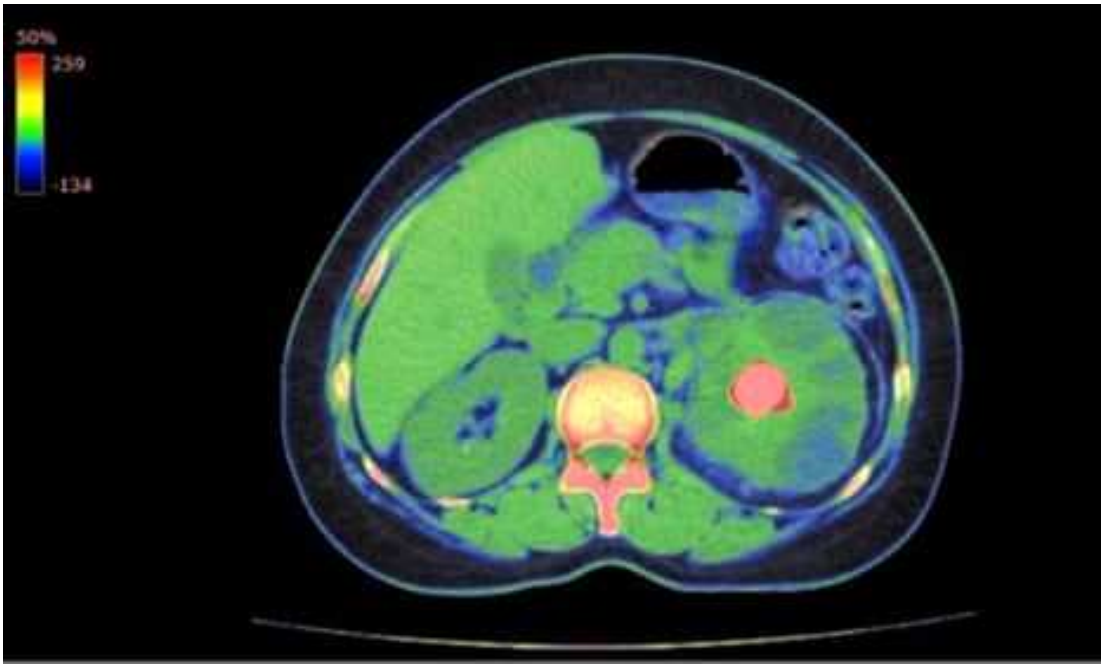

A CT scan showing a renal stone in a patient's left kidney (pink spot, right of image). Photograph: RAJAAISYA/Science Photo Library

Kidney stones

'I was sick with pain – but doctors thought I was a hypochondriac': the

spreading agony of kidney stones

Up to one in 10 of us will get kidney stones, according to the NHS. Even teenagers are at risk from what was long seen as an older man's affliction. Why – and what can we do to prevent them?

Lizzie Cernik
Mon 15 May 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 16 May 2023 10.02 EDT

Donna, 33, from Suffolk, first developed the telltale signs of kidney problems 13 years ago when she experienced excruciating pain under her ribs. "I was being physically sick because of the pain, and kept going to hospital," she says. "I was repeatedly dismissed by doctors because they couldn't find anything on my scans. They thought I was a hypochondriac."

She was diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome and told to make lifestyle changes. "I tried different diets but nothing helped, so I learned to live with the pain," she says. Ten years later, while living and working in Spain, she was finally diagnosed with kidney stones. "A doctor did a scan to check I wasn't pregnant and couldn't believe the state of my kidney."

Donna was rushed in for surgery, where they found a 2cm stone, surrounded by severe infection. "The kidney was so weak it collapsed when they removed the stone and needed to be reconstructed," she says. "After the operation I was rushed back into hospital with a blood clot and fever, and urine was leaking into my abdomen. I was so ill I nearly died."

Kidney stones are formed from hard deposits of minerals and salts and cause excruciating pain when they try to pass through your urinary tract. They have traditionally been associated with older men and are most common between the ages of 30 and 60. But new research has shown that the condition is on the rise in all age groups, including young women and teenagers.

According to the NHS, up to one in 10 people will get kidney stones in their lifetime. About half of sufferers will have them again within five years of

their initial diagnosis and for those who get complications, they can be severe. Due to the increased use of CT scans, kidney stones are now easier for clinicians to spot than ever before, but other factors, such as rising obesity, weight loss surgery and lack of fluid intake are also responsible for the higher number of cases.

A 6mm kidney stone, the maximum size that can be expelled by a patient. Photograph: Javier Fernández Sánchez/Getty Images

Doctors told Donna that her undetected stone was likely caused by years of severe and untreated urinary tract infections (UTIs). “I feel because I was young and a woman my voice wasn’t heard,” she says.

According to Dr Lafina Diamandis, a GP and certified lifestyle medicine doctor for Deia Health, UTIs are a common cause of kidney stones, especially in young women. “They’re most likely to cause a type of stone called a struvite stone,” she says. “UTIs make the urine more alkaline and create the perfect environment for stone formation. Women are more prone to UTIs.”

The other two common types of kidney stones are uric acid stones and calcium stones, which can both be affected by diet. “Uric acid stones are associated with a higher intake of animal proteins found in a high-protein

diet. This is due to the high purine content found in meat, a chemical formed when we break down protein," says Diamandis. "A high level of purines can make the urine too acidic, increasing the risk of stone formation."

The rising popularity of seemingly healthy low-carb diets, such as Keto, may play a role. "Carbs have been demonised in recent years, but we need them in our diets. Ideally, your plate should be 50% vegetables, 25% protein and 25% complex carbohydrates, found in whole plant foods such as beans, oatmeal, quinoa and sweet potatoes."

She also thinks the consumption of highly processed, fatty foods and lack of fluid intake may be contributing to the rise in kidney stones. These foods are often full of salt and sugar, meaning our kidneys have to work harder. "Salty food increases the risk of dehydration, so if you're not drinking enough water the risk will increase further." Some studies have shown that dehydration as a result of global heating is also contributing to the rising number of kidney stone cases.

'I've completely changed the way I eat' … John Chafer. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

When John Chafer, 60, a local councillor from Essex, first developed kidney stones in his early 40s, he had no idea it could be linked to his diet. "I was

quite overweight, I wasn't drinking enough water and was having lots of junk food," he says. After recovering from his first bout of kidney stones, "I wasn't given any preventive advice or told they could come back. I passed the stone so assumed it was over."

It wasn't until he was 59 and developed a rare and severe type of stone called staghorn stones, a very large type of stone which can block the entire kidney and lead to sepsis, that he began to make major lifestyle changes. "I went into hospital in excruciating pain," he says. "Because the stones were wedged in my bladder I was constantly wetting myself, which was so embarrassing."

A few months later, surgeons removed a life-threatening 7cm stone from his kidney. "A consultant gave me lots of really helpful advice and I've completely changed the way I eat," says Chafer. "I also started up an online group on Facebook for other people who suffer with stones." He wishes he'd known about the risks sooner. "I now eat loads of vegetables, take cranberry tablets and drink lots of water. I've lost more than four stone, too."

Sophie Medlin, consultant dietitian and director of CityDietitians, says that another risk factor for calcium stones (also known as calcium oxalate stones) is low dairy intake, particularly among young people. Counter-intuitively, then, calcium stones can be caused by not consuming enough calcium.

The National Kidney Foundation in the US recommends having three portions of dairy foods a day to prevent the formation of stones. "If you're using plant milks, some are better than others," Medlin says, with oat, macadamia and soy having the highest rates of calcium. Some studies also show that a vegetarian diet that includes dairy products might also be helpful.

‘I dread them returning because the pain is off the scale’ … Anne Cryer-Whitehead. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Other foods that can contribute to calcium stones include spinach, berries, chocolate, wheat bran, nuts, beetroot, tea and rhubarb. Like Diamandis, Medlin points out that balance is key. “We shouldn’t avoid eating these foods but it’s important to consume everything in moderation.” She says that certain nutritional supplements such as greens powders, vitamin C, protein powders and turmeric also increase our risk of kidney stones. “These are all very popular supplements and are often heavily promoted on social media which, again, may contribute to increased cases of kidney stones in young people.”

Alongside diet and infections, genetics play a role in the likelihood of getting kidney stones. Anne Cryer-Whitehead from Milton Keynes believes she may be genetically predisposed to stones, as they have persisted despite a healthy diet. “I first got them five years ago, when I had this excruciating pain in my back and groin,” says the 50-year-old, who is medically retired. “I ended up in hospital and they treated me with lithotripsy, which is a laser designed to break up the stones. It was so painful I could barely stand it. It felt like an elastic band being snapped against you faster and faster.”

While the treatment broke up the stones, Cryer-Whitehead got an infection and was rushed back to hospital. Although she recovered, the pain returned during lockdown and she was admitted to A&E. “I had a stone in both kidneys, one of which wouldn’t pass and got embedded, so I had to have emergency surgery.”

Almost three years on, Cryer-Whitehead is still recovering and says the condition has drastically affected her quality of life. “I have calcium stones and I’m very cautious with my diet. I dread them returning because the pain is off the scale. I’d rather have a five-hour tattoo or go through childbirth again,” she says.

Donna says the emotional distress of the condition is also vastly underestimated. “I have physically recovered from my emergency surgery, but I’m left with PTSD,” she says. “I am now back in the UK and due to see a urologist soon, but I’ve been told it’s likely that I will keep getting stones,” she says. “I don’t think many people understand how serious it can be. I just wish I’d been treated sooner.”

This article was amended on 16 May 2023. An earlier version of the main image caption incorrectly said that the kidney stone pictured was in the patient’s right kidney.

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2023.05.15 - Opinion

- **This government has cut the NHS to the bone, and left doctors holding the knife**
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- **I used to hide behind my hair. But cancer gave me a buzzcut and helped me find my voice**
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‘To expect junior doctors to continue like this is nothing short of holding them hostage.’ Junior doctors on strike on 14 April 2023. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

OpinionDoctors

This government has cut the NHS to the bone, and left doctors holding the knife

Nesrine Malik

It’s a horribly effective ploy: underinvest in the health service, then encourage patients to blame staff for any failures

Mon 15 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 12.59 EDT

Sometimes there is a bleakly effective logic to underinvesting in public services. If they survive, then great, the money was saved. If they fail, then even better, because privatisation is here and ready to pick up the pieces. A classic example of this strategy is the NHS.

Junior doctors are working longer and harder, being paid next to nothing for it, and then blamed when things go wrong. There may soon be future strikes as their requests have not yet been met. Even though it is primarily about pay restoration, there is a wider context. They are now expected to put in extra shifts, compromise their career progression, and do work above their pay grade with no training or reward. This is by design.

Whenever the government reduces funding but maintains the service it is defunding, there is an undeclared expectation: the shortfall will be plugged by additional unpaid work and professional sacrifice. Staff are forced to

crash course their training and dig deep into their moral and psychological reserves in order to make decisions they have not been adequately prepared for. The added salt in the wound is that the targets of patients' distress are the staff right in front of them, not an abstract criminal history of a lack of investment.

This is also part of the design of underfunding, to shift responsibility on to those on the scene of the tattered service – slash and run, leaving the knife in the hands of those left behind. Our experiences with the NHS can happen at the sharp end of physical pain and emotional distress, and so the blame for its failures is understandably directed towards the institution and those who staff it: doctors who make mistakes or don't show up, nurses who seem listless and unresponsive, or GPs who dispatch you after a five-minute consultation or cannot escalate your case quickly enough. Verbal and physical abuse of NHS staff is now a hazard of the job. They simply brace themselves before going to work.

And if you're going to deny better conditions and pay for anyone, doctors are the easiest to justify. They are white collar, have high earning potential as their careers progress, and enjoy a professional prestige that makes it easy to target them as greedy or irresponsible – as the rightwing press has not wasted a moment in doing.

It is a testament to the enduring popularity of myths about the entitlement and poor work ethic of NHS staff, and striking workers in general, that just 54% support for the junior doctors' strike is considered high. The government can still count on this bias, and the propaganda that sustains it, in its refusal to negotiate. The narrative focuses on the challenge that another strike will bring to a struggling system just so that doctors can get paid more at a time when everyone else is facing a cost of living crisis.

But it's not about pay. It's more existential than that. It's about the limits of what humans can do when governments abdicate. What is asked of junior doctors now makes the entire practice and purpose of medicine questionable, let alone the viability of the NHS. A junior doctors' strike is about commitment to a model of healthcare that, when properly resourced, provides free treatment to patients while also enabling doctors to receive the

sort of wide-ranging medical training, research opportunities and academic specialisation support that they would never receive in the private sector.

As it stands, junior doctors pay hefty sums towards their own training and exams and they have to compete fiercely for a small number of senior positions. If they are from overseas, they have to pay huge, escalating sums for work permits and the residences of their dependents. Once junior doctors are consultants, they are too few in number, so have to lead, as much as is feasible, those junior doctors below them to do the work they cannot.

To expect junior doctors to continue like this is nothing short of holding them hostage to their choice of vocation and ambition to be the best doctors they can be. The government is asking them to take it or walk away. Increasingly, many across the NHS hierarchy are giving up. Almost 13,000 doctors gave up their medical licences last year, up almost 10% from the year before. They cite burnout, mental distress and impossible workloads. Nearly half of junior doctors are considering leaving the profession altogether.

Those who stay face a circular firing squad that compromises their ability to provide free, good quality healthcare and thwarts their ambition. Even an increase in junior staffing would be a drop in the ocean when there is no increase in bed capacity, no upgrades to administrative infrastructure, and no progression in a career that is founded on increasing specialisation. Junior doctors' ability to continue to underwrite the government's failures is not infinite, but the risk is that this state of affairs is normalised. The NHS has been under stress for so long that we have become desensitised to the toll of the crisis on both doctors and patients, and to the fact that it will, if nothing changes, inevitably reach a disastrous climax. I don't know what that would look like, but I don't want to find out.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist

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‘My son is doing this thing at the moment where he has started kissing his favourite characters in the books we read. Every time he does it I feel a soaring happiness.’ (Picture posed by models) Photograph: PhotoAlto/Alamy

Republic of ParenthoodParents and parenting

To my friend who worries about becoming a parent: here are some things to hold on to

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett

These are the things I wish I had said to you when you asked me if being a parent was as awful as it sounded

Mon 15 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 11.47 EDT

I decided to write this column in the format of a letter. I wanted to set myself the writing challenge of citing some of the many positive things about having a baby without being saccharine, resorting to cliche or generalising, and the only way I could find was this way. It's addressed to one person, but I hope that those who find themselves at a similar crossroads take succour from it.

To my friend A,

When you sidled up to me at a party recently and confessed that you wanted to have a baby, we were both drunk. So when you said that you needed reassurance that it wouldn't be awful, because all you ever seem to hear about parenthood is negative, I probably didn't give you what you needed that night. I've been mulling over what you said ever since.

I read somewhere not long ago that children ruin your life. I do not feel this (I was at a party, for a start). You create a new life in that child, and with that baby, you get a new life, too. I look back on my old self with fondness, and a little indulgence. She had a lot of fun, but it was time for a new adventure. A baby is more than just an adventure, though: you're embarking on an epic quest that will hopefully see them safely into adulthood. We hear a lot about the obstacles we meet on the way and less about the wonders we encounter, so I wanted to say that: you will experience wonder the likes of which you can't imagine now.

The wonder seems mundane to other people, of course, and that's part of the problem. For example: my baby is doing this thing at the moment where he has started kissing his favourite characters in the books we read. Every time he does it I feel a soaring happiness that feels almost criminal, like I'm getting away with something. What I'm saying is that you can spend your whole life trying to be happy, taking up wild swimming or yoga or microdosing LSD or having therapy, but, for me, nothing has come close to the feeling of watching my child launch himself at a drawing of a fluorescent pink simian who has just learned the importance of saying sorry to an elephant with hurt feelings.

It's not just your happiness, either: it's theirs. Giving your baby a lovely day feels genuinely fulfilling for you, but less selfishly, joy has been created for them, and the amount of happiness on this planet has increased. It may be by a tiny amount, in a global context, but to that child, it is everything.

Another one of those cliches is that it's "a love unlike any other" – a nonsense, because no love is like any other. What I will say is that it's a love that feels primal and molecular. It has a before, and an after. Before I felt this love, I could imagine it, because like most humans I am capable of empathy, but I had not lived with it. The life I had before I got to feel this love feels like less of a life. That is not to say that I believe people who are not parents live less meaningful lives. I don't, at all. But my life has greater meaning *to me*, for loving him.

And of course, *his* life has meaning. He exists! It still feels wild and miraculous that this should be the case, and not just because it wasn't the easiest birth (try not to worry about the birth. We usually hear the horror

stories, and they are important, but good births happen, too). Becoming a mother – and giving birth – has enhanced my feelings of solidarity with other women. It is a solidarity that is physical, intellectual, emotional and political. It is also historical. I feel empathy with women who lived and died many centuries before I even existed. And that has expanded my heart and my mind.

When I became a mother, it was as though all the mothers in my life, even peripherally, received some sort of alert signal, and rallied. Even the mothers of friends of mine, whom I rarely see, sent gifts and messages. Other mothers brought meals or gave breastfeeding support or medical advice. Their well wishes, guidance and care held me in an embrace that lasted for many months after the birth. My own mother's embrace, and my father's, not to mention my extended family's, have kept me going.

We are used to hearing about how motherhood limits and constricts your life, less so about how it can expand it. A world of other mothers – other parents, actually – has revealed itself to me. I have always believed that life is fundamentally about human relationships, and having a baby has enhanced mine. I love my husband more than ever.

Parenting has also allowed me to experience childhood again. I always wanted to give someone else a childhood. My wide-eyed little boy is at the stage where he is simply in love with the world, and that love is thrillingly unconditional (he is beside himself every time he sees a pigeon). It is a privilege to witness, and it makes me determined to maintain it for him as much as I am able, because his laugh is the best sound that I have ever heard.

A note about sleep: you will be OK – you've had enough wild nights to know you can cope. And you can get your body back, whatever that might mean to you. I feel I have (ish). As for your career, it's normal to worry. I speak only for myself when I say that I wish I had spent less time fretting beforehand about how I would write. I have far less time, now, but I'm still writing. Even a paragraph a day adds up to a novel, eventually.

There is so much untapped joy, hilarity and love there waiting for you, and I hope I've given you a small glimpse of some of it to hold on to.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author

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Joanne aged 20, at her grandfather's house in France. Photograph: Courtesy of Joanne Harris

Why I quitCancer

I used to hide behind my hair. But cancer gave me a buzzcut and helped me find my voice

Joanne Harris

As an author and a woman, I felt my role was to be scrutinised, yet not to speak out. Now, nobody shuts me up

Mon 15 May 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 16 May 2023 03.15 EDT

There's a saying my grandmother liked to use: little girls should be seen and not heard. I internalised that idea for much of my life, but when I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2020, something changed. Cancer took a great deal from me, but it gave me back my voice, and now I don't think I'll ever be silent again.

I must have been a difficult child. Much of my childhood features people telling me to be quiet. Schoolteachers. Family members. The man who tried to rape me. The adult who, when I told her, and after having satisfied herself that nothing much had happened, decided that it would be best for me never to mention it again.

At school I was labelled "dogmatic" by a teacher who liked to stare down my blouse during lessons. When I called him out, I acquired the additional label of "troublemaker". And so I grew up believing that silence was a

virtue. I became self-conscious about my voice and its effect on others. I was already more than self-conscious about the effect my appearance had on others, and did my best to mitigate this by hiding behind a curtain of hair. For a time, I forgot what it felt like to be myself, except in the safe space of the page, free from scrutiny and judgment.

When my third book became unexpectedly successful, I was suddenly under more scrutiny than I'd ever known before. No more than was directed at any other successful woman, but enough to help confirm the voices of my childhood: that when you're a woman, physical appearance is the first thing people notice; and that no one wants you to be loud, or flippant, or opinionated. My agent agreed. A *grande dame* in the old style, she took me in hand in a manner that brooked no refusal: decided what I should wear, what I should say, what I should write next and how best to keep out of trouble. The implication was clear: if I showed my true self, if I failed to conform to her expectations, if I spoke out about my politics – in short, if I was *difficult* – then something dreadful would happen.

But in spite of this, somehow my voice was coming to life. It started with being a mother. My instinct to protect my child brought out my confrontational streak. I became a troublemaker again, at least in certain circumstances. But a lifetime of self-effacement takes a lot of breaking down. It took me another 20 years to learn to be myself again.

By the time my agent and I parted ways, the internet had taken over as arbiter of what I should be. Women on the internet are often commented upon, told their experiences don't count. When they push back, they receive abuse. For someone like me, raised on keeping the peace, it was sometimes tempting simply not to engage.

But some events are too huge for that. The US election of Donald Trump, then Brexit, Covid, lockdown and Boris Johnson's premiership seemed to demand *some* comment. On those issues, at least, I found myself growing outspoken. I got the usual abuse in response, even the occasional death threat. It was upsetting, but not as much as I'd imagined. With age comes a feeling of "fuck you". Menopause had made me rethink my relationship with my body. Insults about my appearance made little impression on me. Even

20 years before, I'd never understood the need for strangers to see me as sexy.

Then I got cancer. I spoke about that online, too, and found that others in the same situation found it comforting to hear about my experience. There was something oddly liberating in *actually saying something was wrong*. My old agent would have been horrified: she hid her own cancer treatment from everyone – including me – for fear of revealing weakness. I didn't feel weak, however. I felt as if, at long last, I had taken back control. I declined the offer of a wig and opted to shave my head before chemo took my hair.

Suddenly there was more to life than worrying about optics. So what if I didn't look as people expected me to? So what if I expressed a view that made someone else despise me? I realised that I had been hiding away – under my hair, under my fear of upsetting people – all my life. Now, in the face of cancer, I felt I'd rediscovered myself. Acknowledging the effects, the *fear* – felt like a superpower. My scale of priorities had shifted. The dreadful thing had already happened. What was left for me to fear? I found myself engaging in discussions I would have avoided 12 months before. An angry man on Twitter lambasted me for my "woke hair". I laughed to think he'd mistaken my chemo buzzcut for a political statement.

Three years later, I'm cancer-free. My body has mostly recovered. Even my hair has begun to grow back. But the effect remains. I no longer stay silent for fear of causing trouble.

Recently, I found the origin of the "seen and not heard" saying in a collection of old English proverbs by an Augustinian clergyman called John Mirk in 1450: *A mayde schuld be seen, but not herd* – although if Mirk already considered the proverb old, then it must have dated from long before that. Remembering his advice, I wonder what he would have said to a woman who was no longer a *mayde*? I like to think he learned the hard way. I like to think that some 15th-century version of me told him "fucke you", and left him forever speechless.

- Joanne Harris is the author of Chocolat and Broken Light

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Illustration: Michelle Thompson/The Guardian

Name and shameLife and style

Bella Hadid’s regrets about her teenage nose job mirror my own. But now I have a new role model

Emma Forrest

The actor Marisa Abela, who will play Amy Winehouse in a new biopic, is a breath of fresh air, radiating youth – and confidence in her ancestry

Mon 15 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 03.58 EDT

In a move that can be sincerely described as “Cher-Adjacent”, I was once placed next to Cher’s best friend at a dinner. Because I am a human with a heart, I love Cher. Furthermore, because at school I was viciously bullied by pale, blond girls for being too identifiably ethnic, I *really* love Cher.

Beyond her genuine talent – a Grammy, an Emmy, three Golden Globes and a Best Actress Oscar to prove it – two things remain key about Cher: one, her look was seen as pioneering, the first Armenian-American pinup until Kim Kardashian. Second, her iconic political posts on Twitter, where she rails against sexist double standards (as she always has, via all the mediums that have evolved through the decades of her stardom).

When sat beside her best friend, I had just sold my first screenplay, and couldn’t help but ask something my mother and I had spent years discussing: do you know who did Cher’s original nose job, the one she has in

Moonstruck? So that's how I ended up, in my early 20s, going to the doctor said to be the "ethnic rhinoplasty specialist". If you had a bump, he kept some of the bump and he'd lift the tip, but only by degrees. He gave you the nose you *already had,* the next size down. Most people never know unless I tell them.

I began to percolate on rhinoplasty and activism and not getting caught out, after the supermodel and Palestinian rights activist Bella Hadid discussed with Vogue her regret at having her nose done aged 14, telling Vogue: "I wish I had kept the nose of my ancestors. I think I would have grown into it".

I thought about how much Bella Hadid's "before" pictures looked like my Jewish nose from teen photos. Who would have predicted in 2500 BCE, when the Hebrews settled with other Semitic-speaking people in Palestine, we would one day be caught in a cycle of violence over ownership of land, and that those who made it to America would give away the same nose.

Bella Hadid frequently recalls her teenage self-loathing. It is quite a cultural headfuck to be, for this generation, the most emulated model on the planet, and also represent to them the permanent psychic wound of being the "ugly sister". A kind of magic, like Philip Roth noting how, with Irving Berlin's White Christmas, a Jew took the death of Christ and made it about the weather.

In the US, where Hadid and I spent most of our adult lives, Arab and Jewish refugees petitioned to be granted "white" status in the census – before they succeeded, both groups were classified as non-white.

On making it to the American middle class, many of my Jewish, Arab and Iranian girlfriends had rhinoplasty as a generational expectation. If the country your people fled to for survival is unsure whether you belong in the white category or the brown category, plastic surgery can be a subconscious reach for safety. As the writer Bess Kalb described well in Nobody Will Tell You This But Me, a biography of her Grandmother, she wanted Bess to have her nose "fixed", as she had after fleeing the Nazis

“In a fickle environment where there are active would-be Nazis in government, I understand why the protection of being subsumed into legal and cosmetic whiteness draws people in,” says Dr Maysan Haydar. Dr Haydar is a professor specialising in 20th-century immigration and acculturation patterns from Muslim-majority countries – but she’s also just a New York friend who didn’t judge me when I was 23, recovering from rhinoplasty.

I didn’t have to spell out how humiliating it is to be vain, to want to fit in, but also to want to get away with things. In fact, many years later I returned to the surgeon after lip filler became a thing, but he declined to do it, saying: “You’ll go back to England, and people will be able to tell and they’ll laugh at you.”

Bella Hadid was mocked on social media for uploading a video to Instagram of herself crying for the Palestinian people. This is unfair. All interesting people reach for two things that exist in opposition, and that tug, whether lover or movie star or model, is what makes us look at them. That Gene Kelly can dance with an animated mouse and have stood up to the House Committee on Un-American Activities. That Bella Hadid can film herself crying tears for the Palestinian people that fall in a different way than if she had the original Palestinian contours of her face ought not make them dismissible. I say from my own experience: the thing I clung to most, that got me through at a time when I had low self-esteem, felt lost and worthless, was that I came from people who suffered terrible tragedy but continue to struggle and continue to exist.

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after newsletter promotion

And yet it doesn't pass me by that two of the world's most famous women from *my* tribe didn't touch their features: Barbra Streisand and Amy Winehouse. Marisa Abela, the actor who will play Winehouse in the new biopic, has an Arab father and a Jewish mother. And a beautiful, untouched nose. The kind Bella Hadid lamented she would have grown into.

Abela, recently starring in Industry, happens to have my favourite face on TV right now. What am I so transfixed by? Her own visceral liveliness and struggle, plus her very visible ancestry, the carrying, with her own youthful glow, what came before her. She is two things at once, a magic trick – like being an ugly-sister supermodel, or making Christmas about the weather.

Emma Forrest is the author of Busy Being Free, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.99

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/may/15/bella-hadids-regrets-about-her-teenage-nose-job-mirror-my-own-but-now-i-have-a-new-role-model

2023.05.15 - Around the world

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Thai opposition parties deliver crushing blow to military rule in national election – video

Thailand

Thailand's opposition parties start alliance talks after voters reject military rule

Leader of liberal Move Forward says he is 'next prime minister of Thailand' and ready to form coalition government

Rebecca Ratcliffe South-east Asia correspondent, and agencies
Mon 15 May 2023 09.31 EDTFirst published on Sun 14 May 2023 19.12 EDT

Thailand's opposition parties have secured by far the largest number of votes in national elections, delivering a damning verdict to the military-backed government that has ruled for nearly a decade.

Move Forward, a progressive opposition party popular with young Thais, surpassed expectations by winning the most votes and seats and said on Monday that it was ready to form a government. Its leader, Pita Limjaroenrat, told media he had invited Pheu Thai, the party associated with the exiled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and four other opposition parties to form an alliance.

"I am Pita Limjaroenrat, the next prime minister of Thailand," he said in Bangkok, vowing to be a "prime minister for all".

Pheu Thai later confirmed it had agreed to Pita's proposal to form an opposition coalition.

For any of the opposition parties to take power, they will need to form a coalition that has numbers strong enough to pass through a system that is weighed in favour of the military-backed candidates.

A future prime minister will be voted on not just by the 500-seat house of representatives, whose membership is be dictated by the election results, but also by the senate, whose 250 members were appointed by the military after the last coup. It is unclear if senators' votes will reflect the will of the people, especially given Move Forward's ambition to reform Thailand's lese-majesty law.

Pita Limjaroenrat warned of a "hefty price" to pay if there was interference in the election outcome that would lead to the formation of a minority government.

The election commission chair, Ittiporn Boonprakon, said Move Forward had secured 151 of the 500 available seats, while Pheu Thai had 141. The numbers would need to be confirmed before they could be pronounced as official, which would happen within 60 days.

He said voter turnout was the highest recorded, at 75.22%.

Supporters of the Move Forward party react to the election results. Photograph: Sirachai Arunrugstichai/Getty Images

Prayut Chan-ocha, a former army chief who first came to power in a coup in 2014, and who ran a staunchly nationalist campaign, was trailing far behind with 36 seats. However, this is sufficient for him to still be in the running for prime minister, in the event he can cobble together a coalition.

Move Forward, which wants to reform the lese-majesty law – a taboo topic – and has taken a strong stance in calling for military reform, shocked even some of its own supporters by outperforming expectations on Sunday. Throughout the national count, it was neck and neck with Pheu Thai, a heavyweight opposition party that had been aiming to win by a landslide.

Over the past two decades, parties linked to the Shinawatra family have repeatedly proved unbeatable at the ballot box, winning the most seats in every election since 2001.

Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a professor at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, described the results as "staggering" and "historic". Pheu Thai had campaigned using its old approach of populist policies, he said. "Move Forward takes the game to the next level with institutional reform. That's the new battleground in Thai politics."

This was the first election in which the lese-majesty law was openly discussed by candidates – a change brought about by the 2020 youth-led mass protests where activists risked jail to call for the influence and wealth of the monarchy to be curbed.

Move Forward, whose own candidates have been charged under the law, is the only party to make a clear commitment to reforming it. Pheu Thai said the matter should be discussed in parliament but is strongly opposed to the law being scrapped, while Conservative parties all fiercely oppose any change.

Pita, 42, a former executive of a ride-hailing app, said: "The sentiment of the era has changed and it's right. And today it's a new day and hopefully it's full of bright sunshine of hope going forward."

A joint session of the House of Representatives will be held with the Senate in July to select the new prime minister.

It is unclear how senators will vote. Somchai Sawangkarn told Reuters, that any candidate “must be honest and not cause problems in the country. Hitler was elected in a majority but led the country to world war … If there is a possibility of creating division in the country, I will not vote for them.”

Opposition candidates could also face court cases that could prevent them from staying in power. Move Forward is the reincarnation of Future Forward, an equally outspoken party that performed well in the 2019 election and was closed down by the constitutional court the following year, after it was accused of breaking funding rules. Last week, a complaint was filed against Pita, claiming he owned undeclared shares in a media company. He has denied any wrongdoing. Complaints have also been filed against Pheu Thai.

On Sunday, Prayuth slipped away quietly from his United Thai Nation party headquarters, where there were few supporters to be seen. “I hope the country will be peaceful and prosper,” Prayuth said. “I respect democracy and the election. Thank you.”

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

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Business liveBusiness

Petrol and diesel retailers pump up profit margins; Europe approves Microsoft's $69bn Activision Deal – as it happened

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No further information about the trial or charges being faced by John Shing Wan Leung (pictured) were released with such cases normally treated with complete secrecy.

China

China jails US citizen for life on espionage charges

Hong Kong resident John Shing Wan Leung was chair of Texas branch of Chinese ‘reunification’ association

Helen Davidson in Taipei
@heldavidson
Mon 15 May 2023 03.13 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 03.58 EDT

A Chinese court has sentenced a 78-year-old US citizen to life in prison on espionage charges.

John Shing Wan Leung, a Hong Kong permanent resident, was detained in April 2021 by Chinese security services. His sentence was announced on Monday by the Suzhou intermediate people's court on its public WeChat account. No further information about his trial or charges were listed.

Leung's sentence also included deprivation of political rights for life, and confiscation of personal property in the amount of 500,000 yuan. There are no previous reports or notices of Leung's arrest or trial. Espionage cases in China are treated with almost no transparency, with trials often conducted in secret and long delays between convictions and sentencing. China's justice system also regularly reports a conviction rate above 99%.

This month, amendments to China's anti-espionage law came into force, broadening its scope and increasing the risk to foreign individuals and organisations operating in the country, according to observers.

It is not clear what Leung is accused of. Leung, whose Hong Kong and US ID numbers were published by the court, was born in Hong Kong, and was chair of the Texas branch of the Association for the Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification of China (APPRC), according to Hong Kong media. The Guardian has not independently confirmed his identity.

National and state level APPRCs operate around the world, promoting Beijing's claim over Taiwan and its plans for what it terms "reunification". They are believed to be connected to the Chinese Communist party's united front work department, a global influence operation.

In October 2020, the then US secretary of state Mike Pompeo designated the Washington DC-based National Association for China's Peaceful Unification (NACPU) as a united front work department. The website of the NACPU, which says it was founded in the 1970s, also refers to itself as the Association for the Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification.

It describes its purpose as fostering cross-straight relations, uniting overseas Chinese, and to "adhere to the one-China principle and oppose all words and deeds that split China's territory and sovereignty".

“It is feasible to study the unification of China plan, and strive for the final and complete reunification of China,” it said.

In 2015, the man Hong Kong media has identified as Leung was also reported to have funded eye surgeries for 60 rural Chinese children, through the Guangming hospital. State media and government releases in recent years have also praised his commitment to furthering US-China ties, and working with multiple Chinese overseas cultural organisations and the united front department.

The NACPU has been contacted for comment.

Additional research by Chi Hui Lin

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Police responded to the scene and allegedly threatened to call the border patrol on the American citizen. Photograph: Andrew Kelly/Reuters

US news

Hertz apologizes after refusing rental car to Puerto Rican customer

A worker at the rental chain demanded to see the American man's passport, apparently unaware that the island is part of the US

Ramon Antonio Vargas in New Orleans
Fri 19 May 2023 08.23 EDTFirst published on Mon 15 May 2023 01.00 EDT

The US rental car giant Hertz has apologized and pledged to retrain its staff after an employee denied a Puerto Rican customer a prepaid vehicle in the mistaken belief that he was from a foreign country and needed a passport.

During the encounter with the customer at New Orleans's Louis Armstrong international airport, the Hertz employee also called over a law enforcement officer even though Puerto Rico has been a US territory since 1898 and has a (non-voting) member of Congress, according to a stunning report the CBS correspondent David Begnaud published on Twitter and Instagram late on Saturday.

> Hertz rental car employees in Louisiana treat a Puerto Rican man like he's a foreigner and deny him a rental car that he's already paid for. That's the gist and facts of the story. But it doesn't in there. Watch for the resolution and takeaway. pic.twitter.com/ShXKKSBmB6
>
> — David Begnaud (@DavidBegnaud) May 13, 2023

Humberto Marchand's story, as told to Begnaud, vividly illustrated the prejudice many of the US's 53 million Spanish speakers face.

Marchand recently traveled to New Orleans and ahead of his trip paid to rent a car from Hertz at the Armstrong airport. After arriving, he went to the Hertz counter and presented his Puerto Rican driver's license, which contained text in two languages spoken on the island: Spanish and English.

The clerk there then purportedly said to him: "We will need a passport." Marchand told Begnaud that after he asked the woman what she meant, she made remarks that suggested he was from another country and therefore needed a passport.

Marchand – a US citizen engaging in domestic travel – did not have his passport with him, so he urged Hertz to honor his reservation as he recorded video of the interaction with his cellphone. But the clerk refused.

"You're denying me because I have a driver's license which is a valid ID?" Marchand said in English, in a Puerto Rican accent. "It is a valid ID. It is a valid ID."

Holding a clipboard and pen as she walked away, the woman turned around, pointed away, and four times said: "I need you to go about your business."

Marchand replied: “It is a valid ID. It is a valid ID. It is a valid ID. It is a prepaid reservation.”

The woman then said, “Would you like me to call the police?” Marchand told her, “Yes, please, call the police.”

The woman pulled a cellphone out of one her pockets and called out an officer who told Marchand that he needed to leave. At one point, Marchand believed he heard the officer threatened to “call border patrol” if the mistreated customer didn’t leave, too.

Marchand believed he was being accused of being in the US illegally despite the fact that he is as much an American citizen as the Hertz clerk and the officer presumably are.

The police department patrolling Kenner, the suburban New Orleans city where the Armstrong airport is located, later released video recorded by the officer’s body camera to local TV station WVUE. The video showed Marchand at one point ask if the officer had threatened to “call border services”. The officer had actually told Marchand to not cause any more “disturbances”.

Begnaud also described Marchand as a “federal law enforcement officer of 25 years”. A LinkedIn profile under Marchand’s name said he worked as an assistant deputy chief, mental health specialist and officer in a US probation office before retiring.

WVUE reported that Marchand was a 1990 graduate of Loyola University New Orleans, where his son was now enrolled. He had gone to New Orleans to help move his son out of his apartment there after the end of the academic year.

Hertz did not immediately respond to a request for comment from the Guardian. The company apologized to Marchand and issued him a refund immediately after being asked about his experience by Begnaud, whose Twitter and Instagram accounts are each followed by about 270,000 users.

“Hertz accepts Puerto Rican driver’s licenses from our customers renting in the US without requiring a valid passport,” the company said in a statement first sent to Begnaud and later provided to the Guardian. “We are reinforcing our policies with employees to ensure that they are understood and followed consistently across our locations.”

When asked about the employment status of the clerk who denied Marchand his reservation, a Hertz spokesperson told the Guardian that the employee “has been reminded of [the] standing policy related to Puerto Rican driver’s licenses”.

The US is home to the world’s second largest population of Spanish speakers despite English being the most common language. It trails only Mexico, a country of 127 million people whose official language is Spanish.

This article was amended on 16 May 2023 to clarify that Puerto Rico has a non-voting member of the US House of Representatives.

This article was amended on 19 May 2023 to reflect the release of the officer’s body camera.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/15/hertz-apologizes-puerto-rican-customer-new-orleans

Disney animated movie Strange World. Photograph: Disney/© 2022 Disney. All Rights Reserved.

Florida

Florida teacher defends showing Disney movie: ‘I’m just being accepting’

Jenna Barbee, who is under investigation, insists film is related to curriculum and warns investigators are traumatizing her students

Ed Pilkington in New York
@edpilkington
Sun 14 May 2023 16.12 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 09.37 EDT

A Florida teacher under investigation because she showed her class the Disney animated movie Strange World which features a gay character has defended herself on social media, insisting the film related to the curriculum and warning that state investigators were traumatizing her 10- and 11-year-old students.

Jenna Barbee, a teacher at Winding Waters school in Hernando county, Florida, released a six-minute TikTok video in which she gave her side of the story. She said she had been reported to the local school board by one of her students' mother, who sits on the board and was on a "rampage to get rid of every form of representation out of our schools", Barbee alleged.

Barbee, who is in her first year as a teacher, said she was reported to Florida's state education department for "indoctrination" before anyone had even spoken to her. She is now under official investigation for possible violations of the Parental Rights in Education Act, dubbed the "don't say gay" law, which was introduced by Florida's Republican governor, Ron DeSantis, last year and which bans teaching about gender and sexual identity to school students at all ages.

In her TikTok statement, Barbee said she had decided to show Strange World to her fifth-grade class to give them a break after a morning of exams. She saw the film as directly relevant to the curriculum they were studying on Earth science and ecosystems.

She had signed permission slips from the parents of all pupils in the class, giving their approval for showing PG movies.

Disney released Strange World last year. The fictional plot centers on a team of explorers searching for a rare plant that provides energy for their society.

A central character in the animated film, Ethan Clade, who is played by the comic Jaboukie Young-White, is gay. He has a brief crush on another male character.

Barbee said that the sexual orientation of the character had nothing to do with her choice of film: "I have a lot of fifth-grade students who have come to me this year, long before showing this movie, talking about how they're part of [the LGBTQ+] community. It's not a big deal to me. So I just said, OK, awesome, I'm not pushing anything, just being accepting. That's what I do."

Barbee said that as part of the investigation by the state's education department, her pupils were now being hauled out of class one by one to be interrogated by officials. Ironically, she added, no parental permission was required.

"Do you know the trauma that is going to cause to some of my students?" Barbee said. "Some of them can barely come and have a conversation with me, and are just getting comfortable with me, and now an investigator is allowed to come and interrogate them. Are you kidding me? What is that showing them?"

Barbee emphasized that she would never indoctrinate anyone to follow her beliefs. Her aim was to spread "the message of kindness, positivity and compassion for everyone", she said. "That is the key to the safety of our children."

On Sunday, the Tallahassee Democrat named the parent and board member who had reported Barbee as Shannon Rodriguez. A member of the rightwing group Moms for Liberty, Rodriguez has been a leader of demands to have books she describes as "smut" and "porn" taken off library and school shelves.

At a school board meeting last week, Rodriguez reportedly accused Barbee of breaking school policy. "It is not a teacher's job to impose their beliefs upon a child," she said. "Allowing movies such as this assist teachers in opening a door for conversations that have no place in our classroom."

Barbee's predicament left her in the crosshairs of Florida's culture wars. DeSantis, who is expected to run for the White House in 2024, has put teachers at the centre of his attack on "wokeness".

He has also made Disney a prime target after the entertainment giant opposed his "don't say gay" legislation. He has tried to strip Disney of its self-governing status in Florida, while the company has countered with a federal lawsuit arguing that their first amendment right to free speech has been violated.

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Headlines tuesday 16 may 2023

- **Ukraine Russia targets Kyiv with massive overnight airstrike**
- **Live Russia-Ukraine war: ‘exceptionally’ intense air strikes on Kyiv overnight; European leaders meet in Iceland**
- **Trade deals No chlorinated chicken or hormone-fed beef in future deals, Sunak vows**
- **Live Michael Gove joins attack on Labour’s proposal to extend voting rights**

Kyiv struck by 'exceptionally intense' Russian airstrikes – video

Ukraine

Russia's most potent hypersonic weapon neutralised, says Ukraine

Intense night-time bombardment of Kyiv damaged Patriot air defence system, air command confirms

Luke Harding in Kyiv and Dan Sabbagh
Tue 16 May 2023 17.09 EDTFirst published on Tue 16 May 2023 03.38 EDT

Ukraine has said it has neutralised the Kremlin's most potent hypersonic weapon, shooting down six out of six Kinzhal missiles launched at Kyiv, but hours later it emerged the intense night-time attack had damaged a Patriot air defence system.

Yurii Ihnat, a spokesperson for Ukraine's air command, said Moscow had also bombarded the capital with nine Kalibr missiles and three ballistic rockets, as well as six attack drones and three reconnaissance drones. All were shot down, he said, thwarting what he called "air terrorism".

But the attack appeared to have damaged a US-made Patriot air defence battery, US sources told CNN later on Tuesday. Officials warned the system may have to be withdrawn entirely depending on the level of damage it had sustained. An assessment was ongoing, they added.

The attack on Kyiv was one of the biggest since last year's invasion and followed Volodymyr Zelenskiy's three-day trip to Europe. During meetings in London, Berlin, Paris and Rome, Ukraine's president secured promises of more military assistance, including long-range attack drones from the UK.

Russia's furious response came at 2.30am local time. Emergency sirens woke residents. Soon afterwards there were loud booms as Ukrainian air defences engaged incoming missiles. Tracer fire illuminated the sky and car alarms went off. There were growling explosions. A further air raid warning sounded at 4am.

A missile exploding in the sky over Kyiv during an overnight Russian missile strike. Photograph: Gleb Garanich/Reuters

Earlier, on Tuesday, the ministry of defence in Moscow said it had destroyed a US-supplied Patriot air defence battery. Serious damage to a Patriot would be a major blow to Ukraine's air defences. Two Patriots, one donated by the US and one by Germany, arrived in the country around mid April, and have already been targeted previously by Russian missiles, in an effort to eliminate them.

Although considered particularly effective, the Patriot is a relatively static air defence system, and is considered potentially vulnerable to high speed missiles.

"We have received very powerful air defence systems from our western partners. They work against air dynamic targets. The Kinzhal X-47 missiles which used to terrorise us are not so scary any more," Ihnat said. The raid

was “unique” in its use of six Kinzhals from an estimated reserve of “about 50”. “The enemy has used a relatively big number of them,” he added.

The combined attack in the early hours of Tuesday featured Shahed loitering drones arriving from the north, Kinzhals launched by MiG-31K fighter jets in the east and Kalibr missiles fired by Russian warships stationed in the Black Sea, he said. The shooting down of the Kinzhals, if confirmed, would be a powerful demonstration of the effectiveness of the newly deployed air defences.

After a sleepless night during which many residents sought refuge in bomb shelters, Kyiv’s mayor, Vitali Klitschko, issued an update on damage. He said there were three victims in the Solomyan district, which was hit by falling rocket debris. Rescuers extinguished blazes after vehicles caught fire.

Debris fell on the suburbs of Darnytskyi and Obolonskyi, he said, as well as on Kyiv zoo. The zoo’s director, Kirill Trantin, said the remains of a shot-down rocket sliced through trees and landed next to enclosures containing vultures and a family of raccoons. He said he was a few hundred metres away at the time and had taken cover in a shelter with 20 other employees.

People inspect missile fragments in the grounds of Kyiv zoo on Tuesday. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

“It was 2.50am. We heard a boom. It was very loud and very bright. There was no fire and fortunately no humans or animals were hurt. Police arrived and took away a part of the missile,” he told the Guardian. “The Russians don’t give a shit for the law or international norms. We’ve held on for over a year. We will beat them.”

By morning the debris had been swept up, with the zoo opening to visitors as usual at 10am. The animals did not appear distressed but would be monitored over the coming days and if necessary given antidepressants in their water, the director said. In the meantime they would get extra apples and nuts.

Trantin said Russia’s goal was to punish and terrify Ukraine’s civilian population into submission. He said 10 of his zoo colleagues were fighting with the Ukrainian army, including three in the city of Bakhmut. They had contacted him to see if he was OK, he said, adding that Ukraine needed better air defences.

The zoo is a popular Kyiv attraction. One mother, Maryna, said she had taken her son Serhii to see the chimpanzees as a birthday treat. “He’s 11 today. Last night’s attack was terrible. But I promised to take him to the zoo and a promise is a promise,” she said.

Zelenskiy said he had received “important and powerful” pledges of military aid during his European trip. Both the UK and France have announced they will soon start training Ukrainian pilots, and would work with other countries on the delivery of F-16 jets. On Tuesday the UK and Holland announced an “international coalition” to help procure the aircraft.

Ihnat described F-16s as Ukraine’s fighter jet of choice. They could destroy cruise missiles and drones and would support Ukraine’s troops in a counteroffensive, expected this summer, and involving newly formed brigades equipped with western battle tanks and armoured fighting vehicles. “F-16s will protect us from air terrorism by Russia,” he said.

Writing on Twitter, the UK’s ambassador in Kyiv, Dame Melinda Simmons, described the Russian bombardment of the capital as “full on” and “pretty intense”. She had just returned to Ukraine from the UK, where she

accompanied Zelenskiy, who held talks on Monday with the prime minister in Chequers.

> A full on aerial attack on Kyiv last night, pretty intense. Bangs and shaking walls are not an easy night. Hope everyone is ok.
>
> — Dame Melinda Simmons (@MelSimmonsFCDO) May 16, 2023

The attack follows the provision by the government of long-range Storm Shadow missiles, which have a range of more than 250km (155 miles), and a British pledge to deliver long-range attack drones soon. The Kremlin has called the move “extremely negative” amid evidence Kyiv is already using Storm Shadows to hit Russian command and control centres away from the frontline.

Ukraine’s defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, praised the “unbelievable success” of his air forces in the early hours of Tuesday. “Russian terrorists have no chance of prevailing over Ukraine. Their weapons can and should be countered by western ones,” he wrote.

> Another unbelievable success for the Ukrainian Air Forces! Last night, our sky defenders shot down SIX russian hypersonic Kinzhal missiles and 12 other missiles.
>
> 80-1-6=
>
> russian terrorists have no chance of prevailing over Ukraine. Their weapons can and should be countered by…
>
> — Oleksii Reznikov (@oleksiireznikov) May 16, 2023

Meanwhile, fighting continued in eastern Ukraine. Deputy defence minister Hanna Maliar on Tuesday said Ukraine had pushed Russian forces from the flanks of Bakhmut but conceded that Moscow’s forces were pushing deeper inside the embattled town.

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Ukraine war liveRussia

Ukraine claims to have retaken 20 square km of land around Bakhmut – as it happened

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Chickens at a farm in Osage, Iowa. After slaughter, the chickens are rinsed with an antimicrobial chlorine wash to protect consumers from food-borne diseases. Photograph: Scott Olson/Getty

Trade policy

No chlorinated chicken or hormone-fed beef in future trade deals, Sunak vows

PM to tell farmers he will never do a trade deal that includes practices associated with US factory farms

- UK politics live – latest updates

Lisa O'Carroll and *Helena Horton*
Tue 16 May 2023 04.46 EDTLast modified on Tue 16 May 2023 13.16 EDT

Rishi Sunak has vowed to take chlorinated chicken and hormone-fed beef off British tables in future trade deals, promising to put UK farming at the heart of government trade policy.

“There will be no chlorine-washed chicken and no hormone-treated beef on the UK market. Not now, not ever,” he will tell farmers in a letter unveiling a new government policy to improve British food security.

And in a swipe at his predecessor, Liz Truss, the prime minister will also tell the farming community that they will not be “an afterthought” in deals with foreign farmers.

At the first Farm to Fork summit in Downing Street, the government will outline a new approach to improving food security, with targets that the UK produces 60% of the food consumed in the country.

The National Farmers’ Union and other agricultural bodies have spent most of the seven Brexit years battling to persuade the government that giving other countries with lower standards and cheaper food production access to British markets is counterproductive.

Welsh farmers said they had been “chucked under the bus” by Truss’s race to get deals with industrial-scale Australian rivals who could undercut local farmers.

Sunak will tell farmers: “When you consider the scale of the opportunities within our grasp as we forge new trade deals around the world, British farming and British produce simply cannot be an afterthought. I know that is how some of you felt in the past.”

He will also tell food chiefs that he is fully committed to ensuring “without exception” that he will never do a deal that includes chlorinated chicken or beef from hormone-fed cattle, practices associated with factory farms in the US.

Sunak’s commitments put his policies into sharp contrast with predecessors Truss and Boris Johnson, whose thirst for a US trade deal was stymied by his policy on Northern Ireland.

The president of the National Farmers’ Union, Minette Batters, told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme that Sunak was making a commitment previously absent from government policy.

“People will be full of understanding that we have had three very different prime ministers in the last year and in fairness, the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, has set out a very different agenda.

“He has made it very clear in black and white that there will be sensitive sectors in all trade deals. This played out in the Trans Pacific deal, [the CPTPP] and we are going to see sensitive sectors [protected] from now on and he’s saying farmers will be at the heart of this,” she said.

“[He has] also put it in black and white that we will never be importing hormone-treated beef or chlorine-washed chicken so I think everything that we have done has had huge impact on the people of this country are absolutely behind that ambition. I’m delighted to see him support it.”

Food security was put into sharp focus last year when the UK and other countries in Europe experienced shortages of salad items due to weather-impacted crops in southern Europe.

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This year, fears were expressed about trade deal links to deforestation in Mexico after a government minister said beef from the country could hit UK supermarket shelves under a new trade deal.

At the time, Batters said: “I am very concerned about links to deforestation. From Mexico our lines are pretty tough on this having given away so much on beef to Australia and New Zealand. We want the government to take a very, very firm line on further imports of beef.”

Reacting to Sunak’s letter, a spokesperson for the campaign group Global Justice Now, said: “The best way for the prime minister to show he’s serious would be to give parliament a binding vote on future trade deals so he can be held to his word.

“Instead, last month he even scrapped the dedicated committee that scrutinises them. This looks like another empty promise from a government that has put City profits ahead of protecting food standards time and again.”

Meanwhile, Labour and the Liberal Democrats have called on the government to halt rocketing food prices.

Analysis by Labour of the government’s statistical dataset of the average price of wholesale home-grown vegetables shows that British-grown tomatoes cost 67% more than they did at the same time in 2019. In the 19th week of 2019, the average wholesale price for a kilogram of cherry tomatoes cost £1.79; however, the latest price in May 2023 stands at £3.00.

The rocketing prices also include a 109% increase for the price of a head of cauliflower, a 95% increase on asparagus, an 82% increase on strawberries and 62% on leeks.

Analysis by the Liberal Democrats has also found that even though the wholesale prices on basic products such as bread-making wheat and fruit and veg have tumbled in recent months, prices for consumers in supermarkets have continued to soar.

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Politics live with Andrew SparrowPolitics

UK will end up like Russia if it ignores European court of human rights obligations, Sunak told – as it happened

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2023.05.16 - Spotlight

- **The long read The war on Japanese knotweed**
- **Love, loss and the Lib Dems ‘We didn’t show we cared enough. We won’t make that mistake twice'**
- **‘It seems so corny!’ How Jennifer Hosten became the first Black Miss World – and an international diplomat**
- **Hiroshima Survivors urge G7 leaders to unite against atomic weapons**
- **Okonomiyaki Street food that helped rebuild Hiroshima in the G7 spotlight**

The war on Japanese knotweed

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The Guardian - Back to homeThe Guardian

‘When I’m not here, who is going to look after my son? It’s the thing that worries me more than anything’ … Davey at his home in London. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Ed Davey

Interview

‘We didn’t show we cared enough. We won’t make that mistake twice’: Ed Davey on love, loss and the Lib Dems

Zoe Williams

After the Lib Dems’ triumph in the local elections, their leader talks about his ‘mission’ to get rid of the Tories, the tragedies that blighted his childhood, and how caring for his disabled son has shaped his politics

@zoesqwilliams
Tue 16 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 16 May 2023 04.38 EDT

I meet Ed Davey at his house in his Kingston and Surbiton constituency, a sprawling Edwardian semi. In the hands of a banker or, for that matter, a regular politician, it would be full of black and white tiles and plantation blinds, but in the hands of the Daveys it looks like an 80s novel, full of elegant chaos, every surface covered in papers, cellos and vests.

The Liberal Democrat leader, 57, is unusually open and approachable, guileless; I start bombarding him with the kind of questions you’d ask a friend you hadn’t seen in 20 years. Why have you got a high chair, when

your youngest is nine? How come you've got so many cars? Two of the cars are theirs, a little electric one and a mobility vehicle for their 15-year-old son, John, who's disabled; one car is John's carer's, and she has a toddler, hence the high chair. One is John's teacher's – "he's taught from home. We tried two special schools, but they didn't work out. When we started home education, he was non-verbal. He's now verbal. Which is brilliant," he beams. We head out to the garden, where I congratulate him on the local election results.

They have a good ground game, the Lib Dems, and they're scrappy: even accounting for the way all parties manage expectations before local elections, they sailed way over their targets. "Our central scenario was about 250 [councillors] in five councils; we ended up with over 400 in 12 councils. So we're pretty happy," he says. They made 704 gains in the 2019 local elections, so this is shaping up into a solid recovery after the party's post-coalition doldrums. "Because the next election is all about getting rid of the Tories …" he begins, and maybe I smirk a bit because he stops – he's the last man standing of the Lib Dems who served in the coalition cabinet, so fierce anti-Tory rhetoric is still faintly incongruent – "… that is exactly my mission." Will this party ever enable another Conservative government? "This is really important: we will not put the Conservatives back into government or do any deal with them. What. So. Ever. Personally, I've fought them all my life: I fought them in government, I'm fighting them now. They're beyond the pale, as far as I'm concerned."

> I've fought the Tories all my life: I fought them in government, I'm fighting them now. They're beyond the pale

A load of questions shuffle in behind that. What kind of deal would he be seeking with Labour? Is he already in negotiations with Keir Starmer? What would his asks be? Does he think he could get proportional representation over the line?

He doesn't answer any of those, instead giving me this helicopter view: "I've been reflecting on past leaders. I joined the party in 1989, I was economics adviser to Paddy [Ashdown], I worked closely with Charles

[Kennedy], I had a period as Menzies [Campbell]'s chief of staff, so I've seen them close up, and seen them in election campaigns, dealing with this question. There's a danger that if you focus on after the election, you just get distracted, you spend a load of energy thinking about something that might never happen. My job is to win lots of seats: primarily against the Tories; two against the SNP; one, arguably two, against Labour. I'm going to focus on my job."

His life in politics started in 1987, when he was 21, still a student, and he joined the Tactical Voting group, as he "just wanted the Tories out". He emphasises that just because he's had his whole career with the Lib Dems – only two years out of parliament since 1997, when he lost his seat in 2015 – he didn't get into politics as a career move. And while it's true that, in 1989, a careerist would have joined a party polling at higher than 5%, his life can still look smooth and gilded, from the PPE degree from Oxford to the succession of spokesperson jobs – education and skills, trade and industry, business, foreign affairs, home affairs – in a party that prized nicely spoken young men with common sense. This impression of an effortless life could not be further from the reality.

Ed Davey at a climate change protest in London in 2019. Photograph: Claire Doherty/In Pictures/Getty Images

He is putting care at the centre of the Lib Dems' agenda, he says. "It's the only way to rescue the health service. It's massive for gender equality … and linked to that, social justice in and of itself." To have that conversation, he wants to be plain about his perspective, which is not that of a policy wonk, but that of a man who has lived an extraordinary amount of his life as a carer.

> It's difficult talking about my son's disability and Emily's MS. But it's given me an insight into millions of people's lives

He describes a "relatively humble" background: his father from a mining family; his mother the daughter of domestic servants. Davey was the youngest of three boys, and his dad was doing well, working as a solicitor in Nottingham. When he was four, and his brothers were nine (Charles) and seven (Henry), John Davey died of Hodgkin's disease at the age of 37. "Diagnosed in November, he died in March. I didn't really know him. When you're young, you roll with it. The big thing was seeing my mother's grief, hearing it, knowing something tragic had happened."

His mother, Nina, moved with the boys to a bungalow, and was then diagnosed with breast cancer when Davey was nine. Three years on, she was diagnosed with secondary cancer in her bones. "Henry and I, with help from my maternal grandparents and neighbours, nursed Mum for three years," he says. "The last 18 months she was bedridden, in a lot of pain. We had this morphine – I used to pour it out and give it to her in a cup." He became incredibly close to her: "I'd spend hours lying on the bed, talking to her. I was by her side in Nottingham general hospital when she died. I was in my school uniform, on my way to school." She had been put on a dementia ward. "It was incredibly unsuitable, very shouty, you know how some dementia can be."

Ed Davey with former Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg and Jo Swinson en route to Downing Street, days before the 2015 general election. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images

He tells this story matter-of-factly, but it's full of searingly sad details – how his mother and grandmother bickered in the last few months, because his grandmother used to do all the buttons up when she ironed a shirt, and his mother would struggle to undo them; the carrot and apple juice fasts his mother would try, because conventional medicine was all out of ideas and she went to a naturopath; the ridiculously large meals his grandparents used to make him, when he went to live with them after his mother's death.

"And then my grandad died when I was 18," he says. "I was pretty angry about that, after all that had happened. It was quite sudden, a heart attack, he couldn't have been that old, 66. I think he died of a broken heart. He'd lost his only child, who he adored. He was a very, very emotional man."

Ed Davey got through all that without any academic missteps. He was at Nottingham High school, in the year above Ed Balls, and he remembers his conscious decision: "The summer after my mum died, in the kitchen by myself, I had loads of work to do. I thought, 'I'm not going to do it.' Previously, I studied to make my mother happy. Because that's what you do as a kid. Are your parents proud of you? It was a real Rubicon moment for

me. That's when it could have gone wrong. But Mum had been a massive influence in my life, and I went the right way, rather than the wrong way."

With his wife, Emily Gasson, at the state banquet at Buckingham Palace for the president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, November 2022. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

He spent a lot of time with his grandmother: all his university holidays, Christmases, just the two of them, well into his adulthood. "First of all, she was looking after me. Then we were looking after each other. Then she got more frail, after I became an MP. Henry and I became her carers, not in terms of the care I did for my mum or for my son, but looking after her affairs."

When he married Emily Gasson, another prospective parliamentary candidate for the Lib Dems (she stood in four elections, but didn't get a seat; now she's a councillor), it was 2005 and he had to move his grandmother to an expensive care home in Kingston. "I said to Emily, 'We'll have to mortgage the house to pay for my grandmother's care home fees.' Which was quite something to say, because we really couldn't afford it. The great thing about that care home was, they allowed her to smoke." When Davey was about to give up smoking, Emily told him to wait until his grandmother died; she really liked having a fag with him.

His son was born in 2007, and caring for John is “full on”, he says. “Without going into massive detail, you do the lot. I’m sure lots of professional carers do it with affection, of course they do. But when it’s someone you love dearly, your thought process is completely different. My biggest thing with my son is: when I’m not here, who is going to look after him? Sometimes he hits and pinches – you have to get over that. And my wife and I, we worry, when we’re not here … you read these awful stories about how people are treated. I’m sure all parents whose kids have special needs will understand. It’s the thing that worries me more than anything else in my life.”

Gasson, meanwhile, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2012. She recovered pretty well – she has remitting MS – then declined again during lockdown. “She’s fighting back, she’s gone fish-eating vegan, lots of exercise, lots of yoga – she’s trying to keep herself as healthy as she can and she does a good job with it.”

Davey (centre) with former Lib Dems leader Paddy Ashdown (second right) in 1997. Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

“Until I became leader, I didn’t talk about the care side [of my life],” he says. “Partly because it’s private. But I felt, inevitably, people are going to ask me questions about my life. It’s easy with my parents; that’s a long time

ago. It's more difficult with my son, and with Emily's MS, but it is what it is, and it's given me an insight into the reality of millions of people's lives."

We talk about compassion, caring, pluralism, the health service. He's really trenchant on this: hebelieves in socialised medicine, a completely overhauled system of care to reflect the collective responsibilities we have towards one another. And I have to say, given how central health and care are to his agenda, and how the NHS is as close to an experiment with socialism as we've ever come in this country, I'm surprised he's not more leftwing. He's not even to the left of the Lib Dems, though he mildly disputes his reputation as an "Orange Book" liberal (so called after the Lib Dems' pro-free market 2004 treatise, which he co-authored). "I wish people would actually read my chapter in the Orange Book! It's about local government." Beveridge was a liberal, he says. But he wouldn't have amounted to a hill of beans without the Labour party, I reply. David Lloyd George was a liberal, and he brought in national insurance, Davey says. The Labour party was barely five years old when that happened, I return. I appear to be trying to persuade the leader of the Lib Dems to join a socialist Labour party that doesn't even exist, using a GCSE study guide on the 20th century.

> Nick Clegg wanted to show coalitions work. I argued we should show the bit of the Liberals that's anti-establishment

I suppose it's because that period in coalition, the start of the most callous government in living memory, still casts a shadow. Davey says he was fighting the Tories constantly: "I didn't trust them an inch. I didn't trust George Osborne an inch. We didn't tell people how much we were fighting the Tories, that was by design, from Nick [Clegg]. He wanted to show that coalitions work. I argued that we should show the bit of the Liberals that's anti-establishment, that's reformist, that's internationalist. But he was the leader. We served at his pleasure."

He names a few big wins over the Conservatives from those years: the Liberal Democrats successfully locked in the government's offshore wind contracts, so Osborne couldn't rescind them after 2015, as he tried to; they stopped the Tories freezing benefits when inflation was running at 5%. "I

believe in our environmental stuff, I believe in our political reform, I believe in our internationalism, I believe in civil liberties, I believe in our support for public services, I believe we're caring, that's who we are. And we weren't showing it enough. We're not going to make that mistake twice."

As I get ready to leave, Ed Davey introduces me to John, who is playing a card memory game with his teacher and carer in the room at the front where he does his schooling. Everyone's encouraging John, very gently, to say "hello", and my name, and he gets overwhelmed for a second and buries his head in his father's shoulder, who soothes him so that he can come out with a triumphant, "Hello Zoe!" It's a moment of ineffable tenderness, trust and patience, such that you'd probably only witness between two other people a handful of times in your life. I thought I was going to make the whole situation a million times more stressful by bursting into tears, but pulled it back from the brink, thank God, by thinking: It would be funny if, after a lifetime trying to persuade people to vote Labour, I ended up voting Lib Dem.

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The Guardian - Back to homeThe Guardian

‘I found it shocking that your race should be a headline’ … Hosten at home in Canada. Photograph: Jorian Charlton/The Guardian

Black livesRace

Interview

‘It seems so corny!’ How Jennifer Hosten became the first Black Miss World – and an international diplomat

Ellen E Jones

An audience of 100 million watched as Hosten was crowned in 1970. It was just the start of a remarkable career that took in tea with Joan Crawford, a tour with Bob Hope and a violent coup in her home country of Grenada

Tue 16 May 2023 05.00 EDT

Jennifer Hosten was 23 years old when she made history, as the first Black woman to be crowned Miss World. Footage of that evening, on 20 November 1970, was broadcast live from the Royal Albert Hall in London to about 100 million viewers worldwide, and shows Hosten, representing Grenada, looking radiantly beautiful and endearingly stunned, as host Bob Hope places the winner’s crown on her head.

Her moment in the spotlight had already been overshadowed, however. Approximately 40 minutes earlier, the proceedings were interrupted when a

group of women's liberation activists began sounding football rattles and throwing flour-bombs in protest at what they saw as an egregious display of sexism.

Hosten, who was backstage at that point, could only hear the demonstrators. "I don't think I was scared," she says, "but the sound made us wonder what was going on. People thought the contest had come to an end." Once order was restored, a visibly shaken Hope returned to the stage and attempted to assign meaning to the melee: "I want to tell you anybody that would try to break up an affair as wonderful as this … with these wonderful girls from the entire world, have got to be on some kind of dope!"

Hosten as Miss World in 1970. Photograph: Bill Zygmant/REX/Shutterstock

In the half-century since, Miss World 1970 has been touted as an example of the need for "intersectional feminism", before the phrase had even been invented. Was the contest ever really intended as a celebration of international womanhood? Or was it always just an organised excuse for an ogle? Either way, in the eye of the storm, Miss World herself found some clarity: "It seemed like all these things were supposed to happen, that it was meant to be," says Hosten, who is now 75, from her home just outside

Toronto, Canada. “At that point, I realised how much I had to do on my own.”

Even if the event made her a global celebrity, Miss World was by no means the culmination of Hosten’s career: she would go on to travel the world, meet movie stars and heads of state, obtain several advanced degrees and have a ringside seat for history in the making. She has very much written her own script.

Hosten was born in 1947 in St George’s, the picturesque capital of her Caribbean island home, the youngest of five children. It was an idyllic childhood, characterised by morning sea-swims and evenings spent gathered around the radio, which fostered a patriotism that Hosten has carried throughout her life. “When I look back on my childhood I realise I really was quite blessed,” she says. “We didn’t know about drugs and we didn’t have social media to contend with. We made our own fun.”

Jennifer Hosten with her brother Robin, her mother and father, and her sister Pommie. Photograph: Sutherland House

As her parents were professionals – her father a prominent lawyer, her mother a schoolteacher – there were standards to live up to, but the family were not part of any island elite, she says. “Grenada is a small community,

so the structures are not so defined, not like in England," although she describes Grenadians at the time as more class conscious than colour conscious. "Most of us were of mixed blood," she says, and describes her own heritage as including African, Scottish, Flemish and Carib Indian.

The radio was Hosten's main window into a world beyond Grenada, and after leaving school, she pursued a career in broadcasting, eventually travelling to London, aged 18, to enrol on a BBC training scheme. After nearly two years in the UK, and six months as an au pair in France, she returned to Grenada a cosmopolitan, bilingual, polished woman of 20 – an ideal candidate to work as a flight attendant for British West Indies Airways.

It was in this role that a series of events – "what you might consider coincidences, which I don't think are coincidences, really" – propelled her towards her date with destiny at the Royal Albert Hall. There was a fateful in-flight meeting with the recently crowned Miss Guyana; happening to pick up a discarded newspaper reporting Grenada's plans to send a representative to Miss World; and bumping into an old friend whose mother was the head of Grenada's tourist board. He persuaded Hosten to compete, suggesting Miss World would be no different from the traditional carnival queen contests she had participated in as a teenager. "They were never really about beauty. They were always more about promoting the culture of the island," she says. "Throughout the Caribbean, you were considered 'attractive', rather than 'beautiful'; and that meant that you had a nice smile, that you presented yourself well."

> I can't believe that's how I answered questions! It makes you cringe, you know?

Miss World was very different. "The objectification was exemplified by having to turn around for your backside to be judged," she says. "Even back then, it was shocking, because I never had to do that in Grenada. And it was shocking to my daughter, who later saw the contest. She was embarrassed for me. She said: 'Oh Mum, I can't imagine that you had to do that!'" Hosten is also a little embarrassed for her younger self, watching the footage back. "It seems so corny. I can't believe that's how I answered questions! It makes you cringe, you know? But that's what it was."

Her win made the front pages around the world, but Hosten was disturbed by the tone of much of the reporting. “The first time I ever saw myself as a minority was when I came to England for Miss World, because the day after I won, the headline was: Miss World is Black,” she says. “I found it shocking that your colour or race should be a headline … because even if they thought of me as Black, was that the most important thing for them to be highlighting?”

The same articles often included allegations that the contest must have been rigged, since the judging panel included the Grenadian premier, Eric Gairy. Hosten found this risible: “There were three British judges, there was also an African judge, a judge from Denmark, I think there was a judge from India … and all of a sudden, the one from Grenada should have made the difference?” It seemed to her the fuss was a cover for their true objections: “It was really because there were two women of colour [Pearl Jansen, Miss Africa South, placed second], and the fact that I wasn’t the standard European type of winner. [In their minds] I could not possibly, naturally, have been able to win. It was hurtful.”

Protesters invade the Royal Albert Hall during the 1970 Miss World contest. Photograph: Leonard Burt/Getty Images

Coming face to face with the women's lib protesters was, by comparison, less disconcerting. When crowds singing the protest song We Shall Overcome accosted an official Miss World coach en route to the Royal Albert Hall that day, she remembers some of the contestants on board joined in the singing. "Well, at one level we thought, this is a women's demonstration, and we're women." Hosten says she agreed with much of what the UK women's liberation movement had to say, but they made one great tactical error: "They never reached out to us at any point in time, to explain anything about what they were trying to achieve, or who they were against."

If they had, she would have tried to describe to them her experience – as a woman of colour from one of the smallest nations in the world – and how it might differ from theirs, as white women in the UK. "I was able to represent women that really had not had an opportunity like this. And let's be frank: it was a stepping stone for most of us. I never saw myself as a beauty contest winner, really. I saw it as an opportunity, which I took, to have an experience, and to make some money!"

At that time, the simple fact of a Black woman being proclaimed the world's "most beautiful" sent a powerfully countercultural message. While the "Black is beautiful" movement had been challenging internalised racism among African Americans since the early 1960s, in much of the western world the existence of women with darker skin tones or afro hair textures was ignored by the media and the cosmetics industry. "It was always a job to find something that would really complement my skin," says Hosten. "When I won, no cosmetic companies or hair product companies contacted me to advertise for them, as they had done for previous Miss Worlds."

Hosten realised she was also carrying a banner for long underrepresented women of colour from all over the world: "I think I was one of the first Miss Worlds to be invited to Africa, for instance. I didn't accept the invitation to South Africa, during the height of apartheid, but I did go to Nigeria, and pass through Ghana, and they were wonderful to me, just like a homecoming."

Hosten and Bob Hope on Hope's Christmas tour of US military bases. Photograph: AP

If Hosten's only goal had been personal advancement, she'd likely have parlayed her Miss World fame into a showbiz career. There was ample opportunity, including all the contacts she made on Bob Hope's Christmas tour of US military bases. Despite Hope's self-perpetuated reputation as a womaniser, she describes the man she got to know as an avuncular, if slightly detached figure, who continued to send her a Christmas card every year for decades afterwards. "It was only ever addressed to 'Miss World, Jennifer Hosten, Grenada', but somehow it always got to me." Then there was a teatime tête-à-tête at Joan Crawford's New York home, which Hosten remembers as a flurry of small dogs and big hats, during which the Hollywood star personally invited Hosten to enrol at her acting school. Instead, after fulfilling her year of contractual obligations, she went a different way.

Many beauty queens claim to strive for "world peace", but few have put those words into action as literally as Hosten has. A year after Miss World, she married a Canadian IBM manager named David Craig and set up home with him in rural Ontario, where they raised two children and Hosten did the daily commute to her customer relations job at Air Canada on a snowmobile. One day in 1978, however, she received a phone call from Gairy, by then the

Grenadian prime minister, inviting her to serve as high commissioner (equivalent to ambassador) to Canada.

Being a woman meant she was expected to be ambassador *and* ambassador's wife, combining her diplomatic duties with the full domestic schedule of a mother of two. "I would have to come home and plan the cocktail parties, organise the childcare. I remember an occasion where [former Canadian PM] Pierre Trudeau came to my home and read the children a bedtime story … That was quite special." Special, but also a nightmare of parenting logistics: "I was the one that had to arrange for them to actually *go* to bed, and here I was, also the ambassador."

Any notion that this would be a ceremonial role was soon dramatically disproven. "I was returning from a UN meeting in Ecuador when the government fell," she says, referring to the 1979 coup in Grenada led by Maurice Bishop, the leader of the Marxist-Leninist New Jewel Movement (NJM) and an old acquaintance from her London days. "I had to very quickly use whatever skills I had, and get recognition for the new government. I think I was instrumental in that, actually." Hosten stayed on until 1981, through what would turn out to be one of her nation's most tumultuous chapters. She is critical of the fallen Gairy government, describing it as "verging on authoritarian" and presiding over a long discontented populace: "The people wanted independence [from Britain, which happened in 1974], but they didn't want independence under that government." The NJM government, however, soon descended into something "much worse … total abuse of power, the doing away of all freedoms". In 1983 Bishop was executed by dissident members of his own party, triggering a US invasion. These are events that Hosten is still sorting through in her mind. "There is actually much more to that story that I can tell, that I will sometime write about. I don't know if they'll ever publish it."

With their children grown up and their careers taking them to different countries, Hosten and her husband divorced after 28 years of "a fairly good marriage". She went on to marry – and separate – twice more and accept other high-level diplomatic and trade roles, including at the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and Canada's High Commission in Bangladesh before, aged 60, retraining once again, as a psychotherapist and counsellor. These days Hosten is a proud grandmother who enjoys a close relationship

with her family, as well as keeping in touch with the many friends she has made around the world. Throughout all her reinventions, she has retained the grace and sincerity that won her that 1970 title.

Hosten at the Misbehaviour premiere in London, in 2020. Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

In 2020, the events of the 1970 Miss World were dramatised in the movie Misbehaviour, with Gugu Mbatha-Raw as Hosten and Keira Knightley as Sally Alexander, the organiser of the women's rights protest. It was during the publicity tour for Misbehaviour, listening to Knightley discuss her choice of acting roles, that Hosten landed on a useful analogy forher own sense of identity: "She's played pirates in the Caribbean, and been in Jane Austen adaptations, and lots of other types of movies, because actresses don't like to be typecast," she says. "Well, *people* don't want to be typecast … I didn't want to be remembered just as a beauty contest winner, because there are so many other sides to us."

This plurality of womanhood is what Hosten hoped – and still hopes – to convey: "I don't know how far [the women's movement] has come in the sense of really including the interests of a broader section of women," she concludes. "But I do think they achieved a great deal and I really have to

congratulate them. What, it seems to me, is still missing, is asking: who are we to be limiting the roles of other women?”

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Almost 80 years since the bombing of Hiroshima, survivors of the atomic bombings are urging G7 leaders to issue a strong statement against the use of atomic weapons when they meet in Hiroshima later this month. Photograph: Justin McCurry/The Guardian

Japan

Hiroshima survivors urge G7 leaders to unite against atomic weapons

Almost eight decades after the bomb, G7 leaders will meet in the Japanese city where survivors are urging action on disarmament amid the Ukraine war

Justin McCurry in Hiroshima
Mon 15 May 2023 19.54 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 23.20 EDT

A blow to the head probably saved Park Namjoo's life. The 13-year-old schoolgirl, like many other children in wartime Hiroshima, was helping demolish buildings to make firebreaks in July 1945 when a piece of wood struck her on the head.

Less than three weeks later, at 8:15am on 6 August, a recuperating Park told her parents she still didn't feel like going to school. As she and her younger brother and sister traveled on a streetcar near their home, the Enola Gay, a US B-29 bomber, dropped a 15-kiloton nuclear bomb on the city.

"There was a bright flash and a loud bang," Park, 91, said. "It felt like a fireball was going through the entire streetcar. People were screaming and yelling at other passengers to jump out. I held my brother and sister's hands tightly. It had suddenly turned dark outside … it felt very strange. No one had any idea what had just happened."

Almost eight decades later, as the spectre of nuclear weapons returns – this time in Ukraine – survivors of the atomic bombings, known as *hibakusha,*

are urging G7 leaders to issue a strong statement against the use of atomic weapons when they meet in Hiroshima later this week.

“Hiroshima was only able to transform itself into the city we have today because we have had more than 70 years of peace,” said Ryohei Tanabe, a Hiroshima survivor.

“The G7 leaders need to understand that,” added Tanabe.

An estimated 60,000 to 80,000 people died instantly in the attack; by the end of the year, the death toll had risen to 140,000 as more succumbed to burns and illnesses caused by exposure to radiation.

Park Namjoo, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima Photograph: Justin McCurry/The Guardian

Had she been well enough to join her classmates Park, a *zainichi* ethnic Korean resident of Japan, would almost certainly have died. “Most of my friends died, which is why there are so few people of my age in Hiroshima,” she said. “If I hadn’t been off school that morning, I would have been with them.”

Local officials hope that when G7 leaders see present-day Hiroshima’s green spaces and wide boulevards, they will reflect on the destruction that came

before, now represented by the shell of the A-bomb dome.

“Having the G7 summit here is of huge symbolic importance,” said Toshihiro Toya, deputy director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. “If the head of nuclear powers hear the voices of the survivors, then we hope that this will spur them to show more leadership on nuclear disarmament.”

While Japanese officials have yet to announce an itinerary, G7 leaders will reportedly lay flowers at the cenotaph, which contains the name of every one of the 333,907 people whose deaths have been attributed to the A-bombing – the number rising every year – and meet survivors.

“The people aboard the Enola Gay dropped the bomb from a great height, so they couldn’t see the people going about their lives below,” said Shintaro Fukuhara, who organises bicycle tours of A-bomb sites. “If they could have seen people’s faces, I wonder if they could have gone through with it.”

‘As if the sky was trying to crush us’

Vladimir Putin has kept all military options open in the war in Ukraine, and in March announced that Russia would station tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, bringing some of its arsenal closer to the rest of Europe.

The potential for a nuclear exchange, almost eight decades after Hiroshima, is expected to push the issue near to the top of the G7 agenda amid pressure from anti-nuclear groups and the summit’s host, Japanese prime minister Fumio Kishida, who represents a constituency in Hiroshima.

While more than 60 countries have ratified a 2021 treaty to ban the possession and use of nuclear weapons, they do not include any of the recognised nuclear powers – including three G7 member states – or countries, including Japan, that fall under the US nuclear umbrella.

“I hope the nuclear weapons states will understand the inhumanity of nuclear weapons, and take note of the spirit of Hiroshima and its desire for a world free of those weapons,” the city’s mayor, Kazumi Matsui, told the Guardian in an interview.

“They should use the meeting to deepen their understanding of the realities of the atomic bombing and recognise that the only way to protect people’s lives and secure their prosperity is to abolish nuclear weapons. If they do that, I think the summit will have been a success.”

Park, whose parents moved to Japan from South Gyeongsang province in South Korea during the war, did not speak publicly about the bombing for half a century, but decided to share her experiences after talking to a group of schoolchildren.

The retired nurse never went back to school. Her father died of cancer more than a year after the attack, leaving the family with no income apart from cash they made selling sweet potatoes to Japanese soldiers returning from the front.

She recalled how she and her younger siblings had walked the 100m from the burned-out streetcar to their home. As a mixture of rain and thick, black ash fell on the city, she witnessed people wandering the street, their arms outstretched to prevent melted folds of skin – “hanging like kimono sleeves” – from sticking to their clothes.

“It was like hell on earth … it felt as if the sky was trying to crush us,” she said. “People complained about the heat and begged for water. As soon as they were given water, they died. All of the houses along the way had been flattened. I paused and stood on a river embankment, looked over the city and froze with fear. Hiroshima had disappeared.”

Local government records show that about 118,000 people are registered as survivors of the Hiroshima bombing, with an average age of 84. “We are all getting old,” said Park, who has been treated for cancer of the breast, mouth and skin. “I still can’t sleep when I remember the bloated, blackened bodies. But above all I learned that humans are strong. I willed myself to live … if you decide you want to live, then you stand a chance.”

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Okonomiyaki is carb-heavy and delicious. Photograph: Justin McCurry/The Guardian

Japan

Okonomiyaki: street food that helped rebuild Hiroshima in the G7 spotlight

As the city prepares for global leaders to arrive for the summit, restaurants are gearing up for a surge in visitors and orders of Hiroshima's favourite dish

- Hiroshima survivors urge G7 leaders to unite against atomic weapons

Justin McCurry in Hiroshima
Mon 15 May 2023 19.55 EDTLast modified on Mon 15 May 2023 23.20 EDT

Leaked menus for G7 working dinners can be relied on to generate a flurry of stories about the summit host and its priorities – from the clotted cream fudge and seafood showcased in Cornwall in 2021 to the meat-light, sustainable fare on offer in 2022 in the Bavarian Alps.

If this year's host, Japanese prime minister Fumio Kishida, follows suit, his G7 counterparts can expect a portion of *okonomiyaki* – the carb-heavy street food that helped rebuild Hiroshima after it was destroyed by a US atomic bomb.

Restaurants in Hiroshima, where Kishida has his constituency, are using the opportunity to promote the city's signature dish, typically made with batter, shredded cabbage, fried noodles and pork, the whole starchy edifice seasoned with a layer of sweet sauce, crisscrossed lines of mayonnaise and a sprinkle of dried *aonori* seaweed.

An earlier version eaten in prewar Hiroshima – known as *issen yōshoku*, or "one-penny western food" – comprised a simple batter of flour and water

cooked on an iron plate and embellished with chopped spring onion and bonito flakes.

A chef cooks okonomiyaki on a griddle at Chinchikurin, a restaurant in Hiroshima, Japan. Photograph: Justin McCurry/The Guardian

After the atomic bombing of 6 August 1945 left Hiroshima in ruins, malnourished survivors retrieved iron plates and turned again to the familiar snack, using huge quantities of flour provided by the US.

As the city recovered, the simple pancake evolved into something far more satisfying, with the addition of pork, cabbage, eggs and yakisoba noodles. Hiroshima okonomiyaki – which roughly translates as "cooked as you like" – was born.

Restaurants are expecting a surge in diners after G7 delegations, journalists and NGOs arrive in Hiroshima this week.

The Oconomiyaki Academy has come up with multiple versions – reflecting the food culture of the G7 countries – which will appear on restaurant menus during the summit: maple syrup sauce for Canada, sausage and sauerkraut for Germany, fish and chips for Britain.

“Okonomiyaki has gone from a food for survival to a speciality of Hiroshima,” the academy’s director, Shigeki Sasaki, told the Asahi Shimbun newspaper. “Given current global events, we want to incorporate a message into the dishes that they symbolise the peace and reconstruction of Hiroshima.”

The menu at Chinchikurin, one of about 900 okonomiyaki restaurants in Hiroshima, features vegetarian, vegan and halal varieties, and a touchscreen multilingual menu.

“Okonomiyaki are round, which means you can trust them … there are no rough edges,” said the restaurant’s owner, Hiroaki Kawakami, after cooking the Guardian a regular version with an extra fried egg. “This is Hiroshima soul food. And I guarantee you’ll leave here absolutely full.”

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2023.05.16 - Opinion

- Tory populists have a real enemy in their sights – they're gunning for the Tory realists
- The EU should start planning now for Russia after Putin
- The Tories are on the ropes now – and Labour's killer blows are not far away
- I'm an inspiration to my sister. Unfortunately, what I've inspired is a standup routine

Suella Braverman at the National Conservatism conference in London, 15 May 2023. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Opinion Conservatives

Tory populists have a real enemy in their sights – they're gunning for the Tory realists

Gaby Hinsliff

These hardline rightwing Conservatives aren't fighting the next election, their battle is for the ideological soul of the party

Tue 16 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 16 May 2023 09.45 EDT

It's been almost six months now since the last Tory leadership contest. So perhaps it was inevitable that another one would be along soon. No, not another attempted Boris Johnson comeback, despite the best efforts of nostalgic grassroots Tories gathering for a rally last weekend in Bournemouth. The contest much of the cabinet is now less than subtly limbering up for is the one that would follow defeat at the next election, and which some Tories think could yet provoke a historic split in the party.

The row currently engulfing Rishi Sunak's government over immigration can only be properly understood in the context of the electorate some expect to be facing before too long; not the country at large so much as the sliver of it represented by card-carrying Conservative members, many still resentful about having first Johnson and then Liz Truss taken away from them.

For an idea of what those theoretical future hustings might sound like, look to this week's National Conservatism conference, a gathering of British and

American culture warriors brought together by a US thinktank and positioned as a more genteel version of the Republican Tea Party rallies.

The speech by the home secretary, Suella Braverman, set the tone for a movement billed as championing the muscular nation state and traditional nuclear family against the dreaded forces of wokery. Braverman wants it known that she and she alone can give the angriest part of the Tory base what it wants: to yank up the immigration drawbridge at all costs, even if that means leaving farmers' crops rotting in the fields or decimating universities' income from foreign students. Kemi Badenoch, the next most blatant frontrunner in the next leadership contest, isn't due to speak – she's in Switzerland for trade talks – but her representative on Earth, Michael Gove, will be there and can doubtless fill her in. Other promised speakers include notorious historian David Starkey, last seen on GB News before the coronation accusing Rishi Sunak of not being "fully grounded in our culture"; deputy party chairman Lee "bring back the death penalty" Anderson; and the former Brexit negotiator David Frost.

While they'll insist they aren't being disloyal, the overall spirit is ideologically and temperamentally at odds with both Sunak's coolly technocratic government and the remnants of an older, steady-as-she-goes Conservative tradition that has been on the back foot ever since David Cameron lost his Brexit referendum. (It's also anathema to younger Tories worried that banging on about the empire, or arguing that working mothers should be helped to stay at home with their children, is electorally toxic to anyone under 40.) No wonder Sunak has decided now may be an opportune time to invite all Conservative MPs to a free buffet in his back garden.

If the National Conservative branding makes this group feel like a party within a party, that's increasingly what it is. British Conservatism has been an uneasy coalition for a long time now, with the 2016 split between Brexiters and remainers evolving into something more like a split between populists and realists. The former are focused on campaigning, a world where complex questions always have easy answers; the latter are at least attempting to be in the business of governing, with all its awkward tradeoffs. The former tell the Tory base whatever it wants to hear about immigration, insisting that any problems will solve themselves if Britain just trains more HGV drivers. The latter – including chancellor Jeremy Hunt, education

secretary Gillian Keegan and Sunak himself – aren't necessarily bleeding-heart liberals so much as realists, focused on growth.

Penny Mordaunt carrying the Sword of State at the coronation of King Charles III in Westminster Abbey, London, 6 May 2023. Photograph: Reuters

Barely capable of pulling together in power, it's hard to imagine them coexisting blissfully amid the bitter acrimony of defeat. The question is whether, in the shellshocked aftermath of such a loss, British National Conservatives could seize control of their party much as the US's Tea Party zealots did to the Republicans. What's telling is that what now passes for moderate Conservatism currently lacks both an obvious leadership candidate to stand against them if Sunak falls – though the sword-bearing Penny Mordaunt may be its best bet – and a set of even vaguely buzzy new ideas.

For now, the rival factions remain awkwardly gaffer-taped together by electoral maths. Having seen what happened to colleagues who defected to the short-lived Change UK, despairing moderate Tories understand that any new breakaway party would effectively die an electoral death under first-past-the-post. But some are now privately pinning their hopes on the prospect, however unlikely, of a future Labour minority government being persuaded into electoral reform. Under a PR-type system, a breakaway party

could finally become viable. As in any divorce, the question to be answered in a leadership contest would be which side got custody of the house – keeping the established Conservative brand name – and which was deemed the splinter party, forced to move out.

Are National Conservatives the "real" Tories now, or cuckoos still capable of being expelled from the nest? Would Conservative members interpret being beaten by Labour as a sign that they somehow still hadn't moved far enough right, or as a warning that the country had had enough of populists, thanks? Considering how long it took both the post-1997 Conservatives and post-2010 Labour party to understand why they actually lost, it would be brave to bet on a defeated party in 2024 jumping to the obvious conclusion. Keep an eye on this conference, lest it be the shape of things to come.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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Vladimir Putin speaks at the Victory Day parade in the Red Square in Moscow on 9 May 2023. Photograph: EyePress News/Shutterstock

OpinionRussia

The EU should start planning now for Russia after Putin

Alexander Clarkson and Kirill Shamiev

Political destabilisation could lead to armed conflict within Russia itself. There must be a strategy to contain the fallout

Tue 16 May 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Wed 17 May 2023 04.06 EDT

Twenty-seven years before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in what now seems a very distant past, the European Union considered sanctioning Russia.

In 1995, following Russia's military intervention in Chechnya, EU leaders suspended the ratification of a planned partnership and cooperation

agreement and threatened Moscow with even greater consequences if its war crimes, including the indiscriminate bombing of Chechen civilians, did not stop.

The Boris Yeltsin government dealt with the conflict in Chechnya by unleashing further brutal military force, but Europe eventually backed down and ratified the agreement anyway. In the years that followed, Russia's leadership went on to dismantle democratic institutions, invade Georgia in 2008 and ignite a war in eastern Ukraine in 2014, the prologue to the full-scale invasion of February 2022.

Looking back at the missed opportunities of the 1990s is a reminder of how immediate dilemmas can lead policymakers to overlook signs of the next crisis on the horizon. As it responds to the carnage caused by Vladimir Putin in Ukraine, the EU cannot afford not to prepare for the next Russian crisis.

The war in Ukraine, much like the war in Chechnya in the 1990s, has put immense pressure on Russia's stability as a state. It is critical that EU member states and institutions start to plan for a range of postwar and post-Putin scenarios in Russia, including a destabilisation of the Russian political system that could lead even to armed conflict within the country. To protect the collective interests of Europe, including Ukraine, from any future turmoil engulfing Russia, the EU needs a strategy that actively encourages its democratisation, no matter how small the chances of that now seem.

The Kremlin has long dismissed Brussels as a global player. After European condemnation of the brutalities committed during the Chechen wars, Moscow tried to divide and rule, breaking down the bloc's values-based unity, engaging individual leaders, identifying the most influential member states and their national interests. In many cases, Russia received the amount of economic and political integration with western nations it wanted while sidestepping domestic democratic reform.

‘The Kremlin has long dismissed Brussels as a global player.’ the European Parliament building in Brussels. Photograph: Omar Havana/Getty Images

Moscow’s cynical fixation on the interests of individual EU member states both reflected and cast a long shadow over the Russian perception of the EU. Even opposition-minded members of Russian civil society viewed the EU as an imbalanced confederation with big powers dictating the bloc’s economic and foreign policies. Economic growth, travel freedoms and cooperation with individual EU member states left them blind to the gradual decline of freedom in Russia. Russian elites acquired foreign language skills and enough stolen or oil-driven wealth to holiday comfortably in western Europe without bothering to endorse democratic values at home.

For Russia’s middle and upper class, this bargain with Moscow and Brussels ended with the invasion of Ukraine. Having lost any influence over Putin, Russian elites chose either to lie low, escape the country, or start infighting by shifting the blame for the crisis on to one another. If Russia manages to avoid a full-scale slide into totalitarianism, what remains of its democratic opposition may finally be able to acknowledge the EU’s capacity to exert transformative progressive power.

Ukrainian frustration with any deeper EU engagement with Russia would be understandable, but fostering a shift away from Russian imperialism would

be in the interests of all of Russia's neighbours. Since Moscow's current elite will accuse the EU of interfering anyway, the EU has nothing to lose by having a wider debate about democratic reform in post-Putin Russia.

A postwar Russia trying to overcome Putin's toxic legacy would have much to learn much from an economically prosperous bloc that has brought together and transformed societies that had once fought each other in two world wars.

But EU institutions would have to set out the detailed steps that Russia's state elite must take as strict conditions for the reopening of trade, travel and investment access to the rest of Europe. They would also provide incentives. A genuine process of reform that launched the rule of law and acknowledged Russia's post-conflict obligations to Ukraine and other affected states could be rewarded with the promise of negotiations with Brussels.

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European distrust of Russia runs deep so the EU should be resolute about verification at every stage of this process. Many Russians are familiar with the principle of "trust but verify", which underpinned talks on nuclear disarmament in the Gorbachev-Reagan era. But only an unwavering commitment to verification can rebuild trust. As trust is gradually restored,

Russia could over time gain integration into the EU's single market, the basis for Europe's successful economic and social order.

It might sound premature to discuss strategies for stimulating Russian reform. But there may be only a fragile window of opportunity to support genuine transformation in Russia. It will require Russians to abandon the imperialist delusions of the Putin regime. If they can do so, there may be a path towards a common European home for all. The west must not lose sight of the potential for positive change in Russia, even as it supports Ukraine in its struggle for survival.

- Alexander Clarkson is a lecturer in German and European Studies in King's College London. Kirill Shamiev is a Russian political scientist and a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations

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Keir Starmer during prime minister's questions last week. Photograph: Uk Parliament/Jessica Taylor/Reuters

Opinion Labour

The Tories are on the ropes now – and Labour's knockout blows are not far away

Polly Toynbee

‘Boring’ Keir Starmer is more radical than you might think, and as the local elections drubbing showed, he’s already bringing home the votes

Tue 16 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 16 May 2023 09.39 EDT

How rare it is to be able to pinpoint the day you witnessed the winds of change sweeping away the old political landscape. As I wrote just before the local elections, I felt that great doorstep surge in Lightwater, in Michael Gove’s Surrey Heath constituency. Sure enough, those angry Tory voters did desert his party in droves, turning three forever blue seats Lib Dem yellow and giving the Liberal Democrats control of the council.

What’s Gove’s response to his constituents’ rebellion? He ignores it, heading off to the wilder shores of rightwingery that has just been rejected, to speak at the National Conservatism three-day jamboree in Westminster. This low-tax, small-state religio-populism, which has much in common with the Tea Party movement, Viktor Orbán and Donald Trump, is on another planet from Gove’s voters. With other senior colleagues who also attended – some fresh from another Tory rightist rebel conference at the weekend – they reveal how little they have absorbed of views expressed through the ballot box at the local elections.

The home secretary, Suella Braverman, might pause to ask how the Tories lost symbolic Dover, given that she thinks the small boats issue is so hot it can outweigh the cost of living crisis, the NHS and broken public services to save her party's political skin. Instead of heading for east Kent to rethink, she took to the NatCon platform to complain about British people forgetting how to work, leaving it to migrants she calls criminals lacking "our values".

Facing an electoral abyss brings out bizarre behaviour in political parties, with ideologues retreating into realms of fantasy unshared by voters. Tory revolutionaries provide Labour with a smug reminder of themselves when they turned unelectable under Michael Foot or Jeremy Corbyn. Then, Labour convinced itself that the voters only rejected its recipes because they weren't pungent enough.

Only cognitive dissonance lets these Tories ignore last week's triumph of progressive parties. This usually conservative country rejected their rightwing austerity government, the English vote going 60% progressive against 29% Tory. Polls show a quarter of Lib Dem voters saying they will tactically turn Labour in a general election – that's outright victory territory. Alas, Keir Starmer said at the weekend that electoral reform was "not one of [his] priorities": but at least he didn't absolutely rule it out, for tactical voting on this scale reflects high public support for a proportional system.

Although he was demolished at the polls, Rishi Sunak is probably not in peril, a sixth prime minister in seven years is a stretch too far even for his party. But he's lost control, with his five pledges already failing. As Starmer mocked, in an aside to a questioner this weekend: "You don't have Suella Braverman in your cabinet on merit, but because you've lost control of your party."

That brutal quip signalled how success gives an opposition leader new buoyancy. Starmer's aides say he is "emboldened", and so he was in his speech to Progressive Britain. A stronger note of radicalism saw him shed some of the over-caution that has weighed him down. Of course he warned as a distance runner that "the hardest yards always come at the end", but "make no mistake – we are on track. We are on a path towards power." And so they are.

That path was mapped out in stolid Starmer steps from day one. After 2019's worst defeat in living memory ripped out Labour heartlands, he has made his party virtually unbeatable in a journey that took Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair aeons longer. Ruthlessly scotching internal turmoil and leftist antisemitism, he has remade a party in his own image, with candidates and party officials sometimes bruisingly sealed with his own stamp. To borrow from George W Bush, too many have "misunderestimated" him, both his strategic nous and his radical intent: these results should stop that.

True, he faces a Tory party taken leave of its senses, driving the country to near-perdition, but he warns it's "not enough that we're better than the Tories". Describing the barren landscape he'll inherit, he promised as great a transformation as Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson and Blair's Labour governments. Momentum's remnants grumble that he offers no more than "New Labour re-runs", but they should hope he can cut child and pensioner poverty by a million people; revive benefits, Sure Start programmes for tots and further education colleges; and renew local museums and grassroots sport to outdo New Labour's 13 abundant years from 1997 to 2010. It will be harder this time.

"Where's the beef?" Nick Ferrari kept asking Starmer on LBC on Monday morning, echoing people impatient for more policy announcements. Yet that £28bn a year on green growth and insulation is big, and his mission to raise UK growth from the bottom to the top of the G7 in one term is frighteningly enormous. So too are pledges to achieve 100% clean energy by 2030, fix the broken NHS, create a National Social Care service and provide quality childcare. The Labour revolution in working rights, fair pay deals, zero hours and unions allowed into every workplace will change the balance of power at work.

Branding Labour the "party of the common good" in his speech to Progressive Britain is a reminder that it will take back each rail contract and create a Great British Energy, with Rachel Reeves promising "radical insourcing" of services. Starmer will keep hammering away at "security" for all – in jobs, housing and income in hard times – as he parks on vacated Tory turf. The Tories "conserve nothing of value – not our rivers and seas, not our NHS or BBC, not our families, not our nation", he said in his speech. VAT on private schools to be diverted to stricken state schools; the funds

raised by ending non-dom tax avoidance to be used for the NHS; a windfall tax on oil giants' profits – these are all just tasters of Starmer's radical vision.

Bored with them already? That's a good reason for Labour not to announce plans too early, timing policy to breast the tape at the election. Expect more detailed announcements shortly on health, opportunity and the environment, quickening the pace at the party conference in October. But don't expect tax and spend details until next year's March budget shows the Tories' hand.

Glum Tory newspaper leaders warn, "Only a bold vision can save the Tories now", though they can only produce very old ideas for the very rich: "A commitment to axe inheritance tax. An end to stamp duty. A renewed bonfire of EU red tape."

Starmer gets the same "bold vision" moan, but hoary old ideological totems don't win against practical policies – hope comes from concrete change for better lives and public services. Too dull? No "Oh, Keir Starmer!" Glastonbury chants? He just brings home the boring old votes, votes and more votes from Blackpool to Middlesbrough, Medway to Brighton.

There is something beseeching about Sunak's "morale-boosting" garden party on Monday night at No 10 for his MPs, with pies from his Yorkshire constituency. It won't appease rightwing Tory fanatics, nor ease the panic of all who saw their seats vanish before their eyes last week. Deluded and dispirited, as the Tories are now, so once was Labour.

Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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‘There’s something about the generosity of the novice performer …’ Photograph: Mark Andersen/Getty Images/Rubberball (Posed by a model)

Opinion Comedy

I’m an inspiration to my sister. Unfortunately, what I’ve inspired is a standup routine

Zoe Williams

Comedians will say anything for a laugh – and I've given her years of material

Tue 16 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 16 May 2023 05.36 EDT

Two years ago, my sister was about to turn 50 and I called her spouse to see what he was getting her. He rattled off a number of ideas so catastrophically bad that I was silenced, unable to find the words for how badly he'd erred. He'd booked her a number of short courses, and got her flute repaired so that she could start playing again, having given up in the late 80s. There are two things that my sister absolutely hates, to the point of phobia: one is slugs, and the other is self-improvement. I genuinely thought she might leave him, but figured 50 was young enough for a second act.

It turned out he was right and I was wrong: she is now a member of an orchestra. Running the numbers, he's lived with her for almost twice as long as I did (they were teenage sweethearts), so I should have considered the possibility that he knew a thing or two. A standup comedy course was even more successful than the flute. She really liked it. She still does it. She's very funny and, more to the point, incredibly agile. All her material is savage about people she knows well, so if, for instance, she looks out and

sees her Mr in the audience, she has to ditch that set immediately and revert to the one in which she destroys her own children.

So, of course I go as often as I can, just to see her white-hot panic as she mentally tears up seven minutes entitled “My sister is an arsehole”, and it’s got to the point where I really like open mic. There’s something about the generosity of the novice performer, where you can still see the fear in their faces and watch them power through it anyway, for no better reason than to make the audience laugh, that flips your brain into a place where everything is funny. Guys in their 30s with overbearing mothers, millennials and their adventures on dating apps, collectors of Star Wars memorabilia, Swedish émigrés with observations on British hygiene – people will tell you anything when it’s a choice between that and dying on stage. It’s like hacking their mainframe.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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2023.05.16 - Around the world

- Cambodia Only major opposition party is barred from running in July elections
- New Zealand At least six dead in blaze at Wellington hostel
- Hong Kong Tiananmen Square books removed from libraries in run-up to anniversary
- Magazines Martha Stewart, 81, becomes oldest Sports Illustrated swimsuit cover model
- Vodafone Telecoms firm to cut 11,000 jobs worldwide over next three years

Candlelight party supporters gather during an election campaign in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in May last year. Election authorities have refused to register the party for July's elections. Photograph: Heng Sinith/AP

Cambodia

Cambodia's only major opposition party is barred from running in July elections

Candlelight party failed to provide registration documents, says election commission, but party says they were seized in a police raid in 2017

Associated Press
Tue 16 May 2023 00.40 EDT

Cambodia's national election committee has refused to register the opposition Candlelight party, the sole credible challenger to the governing Cambodian People's party, ahead of elections in July.

The committee ruled on Monday that the party had failed to provide the necessary documents, leaving it only a very slim chance of taking part in the elections by successfully appealing to the constitutional council.

Kimsour Phirith, a spokesperson for the Candlelight party, said the party would file an official complaint asking the council to assess the ruling.

He said the party had been operating legally and participated in last year's local elections without issue. In those polls, the Cambodian People's party (CPP) won 74.3% of the votes and the Candlelight party about 22.3%.

Kimsour Phirith said when the party applied to contest this year's elections, the election commission asked for its original registration papers issued by the interior ministry, but they had been taken in a 2017 police raid on the headquarters of its predecessor, the Cambodia National Rescue party (CNRP).

He told the Associated Press that by law, the party had five days to file a complaint after being disqualified, and he hoped the council would render a judgment based on the law.

Cambodian courts are widely considered to be under the influence of prime minister Hun Sen's government and his CPP.

The governing party has held an iron grip on power for decades and controls almost every lever of government. Hun Sen, 70, an authoritarian ruler in a nominally democratic state, has held his position for 38 years. His eldest son, army chief Hun Manet, is widely expected to replace his father as prime minister after the polls.

The Candlelight party is the unofficial successor to the CNRP, which threatened to present a serious challenge to Hun Sen's party in the 2018 elections. But it was dissolved just months ahead of the polls by a controversial court ruling that said it had plotted the illegal overthrow of the government.

The party's disbanding enabled the governing party to win all the seats in the national assembly. Western nations declared the election was neither free nor fair, and imposed mild economic sanctions in response.

In March this year, Kem Sokha, the former leader of the dissolved CNRP was sentenced to 27 years in prison after being found guilty of treason, in a case widely condemned as politically motivated.

On Monday, the election committee said in a statement that 18 of the 20 parties that applied for registration in this year's elections were approved, including the CPP. The Candlelight party and another unidentified party were both rejected for failing to provide documents supporting their applications, it said.

About 9.7 million Cambodians are registered to vote in the elections being held on 23 July for the 125 members of the national assembly.

If the Candlelight party is barred, the sole competition for the governing party would be groups aligned with it, or small, obscure parties without a national presence.

The opposition is low on financial resources and subject to constant harassment in the courts initiated by the governing party. Most prominent opposition members are in self-imposed exile to avoid being jailed on various charges they say are trumped up and unfair.

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Wellington hostel fire: at least six people dead and 11 missing in New Zealand blaze – video

New Zealand

New Zealand hostel fire: at least six dead and 11 missing in Wellington blaze

Emergency services called to 92-room Loafers Lodge hostel just after midnight and a number of people remain unaccounted for

Tess McClure in Wellington and agencies
Tue 16 May 2023 18.50 EDTFirst published on Mon 15 May 2023 16.54 EDT

New Zealand was in shock on Tuesday after a “worst nightmare” fire at a hostel in the capital Wellington left at least six people dead and 11 others missing.

The Loafers Lodge hostel in Newtown, in the city’s south, caught alight just after midnight on Tuesday. By dawn, the top floors of the building were charred black.

The prime minister, Chris Hipkins, who visited the scene on Tuesday morning, said at least six people had died and that number could rise. “I understand six confirmed previously and it looks like there are likely to be more,” he said. The fire is among New Zealand’s most deadly blazes in the last 50 years.

With the building’s roof collapsed and parts of it highly unstable, authorities have warned that it will take some time to retrieve and identify all of the bodies. Relatives face a long, difficult wait for news.

A fire and emergency incident controller, Bruce Stubbs, on Tuesday afternoon said that firefighters had located the bodies of six people but had

not yet been able to retrieve them. He said parts of the building's structure and much of its roof had collapsed, and emergency services had not been able to search the entire building.

Eleven people remain unaccounted for. Nearby residents were advised by national public health authority Te Whatu Ora to close windows, turn off air conditioning units and consider wearing respirator masks to minimise smoke exposure as the building had asbestos in its roof, which could have been released by the fire and structural collapse.

Loafers Lodge had previously been used as an emergency housing provider. The building was named by the Ministry of Social Development in a list of emergency housing providers released in 2021.

The housing crisis in New Zealand means a growing number of homeless people are housed long-term by the government in motels and hostels.

Loafers Lodge offered basic, affordable rooms with shared lounges, kitchens and laundry facilities to people of a wide range of ages. Some were placed there by government agencies and were considered vulnerable because they had little in the way of resources or support networks. Others were shift workers or nurses working at the nearby hospital.

Social service agencies including Wellington City Mission have said they had clients in the building, which advertises itself as providing affordable long- and short-term accommodation.

Damage to the Loafers Lodge hostel in Wellington. Photograph: Marty Melville/AFP/Getty Images

Marie Murphy, the hostel's property manager, told the local media outlet Stuff that the residents were a mix of people. "We've had doctors, nurses, unemployed people, meat workers, hospital staff. All sorts of people. A real variety of people … There's a lot of full-time people. A lot have been there longer than I've been there."

One resident, Tala Sili, said he had seen smoke coming under his door and opened it to find the hallway full of smoke. He hd decided to jump out the window on to a roof two floors below.

"It was just scary, it was really scary, but I knew I had to jump out the window or just burn inside the building," he told state-owned Radio New Zealand.

While authorities investigate the cause of the fire, how it spread, whether alarms sounded and whether the building was appropriately equipped, questions were raised about New Zealand's housing crisis, the state of its emergency housing infrastructure and its care for the most vulnerable .

Speaking at parliament on Tuesday afternoon, the Green party co-leader James Shaw said he was "very, very angry".

“What kind of country are we where those people have so few options in life, but to live in substandard accommodation, with a reasonable chance of lethality?” he asked.

“What kind of country are we, where our firefighters are at risk of not showing up with the most basic of equipment to be able to fight these kinds of events?”

More than 3,300 households including more that 3,000 children across New Zealand live in emergency housing – typically motels – the Ministry for Social Development said in February. A further 29,000 people who needed public housing were still on waiting lists.

Hipkins said the hostel was “not currently being used in emergency accommodation … But my understanding is that there will be a number of Ministry of Social Development clients” – meaning people who were receiving welfare support for housing, sickness, disability or unemployment.

The city missioner, Murray Edridge, told Stuff that many vulnerable people who were under the organisation’s care had registered the lodge as their address: “A significant proportion of residents of the lodge are under our care. This is an absolute disaster. These are people who are inherently vulnerable anyway. It’s a tragedy for our community.”

The Fire and Emergency district manager, Nick Pyatt, said: “This is a tragic event for all involved. My heartfelt condolences go to the loved ones of those who have lost their lives.

“It doesn’t get worse than this. This is a once-in-a-decade fire for Wellington. It’s the worst nightmare for us.”

Fire and Emergency said sprinklers were not fitted to the building and that they were still working to determine whether alarms went off. New Zealand’s building code does not require the retrofitting of sprinkler systems into older buildings. No cause for the fire had yet been determined, authorities said.

Prime minister Chris Hipkins and minister of finance Grant Robertson speak to media. Photograph: Hagen Hopkins/Getty Images

One resident of the building told RNZ that fire alarms would go off regularly in the building and were often ignored.

Another man staying at the hostel described crawling out through a smoke-filled hallway to escape. “For me, it was hard, just that little distance, it was a struggle. You’ve got people in there like 80, 90, who aren’t able to look after themselves, especially in a fire, they will struggle.”

Authorities said 52 people had been taken out of the building after being notified of the blaze at 12.25am.

More than 10 fire vehicles responded to the emergency across the morning and the fire was put out after 6am.

Hipkins offered his condolences to those who had died and their families. “It is an absolute tragedy and it is a horrific situation,” he said.

“In the fullness of time, of course there will be a number of investigations about what has happened and why it happened.”

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Police at a demonstration in Hong Kong in 2021. The national security law has resulted in a significant curtailing of political freedoms. Photograph: Isaac Lawrence/AFP/Getty Images

Hong Kong

Tiananmen Square books removed from Hong Kong libraries in run-up to anniversary

Publications targeted include those about protest and subjects Beijing deems politically sensitive

Helen Davidson in Taipei
@heldavidson
Tue 16 May 2023 04.57 EDTLast modified on Tue 16 May 2023 10.20 EDT

Books about the Tiananmen Square massacre, Hong Kong protest movements, and other subjects deemed politically sensitive by Beijing have

been removed from the former British colony's public libraries in the lead-up to the 34th anniversary of the killings.

Hong Kong media have reported a marked increase in the number of book and documentary removals, which have been growing since the authoritarian clampdown on Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement and the introduction of the national security law in 2020. It has resulted in a significant curtailing of political freedoms in the city and multiple arrests.

Late last month, the government's audit commission report said the leisure and cultural services department, which operates Hong Kong's libraries, needed to "step up efforts in examining library materials for safeguarding national security and taking follow-up actions".

The report said Hong Kong Public Libraries had completed a preliminary review of books that focused on authors and publishers "suspected of publishing books on 'Hong Kong independence' previously".

It said the review of titles, which began in 2021, was ongoing and unlikely to have a clear end date.

On Tuesday, Hong Kong media outlets reported the review appeared to have stripped from public shelves hundreds of books about the massacre of student protesters on 4 June 1989. Photon Media searched for 149 titles that were available in 2009 and found only four still listed.

Ming Pao reported that about 40% of politically themed books, magazines and videos available at the end of 2020 were gone, 96 of them removed this year. It said a number of documentaries, including by the public broadcaster RTHK, were also absent.

A Guardian search of the Hong Kong public libraries' online catalogue returned some titles related to the Tiananmen massacre but most were shown to have "no lending copy available on shelf". Four books on the "umbrella movement" protests were shown to have copies available.

"Books with content suspected of breaching the national security law or other local laws are removed immediately for a review," a spokesperson for

the leisure and cultural services department told the South China Morning Post.

Government figures have defended the targeting of books as safeguarding national security.

The Hong Kong chief executive, John Lee, said books were still available for purchase at private bookshops – a claim disputed by activists and residents, who noted that several bookshops have closed or removed sensitive books from their stock in fear of contravening the national security law. School libraries had already removed books deemed to be politically sensitive in the months after the introduction of the law.

“What libraries need to do is ensure that books that may not be suitable for circulation, that they have to do their duties,” Hong Kong’s secretary for security, Chris Tang, said on Tuesday.

“The principles we use, which I support, is first if all to ensure there is no breach of any laws in Hong Kong, including of course copyright etcetera, and also if they spread any kind of messages that are not in the interest of Hong Kong.”

Tang said he was sure that “safeguarding national security is high on the agenda of each and every individual department and bureau”.

In 2021, Tang had said the cultural and media sectors were an emerging source of national security threats, where pro-independence activists might conduct “soft resistance”.

Government targeting of media and literature has continued, with one of the most notable examples being the conviction for sedition of five members of a physical therapists’ union over the publication of a children’s book.

The judge found that the book, which depicted sheep fleeing from invading wolves, aimed to incite hatred against China.

Late last month, Google revealed in its biannual report that the Hong Kong police had sought to have content related to the book taken off the internet because the court considered it to be “seditious”. Google refused.

Increasing censorship under the remit of the national security law has also targeted media outlets, cartoons, films, documentaries, and art exhibitions. In response, a growing number of international projects are archiving or publishing the targeted content.

Several are operating under the radar, according to one operator of a project receiving sensitive books donated by people Hong Kong for foreign redistribution. He said people passed books along from friend to friend, driven by a need to preserve titles and information about Hong Kong society and history.

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Martha Stewart in New York last month. The TV personality and cook has posed for Sports Illustrated's annual swimsuit edition. Photograph: Kena Betancur/AFP/Getty Images

Martha Stewart

Martha Stewart, 81, becomes oldest Sports Illustrated swimsuit cover model

Television personality says posing for the magazine's annual swimsuit edition is 'kind of historic' – and that her friend Snoop Dogg will think it is 'fantastic'

- Get our weekend culture and lifestyle email

Sian Cain
@siancain
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Martha Stewart has become Sports Illustrated's oldest cover model ever, posing for the magazine's annual swimsuit edition at the age of 81.

The television personality and cook is one of four cover models for this year's issue, which aims to celebrate powerful women who "live in a world where they feel no limitations, internally or externally". The other models were actor Megan fox, model Brooks Nader and musician Kim Petras.

"When I heard that I was going to be on the cover of Sports Illustrated Swimsuit, I thought: 'Oh, well that's pretty good.' I'm gonna be the oldest person, I think, ever on the cover of Sports Illustrated,'" Stewart said in an interview about the cover.

"And I don't think about age very much, but I thought that this is kind of historic and that I better look really good."

Stewart, who was photographed in the Dominican Republic by Ruven Afanador, was asked what Snoop Dogg, a friend and frequent collaborator, would think of her cover. She laughed and said: "Snoop is going to just think that it is fantastic."

Stewart's cover shoot means she is now the oldest woman to ever pose for Sports Illustrated's swimsuit issue, surpassing Elon Musk's mother, the model Maye Musk, who posed in 2022 when she was 74.

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"My motto has always been: 'when you're through changing, you're through,' so I thought, why not be up for this opportunity of a lifetime?" Stewart wrote on Instagram. "I hope this cover inspires you to challenge yourself to try new things, no matter what stage of life you are in."

Stewart, deemed the "OG of influencers" by Sports Illustrated, rose to fame in the 1980s when she started to write cookbooks and appear on television after her success as a chef. Since then, Stewart has written 99 books, hosted multiple cooking shows, launched her own lifestyle magazine and released her own lines of clothing, cooking and home products.

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"Never in her life has she let her circumstances dictate her outcome," Sports Illustrated Swimsuit's editor-in-chief, MJ Day, said of Stewart. "She's changed with the times – always one step ahead, it seems – to build a wide-reaching business empire."

Petras is just the second trans woman to appear on the Sports Illustrated swimsuit cover, following model Leyna Bloom, who in 2021 also became the first trans person of colour to ever appear in Sports Illustrated.

"No matter what your gender or sexuality or any of that stuff is, it's about what you make of life," Petras said, in a video about her cover shoot. "It's about what's inside of you."

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Vodafone cut its annual profit forecast in November and announced a €1bn-plus (£879m) cost-cutting plan. Photograph: Joan Cros/NurPhoto/rex/Shutterstock

Vodafone

Vodafone to cut 11,000 jobs worldwide over next three years

Troubled telecoms firm makes first big move under new group chief executive Margherita Della Valle

- Nils Pratley: Vodafone's new boss still needs to dial up radicalism

Mark Sweney
@marksweney
Tue 16 May 2023 06.35 EDTFirst published on Tue 16 May 2023 02.39 EDT

Vodafone is to cut 11,000 jobs from its global workforce over the next three years, the largest round of cuts in the troubled telecoms group's history.

The job losses amount to more than a tenth of the 104,000 global staff employed by Vodafone. The company employs about 9,000 people in the UK, including at its headquarters in Berkshire.

The cuts mark the first big move by Margherita Della Valle, appointed as Vodafone's first female chief executive last month, who said that the company needed to be leaner and more efficient to compete against rivals.

"Our performance has not been good enough. To consistently deliver, Vodafone must change," she said.

The job losses will fall across Vodafone's entire operations – starting with its group functions, which are based in the UK, Germany, the company's biggest and worst-performing market, and Italy – with no indication of the scale of cuts in each market.

Della Valle said Vodafone's headquarters would become "as lean as possible", and the restructuring plan includes a revision of staff incentive schemes throughout the business to be more closely matched with hitting performance targets.

The cuts will free up an extra €100m (£87m) to be ploughed in to marketing to revitalise the Vodafone brand, and €150m to improve the customer experience.

Della Valle said the savings from the job cuts would not increase a €1bn target announced in November.

The wider restructuring includes a review of options for Vodafone's Spanish business, including a potential sale.

"Looking at our position in the industry and the steps we have taken in the last few years, we have probably been too incremental," Della Valle said.

Vodafone, which has about 18 million UK mobile customers and more than 1 million broadband customers, is in the closing stages of pushing through a merger with Three to create the UK's biggest mobile company.

Della Valle said she hoped a deal to reduce the number of big UK mobile operators from four to three – something that has in the past been blocked by regulators over competition issues – would be given the go-ahead.

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"I would say that the mood music has changed," she said. "There is a wide understanding that the problem of returns [on investment] is preventing Europe to develop 5G networks in line with the rest of the world. We don't have enough scale."

"My priorities are customers, simplicity and growth," Della Valle added. "We will simplify our organisation, cutting out complexity to regain our competitiveness. We will reallocate resources to deliver the quality service our customers expect."

Shares in Vodafone fell more than 9%, making it the biggest faller on the FTSE 100 on Tuesday, as investors reacted to the news and a forecast of a drop of €1.5bn in free cashflow this year.

“Lacklustre performance has been something markets have come to expect from Vodafone of late,” said Matt Britzman, an equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. “The new chief executive has been very vocal about the host of challenges she’s facing in her new role. The honesty is refreshing but not enough to keep the shares falling. Markets will need to see tangible results over the coming year before they get more excited.”

In November, Vodafone cut its annual profit forecast and announced a €1bn-plus cost-cutting plan, including job cuts, to cope with soaring energy bills and inflation.

A month later, the company ousted the two-decade Vodafone veteran Nick Read after a 40% slump in market value during his four-year tenure as chief executive.

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Headlines saturday 20 may 2023

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- **G7 Zelenskiy arrives in Japan as he bids to boost western support**
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Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskiy has touched down in Japan where he will hold talks with world leaders at a G7 summit. Photograph: Lisi Niesner/Reuters

G7

G7 summit: Ukraine's Zelenskiy arrives in Japan as he bids to boost western support for Kyiv

Volodymyr Zelenskiy is set to meet with Joe Biden after US said it would allow allied countries to supply Ukraine with fighter jets

- Russia-Ukraine war – latest news updates

Justin McCurry in Hiroshima
Sat 20 May 2023 03.12 EDTFirst published on Sat 20 May 2023 01.16 EDT

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has arrived in Japan to discuss greater military support from the US and other G7 countries as his

forces prepare for a major counteroffensive in the war with Russia.

Zelenskiy, who had been expected to appear via video link, arrived in Hiroshima, where the G7 leaders are meeting, on a French government plane on Saturday afternoon amid heavy security.

Wearing his familiar olive-green hoodie, he was seen exiting the aircraft, before a day of bilateral and group talks with G7 and other leaders as part of his latest campaign to boost international support for Kyiv.

Moments after his arrival he tweeted: "Japan. G7. Important meetings with partners and friends of Ukraine. Security and enhanced cooperation for our victory. Peace will become closer today."

UK sources said it was Sunak's suggestion that Zelenskiy should come to the G7 to make his case in person, adding that he had made this proposal in a phone call about a month ago. Sunak's official spokesperson said: "It is an opportunity for President Zelenskiy to address a lot of world leaders in one place at a time when western leaders are aligned."

In their final communique – released a day earlier than expected – the G7 leaders reaffirmed their support for Ukraine.

"Russia's brutal war of aggression represents a threat to the whole world in breach of fundamental norms, rules and principles of the international community," it said. "We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine for as long as it takes to bring a comprehensive, just and lasting peace."

Zelenskiy's arrival in Hiroshima comes a day after the White House announced it would permit allied countries to supply Ukraine with US-built F-16 fighter planes. Before leaving for Japan, Zelenskiy described the decision as "historic", adding that he looked forward to "discussing the practical implementation" with G7 countries.

The White House said Joe Biden was "looking forward" to meeting Zelenskiy at the summit, with the US national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, saying it was a "safe bet" that the pair would meet. "The president

looks forward to the opportunity to be able to sit down face-to-face," he said.

The summit began on Friday with a group visit to a museum devoted to the horrors of the US atomic bombing of the city in August 1945 and a memorial to the hundreds of thousands of people who died as a result of the attack.

Amid concerns over Russia's refusal to rule out the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Zelenskiy is also expected to visit the peace museum and cenotaph, Japanese media reported.

In their communique, the G7 leaders said they were committed "to achieving a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all, through taking a realistic, pragmatic, and responsible approach. We reaffirm the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts to create a more stable and safer world".

Sullivan said the F-16 transfers would not upset the balance Washington wanted in supporting Ukraine "in a way that avoids world war three".

"The United States is not enabling or supporting attacks on Russian territory," he said, "and the Ukrainians have consistently indicated that they are prepared to follow through on that."

Ukraine is expected to dominate discussions on Sunday, a day after the G7 announced new sanctions targeting the Kremlin.

Zelenskiy's visit will also give him a rare opportunity to speak to the leaders of powerful non-aligned countries, including Brazil and India, who have declined to condemn Russia's invasion.

Japan's foreign ministry said Zelenskiy would participate in Ukraine talks with G7 leaders on Sunday and attend a session on "peace and stability" that will also include invited non-member countries.

The war in Ukraine has raised fears that China, which has been increasing its nuclear arsenal, could be emboldened to invade Taiwan. Beijing regards the

island as a renegade province and has threatened to bring it under its control, by force if necessary.

In a reference to China, the communique reiterated the importance of a "free and open Indo-Pacific, which is inclusive, prosperous, secure, based on the rule of law, and that protects shared principles including sovereignty, territorial integrity, peaceful resolution of disputes, and fundamental freedoms and human rights".

A crisis in the Taiwan strait – a vitally important trading route – would create havoc for the global economy and possibly lead to a wider conflict.

Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, said on Saturday that the island would not provoke China or bow to pressure from Beijing.

"War is not an option. Neither side can unilaterally change the status quo with non-peaceful means," Tsai said in a speech to mark her seventh year in office. "Maintaining the status quo of peace and stability is the consensus for both the world and Taiwan."

On Saturday, G7 leaders also agreed on a new initiative to counter economic coercion and pledged action to deter "actors" – widely believed to include China and Russia – from threatening trade boycotts for political reasons with a new body to deal with "economic coercion".

But they said they were not seeking a policy designed to harm China or hinder its economic progress. "We are not decoupling or turning inwards," the communique said. "At the same time, we recognise that economic resilience requires de-risking and diversifying."

Sunak's official spokesperson said the UK was pleased with the G7 position on China, as it reflected the challenges posed by the country. "The language is detailed and strong. This was a priority for the UK to thread the needle on the China language aligned to what the PM has said previously," he said.

"The world has encountered a disturbing rise in incidents of economic coercion that seek to exploit economic vulnerabilities," G7 leaders said in a statement that also committed them to deepen cooperation on hardening

supply chains, and called for a bigger role for lower-income countries in promoting economic resilience.

“Supply chain disruptions have had devastating impact for developing, emerging, and advanced economies alike,” they said, and urged countries to adhere to the principles of “transparency, diversification, security, sustainability, and trustworthiness and reliability” in building supply chain networks.

Agencies contributed reporting

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A US Air Force pilot performs pre-flight checks from the cockpit of an F-16 at Bagram airfield, Afghanistan. Photograph: Tech Sgt Robert Cloys/AFP/Getty Images

Ukraine

US to back fighter jet training for Ukrainian pilots

International training programme, to begin soon in Europe, would be prerequisite to transfer of F-16s to Kyiv

How could F-16s affect the war?
Russia-Ukraine war – latest news updates

Dan Sabbagh and *Julian Borger*
Fri 19 May 2023 12.50 EDTFirst published on Fri 19 May 2023 09.22 EDT

The US has told its allies it will back a joint international effort to train Ukrainian pilots to fly F-16 and other modern fighter jets, marking a

significant boost to western support for Kyiv as it prepares a major counteroffensive.

Joe Biden has already informed fellow leaders attending a G7 summit in Japan of his decision, a senior administration official said, adding that the plan would include training "on fourth-generation fighter aircraft, including F-16s, to further strengthen and improve the capabilities of the Ukrainian air force".

The fourth generation category includes Britain's Eurofighter Typhoon and France's Mirage 2000.

"As the training takes place over the coming months, our coalition of countries participating in this effort will decide when to actually provide jets, how many we will provide, and who will provide them," the senior official said. "This training will take place outside Ukraine at sites in Europe and will require months to complete. We hope we can begin this training in the coming weeks."

The decision represents a dramatic shift in stance by Washington, which had previously presented the supply of F16s to Ukraine as unfeasible.

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, tweeted: "I welcome the historic decision of the United States and @POTUS to support an international fighter jet coalition. This will greatly enhance our army in the sky. I count on discussing the practical implementation of this decision at the #G7 summit in Hiroshima."

> I welcome the historic decision of the United States and @POTUS to support an international fighter jet coalition. This will greatly enhance our army in the sky. I count on discussing the practical implementation of this decision at the #G7 summit in Hiroshima.
>
> — Володимир Зеленський (@ZelenskyyUa) May 19, 2023

The speed of the U-turn took some allies by surprise.

There had been reports that the US would give a green light for other states to make preparations to supply western fighter jets, but even close allies did not expect Biden to support direct US involvement in a training programme.

“Things are moving really fast in Japan. Faster even than we had dared hoped,” one European diplomat said.

Yehor Cherniev, the deputy chair of the Ukrainian parliament’s national security committee, said F-16s could be in operation within four months of the start of training.

“When we will have well-trained pilots, the F-16s will be in the sky over Ukraine and will help us to move forward,” Cherniev said. “It’s important to us, not just as one more tool for our air defence system, but also to cover our infantry from the sky because without it, we would have more losses.”

Diagram of F-16

Even if F-16s and other jets arrived in Ukraine by autumn, they would not be in time to support the widely anticipated spring-summer offensive Ukraine has been planning. However, the move represents a significant show of western resolve and could help consolidate any Ukrainian gains.

Cherniev said he thought Biden’s decision had been influenced by the speed at which Ukrainians had mastered the use of other sophisticated weaponry, such as the Patriot anti-aircraft system, and pressure from allies.

“It was our successful use of Patriots, a complicated system,” he said. “We have proven that we can learn much faster than the traditional programme. So we will be able to train our pilots much faster than the training programmes. Plus, there was the readiness of other countries to provide us with F-16s.”

The shift in US stance, could eventually allow countries such as the Netherlands to export the US-designed jets once pilots and ground crews have been trained.

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This week the UK and the Netherlands announced they would set up a "jets coalition" aimed at providing Ukraine with the fighter planes it needs. The US initially said it was still negative on the topic.

A fresh background briefing on Friday, however, suggested it would not block third-party countries exporting the Lockheed Martin-made jets.

Cherniev pointed out that Belgium and Denmark had indicated they would supply fighter jets, and said he hoped other countries would declare their readiness in the wake of Biden's announcement.

"It is just the start of this coalition," he said.

Biden's change in policy will avoid any embarrassment at the G7 summit. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, is expected to visit the meeting on Sunday and is likely to repeat his "wings for freedom" request amid concerns Ukraine's small air force will be unable to survive a long war.

Ukraine is desperate for extra airpower as it plots a counteroffensive against the Russian invasion. While its small, Soviet-standard air force remains operational, it is able to run only a dozen or so combat missions a day.

The most obvious problem with any gift of F-16s is that it would take at least three months – and more likely six to nine months – to train Ukrainian pilots and crews. Kyiv has been identifying a list of potential pilots and teaching them English so they could begin their tuition in the UK.

There are 3,000 F-16s, a jet that dates back to the late 1970s, in service in 25 countries, including several smaller European nations, such as the Netherlands. However, they are not used by the UK, France or Germany, which are able only to provide training and some related services.

The UK prime minister, Rishi Sunak, said he “welcomed announcement that the US will approve the training of Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets”. The UK would work together with the US and the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark “to get Ukraine the combat air capability it needs”, he added.

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Justin Trudeau and Kim Jin-pyo, the South Korean national assembly speaker, in Seoul on Friday. Photograph: Yonhap/EPA

Justin Trudeau

Trudeau's wide-stance pose with Korean politician splits critics

Korean media praises prime minister's gesture, known as 'manner legs', while some Canadians say it is embarrassing country

Leyland Cecco in Toronto
Fri 19 May 2023 13.11 EDTLast modified on Sat 20 May 2023 07.11 EDT

Justin Trudeau's hair has made international headlines, as have his fumbling handshakes and propensity to appear shirtless when cameras are near. Now, the Canadian prime minister's well-mannered legs are getting their moment in the spotlight

Ahead of the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Trudeau and a delegation of Canadian ministers were in South Korea to celebrate the 60th anniversary of

diplomatic relations between the two countries, as well as an attempt to salvage a multibillion-dollar battery plant deal.

Before giving a speech to the national assembly, Trudeau posed for photographs with Korean politicians, including with the national assembly speaker, Kim Jin-pyo.

Amid the clatter of camera shutters, Kim raised on his tiptoes, poking fun at the 20cm (8in) height gap between the two leaders.

Justin Trudeau's greetings: from 'manner legs' to the three-way handshake – video

Trudeau bent momentarily down to Kim's level, prompting laughter from the Korean delegation. He then spread his legs to put himself at a similar altitude to Kim, a move known in South Korea as "manner legs", meant to level the height between two people.

Korean media largely praised the gesture, with the outlet Chosun calling it a "heartwarming scene" and YTN suggesting it showed a "caring" mindset.

The Canadian conservative outlet True North, however, wrote the meeting had "some Canadians accusing Trudeau of embarrassing Canada while abroad once again".

It was not the first time the prime minister's greetings with political leaders have received attention.

In February, a handshake with the Alberta premier, Danielle Smith, a fierce critic of the prime minister, quickly devolved into an awkward fumble.

Trudeau was also the first to effectively dodge former president Donald Trump's forceful handshake strategy that left world leaders and political rivals looking bewildered. In their first meeting in 2017, Trudeau put a hand on Trump's shoulder to brace himself.

And in 2016, Trudeau attempted to shake hands with former presidents Barack Obama and Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico, awkwardly crossing his arms over and grabbing Peña Nieto's wrong hand.

In his visit to Seoul, Trudeau also met with President Yoon Suk Yeol, pitching greater collaboration between the two nations, but also drawing distinctions over how the countries pursue gender equality and child care policies.

As part of the state visit, Trudeau visited the grave of Frank Schofield, a Canadian missionary who supported Korean independence from the Japanese empire and is the the first foreigner buried in the Seoul National Cemetery.

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2023.05.20 - Spotlight

- Sadiq Khan ‘I lost my mojo. I wasn’t so sparky. Without a doubt, I was suffering with PTSD’
- Blind date ‘I banged my head on the table I was laughing so hard’
- From Ireland to Italy 35 of the best restaurants in Europe
- The key to an unforgettable holiday? Just focus on the food
- Poker Face Natasha Lyonne’s perfect detective show turns up the fun-o-meter until it explodes

Sadiq Khan: ‘I lost my mojo. I wasn’t so sparky. Without a doubt, I was suffering with PTSD’

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Blind dateLife and style

Blind date: ‘I banged my head on the table I was laughing so hard’

Giles, 57, an advocate and DJ, meets Sarah, 55, a library assistant

Sat 20 May 2023 01.00 EDT

Giles on Sarah

What were you hoping for?
To acquire minor celebrity status, some DJ gigs and an appearance on Loose Women as a result of doing this.

First impressions?
Colourful, calm and confident. Warm, witty and wonderful.

What did you talk about?
Life, love, laughter. David Hockney. Harry Styles. BBC 6 Music. 90s indie bands. The joy of dancing. Combining peanut butter with celery.

Most awkward moment?
Nearly getting run over by a bus. Well, this was my first date in rather a long time.

Would you introduce Sarah to your friends?
Yes. They would love her.

Good table manners?
Yes, she ate with a knife and fork.

Describe Sarah in three words
Brown eyed girl.

Best thing about Sarah?
She's good looking, intelligent, cultured, very funny, easygoing and has a joie de vivre.

What do you think Sarah made of you?
That I'm a bit like Phil in The Hangover?

Q&A

Fancy a 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.

Did you go on somewhere?
Bruno's next door for (more) cocktails till it closed.

And … did you kiss?
We lingered slightly as we parted in the bowels of Old Street station and kissed goodbye. On the *lips*!

Marks out of 10?
Sarah can't be compressed into a number. She's a librarian. OK, a 9.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?
St John's ambulance on hand for when I banged my head on the table I was

laughing so hard.

Would you meet again?
Yes, we're off clubbing and to immerse ourselves in David Hockney.

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Giles and Sarah during their date.

Sarah on Giles

What were you hoping for?
An evening of good company, good food and good cocktails. Fortunately I got what I was hoping for.

First impressions?
Smartly dressed and smiley. I think he may have been a little nervous.

What did you talk about?
Music and dancing. The perils of dating when older. David Hockney. Children. Gardens. The fact we kept going off on different tangents …

Most awkward moment?
I didn't feel there were any, even when he tried to strong-arm me into ordering the cod.

Would you introduce Giles to your friends?
I'd be happy to.

Good table manners?
Yes. Giles was the perfect gentleman.

Describe Giles in three words.
Chatty, fun, tipsy!

Best thing about Giles?
He asked questions and listened to the answers. He also said that he felt relaxed in my company.

What do you think Giles made of you?
I think he thought I was entertaining; there was a lot of laughing. And he really liked my pink coat.

Did you go on somewhere?
Yes, for another cocktail.

And … did you kiss?
I'd never kiss and tell.

Marks out of 10?
8.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?
To have put on something warmer.

Would you meet again?
Yes, we talked about going to the David Hockney exhibition.

Sarah and Giles ate at Caravel, London N1. Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

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The Guardian - Back to homeThe Guardian

Jah Izakaya and Sake Bar in Copenhagen. Photograph: Chris Tonnesen

Restaurants

35 of the best restaurants in Europe

From Ireland to Italy, our local writers reveal their favourite places to eat across the continent

Felicity Cloake: ‘Discovering a great restaurant can make a trip’

Sat 20 May 2023 02.00 EDT

Denmark

Jah Izakaya and Sake Bar, Copenhagen
Japanese and Korean restaurants are taking over Copenhagen at the moment, fusing New Nordic philosophies with the food of east Asia. Opened in 2018, Jah Izakaya, on a street near the meatpacking district, is an unpretentious, fun and inviting Japanese-inspired gastropub. It serves *gyoza*, *tonkatsu*, Danish squid and a fabulous beef car

paccio that can be washed down with tankards of lager or bottles of sake, and is soundtracked with reggae.
From about 210 kroner (£25) for three small plates, jahizakaya.dk
Laura Hall

Pomle Nakke, Horbelev

Recommended to me by a Danish friend, this airy spot on a clifftop overlooking the Baltic was a traditional family-run restaurant that has been reworked into something more refined by the owners of the Danish chain Sticks'n'Sushi. About a 90-minute drive south of Copenhagen, it's in an untouristy region that is now coming into its own. After a morning on the fossil-strewn beaches nearby, a lunch of Danish oysters, locally caught scallops, cod and kimchi goes down well under the beech trees.
Set four-course menu 495 kroner (£58), falsterskyst.com **LH**

Italy

La Lanterna di Diogene, near Modena, Emilia Romagna

Named after a Cynic philosopher, this working farm and restaurant in the village of Solara takes locavore very seriously. The pickled vegetables are grown steps from the table, flour for the *tortellini in brodo* is milled nearby, and pork ribs come from the heritage breed of pigs they raise. Even the balsamic vinegar drizzled over frittatas and ricotta flans is made right here, using centuries-old practices. I always make a detour for La Lanterna when visiting nearby Modena, and ensure I'm not the designated driver so I can enjoy the encyclopedic list of dry Lambruscos, also made locally.

Mains from €15, lalanternadidiogene.org
Katie Parla, author of Food of the Italian Islands

Trattoria Da Cesare al Casaletto, Rome

Cesare al Casaletto owners Maria Pia Cicconie and Leonardo Vignol

Cesare al Casaletto is on the ground floor of a residential building a 30-minute tram ride from Rome's historic centre. The distance does nothing to dissuade devotees such as me, who come for flawless versions of *cucina romana,* with an elevated yet affordable wine list. My go-to order is a parade of fried starters such as gnocchi on a pool of *cacio e pepe* sauce, aubergine croquettes and simmered beef meatballs. The half-rigatoni with oxtail sauce and pecorino cheese and fried lamb chops tie for my favourite dishes in town.
Mains from €12, trattoriadacesare.it **KP**

La Marina, Ponza

La Marina is built into the weathered volcanic terrain of Cala Feola, a natural harbour with a narrow sand beach on the island of Ponza (reached by ferry from Naples or Rome). After a morning swimming in pristine water, I love to cruise over to Cala Feola to tie my dinghy to the rocks beside the restaurant's shaded terrace then enjoy a lazy lunch of parmigiana made with prickly pear paddles, anchovies spiked with vinegar, linguine with spiny lobster, and mixed fried fish. The food is prepared by a barefoot cook and served on tables overlooking the sea. The best dessert is a nap on the beach among the sunning *ponzesi*.
Mains from €16, no website, +39 338 648 6110
KP

Antica Trattoria di Pietro Dal 1934, Melito Irpino, Campania

The Di Pietro family cook soulful dishes from Campania's Irpinia region, a place so ancient the locals call themselves Samnites, after a pre-Roman tribe. My order begins with a huge spread of regional starters such as frittata, salami made from local *nero casertano* pigs, and fried courgette flowers. I always follow this up with handmade cicatelli pasta with a bright tomato sauce spiked with a minty local herb, then roast grass-fed lamb. I pair it all with an age-worthy white wine like those that have enticed connoisseurs to Irpinia for the better part of two millennia, or a pleasantly fruity red made by the proprietors' son.
Mains from €13, on Facebook **KP**

Osteria Il Principe e Il Pirata, Pantelleria
At the eastern edge of Pantelleria, a Sicilian island visible from Tunisia, Osteria Il Principe e Il Pirata serves dishes merging flavours from volcanic land and tumultuous sea in specialties such as spaghetti with tuna *bottarga*, fennel and pistachio, and *busiate* pasta with sardines, fennel, raisins, pine nuts and fried breadcrumbs. Set among terraced vineyards cascading to the sea, the restaurant's dining room in grey stone and powder blue tiles is my favourite place to eat *bacio pantesco*, the island's signature sweet of ricotta-filled fried pastry sells.
Mains from €17, ilprincipeeilpirata.it **KP**

France

Au Vieux de la Vieille, Lille

There's a particular kind of restaurant in northern France, the *estaminet*, that dates from the days when coal miners would gather for post-shift banter and beer. While the mines are long gone, the estaminets remain, and Au Vieux de la Vieille is one of the best in Lille. It offers a menu of local classics: beef carbonnade, made with beer and gingerbread; *potjevleesch* (four meats in aspic jelly – better than it sounds); and dishes using the local stinky cheese, maroilles. The decor is as much a part of the experience as the food, with dried hops, shelves of bric-a-brac and rustic wooden tables and chairs. Booking essential.
Mains from €12.10, estaminetlille.fr
Carolyn Boyd

Zéphirine, Bordeaux

In a city known for its carnivorous tendencies, it's a joy to find a chef who is more in thrall to vegetables than beef. Chef Romain Corbière has worked in some of the best restaurants in France, but returned to Bordeaux to open a bijou restaurant, which he calls an *auberge urbaine*, with his sister Marie-Zéphirine and her husband, Bertrand Arnauld. The menu reflects the seasonal produce available at markets, with vegetarian or vegan options *de rigueur*, and all paired with superb regional wines. The relaxed-feeling, wood-floored dining room is adorned with vegetable artworks.
Three-course lunch from €31, dinner from €55, zephirine.fr **CB**

La Table d'Élise, Noirmoutier, Vendée

For all the flavour and less of the frippery, seek out bistros owned by France's top chefs. The best I've found is La Table d'Élise, from renowned chef Alexandre Couillon, who is passionate about the island on which he grew up. Noirmoutier, off France's west coast, is blessed with some of the best produce in the country. The menu includes fish landed that morning and vegetables that thrive in the seaweed-fertilised soil. With its wood panelling, fishing nets and ships' brass, the decor is charmingly olde worlde and its front window opens out towards the harbour, which is surprisingly attractive at sunset.
Mains from €18, alexandrecouillon.com **CB**

Chez Mattin, Ciboure, Basque Country

Across the harbour from Saint-Jean-de-Luz, one of my favourite food-loving towns, is the village of Ciboure. It's a warren of sleepy lanes and red or green timber-framed Basque villas. Chez Mattin is an institution in these parts, established in the 1970s, where chef Michel Niquet continues the family tradition and cooks fish caught that morning. The choice of dishes is announced to the dining room at the start of each course by Niquet's wife, Céline, and the signature dish is *Ttorro* (€30), a Basque fish stew with juicy langoustines.
Mains from €21, chezmattin.fr **CB**

A Choumas', Le Puy-en-Velay, Haute-Loire

Sometimes the best meals come by accident: a late arrival or a hasty dinner at the restaurant next door to the hotel. This was how I came to sit in a corner of the cosy, wood-beamed A Choumas' in Le Puy-en-Velay, in the Haute-Loire department, where two of its vertiginous volcanic peaks are topped with chapel and another with a statue. It's renowned for its lentils, so I ordered them as a side dish to steak cooked on a grill fired with volcanic stones. For dessert, I had a semifreddo flavoured with another local speciality, verbena liqueur, topped with a layer of chocolate sauce.
Mains from €19, lepuyenvelay-tourisme.fr **CB**

Greece

To Psaraki, Santorini

Produce from milky-white aubergines to peach-sweet cherry tomatoes flourish in Santorini's volcanic soil, but good food is not always easy to find on the island. Away from the tourist-heavy caldera area, To Psaraki is a clifftop taverna with a handful of check cloth-covered tables in Vlychada, on the island's southern tip. It may not have such spectacular views (although there are fine vistas of the tiny fishing port below), but chef Thanasis Sfougaris's brine-fresh seafood dishes (onion and herb-stuffed grilled sardines; cod fillets steamed in white wine and drizzled with a tangy caper sauce) more than make up for the lack of Insta fodder.
Mains from €12, on Facebook
Heidi Fuller-Love

Stathmos, Zakynthos
Few give this hole-in-the-wall taverna housed in what was once Zante town's bus station (*stathmos* means bus stop) a second glance, but for hearty portions of luscious home-cooked food served up with a big dose of island colour, it can't be beaten. Stathmos is justly famed for its *kouneli stifado* – chunks of rabbit marinated overnight in red wine vinegar, flash fried in olive oil and then slow-cooked in a garlicky tomato sauce. It's a popular spot with locals, so it's wise to arrive early and bag one of the wonky wooden tables overlooking the street.
Mains from €10, Filita 42, tel +30 2695 024040 **HFL**

Portugal

Prado, Lisbon

This light-filled restaurant in Lisbon's Chiado district will probably get a Michelin star – I reckon so anyway – so get in there first. Brilliant but super shy chef António Galapito, who worked with Nuno Mendes in London, has gone off the scale with his cooking on his return to Portugal. All the produce is as local as it can be, but cooked with a punky sensibility *and* deep skill. I come back every time I visit Lisbon and would eat everything on the menu. *Mains from €9.50, pradorestaurante.com* **Audrey Gillan**

Alameda, Faro, Algarve

A love letter to the Algarve is the theme for Rui Sequeira's tasting menu at this funky restaurant in Faro's old town. Produce from the coast and the mountains is key to what Sequeira says is "an authentic ode to the gastronomic tradition of our region", with dishes that hark back to his childhood. I love that this is haute cuisine without the fuss or the wallet-busting prices. There are takes on traditional Algarve dishes, such as *cataplana* (pork and seafood stew) and piri piri chicken.
Mains from €22.50, 10-course love letter to the Algarve menu €89, (vegetarian option available), restaurantealamedafaro.com **AG**

Almeja, Porto

Everyone I've sent to this little restaurant adores it. It's stylish and warm, and the dishes do a dance between Portuguese classics and ones with a culinary twist, thanks to the ideas chef João Cura picked up while travelling in Asia with his wife Sofia, the restaurant manager. Main courses include the stalwart goatling oven rice, with giblets bringing an intensity of flavour, and an unforgettable dessert of sweet curry, coconut, mango and lime. The "10 moments" menu offers a taste of the best dishes and there's a great-value set lunch for €10.50, with bread, starter, main course and a soft drink.
Mains from €18.50, 10 moments menu €80, (vegetarian option available), almejaporto.com **AG**

Gadanha, Estremoz, Alentejo
My pal, Portuguese chef Nuno Mendes (owner of London's Lisboeta), sent me to this great wee place years ago. He waxed lyrical about a puff pastry of partridge and a *sopa fria* – cold tomato soup dressed with strawberry, prawn and basil ice. This is a casual restaurant and shop, but the cooking is among some of the best in the Alentejo region. It's not fancy, but what it does, it does more than well. Standouts are fried croquettes of veal or lamb and the classic *peixinhos da horta* "little fish of the garden" – a tempura green bean.
Mains from €14.50, mercearia gadanha.pt
AG

Belgium

De Zuidkant, Damme

Damme is a village on a sleepy-seeming canal lined with windmills, which I discovered when travelling from Bruges to Knokke-Heist on the Belgian coast. It's renowned for its food, and the medieval high street is lined with bistros, but I always book a table at De Zuidkant, a relaxed diner (though it has a Michelin star). Chef Patrick van Hoorn, cooking in a tiny open kitchen, subtly combines local ingredients – such as smoked eel and white celery with foie gras or line-fished mackerel, swede and strong cheese.*Four-course tasting menu €90, restaurantdezuidkant.be* **John Brunton**

De Gebrande Winning, Sint-Truiden, Flanders

Far from the chic, gourmet dining scene of metropolitan Brussels, rural East Flanders offers fruit orchards, vineyards and craft breweries, which partly explains why the market town of Sint-Truiden has a cosy tavern that has become a shrine for lovers of beer and food. Chef Raf Stimorol is inspired by his grandmother's traditional recipes, using seasonal produce complemented by the beers that he cooks with: hearty dishes like pork braised in rich red-brown beer or North Sea turbot baked with fresh hop flowers. My choice is the beer pairing menu, though there are 600 labels on the brew list!
Two-course lunch €27, four-course tasting menu €55, or €79 with beer pairing, degebrandewinning.be
JB

The Netherlands

De Dagvisser, The Hague

The Netherlands isn't famed for its fine cuisine, but when I moved to Scheveningen (near The Hague) more than a decade ago I was thrilled to find the seafood often excellent. One of my favourite early discoveries was De Dagvisser restaurant, next to where the fishing boats moor. If I'm on a budget, I'll stick to simple dishes like cod and chips, but pricier options include fresh oysters and mussels from Zeeland. After eating, the lovely beach is nearby for a digestive walk.
Two-course Love of the Sea menu €21.50, dedagvisser.nl
Ben Coates

Pllek, Amsterdam

A few years ago, the former shipbuilding area of Amsterdam, known as NDSM, was largely derelict. It has now been reinvented, with new bars and restaurants. I particularly like Pllek, which calls itself “the biggest green restaurant in Amsterdam” and is in a greenhouse-like building on the waterfront. On summer evenings, I’ll take the free ferry over from the centre of town and order something from a menu that is eclectic and hearty, including fried cod salad, vegetable tajine and wild boar stew with gingerbread.
Mains from €20.50, pllek.nl **BC**

Germany

Oh Panama, Berlin

As the swish, art-filled interior suggests, this Berlin spot is not in thrall to tradition. The creation of entrepreneur Ludwig Cramer-Klett, it's a concept restaurant that draws inspiration from a 1970s German children's travel-themed book, the menu taking German cuisine on a journey to exotic places. Familiar ingredients such as Arctic char, saddle of lamb and goulash are remixed into a changing carousel of fusion dishes elevated by creative sauces and sides such as ember-roast potatoes, chicory with hazelnut, and fermented vegetables. Artworks are by Alicja Kwade, Kerim Seiler and Julius von Bismarck, and there are cocktails at the restaurant's Tiger Bar.
Mains from €23, set menus from €65, oh-panama.com
Paul Sullivan

Obere Mühle, Bad Hindelang, Bavaria
In a mountain setting in the Oberallgäu region, near the Austrian border, the "Upper Mill" is in a former saw mill and manages to be both rustic *and* refined. The restaurant (and guesthouse) opened in 1989 and has been the domain of head chef Oliver Egger ever since. Bavarian and German classics, with ingredients hunted in forests and plucked from gardens are traditional and elegant, much like the interior. Tasteful antiques mix with dilapidated walls and a mesmerising painted ceiling. Every dish is worth trying, but the three kinds of organic lamb: roast, oriental, and with creamy polenta (€34),

are memorable. There's also a museum and organic cheese dairy on site.
Mains from €19, set menu from €60, obere-muehle.de **PS**

Czech Republic

La Fresca, Kroměříž, Zlín
Kroměříž, a baroque castle town in the Zlín region, is a gem in the south-east of the country. Its main square, a cobbly quadrangle of pastel facades, is delightfully Czech, and is best viewed from the terrace of the town's flagship restaurant, La Fresca. The menu is big on traditional hunting plates, such as venison served with chanterelle mushrooms and fallow deer leg in creamy sauce with a dollop of cranberry. The restaurant is also a swish-but-cosy hotel, so it can be just a short trudge from dining room to bed.
Mains from 230 koruna (about £9), lafresca.cz
Mark Pickering

Spain

Aiyanna, Playa de Cala Nova, Ibiza

Turquoise sea and wafting palms, sofas and laid-back tunes, beautiful people and food made of leaves and flowers and fish … if AI designed an ideal Ibiza lunch spot, it might be Aiyanna, on a fairly wild beach near Santa Eulalia. With a wide variety of greenery from their organic garden and sharp flavour pops, the food is fresh and healthy. Lunch might be artichoke flowers with feta and mint, or mussels in lemongrass, and a few mojito sorbets. Great location plus excellent food is never going to be a budget option on Ibiza, but with mains from about €20 this place is worth it.
aiyannaibiza.com
Sorrel Downer

Fuentelgato, Huerta del Marquesado, Castile-La Mancha

On a foodie pilgrimage to Cuenca, Spain's Capital of Gastronomy for 2023, it's worth going go the extra mile (well, about 40 miles through the rocks and pines of the Serranía de Cuenca) to this outpost of *alta gastronomía*. Young chefs Alejandro Paz and Olga García, both in their 20s, offer imaginative tasting menus in an old-fashioned family bar with seating for 12. Expect the unexpected: artichoke in game and coffee consommé, pigeon in garum sauce, aubergine ice-cream with chocolate, and milk ice-cream with caviar have all featured. This is special. Book ahead – and fight not to be the designated driver: there's a cellar of 400 wines you probably won't

have heard of, and a long drive back.
Seven-course tasting menu from €50, restaurante.covermanager.com **SD**

Espacio Eslava, Seville

I've never been less than deliriously happy here, sitting at an outside table with a view of the church, a chilled manzanilla to hand, working through creative and affordable tapas and *raciones* with friends. This place is an institution in the San Lorenzo district: the modern feel belies its 35 years, and it's the weekend venue of choice for ebullient *sevillanos*. There are ribs, *carrillada* (braised pork cheek) and beef tataki with ginger for meat-lovers, but the seafood dishes – razor clams in lemon, fried sea anemones and *boquerones* (anchovies) – are the star attraction.
Tapas from €3, raciones from about €12, espacioeslava.com **SD**

Vista Alegre, Colunga, Asturias
A table shaded by a white umbrella on the terrace of a laid-back, child-friendly restaurant above sandy La Griega beach and close to dinosaur stuff in the Jurassic Museum? Yes please. Add an ice-cold glass of cider and it doesn't matter what's on the menu, but the chipirones fritos (battered squid) seafood on the grill, paella, and fish straight from nets hauled into neighbouring Lastres are consistently good and fairly priced. In colder

months, savour its award-winning fabada (pork and bean stew) in the elegant sea-view dining room. It's open for lunc h only until July.
Mains from €16, restaurantevistaalegre.com **SD**

Casa González, Madrid
A more vivacious sister to the old *ultramarinos* (grocery shops) with their barrels and *bacalao*, this glorious 1930s glass-fronted deli in Las Letras district (open till 11pm) has tables tucked into corners, a good-natured lively bustle and exceptional wines. There are many variations of French and Spanish cheese and charcuterie plates to share, from €13, along with toast and patés, salads and stews (just the cheese is irresistible).
Small plates from €7, casagonzalez.es **SD**

Ireland

Casey's Baltimore Room, County Cork

With its scrubbed timber flooring, nautical decor and ocean breezes, the Baltimore Room has a quarterdeck vibe that offers commanding views over Roaringwater Bay, which is home to the restaurant's own shellfish farm. Despite the pared-back, easygoing elegance inside, owners Dominic Casey and the family work hard to make sure their food is in season and fresh.

Scallops are farmed early in the season, while summer brings mussels and prawns. Other offerings include sirloin steak, black sole, crab claws and a seafood tasting plate. An onsite micro-brewery keeps craft beer aficionados (and lesser species like me) happy with Sherkin Lass pale ale and Roaring Ruby dark red ale.
Mains from €18, caseysofbaltimore.com
Vic O'Sullivan

JP Clarke's, County Clare
Despite its strawberry and butterscotch painted rendering, there's a distinct flavour of Aspen inside JP Clarkes in Bunratty, with its high ceilings, cream joists and logs stacked by the brick fireplace. It started life as a seafood restaurant and still keeps one oar in the water, with pan seared sea bass or a tasting plate of rock oyster, salmon and crab, but it also offers pork, beef and daily specials. Yes, I'm probably a biased local– JP Clarke's is close enough to my home for me to hear the changeover of kegs, but it's the friendly, unflappable service from Barry, Kieran and the team that has brought three generations of my family to their door .
Mains from €14, jpclarkes.ie **VOS**

Croatia

25 Ante's Place, Mljet

Of all of Croatia's islands, I love the mellow mood of Mljet – and it's at its friendliest at Ante's Place, a family-run restaurant overlooking Saplunara Bay on the island's eastern side. Ana and Ivo Dabelić are the cheerful hosts and cooks, specialising in freshly caught seafood and carrying on the tradition started by Ivo's father, Ante. With a bit of notice they also serve slow-cooked *ispod peke* – under a bell-shaped iron pot – and Ivo makes sublime lobster spaghetti. The setting is magical: the sheltered bay is right in front of you and I've seen some spectacular sunsets. They'll offer a free launch service for those arriving by boat.
Mains from £29, pinetreemljet.com
Mary Novakovich

Konoba Šešula, Šolta

Sailors looking for a sheltered mooring will have noticed deeply indented Šešula Bay on the west side this Dalmatian island. And, in particular, the welcoming Konoba Šešula – less than a 15-minute walk from the pretty port of Maslinica, and which offers free moorings. The giant outdoor grill is the star of this laid-back restaurant, where the daily catch, langoustines or squid – and meats are prepared over a wood fire. With a couple of hours' notice they'll also do lamb or octopus slow-cooked *ispod peke*.
Mains from £27, on Facebook **MN**

Poland

26 Concordia Taste, Poznań

At the end of my most recent visit to Concordia Taste, I was so smitten that I was tempted to “do the Poznań” –turn my back on the kitchen and bounce up and down, which is what the local football fans famously do when their team is playing a blinder. Here’s why: the marinated walnuts. And the smoky potato soup. And the quince ice-cream with elderflower vinegar (trust me). And the truffle mayo with toadstool crisps. And the blueberry mustard. And the parsnip flan. And the truffle sauce that pimped up the venison. I’m frothing in remembrance! A bright and airy space with a Scandi-chic vibe make for a very memorable setup. I’ve heard on the grapevine that Poznań has aspirations of becoming the food capital of Poland. It’s going the right way about it. *Smacznego!*
Mains from 41 zloty (£8), two-course lunch 41 zloty, concordiataste.pl
Ben Aitken

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Guardian food writer Felicity Cloake feasts her eyes … Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

Food and drink

The key to an unforgettable holiday? Just focus on the food

Discovering a great local place to eat is often the highlight of a trip and a way of understanding a culture

35 of Europe's best restaurants

Felicity Cloake

Sat 20 May 2023 02.00 EDT

Though I have a photograph of me standing on the Great Wall of China, my sole memory of the visit is the noodles I had for lunch in a truckers' cafe afterwards. Equally, while I know our student trip to Venice must have taken in St Mark's Square, two decades on I can only conjure an image of cuttlefish in ink as dark as a Tintoretto devoured in a hidden trattoria (startling to callow youths expecting pizza and pasta). Exploring the city's history through its cuisine – rice and spices from the east, salt cod from the frozen north and strudel from the years under Austrian rule – proved far more pleasurably educational than listening to my friend Rick read out endless pages of the guidebook.

While I don't just travel to eat, it's always a reliable shortcut to intimacy with a culture. It's a universal language, especially when you have no shared vocabulary, as happened when we joined a table of Hong Kong pensioners

for Sunday morning dim sum, and delighted them with our enthusiasm for fried duck's tongues.

And an interest in food means you'll never be short of something to talk about, even when you're eating alone.

> Asking locals where they go out to eat opens up neighbourhoods not normally on the visitor's radar

As I was quietly finishing a bowl of cassoulet at Toulouse's Marché Victor Hugo, an older man at a neighbouring table enquired solicitously if I'd enjoyed it – "because I couldn't help but notice it looked a bit dry". A lively conversation followed, involving staff and other diners, and I left with several recommendations for further eating, and the pleasing sense of having been, ever so briefly, among friends.

Indeed wherever you are in the world, people are usually only too happy to open up to you about regional specialities – sometimes, if you get really lucky, they open up their homes too. Driving around Iceland a couple of years ago, I found it very easy to admire the scenery, but more difficult to engage with its few inhabitants, until I went for lunch at the Brimslóð Atelier guesthouse in Blönduós on the north coast. As chef Gísli Egill Hrafnsson deftly prepared the fish (local cod, naturally) in his home kitchen overlooking the grey Greenland Sea, I was able to quiz him on important subjects not covered in the National Museum, such as, how do you get to sleep when it's light 24 hours a day, and what do you do if you happen across a stray polar bear?

The writer eating fondue at Le Cellier in Les Deux Alpes

It pays, of course, to look beyond the most obvious dining options. In the Croatian islands, my eye was caught by a ragged flyer fluttering near the ferry terminal, advertising dinners at a farm up in the hills, so I booked, attracted by the chance to see beyond the touristy coastal strip. Not only did we come away with a two-litre plastic bottle of their wine, but we got a lift from town in the back of a pick-up with a bouncy little terrier, which I enjoyed almost as much as the slow-braised octopus that followed.

Asking locals where they go out to eat also opens up neighbourhoods not normally on the visitor's radar. Forget the pub opposite the British Museum offering "London's best fish and chips"; Knight's Fish Bar in West Norwood, with its picture of a young Queen Elizabeth tacked to the wall above the saveloys and pickled eggs, is less than an hour away by bus – get a seat on the top deck and you get a cheap tour of south London to boot.
The memory of the food – and the special foodie places discovered – is often the highlight of a trip, what really connects us to a place. That competitive fondue eating with friends at Le Cellier in Les Deux Alpes, or the punchy little *noisette* (espresso with hot milk) at Trattoria des Pistoles in Marseille's maze-like Le Panier quarter, surrounded by the sights and sounds of everyday life, are snippets in time I cherish.

So you can keep your fancy hotels – frankly, I'd always rather spend my money on food.

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The sleuth is out there … Natasha Lyonne in Poker Face. Photograph: Peacock/Evans Vestal Ward

The watcherTelevision

Poker Face: Natasha Lyonne's perfect detective show turns up the fun-o-meter

until it explodes

A PI who can spot liars a mile away, and a cast clearly having a hoot, inject the classic murder-of-the-week format with wit, charm and irresistible energy

Joel Golby
Sat 20 May 2023 02.00 EDT

Whatever happened to fun? We used to have it, didn't we? Mr Blobby bursting through things, stuff like that. But in recent years, it feels, fun has receded a bit, and we've replaced it with other things that don't hit as hard: overearnestness or mawkishness or choreographed sentimentality. Someone really trembling while they deliver a series-closing monologue about their emotions. You couldn't have Del Boy falling through a bar these days, could you? That's because we're in a fun drought, the dust of it whirling round us like old glitter.

Thank goodness then for Poker Face, the enormously successful mystery-a-week show that debuted in the US earlier this year and has finally come over to Sky Max (from Friday), and which remembers throughout what fun is. First there is the casting of Natasha Lyonne, who is always fun – her own vibrating beacon of freestanding fun, even – but is especially fun when she just plays the character of Natasha Lyonne, which is exactly what she is doing here. Then there's that little tweak to the "unlikely detective" trope – Lyonne's Charlie Cale has the innate ability to sense when someone's telling a lie (her catchphrase is just "bullshit", which is – you guessed it) – and uses it to unpuzzle strange murders and bizarre crimes on a run-from-the-mob-boss road trip across the US.

Even the decision to place each episode in a series of unlikely, salty, rust belt backwaters – at a Nascar track, or an out-of-town petrol station – is fun. It feels as if they had fun behind the scenes making them up, and it makes the whole thing feel more lively and interesting throughout. It's also nice to be reminded places other than "Manhattan" or "LA" exist, as almost every TV show produced in America tends to forget.

Each hour-long episode gives 12 to 17 minutes of Lyonne-less backstory over to the guest stars that week – from Chloë Sevigny to Adrien Brody to Tim Blake Nelson to Jameela Jamil, all of whom are having enormous amounts of the f-word – and every episode wrings every last drop out of its runtime, each one feeling rich and textured. There's some ongoing storyline where Charlie's history will catch up with her, probably. There's a couple of running in-jokes and some premonition stuff that I think will come to a resolution towards the end. But, for now, here Natasha Lyonne is, mopping out a urinal and 25 minutes away from solving a crime. And it is so, so fun.

Poker Face is a Rian Johnson creation, and I'm glad he's back on form – Brick and Looper were so good, then The Last Jedi was really long and then for better or worse Knives Out happened and Glass Onion after that – because Poker Face feels like all the good bits from his previous works (knotty puzzles solved in unlikely ways and along unlikely timelines by unlikely investigators; dialogue that's actually smart, not look-to-the-camera-and-check-you-noticed-how-smart-it-was smart; a constant but never-looming threat) and none of the bad bits (Luke Skywalker taking about 15 hours to die; a big onion made of glass).

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The series has already been compared to the heyday of Columbo – there is admittedly something very “ … just one more thing” about Lyonne’s performance – and that’s not necessarily because of the mystery-a-week format. It’s more the dense character study-ness of it, the fact that each guest star has a part to get their teeth stuck into rather than just being a bland eyewitness, and then Natasha Lyonne as a charisma whirlwind in the middle of it. The show finds new ways to reveal or not reveal Charlie’s strange superpower; fun new twists on lying and telling the truth; grey-area moral quandaries of every flavour; exploring those dark instincts we all have (jealousy, greed, hubris) and throwing a few slightly overdone murders in there and turning up the fun-o-meter until it explodes. Not every episode ends in a neat resolution, or a cop waiting there with a pair of handcuffs and a sullen expression. Every single decision they made about this one they got right.

Hey, come on. Been a bad year, hasn’t it? You sat through all those episodes of The White Lotus. They’re taking Succession away from you and made Cousin Greg the worst one along the way. Love Island wasn’t even good this time. Don’t you think you deserve this? There’s no fun to be had out there, in the real world. Believe me. Turn the TV on. It’s a long time since you had fun and you’ve forgotten how good it is. Come on. Trust me. Watch Poker Face. Have just a little bit of fun.

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2023.05.20 - Opinion

- They're openly saying it: Brexit has failed. But what comes next may be very dark indeed
- Vice and BuzzFeed were meant to be the future of news. What happened?
- It's easy to see white supremacy as the thinking of extremists. We know that's not true
- I went to the NatCon conference expecting sinister exuberance. But all I found was doom and gloom

‘Farage said three words of striking simplicity and truth: “Brexit has failed.”’ Nigel Farage at a press conference in London on 20 March 2023. Photograph: Daniel Leal/AFP/Getty Images

Opinion Brexit

They’re openly saying it: Brexit has failed. But what comes next may be very dark indeed

Jonathan Freedland

The ‘remoaner elite’, the civil service, the BBC, universities, unions, refugees: anything is blamed but Brexit itself

Fri 19 May 2023 12.06 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 16.42 EDT

It lasts no more than a second, but it is a moment for the ages. Interviewed on BBC Newsnight on Monday, Nigel Farage made a confession that, by rights, should end the debate that has split this country down the middle for much of the last decade. A month ahead of the seventh anniversary of the 2016 vote that took Britain out of the European Union, Farage said three words of striking simplicity and truth: “Brexit has failed.”

You can watch the clip over and over, for it is something to behold. Here is the arch-Brexiter himself, the man who dedicated his life to the cause of rupture from the EU, admitting it has been a disaster. Of course, as we shall see, he and his fellow Brexiters do not blame that failure on the idea itself, but it’s the admission that counts. It offers grounds for modest celebration: now, at last, the contours of an emerging national consensus are visible, as remainers and leavers alike can join in agreement that this thing has not worked. And yet it comes at a price, one that also became darkly visible this week.

Start with the facts that even Farage can no longer duck. During the referendum campaign, he and his allies promised that Brexit would be a boon for the UK economy, unshackling it from Brussels red tape and releasing it into a roaring future. Seven years on, we can see the reality: a country in the grip of a cost of living crisis that means millions can no longer afford what they once regarded as the basics. Britain is becoming poorer and falling behind its peers. Ours is now forecast to be one of the worst performing economies in the world, not merely seventh in the G7 but 20th in the G20 – behind even a Russia under toughening international sanctions – according to the International Monetary Fund.

The consequences of being poorer are seen and felt everywhere, whether it's in the 3m food parcels delivered by food banks last year, the family who can't get a mental health appointment for a troubled child, or in courts that are jammed and backlogged for years. For a while, the Brexiters could blame all our woes on anything but Brexit: Covid or Ukraine. But there's no hiding place now.

This week came a warning that post-Brexit trading arrangements with the EU threaten the very existence of the entire UK automotive industry, which employs some 800,000 people. Ford, Jaguar Land Rover and the owners of Vauxhall called on the government to renegotiate the Brexit deal. Such demands are getting louder. Next month, a thousand businesses, alongside representatives of farming and fishing, will gather in Birmingham for the Trade Unlocked conference, called to discuss a post-Brexit landscape most say has made commercial life infinitely harder and more bureaucratic. "Business is beginning to find its voice," one organiser tells me.

But it's not just the economic numbers. Remember, Farage and the others argued that a hit to GDP would be worth it, so long as Brexit fulfilled its other promises – most cherished among them, a reduction in the number of immigrants to the UK. Yet if you were among those persuaded, against the evidence, to see immigration as a cost, rather than a benefit, to the country, Brexit has failed on even that measure. Immigration has gone up, not down, since we left the EU, with one analysis suggesting net annual migration figures published next week could see a rise to 700,000 or even 1 million. Turns out Britain needs migrants – but now they have to come from far

away, rather than in reciprocal movement between us and our nearest neighbours.

Given all this, what are the Brexiters to do? Some still deny reality altogether, insisting that we should disbelieve the evidence of our own eyes. The rest admit that Brexit has failed, and then face one of two options. Either they can atone for their role in visiting this calamity upon the nation and move to correct it. Or they can blame others for not doing it right.

On Newsnight, Farage made the latter choice. Yes, it was true that Britain had "not actually benefited from Brexit economically" but that was because "useless" politicians had "mismanaged this totally". It's the manoeuvre perfected in an earlier era by western communists confronted by the brute realities of the Soviet Union: nothing wrong with the communist idea, they insisted, it just hadn't been implemented properly.

But that logic is tricky for the Brexiters, because it's they who have been in charge. The exit deal was signed, sealed and pushed through parliament by one of their own, Boris Johnson, and a conviction Brexiter is in Downing Street now, in the form of Rishi Sunak. So there has to be someone else to blame, other shadowy forces who betrayed the cause.

Some point to Sunak himself, aided by Kemi Badenoch, who this month halted the planned shredding of thousands of EU-tainted regulations. For others, it's the Blob or the "remoaner elite", made up of the civil service, the BBC, the universities, the unions: anyone who, along with desperate refugees in small boats, can be blamed for standing between Britain and the promised Brexit nirvana.

This is hardly a new dynamic. Nationalism, with its impossible promise of a perfect future, always has to have a traitor to blame for perfection's delayed arrival. That is the process we are witnessing now: the steady nurturing of a stab-in-the-back myth for Brexit. History suggests that this hunt for the wielder of the treacherous dagger will only get nastier.

Which is why many were rightly alarmed by this week's gathering in the name of "national conservatism", where the writer Douglas Murray declared that nationalism need no longer hide its face just because the Germans had

“mucked up” in the last century – a novel way to describe the murderous record of national socialism. That conference was a three-day search for those whose betrayal could be blamed for the failure of the Brexit project.

The quest will intensify as the damage caused by Brexit piles up. The worse the economy gets, the higher interest rates rise, the tighter incomes are squeezed, the louder and more vitriolic the attacks on the supposed true culprits will have to be – if only to quieten the obvious thought: namely that it is Brexit itself that is to blame.

It means those who opposed this madness from the start now have two reasons to break the understandable, if still bizarre, omertà on Brexit that prevails in Westminster. The first is the need to point to the source of our national ailing: if the patient is losing blood, you cannot keep ignoring the wounds where he shot himself in both feet. Less obvious, but no less urgent, is the need to acknowledge that Brexit’s failure is injecting a new toxin into the system, one that will spread the more apparent that failure becomes – and spread faster if we refuse to name its actual cause.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
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Vice Media's office building in Los Angeles, after the company filed for bankruptcy protection, 15 May, 2023. Photograph: Jae C Hong/AP

OpinionBuzzFeed

Vice and BuzzFeed were meant to be the future of news. What happened?

Jane Martinson

Their young audience made them the envy of the media's old guard. But, ultimately, they couldn't convert this into profit

Sat 20 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 20 May 2023 10.50 EDT

After Rupert Murdoch invested tens of millions of pounds in his digital publishing company in 2013, Shane Smith, boss of Vice Media, laughed at how much old media companies wanted his sexy young business. Acknowledging that they were being left behind, they would offer billions: "And we keep saying 'no, no, no'".

Soon afterwards, BuzzFeed's Jonah Peretti, Smith's closest rival for the attentions of both young eyeballs and wealthy older men, was in London to talk about plans for his own global domination. There is over-preoccupation with the money he said. He tried to avoid that, because, "then we're not thinking about what the company is doing but what it's worth".

But now everyone is thinking about what Vice Media and BuzzFeed are worth; earlier this week Vice filed for bankruptcy protection, just a few weeks after BuzzFeed closed a news operation that once sought to rival the biggest names in news. Both digital media companies – once hailed as the

future for news – are now worth a fraction of their one-time highs. Vice, valued at nearly $6bn soon after Murdoch invested, is expected to be bought for about $225m by its remaining lenders.

The reason for these sudden declines, occurring almost in tandem, is relatively simple, albeit still heartbreaking for all those who now face unemployment. Vice burned through all the money investors splashed on it and still had so much outstanding debt – $834m – that rising interest rates made its future unsustainable. Prizes and awards did not stop BuzzFeed struggling to make enough money.

What went wrong was not just a worsening economic climate, hubris and mismanagement, but also a payment system in which these two very different digital media darlings were set up to fail.

Remind yourself how different they were: Vice, spawned from a punk magazine until the internet gave it global reach, sent a basketball star to meet the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un. BuzzFeed, meanwhile, founded by a liberal Californian, wanted to be the New York Times of the web with a sideline in cat videos.

Both were fed by the idea that audience reach was all, and that digital advertising would be enough to pay for all the content being consumed by a generation groomed on the need for constant updates, or "hot takes" as Peretti called them. Social media companies born on the web sneered at the old media groups with their dirty print costs, and offered a link to younger readers who no longer read papers or watched TV. The fact that half of 18- to 34-year-old Americans came to Buzzfeed.com every month, according to Google Analytics research, made a loss-making site appear to be the future, despite the fact that those users failed to spend any money there. When they grew tired of the advertising that kept stopping their content, even the cat videos, the advertisers moved elsewhere.

The idea of youth as not just the future but the panacea was evident as long ago as 2014 when I visited Vice's then achingly hip London base in Shoreditch. When Comscore figures suggested that the Guardian and other legacy media brands attracted more millennials than Vice.com, the company

called the analysis “inaccurate”. More tellingly, senior advertisers said the fact that it was largely millennials who visited Vice, while lots of older people favoured legacy media, was more important.

Joseph Teasdale, head of technology at Enders Analysis, says some of the problems faced by the digital darlings during that formative time (the terrible technological teen years) were that they remained “good pitches still looking for a business plan”. Investors will happily splurge cash on the hope of future success, but only for a finite amount of time.

It is also clear that social media platforms such as Facebook and Google proved unreliable sources of funding. Without any real sanction, Facebook could simply switch its algorithm to stop promoting news stories, while Google had to be persuaded of the distinction and value of editorial versus advertising. Both BuzzFeed and Vice were among the first to grapple with and then be criticised for their own handling of this distinction. Meanwhile, Gen Z had moved on, its diminishing attention span now fixed on even shorter video content on Snapchat and TikTok.

Investors with money to spend are still willing to back new ventures offering information and news to the next generation, including one launched by Smith in the US and two in London, Tortoise and the News Movement. Earlier this month, the Messenger launched in the US with $50m and a founder, Jimmy Finkelstein, who wants an alternative to a too-partisan national news media.

While Vice and BuzzFeed were trying and failing to develop their own business plans, legacy media companies had to develop new ways to make money as circulation and advertising revenues declined. Faced with increasingly loud voices online, for some that meant a move towards more partisan media. Or, “news for angry old people”, as Roman Roy in Succession describes ATN, the Fox-like news channel the fictional family still owns after killing off two Vice-like media ventures.

If that’s all that is left after the money and tech men have finished experimenting with news online, then, young and old, we should all be angry.

- Jane Martinson is a Guardian columnist

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Joe Biden delivers the 2023 Howard University commencement address on 13 May in Washington DC. Photograph: Kyle Mazza/SOPA Images/Shutterstock

OpinionRace

It’s easy to see white supremacy as the thinking of extremists. We know that’s not true

Nels Abbey

To hear Joe Biden address the issue is heartening, but there is more he needs to know about how norms affect our lives

Sat 20 May 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 20 May 2023 05.25 EDT

During Joe Biden's recent address to Howard University, a historically Black higher learning institution, he offered a forthright perspective on white supremacy. "On the best days, enough of us have the guts and the hearts to stand up for the best in us. To choose love over hate, unity over disunion, progress over retreat. To stand up against the poison of white supremacy, as I did in my inaugural address – to single it out as the most dangerous terrorist threat to our homeland."

Biden is stating what has long been established as fact in the United States, that extremist white supremacist groups are the foremost domestic terror threat. On this basis, his calling out and condemnation of white supremacy is welcome, authoritative and well intended.

The problem is that it doesn't do Black people the favours he may think. Biden defined white supremacy in terms with which society is now most comfortable: a phenomenon on extreme, unhinged, uncouth and often

violent fringes. That may be a form in which he sees it evident in the US. All countries are different; manifestations vary. But here's the thing: most Black people who use the term define and view white supremacy quite differently.

To us, white supremacy is not just an armed white man with a swastika tattooed on his forehead. It is the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (called by then senator Joe Biden, who drafted the legislation, "Biden's bill") juxtaposed with the Anti-drug Abuse Act of 1986 – which together led to the mass incarceration of, principally, Black men. It also explains the enormous sentencing disparity between powder cocaine and cheaper crack cocaine, which was more widely available in poorer and predominantly Black communities. Under the 100-1 crack versus powder cocaine disparity that existed before 2010 (when it was reduced to 18-1), the distribution of just 5g of crack, versus 500g of powder cocaine, carried a minimum five-year federal prison sentence. It also explains the difference in coverage, criminalising and compassion between the "crack epidemic" and the "opioid crisis".

White supremacy is not just a klansman burning a cross, it is the fact that no one was held liable for the horrors inflicted on the people of Iraq. If the victims of the Iraq war were white, it is hard to believe that the architects of the assault would be on BBC Radio 4 opining on the issues of the day.

Jordan Neely, who was choked to death on the New York subway on 1 May 2023. He is pictured with his aunt Carolyn. Photograph: AP

White supremacy is not just Combat 18 in combat gear: it is a homeless Black man with mental health issues being choked to death on a subway train by a white marine veteran, members of a Fox News TV audience cheering at the report, and the attitude that sees the former soldier premptively hailed a hero and bolstered with public donations of $2m towards his legal fees.

White supremacy is not just 14 words, it shapes what is seen as worthy history and what is dismissed as "wokery": who is viewed as worthy of respect and empathy, and who are dismissed as grifters with a 'victimhood mentality'."

Though the main and intended beneficiaries of white supremacy are white people, perplexingly, when we speak of white supremacy, we are not exclusively speaking about the actions or ideologies of white people. Some of the foremost proponents of white supremacy are Black and brown. For some it is so normalised that they struggle to understand a world without it. Others understand what happens to those who oppose white supremacy and are rightfully scared. And for some others it is a simple equation: if you can't beat them, dine with them (and pray they don't dine on you).

Suella Braverman, the home secretary, said: "White people do not exist in a special state of sin or collective guilt … the defining feature of this country's relationship with slavery is not that we practised it, but that we led the way in abolishing it." She added: "The unexamined drive towards multiculturalism as an end in itself, combined with identity politics, is a recipe for communal disaster."

This sounds very much like our our home secretary – as see-through as spring water – going to ludicrous extremes to appeal to the normalised nature of white supremacy in Britain, and in her own party?

So here is a memo to the president and all who see the world as he does. It is too easy to equate white supremacy with the outlier, the diseased mind

plotting atrocities in a West Midlands kitchen, the gun- and Trump-loving, tobacco-chewing redneck who just can't get the N-word out of his vocabulary. Because to many who look like me, white supremacy is not the fringe, it is central to much of what happens in society; to vast areas of legislation, to the economic hierarchy, to practices and perceptions. Yes, we see the immediate urgency of the threat of white supremacy in extreme forms – as Biden does. However, normalised white supremacy – in all its forms – is just as dangerous.

To much of society, "white supremacy" is merely a pejorative term, but to many of us it is reliable descriptor that helps us understand society: it is a knowledge that protects our family, our community, our sanity – our very selves.

- Nels Abbey is a writer, broadcaster and former banker, and the author of Think Like a White Man
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‘Politicians and voters may decide national conservatism is too extreme, its worldview too old-fashioned.’ Photograph: Tom Nicholson/Shutterstock

OpinionPolitics

I went to the NatCon conference expecting sinister exuberance. But all I found was doom and gloom

Andy Beckett

Speakers warned of leftwing forces creating a ‘new dark age’. They were quieter about who has been in power for 13 years

Fri 19 May 2023 12.20 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 13.19 EDT

For anyone who has grown up with the idea that the right dominates Britain, it can be a shock to discover that its members are often anxious or even downright miserable. Much of this week’s already notorious National Conservatism conference in London – seen by some on the left as a gathering of immensely powerful and sinister forces – was actually very gloomy.

Over three long days in a slightly chilly church conference centre in Westminster with opaque ecclesiastical windows blotting out most of the outside world, I encountered a rightwing movement that often seemed frustrated, divided and angry – and pessimistic, even apocalyptic, about the right’s prospects. Despite 13 years of Tory government, it was widely agreed that the climate for conservatism had not got better but worse.

“Transgenderism”, “climate catastrophism”, “the liberal establishment”, “neo-Marxism”, “wokeism”, “the professoriat”, “globalists”, “big

corporates", "big tech", "the reign of terror by cancel culture", "collectivist" politicians and civil servants, "elites", "quangos" and "progressivism – the dominant ideology of our times": all these forces were said to be creating what was variously described as "an age of unreason", a "new dark age" and even "the end of our way of life". The bleaker the speaker, the louder the applause generally was.

Conservatism always has a pessimistic side: warning against change, and making bleak assumptions about human nature and the practicality of a fairer world. Conservatism is also good at conjuring up bogeymen while shamelessly playing down its own power. The conference featured the home secretary, the levelling up secretary, several influential Tory MPs, the Conservative deputy chairman and lots of well known commentators from the rightwing press (the huge impact of which was never mentioned).

But several speakers still claimed that it was a "counterculture" gathering. Those who remember the hippy squats and police harassment of the original counterculture may find that term hard to apply to several hundred well connected suits listening to cabinet ministers and exchanging business cards afterwards.

And yet the dark mood felt real. The Conservatives' terrible performance in the local elections and opinion polls hung over proceedings. The political scientist Matthew Goodwin said the party was in a "prolonged death spiral". Onstage, and in conversations I had with participants, almost everyone assumed the Tories would lose the next election. As during the last years of Conservative rule in the mid-1990s, there was the sense of a privileged tribe preparing for harder times.

Unlike the listless Toryism of the John Major years, however, there was also an expectation that defeat would bring opportunities. National conservatism is not the same as Conservatism, in the British party sense, but a loose concept and movement imported from the US, where the right is more confident, more confrontational and more authoritarian.

‘Unusually, Thatcherism was described as a philosophy whose time had passed. Given her premiership ended 33 years ago, we might ask, what took you so long?’ Photograph: Keystone/Getty Images

A few things unite the movement: fury against liberals, extreme reverence for tradition, horror at “uncontrolled immigration”, and an apparent readiness to impose conservative, often Christian, values on others. “The normative family, the mother and father sticking together for the sake of the children, is the only basis for a safe and functioning society,” the conference was told by MP Danny Kruger.

Yet the ambiguity of the phrase “national conservatism” also allows it to be interpreted in different ways. And thus the movement has become a vehicle for many of the factions competing to transform the right in Britain and beyond.

National can mean nationalist. Despite even Nigel Farage admitting this week that leaving the EU had “failed” to benefit Britain, Brexit was presented at the conference as a triumph. National can mean for the whole nation: some speakers argued that the Tories should better represent all of Britain. National can mean more state-driven: other speakers said the government should get more involved in the economy, and in financially supporting child-rearing and marriage.

National could also mean national in the infamous 1930s sense. Conference participants reacted with outrage and derision at being called "fascists" on social media. But there was also praise from the stage and in publications available in a busy side room for the authoritarian governments of Hungary, India, Israel and Singapore.

In her brazenly self-serving speech, the home secretary Suella Braverman said, with ominous emphasis: "Conservatism is order or it is nothing." And in an address at the opening dinner, the rightwing author Douglas Murray said, "I see no reason why every other country in the world should be prevented from feeling pride in itself because the Germans mucked up twice in a century." Laughter and applause followed.

The National Conservatism logo, with the first word in heavy orange capitals and the second in flimsier white ones, against a traditional Tory blue background, could easily be a logo for a new political party – perhaps a reshaping of Toryism akin to New Labour, or something more revolutionary.

Some of the conference speakers most critical of the Conservatives' supposed timidity in office – victims of austerity, the Home Office and Brexit may beg to differ – talked with a rhetorical crispness and dressed with a camera-ready smartness that suggested Commons careers on the horizon. Goodwin declared that one way to revive the Tories would be to "replace the dominant faction". Another slick academic analyst and advocate of rightwing populism, Eric Kaufmann, said that Tory MPs "must be converted" to national conservatism, "or they must be selected out".

At other times, though, the conference presented a less united and professional front. While some contributors still insisted that the free market was an essentially perfect economic system, others argued that the right should abandon it, because it did so much social damage. Unusually for a rightwing gathering, Thatcherism was sometimes described as a philosophy whose time had passed. Although, given that her premiership ended in a recession and acrimony 33 years ago, we might ask her new rightwing critics: what took you so long?

In Britain at least, national conservatism could fizzle out. Most politicians and voters may decide it is too extreme and strident, its worldview too sour and old-fashioned. A lack of fresh policy proposals, apparent at the conference, may also hurt the movement.

Or it may be overtaken by events. The UK's next prime minister may well be a Labour one whose keywords are patriotism, the family and security – in other words, a milder, more egalitarian, more palatable kind of traditionalist than national conservatism offers. Yet at the conference I never heard Keir Starmer mentioned. Even the self-styled truth-tellers of the British right may be in denial about what the future holds.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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2023.05.20 - Around the world

- US debt ceiling Talks resume afresh as default deadline creeps closer
- 'I won again' Silvio Berlusconi released from Milan hospital after six weeks
- Slovakia Tycoon acquitted of killing journalist and fiancee in case which brought down government
- ‘It can be quite Dickensian’ Life in New Zealand’s boarding houses
- Colombia Country's elite backed death squads, former paramilitary commander says

Congressman Garret Graves, lead negotiator for House Republicans in talks with the Biden White House, said: ‘We’re not there.’ Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

US politics

Debt ceiling talks briefly resume as US default deadline creeps closer

Janet Yellen, the treasury secretary, has said that without action the US will cease to be able to pay its debts around 1 June

Chris Stein in Washington, Martin Pengelly in New York and agencies
Fri 19 May 2023 21.58 EDTFirst published on Fri 19 May 2023 16.42 EDT

Negotiations for a deal to raise the US debt ceiling and thereby avoid a default with potentially catastrophic consequences for the world economy briefly resumed on Friday before concluding with no progress cited by either side.

Republicans had returned to the bipartisan talks with the White House on Friday evening, hours after negotiations had come to an abrupt stop earlier in the day.

“We had a very, very candid discussion talking about where we are, talking about where things need to be,” said Garret Graves, the Republican representative, to reporters following a brief meeting in the Capitol with White House officials.

“This wasn’t a negotiation tonight,” Graves said, adding the timing of the next meeting was not set.

Representative Patrick McHenry said he was not confident the two sides could meet the House speaker Kevin McCarthy’s goal of reaching a deal this weekend.

Earlier in the day, Graves of Louisiana, the lead negotiator for House Republicans in talks with the Biden White House, had told reporters at the Capitol: “We’re not there.”

“We’ve decided to press pause, because it’s just not productive.”

The impasse had rattled financial markets with the deadline ticking closer to avoid default.

The treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, has said that without action the US government will cease to be able to pay its debts on or around 1 June.

Joe Biden is away at the G7 summit in Japan. White House officials were leading talks for Democrats.

One told the Guardian: “There are real differences between the parties on budget issues and talks will be difficult. The president’s team is working hard towards a reasonable bipartisan solution that can pass the House and the Senate.”

For decades after 1917, when the federal debt was capped, raising that limit, or ceiling, was usually a routine procedure, if subject to political grandstanding.

In 2006, the Illinois Democratic senator Barack Obama voted against a raise under a Republican president, George W Bush.

But Republicans have increasingly and effectively employed threats to refuse to raise the ceiling as a bargaining tool and in 2011, as president, Obama was forced to say he regretted his vote of five years before.

In the 2011 standoff, the House GOP extracted trillions of dollars in spending cuts which Obama was forced to sell to his party. Now, under Biden, the same dynamic is in play.

With the Republican House speaker, Kevin McCarthy, beholden to far-right members who made him endure 15 votes before gaining the position, the GOP is demanding hefty cuts to spending, on Democratic priorities including healthcare and climate, in return for a debt ceiling raise.

Democrats say Republicans should agree a clean raise – meaning without preconditions – as they did repeatedly under Donald Trump. Democrats also demand that Biden does not blink.

Senator Bernie Sanders, flanked by Senators Jeff Merkley, left, and Ed Markey, urges Joe Biden to invoke the 14th amendment. Photograph: Shawn Thew/EPA

At the Capitol on Friday, Graves said: "Until people are willing to have reasonable conversations about how you can actually move forward and do the right thing, then we're not going to sit here and talk to ourselves."

Republican leaders outside the talks sought to apply pressure. Not long before Graves spoke to reporters, Trump said his party should not give ground.

Republicans, the presidential frontrunner wrote on his Truth Social platform, "should not make a deal on the debt ceiling unless they get everything they want (including the 'kitchen sink'). That's the way the Democrats have always dealt with us. Do not fold!"

Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader in the Senate, aimed fire at Biden, accusing the president of "wait[ing] months before agreeing to negotiate with Speaker McCarthy on a spending deal.

"They are the only two who can reach an agreement," McConnell said. "It is past time for the White House to get serious. Time is of the essence."

Chris Murphy, a Democratic senator from Connecticut, countered: "We are in a crisis, for ONE REASON – House Republicans threat to burn down the entire economy if they don't get their way."

In a recent column for the New York Times, the Harvard law professor Laurence H Tribe, an expert in constitutional law, accused Republicans of playing "chicken or, maybe more accurately, Russian roulette" with the US debt.

Tribe went on to outline his theory of how Biden has the authority to raise the ceiling on his own, under the 14th amendment, which says the US national debt "shall not be questioned".

Tribe wrote: "Mr Biden must tell Congress in no uncertain terms – and as soon as possible, before it's too late to avert a financial crisis – that the

United States will pay all its bills as they come due, even if the treasury department must borrow more than Congress has said it can."

Such a step has support from prominent Democrats.

In a letter earlier this week, a group of senators including Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders (an independent who caucuses with the party) said: "Using this authority would allow the United States to continue to pay its bills on-time, without delay, preventing a global economic catastrophe."

But Biden has resisted so far.

On Friday, an unnamed official told the Washington Post the Biden White House still believed "a path to a reasonable bipartisan budget agreement" was possible, "as long as both sides recognise that they won't get everything they want and compromise is necessary".

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Former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi leaves hospital in Milan, Italy. The 86-year-old had been treated for a lung infection linked to leukaemia. Photograph: Matteo Bazzi/EPA

Silvio Berlusconi

Italy: Silvio Berlusconi released from Milan hospital after six weeks

Billionaire former prime minister, 86, had been suffering from a lung infection linked to leukaemia

Agence France-Presse
Fri 19 May 2023 20.59 EDT

Silvio Berlusconi has been discharged from hospital in Milan, declaring “the nightmare” is over, more than six weeks after the former Italian prime minister was admitted with leukaemia and a lung infection.

“Today, after 45 long days, I finally returned home,” the 86-year-old billionaire media mogul said in a statement after leaving the San Raffaele Hospital on Friday.

He described it as “an incredible emotion, a great relief”, adding: “It was a distressing and difficult period, but after the darkness, I won again.”

In a typically impassioned statement, Berlusconi thanked God and all those who had supported him. “I never felt alone,” he said, adding: “The nightmare is over ... Long live life, always!”

The senator, who has been plagued by health issues in recent years, was admitted to the San Raffaele on 5 April and spent the first week and a half in intensive care.

Doctors said he had been admitted for treatment for a lung infection, before revealing for the first time that he had leukaemia.

The Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni, whose governing coalition includes Berlusconi’s rightwing Forza Italia party, led the congratulations for his return home.

“Go Silvio!” she tweeted, adding: “We are waiting for you in the field, to fight many battles together.”

Berlusconi led Italy three times between 1994 and 2011 but has dominated public life for far longer, as a businessman and media magnate and through his ownership of the AC Milan football club.

His career has also been dogged by scandal and legal woes, which for the past decade were focused on proceedings relating to his notorious “Bunga Bunga” sex parties.

Meloni had visited Berlusconi in hospital on Sunday, saying afterwards that he had been “in an excellent mood” and was still working “tirelessly”.

The former premier also received visits from his Forza Italia deputy, foreign minister Antonio Tajani, and coalition ally Matteo Salvini, leader of the anti-immigration League party.

“Welcome home, Great Silvio,” Salvini tweeted, while Tajani added: “We’re all happy you’ve returned home.”

Berlusconi had hoped to be discharged from hospital earlier this month in time for a Forza Italia convention in Milan but ended up addressing delegates in a pre-recorded video address filmed in his hospital room.

Despite remaining president of Forza Italia, Berlusconi is rarely seen in public these days, and his health has long been a concern.

He was in hospital for 11 days for Covid-related pneumonia in September 2020, after contracting the virus while on holiday in Sardinia.

After being admitted again last month, doctors revealed he had “chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia”, a rare type of blood cancer.

The disease, which affects mainly the elderly, starts in blood-forming cells of the bone marrow and goes on to invade the blood.

Berlusconi’s cancer was in a “persistent chronic phase” and had not yet turned into “acute leukaemia”, the doctors said.

In March, Berlusconi was admitted to the same Milan hospital, where he spent four days.

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The case involving Marian Kocner is not yet over, as both the prosecution and the defendants can appeal. Photograph: Jakub Gavlák/EPA

Slovakia

Slovakia: court acquits tycoon in retrial over 2018 killing of journalist and fiancee

Marián Kočner found not guilty of murdering Ján Kuciak, who had written about him in the past, and Martina Kušnírová

AP in Prague
Fri 19 May 2023 12.49 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 13.10 EDT

A court in Slovakia has acquitted for a second time an executive accused of masterminding the 2018 killing of an investigative journalist and his fiancee.

The specialised criminal court in Pezinok, near the capital, Bratislava, which handles Slovakia's most serious cases, ruled on Friday that Marián Kočner

was not guilty of murdering Ján Kuciak, who had written about him in the past, and Martina Kušnírová, both 27.

The crime shocked the country and caused the government to fall.

The court said "it was not proven" that Kočner was the mastermind. Nevertheless, Kočner's associate, Alena Zsuzsova, was convicted over her role in the killings and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

The case is not yet over, as the prosecution and the defendants can appeal.

Prosecutors had requested life imprisonment for both defendants.

The parents of Kuciak and Kušnírová left the courtroom before the reading of the sentence was completed. "There's no logic in it," the journalist's father, Jozef Kuciak, told reporters. "I don't get it at all."

"Of course, we'll appeal," Zlata Kušnírová, Martina's mother said. "It's impossible what happened. It's a shame for justice."

Kuciak was shot in the chest and Kušnírová was shot in the head at their home in the village of Veľká Mača, east of Bratislava, on 21 February 2018.

Kočner allegedly threatened the journalist after publication of a story about his business dealings, prosecutors said. Overall, Kuciak published nine stories about Kočner.

The killings prompted large street protests not seen since the 1989 anti-communist Velvet Revolution in what was then called Czechoslovakia. The ensuing political crisis led to the collapse of a coalition government headed by the hard-right prime minister Robert Fico.

Kuciak had been investigating possible government corruption when he was killed.

It was the second time the Pezinok court had ruled in the case. Originally, it acquitted Kočner in September 2020, saying there was not enough evidence for the convictions. The prosecutors appealed.

Slovakia's supreme court dismissed the acquittal in June 2021, saying the lower court did not properly assess available evidence when it cleared Kočner and Zsuzsova, and ordered a retrial.

Three other defendants were previously convicted and sentenced to stiff prison terms.

One of them, the former soldier Miroslav Marček, pleaded guilty to shooting Kuciak and Kušnírová and was sentenced to 23 years in prison in April 2020. Prosecutors said Kočner paid Marček to carry out the killings.

In the meantime, Kočner was sentenced to 19 years in prison in a separate forgery case while Zsuzsova received 21 years in prison for her role in the killing of a mayor.

Those verdicts are final.

In December 2019, the US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Kočner and six of his businesses for threatening Kuciak.

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The Guardian - Back to homeThe Guardian

Paul Clutterbuck has spent most of the last 12 years in Wellington boarding houses. Photograph: Tess McClure

New Zealand

‘It can be quite Dickensian’: life in New Zealand’s boarding houses

After a fire at Loafers Lodge left at least five dead, attention has turned to Wellington's hostels and the housing crisis they embody

Tess McClure and Charlotte Graham-McLay in Wellington
Fri 19 May 2023 16.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 18.56 EDT

On the street outside the hostel, Chris skirts thin ribbons of police emergency tape, stepping sideways as they snap in the wind. Holding a small bunch of white plastic flowers, he carefully hangs the stems from a metal voltage box. "For the bros," he says. "The ones that didn't make it out."

Looming behind him are the charred walls of Loafers Lodge. Some of his neighbours still lie in the building, their bodies unable to be safely retrieved by police and firefighting crews. Five bodies have now been retrieved, but more may have died – up to 10 people remain unaccounted for after the flames ripped through the 92-room boarding house, collapsing parts of the building and sending residents leaping from the upper story windows.

Chris, 48, had lived there since November 2022. He said smoke alarms were a frequent occurrence – set off as people burned toast or their cooking – so he paid little attention when he first heard the familiar sound ring out on Tuesday evening. A few hours later, he was woken again. This time, he heard yelling.

New Zealand hostel fire survivor Chris hangs a tribute at the scene. Photograph: Tess McClure/The Guardian

“My neighbour’s screaming, ‘Fuck, the building’s on fire!’,” he says. “I opened the door to go out there and have a look, and there’s just black smoke everywhere. You could hear the bros on the other side of the building screaming ‘Fuck, help us!’”

He speaks quickly, shaking his head, his voice sometimes cracking. Two days after the fire hit, the reality is sinking in. “[Earlier] everyone was just on adrenaline – today’s the day that, you know, realisation of what actually happened is kicking in,” he says. “I keep getting emotional. I was trying to hide – hide the tears.”

Taking a seat a little way down the street, Chris stretches his feet out in front of him: they’re pinched and painful. The shoes he’s wearing are two sizes too small, but for now, they’re all he’s been given. He escaped the fire barefoot, with nothing except his phone and a vape in his pocket. “That’s just material things though,” he says. “There’s others that lost their lives.”

In his mind, Chris keeps a tally of those he believes have died: certain neighbours he’s sure didn’t make it out. The building housed a diverse set of people: some elderly, some with disabilities, some placed there by the

criminal justice system, some sent by homelessness agencies, others who were nurses or shift workers at the local hospital. But what united them was one thing – a chronic lack of affordable, high-quality housing in Wellington city. “I’ve read online and on social media saying that, you know, it [the hostel] is a place for the vulnerable,” he says. “I think that is the wrong word. Because sure, most are unemployed, or most of them are elderly – but it doesn’t make us vulnerable. I don’t consider myself a vulnerable person, you know – it’s just at the moment there’s a struggle with housing.”

Chris believes some of his neighbours died in the hostel fire. Photograph: Marty Melville/AFP/Getty Images

‘The elephant in the room’

That struggle was what sent Chris, along with thousands of other New Zealanders, to a long-term stay at places like Loafers Lodge. February figures from the online marketplace TradeMe recorded New Zealand’s capital city as the most expensive place for tenants to live; median weekly rent was $660. The shortage of affordable housing is national: more than 29,000 people are on state housing waitlists, and more than 3,000 families have been placed by the government in “temporary” motel or hostel accommodation – stays that often stretch to months or years. Boarding houses sit at the bottom of the accommodation ladder: offering bare rooms, a

bed, and shared access to facilities. The fire at Loafers lodge has thrown a spotlight on both New Zealand's housing crisis and the network of boarding houses that house those who can't afford places of their own.

"Housing is the elephant in the room: the actual problem behind all of the other problems," Paul Clutterbuck says. "If we can solve the housing problem and accommodation problems, then we solve lots of other problems as well."

Clutterbuck, 50, has spent much of the past 12 years living in Wellington's boarding houses. He wasn't a resident of Loafers Lodge, but has lived in many places like it, converted apartment blocks or old commercial buildings, transformed into packed human warehouses. Clutterbuck has long-term disabilities, including chronic kidney failure that mean he lives with help from a government benefit – a tight income, which leaves most other options for a home out of reach.

Fire and police investigators inspect inside the Loafers Lodge hostel in Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: George Heard/AP

His current home was once a retirement village, now transformed into a private, 70-room boarding house. His tiny room fits a single bed, the floor space largely taken by a stack of boxes of dialysis equipment. A4 paper

notices have been pasted to many of the walls, noting things that are broken or recent rule-breaking: “Lift out of order,” one reads, “This shower out of order,” says another. In the communal kitchen, one has been thickly underlined in felt tip pen: “All elements are to be TURNED OFF AFTER USE … No exceptions – this is a fire hazard”. This morning, the fire alarms went off twice. Paul worries about the possibility of fires, particularly when hooked up to nightly dialysis.

“If someone wanted to destroy the place, I’m just a sitting duck really,” he says.

Still, this is one of the better boarding houses in which he has lived. Over the years, Clutterbuck has spent time in rooms with holes in the walls, rodent and bug infestations, windows that were stuck permanently open. At one property, Clutterbuck left after witnessing a neighbour assaulting his partner.

“Sometimes it can be quite Dickensian,” he says. Boarding houses group together people with varied needs and backgrounds – those with disabilities alongside those released from prison on community sentences, people with chronic mental illness alongside shift workers or deportees. Most of the time, things go fine, Clutterbuck says. But sometimes those mixtures can become toxic.

“We’ve got to start re-thinking that acceptance that these places are not great but they’re the best we’ve got to offer so that’ll do,” says Murray Edridge, the head of the charity Wellington City Mission, which already worked with many residents of Loafers Lodge. “I’m not suggesting that they shouldn’t exist at all, but there should be acceptable levels of standard in them which shouldn’t be the bare minimum.”

He and other advocates have long warned government agencies that many private owners of such accommodations don’t have the resources or training to meet the social needs of residents – and stress can be compounded when people are housed together with little support.

Across the non-burned side of Loafers Lodge building stretches an enormous billboard, advertising one of the city’s highest-profile real estate agencies, and their recent support of a local homelessness charity. The

advertisement showcases the different sides to New Zealand's housing coin. On the one side, years of rising house prices and untaxed capital gains have made the housing market the primary mechanism of wealth accumulation for New Zealanders: housing now accounting for almost 60% of the country's wealth, and has produced enormous, often untaxed sums for many long-term property owners, speculators and investors.

Loafers Lodge after the fire in which at least five people have died. Photograph: Masanori Udagawa/AP

On the other side, a chronic shortage of homes has produced an interwoven crisis of homelessness, poverty, insecure housing and thousands living in emergency, temporary accommodation like motels.

"I think we all know that Wellington is facing a housing crisis. And in the long term, temporary solutions, such as that behind us are just not acceptable solutions moving forward," says mayor Tory Whanau, at a press conference outside the cordon. Asked if the building behind her should have been a permanent home for anyone, her answer is "No."

"I think everyone deserves a more long-term, warm, dry home," she says. "I don't see that as a long-term solution for anyone."

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Colombian soldier provides security during a tribute for victims killed in the old crematorium ovens of Juan Frio, Norte de Santander, Colombia. Photograph: Mario Caicedo/EPA

Colombia

Colombian elite backed death squads, former paramilitary commander says

Salvatore Mancuso testified to peace tribunal that rightwing AUC worked hand in glove with business, military and political elite

Luke Taylor in Bogotá
Fri 19 May 2023 14.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 14.20 EDT

A notorious former commander of Colombia's largest paramilitary group has revealed new details of how rightwing death squads worked side by side with the country's business, military and political elite to sow terror in the countryside and wipe out leftwing insurgencies.

Salvatore Mancuso told Colombia's peace tribunal this week that state institutions were not only complicit in the expansion of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) but actively coordinated with them, giving orders to wipe out anyone suspected of aligning with communist rebels.

"This phenomenon of paramilitarism came from the state," Mancuso told the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) on a video link from the US where he was extradited on drugs charges in 2008.

Mancuso was released from prison in 2020 and is seeking a reduced sentence from Colombia's transitional justice system in exchange for divulging the human rights atrocities committed by the AUC – a key player in a brutal, six-decade-long conflict which has left 450,000 dead and millions displaced.

The AUC formed in the Córdoba region in the north of the country to protect landowners from guerrillas but rapidly expanded into one of the world's biggest drug cartels. Most of its 20,000 combatants laid down their weapons in 2004 as part of a controversial peace process.

Salvatore Mancuso, former commander of the right-wing paramilitary group AUC, seen on screen during during ceremony where he apologised for his

crimes. Photograph: Schneyder Mendoza/AFP/Getty Images

Mancuso, who was the AUC's second in command, has admitted to orchestrating thousands of crimes and some of the darkest chapters in Colombian conflict – including massacres of unarmed civilians, torture and sexual violence.

In sessions lasting up to eight hours the former warlord this week gave grisly accounts of how the militia acted as an arm of the Colombian state to silence the political opposition and take on the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) guerrillas.

Mancuso said officials gave the AUC lists of individuals and communities with suspected ties to the communist rebels so they could intimidate, torture and assassinate them without consideration for the rules of war.

"Mancuso's narrative was that the military was not strong enough to combat the guerrillas themselves and needed an extrajudicial force in order to carry out the scorched-earth tactics that they themselves could not," says Elizabeth Dickinson, senior analyst for Colombia at International Crisis Group.

There was "enormous pressure" from the state to wipe targets out, Mancuso said. Those targets include Gustavo Petro, then a leftwing congressman and now the country's president.

Members of United Self-Defense Forces (AUC) brandish automatic assault weapons during a training session in a rural area of Puerto Asis, Putumayo province, in 2000. Photograph: Reuters

Mancuso corroborated previous accusations that the army gave the order for another notorious killing, the 1998 assassination of Jaime Garzón, a beloved TV comedian and political activist.

"Anyone who was accused was eliminated. This is a pattern we learned hand in hand with the institutions of the state," he said.

The AUC deeply infiltrated Colombian politics and in 2004 Mancuso was even invited to speak to congress to a standing ovation.

One of Mancuso's most shocking new allegations was that the then president, Álvaro Uribe, removed the security unit for Eudaldo Díaz , a local mayor in the town of El Roble, so the AUC could torture and kill him in 2003.

Mancuso also alleged that Francisco Santos, then vice-president, requested that he form a new unit around Bogotá to prevent leftwing rebels from advancing on the capital.

Uribe and Santos have both denied Mancuso's allegations.

Mancuso alleged that hundreds of businesses – including banana companies and multinationals such as Coca-Cola and Drummond – helped fund the AUC in the 1990s as it grew from a community of vigilantes into a national terror machine, while military generals trained and supplied the AUC commanders with helicopters and uniforms. Coca-Cola and Drummond have previously denied the allegations.

A former combatant of the AUC shows his tattoos during the first National Meeting of AUC ex-combatants in Puerto Boyacá, on 6 May. Photograph: Raúl Arboleda/AFP/Getty Images

"Mancuso's testimony confirms that paramilitarism was not only an anti-subversive strategy but an economic one to make business leaders rich, to elect corrupt politicians in the highest ranks of the state and to spy on and intimidate politicians, lawyers and journalists," says Julián Martínez, author of Chuzadas, a book documenting how the Colombian state spied on judges, journalists and the political opposition.

The army often planned their offensives together with paramilitaries so they could quash guerrilla fronts in pincer manoeuvres, Mancuso said.

"The territories in guerrilla areas were emptied," he said.

When the number of civilian casualties began to rack up Mancuso says the attorney general's office alerted the AUC ahead of investigations so they could burn the bodies.

Experts say Mancuso's accounts advance the JEP's mission to untangle the truth of Colombia's conflict and offer reparation to victims.

The warlord will now have 30 days to provide evidence to support his claims, which could spark new investigations into some of Colombia's most powerful political figures.

Mancuso's testimony is vital to understand not just the past but the present as rightwing drug-trafficking organisations such as the Gulf Clan, which was founded by former AUC members who refused to disarm and continues to terrorise the countryside, picking off community leaders who oppose them.

"These same acts continue to be committed today, not in the name of the United Self-Defense Forces, but of the Gulf Clan and they too have extensive links with the state," Martínez says.

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Headlines friday 19 may 2023

- **Live Russia-Ukraine war: Zelenskiy to attend G7 in person as leaders prepare new sanctions**
- **Rishi Sunak ‘We’re not going away’: PM arrives for G7 as UK unveils new Russia sanctions**
- **G7 summit Leaders prepare new Russia sanctions as Zelenskiy to attend Japan summit in person**
- **Ben Wallace Rishi Sunak talks up defence secretary as next Nato secretary general**

Ukraine war liveUkraine

Russia-Ukraine war: Zelenskiy welcomes ‘historic’ Biden decision to back fighter pilot training; US issues more Russian sanctions – as it happened

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Rishi Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty (both in centre), meet the Japanese PM, Fumio Kishida, and his wife, Yuko, at the Peace Memorial Park. Photograph: Jacques Witt/AFP/Getty Images

Rishi Sunak

‘We’re not going away’: Rishi Sunak arrives at G7 announcing Russia sanctions

Putin ‘can’t outlast us’ says PM, who will use Hiroshima summit to push countries like Brazil and India to do more for Ukraine

Rowena Mason in Hiroshima
Fri 19 May 2023 03.08 EDTFirst published on Thu 18 May 2023 17.30 EDT

Rishi Sunak has warned Vladimir Putin that western leaders are “not going away” as they gathered at the G7 summit in Japan, with the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, preparing to fly in to meet them.

At a teahouse in Shukkeien garden in Hiroshima on Friday, the prime minister told Sky News: “Russia needs to know that we and other countries remain steadfast in our resolve to support Ukraine, not just in the here and now with the resources it needs to protect itself, but for the long term as well.”

He told ITV: “They can’t just outlast us in this conflict. One of the common topics of conversation I’ll be having and have been having with my fellow leaders is about the longer-term security agreements that we put in place in Ukraine, to deter future Russian aggression.”

He said the message from G7 leaders to Vladimir Putin was: “We’re not going away.”

Zelenskiy is expected to arrive at the summit for an intensive round of diplomacy over the weekend. With Russia’s war against Ukraine now in its second year, Sunak has said his main mission at the G7 is to shore up support for Kyiv, especially among countries maintaining a broadly neutral stance, such as India.

The UK was joined by other G7 nations including the US in unveiling a swathe of new sanctions against Russia.

Flying into Hiroshima for the three-day gathering of world leaders – and becoming the first British prime minister to visit the city destroyed by a US atomic bomb in 1945 – Sunak announced a UK ban on imports of Russian diamonds and Russian-origin copper, nickel and aluminium, with other G7 members expected to follow suit.

Seeking to push his credentials on the global stage after a bruising few weeks of domestic politics, Sunak also set out sanctions targeting another 86 individuals and firms linked to Putin, taking the total UK sanctions list to more than 1,500.

Those newly sanctioned are described as being from the Russian president’s “military industrial complex”, as well as some who are involved in key economic areas including energy, metals and shipping.

The US had also promised fresh sanctions aimed at disrupting Russia's ability to get materials it needs for the battlefield, closing loopholes used to evade sanctions, further reducing international reliance on Russian energy, and narrowing Moscow's access to the international financial system, an official told the Reuters news agency.

US sanctions would "cut off roughly 70 entities from Russia, and other countries, from receiving US exports by adding them to the commerce blacklist. And there will be upwards of 300 new sanctions against individuals, entities, vessels and aircraft," the official added.

A key task for Sunak will be to put pressure on leaders who have remained more neutral over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, notably the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi.

Before landing in Hiroshima along with his wife, Akshata Murty, her first attendance on an official No 10 trip, Sunak said he hoped to stress the extent of Russian war crimes to leaders from non-G7 nations including Modi and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the Brazilian president.

"One thing we have to keep doing is talking to countries like India and also Brazil. That is going to be in that second part of the summit which is a good thing," Sunak said.

"One of my three things is talking to countries around the world and making sure they realise what is going on, the war crimes Russia is committing inside Ukraine and why everyone should support bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

"That's what President Zelenskiy wants, that's what we want, and putting pressure on Russia to withdraw their forces so we can get to that outcome, that's the consistent message that I will be taking to countries all around the world."

Sunak and Modi will meet but it is not yet confirmed that this will be a formal bilateral meeting.

Given the UK imposed punishing tariffs of 35% on diamonds and metals from Russia last year, massively reducing trade, the outright ban could prove largely symbolic unless it takes place in conjunction with other countries.

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The EU has previously stopped short of banning diamonds owing to the importance of the sector to Antwerp in Belgium. It is expected to instead call for better tracing technology for Russian diamonds, a commodity that earned Russia €4.5bn (£3.9bn) in 2021.

Iron, steel, gas, oil and coal imports to the UK from Russia are already banned.

As well as discussing Ukraine, the assembled world leaders, among them the US president, Joe Biden, will hold talks on Indo-Pacific security in light of China's threat to Taiwan, as well as nuclear disarmament, a key subject for Fumio Kishida, the Japanese prime minister, who is hosting the summit in the first city ever hit with an atomic bomb.

The leaders are expected to visit Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Museum on Saturday. It details the destruction on 6 August 1945, which led to 140,000 deaths by the end of that year.

G7 leaders lay wreaths and plant trees at Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima – video

In comments released before the summit, Sunak explicitly linked Hiroshima's past with Russia's actions in Ukraine. "For the sake of global peace and security, we must show that brutal violence and coercion does not reap rewards," he said.

"As today's sanctions announcements demonstrate, the G7 remains unified in the face of the threat from Russia and steadfast in our support for Ukraine. We are meeting today in Hiroshima, a city that exemplifies both the horrors of war and the dividends of peace."

The summit, which follows Sunak's address to the Council of Europe summit in Reykjavik, is a chance for the prime minister to look beyond domestic woes following the Conservatives' terrible results in this month's local elections, in which the party exceeded even its deliberately gloomy pre-poll forecast of 1,000 losses.

Even heading to the G7, however, he has not been immune, facing criticism for being out of touch after telling reporters on the flight to Japan that people's household incomes were "hugely outperforming" expectations and there were "lots of signs that things are moving in the right direction" with the economy.

Sunak met Kishida for dinner on Thursday night after signing a defence pact agreeing to consult each other on major military decisions. The summit is set to discuss the Chinese threat towards Taiwan, amid increasing belligerence from Beijing since the invasion of Ukraine.

The prime minister also held a business reception for UK and Japanese companies, with Sunak claiming about £18bn of investment had been pledged.

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From left: Rishi Sunak, Ursula von der Leyen, Justin Trudeau, Joe Biden, and Fumio Kishida in Hiroshima, Japan. Photograph: Reuters

G7

G7 prepares new Russia sanctions as Zelenskiy to attend summit in person

Ukrainian president to take part in Hiroshima talks on Sunday as leaders target exports to Russia

- Follow G7 summit updates – live

Justin McCurry in Hiroshima
Fri 19 May 2023 08.21 EDTFirst published on Thu 18 May 2023 19.53 EDT

The G7 has unveiled further sanctions targeting Russia over its war against Ukraine, as Volodymyr Zelenskiy prepared to attend the Hiroshima summit in person.

“Our support for Ukraine will not waver,” the G7 leaders said in a statement on Friday, vowing “to stand together against Russia’s illegal, unjustifiable, and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine”.

“Russia started this war and can end this war,” they said.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was top of the agenda as G7 leaders gathered in Hiroshima, with Friday’s statement designed to underscore their resolve to support Ukraine and put pressure on Moscow.

The statement said: “Fifteen months of Russian aggression has cost thousands of lives, inflicted immense suffering on the people of Ukraine, and imperilled access to food and energy for many of the world’s most vulnerable people.

“We urge Russia to stop its ongoing aggression and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its troops and military equipment from the entire internationally recognised territory of Ukraine.”

The G7 leaders said they were “renewing our commitment to provide the financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support Ukraine requires for as long as it takes. We are imposing further sanctions and measures to increase the costs to Russia and those who are supporting its war effort.”

The sanctions are designed to disrupt the Kremlin’s ability to get the materials it needs for the battlefield, close loopholes used to evade sanctions, further reduce international reliance on Russian energy, and narrow Moscow’s access to the international financial system.

The G7 countries reiterated their call on other countries to immediately stop providing material support to Russia’s aggression, “or face severe costs”.

While the leaders evaded a full commitment to a special international tribunal to try Putin for a so-called “leadership crime”, they did signal that Russia’s sovereign assets in G7 jurisdictions “will remain immobilised until Russia pays for the damage it has caused to Ukraine”.

Zelenskiy will reportedly arrive in Hiroshima on Saturday from Saudi Arabia, where he will attend the Arab League summit, and take part in talks the following day.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's national security and defence council, said: "We were sure that our president would be where Ukraine needed him, in any part of the world, to solve the issue of stability of our country. Very important things will be decided there and therefore the presence of our president … is absolutely essential in order to defend our interests."

G7 leaders visit the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima Photograph: Reuters

The Ukrainian president recently travelled to Italy, Germany, France and Britain as he stepped up calls for more international support before a planned counteroffensive.

"It's important for the G7 leaders to hear directly from them about conditions on the ground," John Kirby, the White House national security spokesperson, told reporters in Hiroshima. "He was always supposed to participate. It's certainly that participation in whatever form it takes shows that the G7 takes seriously our mutual commitments to Ukraine's self-defence."

US sanctions would “cut off roughly 70 entities from Russia, and other countries, from receiving US exports by adding them to the commerce blacklist. And there will be upwards of 300 new sanctions against individuals, entities, vessels and aircraft,” a US official said.

The US and its allies, including the EU and the UK, have continued to ratchet up sanctions and export control pressure on Russia since the invasion began in February 2022.

While there was unanimity on Ukraine, disagreements on how to address China’s growing global influence could overshadow the summit, with a senior French official saying the three-day meeting should not turn into an “anti-Chinese G7”.

On Friday, Charles Michel, the European Council president, said it was in the EU’s interest to maintain “stable and constructive” cooperation with China, adding that the bloc would call on China to step up pressure on Russia to end its military aggression in Ukraine.

G7 leaders were expected to issue a statement with a section specific to China, listing issues that included “economic coercion and other behaviour”, a US official said.

Discussions will focus on how to warn the world’s second-biggest economy against what the G7 leaders see as its threat to global supply chains and economic security without alienating a powerful and important trade partner.

The EU wanted to “de-risk to reduce over-dependencies and diversify to address unfair practices”, Michel said. “Stable and constructive relations with China is in our mutual interest. Given its role in the international community and the size of its economy, China has a special responsibility in the world and it has to play by international rules.”

Rishi Sunak and his wife, Akshata Murty, are welcomed by Fumio and Yuko Kishida. Photograph: Franck Robichon/EPA

In the lead-up to the summit, Rishi Sunak announced a UK ban on imports of Russian-origin copper, nickel and aluminium, with other G7 members expected to follow suit. The British prime minister also set out sanctions targeting another 86 individuals and companies linked to Vladimir Putin, taking the total UK sanctions list to more than 1,500.

The UK will also ban the import of Russian diamonds – a ban that could prove largely symbolic unless it takes place in conjunction with other countries, as Britain has already imposed punishing tariffs of 35% on diamonds and metals from Russia.

On Thursday, an EU official said Russia's multibillion-dollar diamond industry was a target for discussion. "We believe we need to limit exports from Russian trade in this sector," the official said, adding that Indian involvement would be crucial to making any new measures work. India accounts for a large portion of the world's trade in rough diamonds.

"We would like to engage in a dialogue with them, because the diamond industry is quite important in India," the official said.

The Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, is among several leaders from leading developing economies invited to the G7 summit as it tries to win over sceptical nations to its way of thinking on both Moscow's war and China's increasing sway in the world.

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

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Ben Wallace has long been tipped as a contender for the Nato role due to his role in supporting Ukraine. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

Ben Wallace

Rishi Sunak talks up Ben Wallace as next Nato secretary general

PM praises 'widely respected' defence secretary who has stated his interest in succeeding Jens Stoltenberg

- **UK politics live – latest updates**

Rowena Mason in Hiroshima
Fri 19 May 2023 04.39 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 12.02 EDT

Rishi Sunak has talked up Ben Wallace in his effort to become the next Nato secretary general, after the defence secretary confirmed his interest in the job.

The prime minister praised Wallace as “widely respected” among his international counterparts when asked about his cabinet minister touting himself to succeed Jens Stoltenberg next year.

Wallace has long been tipped as a contender owing to his role in supporting Ukraine after Russia’s invasion, despite the secretary general job often going to more senior politicians such as former prime ministers.

The defence secretary has never previously said outright that he would like the job, but told the German news agency dpa on Thursday: “I’ve always said it would be a good job. That’s a job I’d like. But I’m also loving the job I do now.”

He said secretary general of the transatlantic alliance “is a fantastic job and Nato is an incredibly important part of all our securities”.

He added: “But it’s not for me to decide. It’s for all the other allies.”

Asked by ITV whether he would support Wallace, Sunak did not give his formal backing but said he knew the defence secretary was “widely respected by his peers for the role that he has played”.

He added: “He’s focused right now on supporting Ukraine. He’s doing a great job of that.”

Stoltenberg has led Nato for nearly a decade and will not seek another term.

The job is usually decided behind the scenes. The US has yet to indicate its preferred candidate but there have been reports that France would prefer someone from the EU. Some other possible contenders include Mark Rutte, the Dutch prime minister; Chrystia Freeland, the deputy prime minister of Canada; and Kaja Kallas, Estonia’s prime minister.

If Wallace were to get the job, it would trigger a byelection in his seat of Wyre and Preston North. This would be a headache for Sunak but would probably be more than compensated for by the increase in the UK’s clout on the international stage.

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2023.05.19 - Spotlight

- Lambeth Council tenants ‘in precarious position’ after 350% service charge rise
- Corleone The Sicilian town trying to break free of its mobster past
- ‘An irresistible mix of art and genitals’ Caligula finally comes to Cannes
- You be the judge Should my girlfriend stop monitoring me at the gym?

Peter Shapcott is one of an estimated 480,000 households nationwide occupying a flat where the heating and hot water come from a central boiler. Photograph: Jon Clements

Social housing

Lambeth council tenants ‘in precarious position’ after 350% service charge rise

Price hikes of up to £300 a month for communal heating and hot water driven by rapid increase in energy costs

- UK households with communal heating facing 350% rise in energy costs

Sarah Marsh
@sloumarsh
Fri 19 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 09.11 EDT

Peter Shapcott is sitting in his council flat in Brixton, south London. As he examines the bills that have come out of his bank account, he hovers his computer mouse over a screen showing how much money is left. The 67-year-old, who is terminally ill, has been paying his rent through credit in his account from overpaid water bills. He has £300 left, and now he must fund a steep hike in the service charge.

From April, his weekly payments for rent and communal services such as heating, hot water and maintenance have risen from £153 to £214, leaving him scrabbling to find an extra £61 a week. The spike is being driven by a big increase in energy costs.

Shapcott is one of an estimated 480,000 households nationwide occupying a flat where the heating and hot water come from a central boiler. Many buildings served by one of these heat networks are council tower blocks, which house some of the lowest-income families in the country.

Their energy is bought in advance, so the rise in gas prices last autumn after the invasion of Ukraine is only filtering through to bills this financial year. And the £400 given to every household to cushion the increase last winter is not on the table for next winter.

Shapcott lives in Southwyck House, a Lambeth council block with a communal boiler. The heating charge for his two-bedroom flat is rising from about £11 to £37 a week – a 236% increase. Hot water will go from £3.57 to £12.60 a week. He receives housing benefit, but this doesn't cover heating and hot water. The rest of the extra money will have to come from his pension.

About 3,500 people in Lambeth-run estates are in the same position. Many are facing service charge increases of between £240 and £300 a month, which is equivalent to about a 350% rise. The Labour-controlled council's advice to those unable or unwilling to pay, in a letter sent out to residents in March setting out the new charges, was to "end your tenancy". The council has apologised for the wording.

Shapcott, 67, has a longstanding affection for the area, having lived in his flat for 40 years. He was given a home by Lambeth when he was ill with HIV.

For that reason, the former charity worker does not "like to complain too much" about the council. He says the overall monthly rent is reasonable given the property's size. But finances are tight and he is helped by a local food pantry.

Shapcott points to his screen: "You can see the credit [in his account] started shooting down when they put the price up … And there we go. When you are on benefits, you are in a precarious position."

Even going out to get a cup of coffee in a local cafe has become impossible. "You have to think twice about things like that," he says.

One of Shapcott's neighbours, living on the ground floor of Southwyck House, who asked not to be named as she used to work for the council,

believes the price rises are unaffordable. The 74-year-old gets a pension, which just about covers bills, and has been visiting the food pantry to help with the cost of living.

“The rise monthly is big; some things have almost doubled. On top of that phone bills have gone up,” she says. “We don’t know why service charge has risen by so much. You’re just presented with a massive bill. For someone like me who’s now retired, it’s really difficult. I’ve got a steady pension that only goes up a few pounds.”

Scott Ainslie, a Green party councillor, says many residents are worried. “Everyone anticipated an increase due to cost of living and fuel prices. Residents in the ward budgeted for a 100% or even, in the worst-case scenario, a 200% rise, but 350% is not manageable.

“Lambeth did not prepare people in any way at all and it has shocked them.”

In a statement, Lambeth council said the war in Ukraine had driven global energy prices “to record levels”, adding: “Last year the council’s long-term contracts meant we were able to keep costs low for residents, compared to the huge increases in prices for people with private heating. Unfortunately, these contracts are now over, and costs have increased in line with the bills that most people in the country have faced in the last year.”

It said it has been directing £8m in financial aid to those who need support the most and was adding a further £10m, some of which was being set aside for council tenants.

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Corleone: the Sicilian town trying to break free of its mobster past

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Malcolm McDowell as Caligula in the 1979 film of the same name. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

Movies

‘An irresistible mix of art and genitals’: Caligula finally comes to Cannes

Described by its screenwriter, Gore Vidal, as ‘easily one of the worst films ever made’, Caligula has been re-edited by Thomas Negovan and received its premiere this week. Here, he explains his decision to revisit the swords-and-sandals shockfest

Catherine Bray
Fri 19 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 04.06 EDT

As quixotic quests go, it’s a doozy: take 96 hours of raw footage filmed during one of the craziest and most tumultuous shoots in movie history and attempt to create a new version of the film described by Variety on release in 1979 as “a moral Holocaust”.

Step forward Thomas Negovan: the man who rescued Caligula. “There were definitely a lot of points in the last three years where I thought I was crazy,” he says. “I thought: ‘Is anyone going to care about this?’” But, in fact one of the most important entities in the industry, the Cannes film festival, cared very much, booking the new-and-possibly-improved version a premiere in its prestigious Cannes Classics strand, a section of the festival generally dedicated to celebrating the art of cinema at its finest.

“And so all of a sudden, I thought: ‘OK, all the therapy bills are worth it,’” says Negovan.

Screened for the first time on Wednesday, the 2023 version is billed as Caligula: The Ultimate Cut, and Negovan is keen to point out that, “The thing that’s bizarrely unique about it is it’s almost like the version that was released in 1979 is the deviant version. Ours is closer to what was originally intended. Even the word restoration … I don’t know what word works, but it isn’t a restoration. I don’t know what to call it.”

Helen Mirren as Caesonia. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

A quick recap for the uninitiated: involving more drama than every season of Love Island combined, the 1979 swords-and-sandals shockfest Caligula has long been infamous as one of cinema's most disastrous productions, its very title a byword for what can happen when a creative project spins out of control. Starring Malcolm McDowell, Helen Mirren, John Gielgud and Peter O'Toole plus a busload of porn stars, the lurid epic about the life of the mad Roman emperor Caligula, was a noble attempt to create the most explicit prestige picture in the history of the moving image.

An anonymous crew member described it as "not a shoot, it's the Fourth Reich. Caligula Uber Alles". The finished film itself was hardly less chaotic. With finance put together by Penthouse founder Bob Guccione, a script by the leftwing intellectual Gore Vidal, and Tinto Brass, a cult Italian film-maker famed for his erotic movies, in the director's chair, perhaps on paper the film had a certain sort of bold logic to it. Theoretically, these three brought to the table the unique combination of hedonism, intellect and wildcard creativity that the decadent, explicit, historical epic would need. What could possibly go wrong?

Everything, as it turned out, starting with a rocky development period during which Vidal fell out with everyone over changes to the script, and essentially

disowned the film. Vidal would eventually call Caligula “easily one of the worst films ever made”, which is quite the review to get from its screenwriter. Of course, the film didn’t bear much resemblance to the screenplay Vidal wrote – as director Brass announced airily during production, “What we’re shooting right now is definitely not Gore Vidal’s script.” Producer Guccione also wasn’t impressed and wasn’t shy about saying so: “I’ve made the worst mistake in my life asking Tinto Brass to direct the film.”

For Negovan, the biggest tragedy of the original film is that the actors were left high and dry when they stepped on set and again when the film was assembled in a messy and contentious edit. Mirren, whose character gives birth in stirrups that leave nothing to the imagination (on stage in front of an audience), called the experience “an irresistible mix of art and genitals” akin to going into Dante’s Inferno.

Negovan believes that the original can fairly be described as “the clickbait edit” – in the sense that all the most extreme line-readings were favoured over subtler moments, which is fun in the moment, but doesn’t help the actors. His north star throughout the project was McDowell’s performance, which he felt was particularly undersold by the original cut. “Like, of course, Clockwork Orange is brilliant. But it’s not the same range that he has in Caligula. I feel like this is the best performance that Malcolm ever gave.”

‘Caligula has an undeniable power to it’ ... Photograph: Photo 12/Alamy

There is something moving about Negovan’s quest to honour McDowell’s performance. There’s not much the recut can do about the script and iffy camerawork, which are all part of the charm. But Negovan has unearthed a much clearer sense of a character arc, from Caligula as wary young man genuflecting to the mad emperor Tiberius (Peter O’Toole, on wonderful form), to a joyful freshly minted tyrant, through to the increasing cruelty and disintegration of his reason as he is driven mad by power. Modern audiences, attuned to reality television and the way that an unfavourable edit can create an entirely different version of someone’s personality, are well-positioned to be more sensitive to the effect that the “clickbait” choices in the original edit has on the film as a whole.

Which is not to say that this isn’t the film fans know and love. Caligula’s strengths – the elaborate sets (particularly the head-chopping machine), the OTT costumes, the beautiful way that it is lit – are still present and correct. As are the multiple orgies, the infamous fisting scene, the copious nudity and the genuine shock of some of the violence. At the Cannes premiere of the new version, there were some walkouts following the scene where Caligula rapes both bride and bridegroom at a wedding; anyone expecting a purely silly cult movie may be surprised at how dark and upsetting some of it is – and always has been.

Caligula has an undeniable power to it, as an object as much as a film – it is a fiction feature and a documentary of a particular place, time and confluence of different creative energies, and this new version is a compelling testament to that.

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Illustration: Joren Joshua/The Guardian

You be the judgeRelationships

You be the judge: should my girlfriend stop monitoring me at the gym?

Janae thinks Jenny is too critical of her workout routine. Jenny thinks Janae should get off her phone. You decide who needs to step it up

- Find out how to get a disagreement settled or become a You be the judge juror

Interviews by Georgina Lawton
@georginalawton
Fri 19 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 21.21 EDT

The prosecution: Janae

> *Nothing I do at the gym is good enough for my fitness-fanatic girlfriend and it's making me feel inadequate*

My girlfriend, Jenny, and I go to the gym together, and she's constantly judging me while I'm working out. She moans at me and says: "All you do is go on your phone." But I'm doing light exercises and chill workouts, whereas she goes hard every time with her high-interval training.

I'm not sure what her problem is; it's not like I'm making her run slower by being on my phone. She often has a go at me and questions why I go with her. I say: "At least I'm bloody here."

We go five times a week, though if it was up to me I'd probably only go twice. I don't push hard every time, but I think that's normal – and I can't believe that me going five times a week isn't good enough for Jenny. She makes out that I'm lazy.

> She will wake up early, do yoga, go for a run and then go to the gym – it's unreal

Guys, including bodybuilders, come up to me in the gym and say: "Your girlfriend motivates me to go harder." She loves that. Sometimes I try to join in with Jenny's hardcore workouts, but she never praises me when I do. When I work out in a more chilled way, or I'm on my phone, she'll come over and drop a snarky one-liner like, "Ha! Classic!", then walk off. I find that triggering and we've had fights in the gym before. I hate it when she comes up behind me and watches what I'm doing on my phone, before making a comment. It's like she's spying. The gym should be a place for me to unwind, too.

Jenny prioritises the gym over everything. We've been together for a year and she's always been like this. She will wake up early, do yoga, go for a run, then go to the gym. It's unreal.

She wants a fitness-fanatic girlfriend, and I feel inadequate next to her at times. I'll suggest going to grab a coffee or meeting people in the pub and she'll make excuses, like "I don't feel well." I'll reply: "Oh, so no gym then?" But she'll still go. She needs to change tack or I'll stop going.

The defence: Jenny

> *I like to be in and out in an hour, but Janae wastes so much time*

I love going to the gym, but since I've been with Janae I've made sacrifices when it comes to how I work out. The gym is my happy place, somewhere I

can just put headphones in and be stress-free. Working out makes me feel better about myself.

Janae also goes to the gym, but not in the same way as me. She comes to the gym to gossip with her friends, or waste time watching videos on her phone. I used to go to the gym at 7am, but Janae wants to go in the middle of the day or late at night. I prefer to get my exercise out of the way, and to relax in the evenings. Janae prefers to wake up late, have a coffee and go to the gym at 2pm. I think that is wasting the whole day, but I'm in a relationship with her so I compromise.

> It's not just me who thinks that Janae's behaviour is ridiculous. She is known for wasting time

Sometimes, before we head out, Janae will say she doesn't want to go, and I have to motivate her into getting there. I find that annoying. And when we get to the gym, Janae is often on her phone the whole time. I'll offer to work out with her, but she'll say she wants to do her own thing. But I'll look over later and she's not doing much.

I like to be in and out of the gym in an hour, but Janae wants to stay for two hours. I'll be ready to leave and she'll say: "Oh, can we stay longer, I haven't worked out that much."

I'll say: "Of course you haven't, that's because you've been scrolling on your phone." It's not just me who thinks that Janae's behaviour is ridiculous. She is known for wasting time. The personal trainers at the gym recognise us and often come over and ask: "Are you actually going to do anything today?"

Janae needs to get serious when she's with me. We are both fit, healthy and toned. I am slightly obsessed with the gym – I just think that if you're there you may as well be fully there and workout, rather than doing nothing. Why waste your time?

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Jenny leave Janae to her own workout routine?

Reading between the lines, I suspect Jenny has some deep-rooted insecurities that get triggered whenever she sees Janae going at a different pace. Insinuating that Janae is lazy is unhelpful: why doesn't Jenny just go to the gym alone if it bothers her that much?
Tim, 41

Jenny is not guilty. The two of them have different approaches to the gym, so why not go separately? I understand they want to spend time with each other but it is making the experience less enjoyable for both of them.
Rachel, 37

It's one thing to go to the gym together, another to try to force your partner to work out the same way you do. Jenny talks about compromise, but it sounds more like she views it as a sacrifice. Maybe you should let each other just get on with it, or even not work out together at all. These kind of judgmental remarks never foster a healthy relationship.
Lou, 28

Jenny should go to the gym when it suits her and do her own workout rather than imposing her habits on Janae. If Jenny doesn't stop being so judgmental it will create further resentment and undermine their relationship.
Federico, 35

Jenny should stop making snide remarks. She has, however, made personal sacrifices so that they can go to the gym together. Janae is getting her endorphins from her phone, not from working out. So Janae should get off her phone or they should go separately.
Sam, 30

Now you be the judge

In our online poll below, tell us: should Jenny leave Janae to her own workout routine?

The poll closes at 9am GMT on Thursday 25 May

Last week’s result

We asked if it’s OK for Raoul to take Omar’s favourite cafe table.

24% of you said yes – Raoul is guilty

76% of you said no – Raoul is innocent

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2023.05.19 - Opinion

- Loyalty has long been the Tories' secret weapon. Without it, Sunak stands no chance
- Can we call time on the 'doesband' doing 'daddy day care'? Fathers are way past that
- Did Harry and Meghan exaggerate their 'catastrophic' chase? It's complicated
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‘Sunak as prime minister must face the toughest struggle of any since the second world war.’ Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

OpinionConservatives

Loyalty has long been the Tories’ secret weapon. Without it, Sunak stands no chance

Simon Jenkins

As rebel rightwing Tories jockeyed for position this week, they tore up any remaining hopes of a Conservative election victory

Fri 19 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 08.28 EDT

I once pondered a career in politics but an elder statesman strongly advised me against it. I asked why. Because, he said, you are too interested in politics. Stick to journalism. A political career was not about politics, but about loyalty.

Never a truer word was spoken. As the tottering frame of Britain's Tory party heads for collapse at the end of this parliament, it is clearly suffering death throes. Loyalty, long that party's "secret weapon", has deserted it. With an awesome electoral ordeal ahead, its leader Rishi Sunak had to watch colleagues and backbenchers alike attend a rally of an ultra-conservative US sect to discuss what Tories really believe, 13 years after they have supposedly been practising it.

This week's National Conservatism conference, held at the Emmanuel Centre in central London, was blatantly a first run of a leadership contest presumed to follow next year's general election. Speaking were the

shameless home secretary, Suella Braverman, Jacob Rees-Mogg and Lord Frost among other not so closet rebels. The Tories have found their own Tribune group.

NatCon: the most memorable moments from the rightwing conference – video

For senior figures in the party to publicise their impending defeat is bizarre. Throughout history, the Conservatives have faced the nation with a united front. Any leader seen as likely to lose was ditched, such as Harold Macmillan or Margaret Thatcher. Or they were supported with blind faith, like Edward Heath and John Major. When, under David Cameron, Brexit was the issue of the day, antagonists buckled under or left the party for Ukip.

The leaderships of Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss destroyed this tradition of loyalty. Tory leaders would once have been longstanding friends. They would have socialised together and known each other's strengths and weaknesses. An informal protocol would have guarded their confidentiality and commitment to each other. Only of Thatcher was this perhaps not true, but she carefully kept her dissident "wets" within her tent. John Major too had his "bastards" but he faced them down and won their public support.

Sunak as prime minister must face the toughest struggle of any since the second world war. He has inherited a nation stumbling out of a pandemic in worse shape than any in Europe. Its economy is ailing, its cost of living soaring and every public service is in disarray. The nation's favourite state enterprise, the NHS, is in some respects facing collapse. As for the Tories' greatest achievement in a generation, Brexit, it is gradually emerging as a serious failure, its unique selling point, lower immigration, gone into reverse. On planet Sunak, no day is a good news day.

After Johnson's massacre of the talents, the party was left bereft of able candidates to succeed him. The cabinet is composed of ministers of whom most would never formerly have rated any government job. Only Michael Gove would have attained cabinet rank in a normal government. Sunak himself was a mere junior minister four years before entering Downing Street. He has had to learn on the job.

Michael Gove, levelling up minister, speaks at the National Conservatism conference in London. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Nonetheless he has emerged as a competent, conscientious and, even at times, cheerful leader. Labour's Keir Starmer has seemed uncomfortable trying to be rude to him at the dispatch box. Indeed, the chief accusation levelled at him is his loyalty to his former leaders. He must answer for all the evils of "long Johnson", not to mention long Cameron, May and Truss.

The prime minister's greatest handicap is the lack of an experienced team around him. Lacking experience himself, he is devoid of staff seasoned in crisis management. Sunak lacks the cabal of old friends and associates on whom leaders such as Thatcher and Tony Blair relied and with whom they could relax. The 44-year-old cabinet secretary Simon Case appears to lack the confidence of his fellow departmental chiefs. There is no one with the clout of Thatcher's Charles Powell, Blair's Alastair Campbell or even Johnson's Dominic Cummings. However misguided may be the clout, it helps absorb pressure and negotiate advice.

Worst of all, Sunak has had no time: no time to weed his cabinet of duds and no time to resolve legacy nightmares not of his making. He is, or should be, haunted by fiascos over Belfast power-sharing, Brexit law revision, Post Office compensation, HS2's costs and defects in EU trade treaties. He has no

time to boost Tory fortunes in Scotland, where much of the coming election may depend.

In all this the Tories' secret weapon is blunted and useless, tarnished by Sunak's own disloyalty when tested to extreme in Johnson's hour of need. The message of the NatCon rally is that the Tory hierarchy is no longer a club. Much like Labour of old, it has dissolved into policy differences that mutate into party identity groups.

To put it mildly, Sunak looks like being the best leader the Tories have got. Given the odds against him, if he stops Labour achieving an overall majority, it will be a political feat little short of sensational. He would at very least deserve another chance. But if the antics of NatCon are any guide, there is little chance of that. The Tory party looks set fair for another period of tempestuous self-destruction.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist

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‘Since having a baby, I’ve been depressed by how little some men seem to get away with doing when it comes to their own children, and how normalised that is.’ Photograph: Elly Godfroy/Alamy

Republic of ParenthoodParents and parenting

Can we call time on the ‘doesband’ doing ‘daddy day care’? Fathers are way past that

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett

Millennial men are overcoming the hands-off parenting of previous generations – and sharing the mental load, too

Fri 19 May 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 21.22 EDT

Are you a “doesband”? The latest irritating portmanteau refers to a husband who parents his own children. “A doesband has his own hectic job, but still does his fair share at home Without Being Asked,” writes Harriet Walker, the Times journalist who coined the term. “A doesband knows where the Calpol is and when ballet kit is needed … He gets up with the children and does bedtime; he feeds them, bathes them, does the school run; knows when their nails need to be cut and that behind their ears can get gunky.”

I hate the term, but Walker makes a salient point: that men who share childcare equally with their partners, including the mental load, are still rarer than they should be. There are more and more female breadwinners, but according to the Office for National Statistics, women still do 60% more unpaid work than men. Walker writes about staying awkwardly silent during conversations with other women about their useless partners. It can feel like boasting to go into just how much your male partner does (I’m only discussing heterosexual relationships here).

Since having a baby, I've been depressed by how little some men seem to get away with doing when it comes to their own children, and how normalised that is. Take the loathsome phrase "Daddy daycare", or the fact that my husband is frequently congratulated for taking his own son out for a walk – something that has literally never happened to me. I feel lucky to have a partner who took five months of shared parental and annual leave, who feeds (we combi-fed, which set the tone from the start), changes, comforts, plays, cooks, shops, sorts the childcare payments, night-weaned the baby and – the worst task of all – deals with the nappy bins. Yet I shouldn't feel lucky, it should be normal.

On the bright side, lots more men are what used to be called "involved fathers", while also trying to hold down full-time work. Seeing how challenging that can be has made me reflect how, in our capitalist system, men can't have it all either. For many, being able to work from home during the pandemic has been a gamechanger. "I don't think women are inherently better caregivers than men," says Alex Marsh, a 39-year-old market researcher with two daughters, aged nine and 12. He tells me that he has always strived to do his share, remembering how the midwife "wrote 'hands on dad' on her notes, as though that was remarkable" when he and his wife said they shared the nappy changing. Alex was the "night duty" parent, but was still working in London all week.

Now that he only goes into the office twice a week, he is able to read his kids bedtime stories every night, cook most of their meals and handle their school admin: "And I love it," he says. Alex says he doesn't feel that exceptional among his peers, except maybe in terms of the cooking, but he worries that they are a minority. "There are still a lot of relationships out there where the woman is expected to do more, simply because she is a woman."

A friend who works in tech, a similarly hands-on dad, doesn't feel rare either. He finds the term "doesband" infantilising. He's messaging me back at 3.05am while trying to settle his toddler daughter and says the majority of fathers he knows are equal parents. In his industry, it's considered commonplace: he got four months of paid paternity leave.

“I still notice a huge generational legacy in behaviour,” he says. His grandparents and parents have been surprised by how dedicated he and his partner are to parenting equally. That’s not to say it’s easy: “There’s no getting around that it’s draining and runs you into the ground ,” he says. “In the early stages there’s anger and frustration.”

My friend’s talk of the early stages makes me think that perhaps some couples succeed at equal parenting right off the bat, while others negotiate and learn as they go. Steph Douglas, 42, who runs the thoughtful gift company Don’t Buy Her Flowers and has three children, says**:** “It’s been a ‘journey’ that has involved me trying to understand why I was so resentful and unhappy after we had kids.” She found the “fair play” method – a system that helps couples share household chores equally – key in making their parenting genuinely more equal rather than simply giving her husband a list of tasks. As well as now sharing much of the parenting, her partner is in the school WhatsApp group – they succeeded in signing up all the dads after she noticed it was only mothers.

Some of us might move in circles where equal parenting is the norm, but the stats tell a different story. There is cause for hope, though. While hands-on dads have always existed, they are becoming more commonplace among younger generations of parents, and policy – especially in terms of paternity leave – needs to catch up. Women seem less inclined to put up with an unfair division of labour and a heavy mental load, which is sexist and in many cases no longer makes financial sense. I enjoy the TV comedy Motherland, and have seen that, sadly, the useless, absent husband in it reflects the reality in some households. But millennial fathers I speak to repeatedly highlight how retrograde and depressing the wimpy stay-at-home dad character Kevin is. He simply does not resonate with younger parents, and though there is still a long way to go, that can only be a cause for hope. As for the term “doesband”, it can get in the bin with the nappies.

What’s working

As well as equal parenting, I owe a lot to YSL’s Touche Eclat concealer for making me look less haggard after all the sleepless nights. (“Why don’t you look like a shoe?” my friend said, suspiciously, when she met me for lunch

shortly after I gave birth.) But now I've found a new favourite: Beauty Pie's Superluminous Under-Eye Genius cream. It's genuinely life-changing.

What's not

We have unwittingly created a sleep association with Norah Jones's 2002 blockbuster album Come Away With Me, so our home environment now sounds like a Blairite dinner party.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author

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The Duke and Duchess of Sussex arrive at United Nations headquarters on 18 July 2022. Public reaction to the ‘near catastrophic’ car chase the couple were involved in has been divided. Photograph: Seth Wenig/AP

Opinion US news

Did Harry and Meghan exaggerate their ‘catastrophic’ chase? It’s complicated

Arwa Mahdawi

You don’t have to particularly like Harry and Meghan to be disturbed by the constant vitriol directed against them

Fri 19 May 2023 04.14 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 08.09 EDT

They nearly died! They made the whole thing up! The royal family was trying to Diana them! They’re incorrigible attention-seekers who exaggerated to try and get British taxpayers to pay for their security costs!

Public reaction to news that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and the duchess’s mother had been in a “near catastrophic” car chase with paparazzi in New York on Tuesday evening has been divided, to say the least. Some people seem to think that the severity of the incident has been inflated in an effort to drum up sympathetic PR for the Sussexes, at a time when they’re mired in several lawsuits about their privacy and security. Conservative commentator Megyn Kelly, for example, accused the pair of “exaggerating, because they like being in the public eye”.

Others, citing the obvious echoes of the paparazzi chase that killed Princess Diana in 1997, are horrified at how close the Sussexes came to death. Look on social media and you’ll also find wild conspiracy theories that a crafty

King Charles engineered the whole thing and it wasn't so much an accident as an assassination attempt.

The passionate and polarized response to Tuesday night's incident is hardly surprising. Harry and Meghan have devoted fans and equally devoted haters; they can't so much as eat a cheese sandwich without inspiring a string of unhinged reactions. Nevertheless, the range of responses to this particular event is remarkable: even the people directly involved seem to have very different recollections of what happened.

Let's start with how the Sussexes characterized the chase. On Wednesday a spokesperson for Prince Harry said that the three passengers had been "involved in a near catastrophic car chase at the hands of a ring of highly aggressive paparazzi. This relentless pursuit, lasting over two hours, resulted in multiple near collisions involving other drivers on the road, pedestrians and two NYPD officers".

Chris Sanchez, a member of Prince Harry's security team has corroborated this description of events. "The public were in jeopardy at several points," Sanchez told CNN. "It could have been fatal."

The New York Police Department, meanwhile, characterized the incident as "challenging" rather than catastrophic. "The Duke and Duchess of Sussex arrived at their destination and there were no reported collisions, summonses, injuries or arrests in regard," an NYPD spokesperson said.

New York City's mayor, Eric Adams, while condemning the paparazzi as "reckless" and "irresponsible", similarly characterized the incident as less dramatic than the Sussexes described and cast doubt on the supposed time-frame. "I would find it hard to believe that there was a two-hour high speed chase," Adams said. A fair point since a two-hour high-speed chase in Manhattan is near impossible unless it's 4am on a Sunday or Vin Diesel is behind the wheel. However, as Adams noted, even a 10-minute pursuit would be "extremely dangerous in New York City".

Whatever happened, the real hero of the hour is Sukhcharn Singh, the yellow cab driver who was chauffeuring the threesome. Singh seems remarkably relaxed about his role in shuttling the Sussexes to safety. (Bear in mind that

it probably takes a lot to faze a New York cab driver.) Singh told CNN that he didn't feel under threat by the encounter with photographers but Harry and Meghan looked "nervous and scared". He also told the Washington Post that the incident lasted 10 minutes. "I don't think I would call it a chase," Singh said. "I never felt like I was in danger. It wasn't like a car chase in a movie." Still, added Singh, he could understand why his famous passengers were terrified. "You know, my feelings were normal, but I'm sure their feelings were more intense because of what his mom, Princess Diana, died in a crash running away from the paparazzi," he said. "So I think their emotions must have been higher."

And that's really the crux of it, isn't it? We all react to high-pressure situations in different ways, based on our personal histories. It is perfectly natural that Prince Harry would be traumatized by being aggressively pursued by the paparazzi. Nobody has any right to dismiss or diminish his response to what must have been a very triggering situation. You don't have to particularly like Harry and Meghan to be disturbed by the constant vitriol directed against them, particularly from the British media. And you don't have to be a Harry and Meghan cheerleader to feel disturbed at how they were treated by the royal family. Who, by the way, have kept conspicuously quiet on the car chase.

Anyway, if there's a happy ending to come out of all of this I hope it's that Singh gets a cameo in the next Fast and the Furious movie.

- Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian US columnist

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Illustration: Danielle Rhoda/The Guardian

OpinionClimate crisis

If swing voters were terrified of the climate crisis, ministers would take it seriously

Gaby Hinsliff

The effort to stay below 1.5C needs to be a battle people feel we can win. They must sound the alarm, and make sure politicians listen

Fri 19 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 03.30 EDT

The end of the world is nigh, again. And as usual, it's being greeted largely with a shrug. Perhaps you felt a prick of unease as you scrolled the headlines, or half listened over breakfast to some radio debate about the fact that sometime in the next four years the planet is likely to breach the 1.5C rise in global temperature that we have long been told is the tipping point to avoid. (Although this time the breach should be only temporary, the World Meteorological Organisation report stresses that it still takes us into uncharted waters, and if nothing changes the world is likely to cross this dangerous threshold more and more often in future.)

Perhaps you even felt rage or frustration that it's taking everyone else so long to wake up. But the chances are that most people will have forgotten it by lunchtime. YouGov's regular tracker poll finds Britons are still more worried about immigration, which almost a third consider the single most important issue currently facing the country, than about climate and the environment.

Being a Nobel-worthy climate scientist these days must feel frustratingly like being one of those prophets of doom parading down the high street in a sandwich board, yelling at oblivious shoppers that judgment day is coming, with the exception that this time it really might be.

If swing voters were as viscerally scared of flood, fire and catastrophic crop failure as they seem to be of people leaving Calais in dinghies, governments would be turning themselves inside out battling the rising temperature. Just look at the mad, economically self-lacerating lengths the Tories have been willing to go to for the past seven years in the name of supposedly "taking back control" over our borders, and at how frightened Labour still is of contradicting them.

Imagine if Westminster pounced on every global heating forecast like it will on next week's immigration figures, expected to show another rise to record levels; if green issues stirred the same primal emotions as Brexiters' blue passports.

But though the nation says it cares when specifically prodded – three-quarters of adults said they were worried about the climate crisis when asked by the Office for National Statistics – somehow we don't follow through by punishing politicians who fail to deliver. Allow yourself to think about the potential consequences of our collective feebleness, and they're terrifying. But for some reason – arguably *because* they're terrifying – we mostly don't let ourselves think about it very often.

A psychologist would argue that the brain's natural defences against anxiety are strong, and in this case unhelpfully so. We're hardwired to respond to imminent physical threats rather than abstract or distant ones; and, crucially, to run away from anything too big to fight.

People sweeping mud from a house after torrential rain caused severe flooding and landslides, Faenza, Italy, 18 May 2023. Photograph: Emanuele Cremaschi/Getty Images

These survival instincts served humans well in conflict with charging mammoths, but not so much against the kind of abstract but existential risks potentially posed by the climate crisis, hyperintelligent AI or the prospect of antibiotic resistance rendering modern drugs useless. Add in our species' natural bias towards optimism – the sunny belief that something's bound to turn up, or that someone in authority will presumably be along any minute to take charge – and we are stunningly ill-equipped to deal with pending apocalypses of any kind.

No doubt the media could do more to shove this particular crisis in everyone's faces. But with apologies to those many Guardian readers who genuinely long to see climate issues covered in greater depth, journalists can lead a horse to water but they can't stop it drinking something more relaxing in its lunch hour. The joy and curse of online news is that every newspaper can now see exactly what people are reading: we know how many people skim the headlines of serious stories they'll later swear they read, before devouring every word about Phil 'n' Holly at war on the This Morning sofa.

And the inconvenient truth, to coin a phrase, is that at the time of writing I can see more Guardian readers are engrossed by Harry and Meghan's battle with the paparazzi than by the breaching of the 1.5C threshold. Meanwhile, on Twitter, where users joyfully unconstrained by mainstream media agendas can post about whatever matters most to them, the current trending topics are Kylie Minogue and some basketball game in the US.

Melting ice sheets? Meh. Some things are just too big to get your head around. What looks on the face of it like apathy may be better understood as being overwhelmed, a sort of sagging mental exhaustion; the same feeling that makes you collapse on the sofa with a takeaway again when you know perfectly well you would live longer if you went to the gym.

It's not too late yet. The lesson from the pandemic is that people can be surprisingly willing to make sacrifices for the public good, if we think that everyone else is doing it and if the rewards are clear. Staying at home to save the NHS was, of course, the noble thing to do, but crucially it also made you much less likely to die of Covid yourself, and within weeks it was gratifyingly obvious that it was working as case numbers began to fall.

The fight to stay below 1.5C needs to feel like the next national crusade, a battle we are capable of winning and which is therefore worth joining in. There is something oddly puzzling about this government's apparent reluctance to sing its own praises over net zero: Britain evidently isn't decarbonising fast enough, but it still reduced its emissions faster than any other country in the world between 2010 and 2020, a success many Conservatives now seem strangely embarrassed to mention.

Crucially, households need to know what is in it for them if they give up their gas boilers or petrol cars – which in practice means more generous financial subsidies and incentives to cushion the costs of switching, plus investment in the infrastructure to back it up, from car-charging points and battery factories to an army of properly trained heating engineers.

But with one in five voters already saying they think the government spends too much on climate and environment policies, political parties won't risk spending billions more without a clear signal that this really is how we want

our taxes spent. And so we go, round and round in an endless circle of dithering.

It isn't rising global temperatures that threaten us in the end so much as the eternal human tendency to put off endlessly until tomorrow that which we can't quite face doing today. What the science is increasingly urgently trying to tell us, much as we may not want to listen, is that we can no longer be sure exactly how many tomorrows we have left.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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2023.05.19 - Around the world

- Italy Death toll mounts in worst flooding for 100 years
- Bruce Springsteen Singer criticised for not cancelling gig
- Australia TV host Stan Grant standing down after racist abuse following coronation
- China Police detains woman for supporting comedian who joked about military

Italy floods: emergency services continue rescue efforts in flood-hit region – video

Italy

Death toll mounts in Italy's worst flooding for 100 years

Older and disabled people trapped in homes as rescuers battle harsh conditions in Emilia-Romagna region

Angela Giuffrida in Rome
Thu 18 May 2023 11.28 EDTFirst published on Thu 18 May 2023 08.18 EDT

Older and disabled people were trapped in their homes as rescuers worked under pounding rain throughout the night to save people in what has been described as the most severe flooding to affect Italy in 100 years.

The floods in the northern Emilia-Romagna region have claimed 13 lives as of Thursday evening. An estimated 20,000 have been left homeless in a disaster that caused 23 rivers to burst their banks and 280 landslides, engulfing 41 cities and towns.

Roads remained blocked, including the A1, after a landslide in Sasso Marconi on Thursday afternoon, and trains were cancelled or disrupted.

Among the dead were an elderly couple trapped inside their home in Cava, a hamlet in the province of Forlì-Cesena. "We heard their cries for help," a neighbour told Il Messaggero newspaper. "We tried to get them out, but it was useless."

Drone footage shows residents clearing up mud in flood-hit Italy – video

An 80-year-old man drowned in his cellar after going to retrieve belongings, and a couple, identified as Sauro Manuzzi and Marinella Maraldi, who owned a company that produces herbs, were hit by the floods in the field opposite their home. The body of Maraldi, 70, was swept 12 miles down a river before being found on a beach along the Adriatic coast. A 76-year-old man was killed after being hit by a landslide in his garden, while another man, aged 43, died after falling into a well while trying to pump water away from his property.

Firefighters have carried out 2,000 rescue operations across the region and in parts of central Marche that were also affected by the floods.

map

Forty elderly people were saved from a care home overnight as police were inundated with calls seeking help. A caller in Faenza, among the worst-hit towns, told police: “My neighbours are elderly. One has Alzheimer’s. They’re unable to leave by themselves. Somebody must come. There’s too much mud.”

Elderly people who sought refuge on rooftops were saved by helicopters, as were entire families. Volunteers described carrying people out of their homes. Paolo Meoni, a volunteer working in Cesena, told La Nazione newspaper: “We worked all night in the pouring rain. In some cases, we carried the elderly and disabled in our arms and brought them on a dinghy to rescuers, who in turn transported them to shelters.”

He added: “The water was 40cm high, but the heavy rain, which lasted until 6am, made things worse.”

Stefano Bonaccini, the president of Emilia-Romagna, compared the devastation to the earthquake that hit the region in 2012 in which 28 people died. “The damage will be quantitatively smaller, but it will be a few billion euros,” he told Rai 3 television. “We will rebuild everything as we did for the earthquake.”

People clean up debris at a coffee shop in Faenza, Italy. Photograph: Claudia Greco/Reuters

The floods have destroyed homes and shops and left more than 5,000 farms under water, according to Coldiretti, Italy's largest agricultural association.

The owner of a shop in Faenza that has been selling kitchen equipment since 1950 told Ansa news agency: "We've been cleaning up since 6am, I don't know what time we'll finish. I live outside Faenza and in 2014 there was a flood, but nothing like this – I've never seen anything like this one, nobody here has."

The situation in Cesena, which was also badly hit, had slightly improved by Thursday afternoon. "There are almost no more areas that are flooded," said Matteo Raggi, a spokesperson for the mayor of the Forlì-Cesena region, Enzo Lattuca.

"Mud remains … we are now cleaning the waste from the streets. The big problem is the hillside areas that have been hit by landslides and trying to reach people there – many have been cut off because of the landslides but also because there is no mobile phone reception. Some have no food."

Pierluigi Randi, the president of Ampro, the association of weather experts, told La Repubblica it was the worst flood to affect Italy in a century. It

followed flooding in Emilia-Romagna and parts of Marche in early May in which two people died. Six months' worth of rain fell in two weeks.

"We need to prepare ourselves, this is the climate crisis," Randi said.

Before the floods, Emilia-Romagna and other areas of northern Italy were blighted by a drought that dried out land, reducing its capacity to absorb water.

In 2022, the hottest year on record in Italy, 310 extreme weather events were registered, causing the deaths of 29 people, according to Legambiente, an environmental group. Thirteen people were killed in floods in Marche last September and 12 people, including several children, died in a landslide on the island of Ischia in late November.

"The only new thing to say about the latest floods is that two records were broken in 15 days in the same region," said Luca Mercalli, the president of the Italian Meteorological Society. "An event like the one that occurred on 2 May might happen once in a century, but then another hit 15 days later – having two occasions of intense rain within such a short timeframe, and in the same region, is what is really surprising."

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Bruce Springsteen will go ahead with a concert in Ferrara, which has not been directly affected by the floods. Photograph: Xavi Torrent/Redferns

Bruce Springsteen

Bruce Springsteen criticised for not cancelling Italy gig after deadly floods

Fans describe decision to go ahead as ‘outrageous’ and call on US star to reschedule Emilia-Romagna event

Reuters in Rome
Thu 18 May 2023 13.37 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 13.47 EDT

Bruce Springsteen has been criticised in Italy for going ahead with a concert in Ferrara on Thursday evening after the northern Emilia-Romagna region was hit by deadly floods.

Fans of “The Boss” urged him on social media to reconsider out of respect for the dead and homeless after torrential rains caused landslides and made

rivers break their banks.

Massimiliano Zampini tweeted: “@springsteen please consider to reschedule your concert today. Surrounding areas have faced devastating floods. You should because: all emergency resources should be available in the affected area; we need to avoid massive traffic; out of respect for the victims.”

Cristiana Boi described the decision to go ahead with the show as outrageous, while Laura Casadei posted: “It is a scandal that they are doing Springsteen’s concert in Ferrara tonight. He will sing without an audience as all the main streets are blocked in several places.”

Springsteen’s representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ferrara, one of Emilia-Romagna’s main cities, has not been directly affected by the floods and its mayor, Alan Fabbri, defended the decision not to cancel the concert, which was expected to attract as many as 50,000 people.

“I am sorry if anyone may have thought that Ferrara was insensitive to the tragedy in Romagna just because it did not cancel the concert of The Boss,” he posted on Facebook.

A concert, “given its enormous complexity, cannot be postponed or cancelled” at short notice after having involved thousands of workers and tourists arriving in the city, he said.

The floods led authorities to call off Sunday’s F1 Grand Prix at Imola, which is close to many of the areas worst hit by the flooding. Organisers said it was not possible to hold the event safely.

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Q&A host Stan Grant says he is ‘walking away’ from the ABC show after receiving racist abuse. Photograph: ABC

Stan Grant

Q+A host Stan Grant standing down from ABC show after racist abuse

The ABC presenter says he has been a media target for racism and for now he’s ‘walking away’

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Amanda Meade
Fri 19 May 2023 01.42 EDTFirst published on Fri 19 May 2023 01.14 EDT

The host of Q+A Stan Grant is standing down from the show after receiving “grotesque racist abuse” which escalated after he spoke on the ABC about

the impact of colonialism ahead of the King's coronation.

Grant said in a column published on the ABC website that after Monday's episode he was "walking away".

"Since the King's coronation, I have seen people in the media lie and distort my words," he said. "They have tried to depict me as hate filled. They have accused me of maligning Australia.

"Nothing could be further from the truth. My ancestors would not allow me to be filled with hate."

The director of ABC News, Justin Stevens, took aim at the "usual sections of the media" for stirring up the hate by distorting Grant's contribution to the debate.

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But Grant took a swipe at ABC management too, saying no one at the ABC had supported him publicly since he appeared on the panel to discuss the impact of colonialism on Indigenous Australians.

"I am writing this because no one at the ABC – whose producers invited me onto their coronation coverage as a guest – has uttered one word of public support," he said.

"Not one ABC executive has publicly refuted the lies written or spoken about me. I don't hold any individual responsible; this is an institutional failure.

"I value the friendship of ABC Director of News, Justin Stevens. He has been a support and a comfort. He is trying to change an organisation that has its own legacy of racism. But he knows I am disappointed. I am dispirited.

“I was not the producer nor presenter of the coronation broadcast yet every newspaper article accusing the ABC of bias has carried my image. I am writing this because I will not have people depict me as a person of hate.”

In a separate statement Stevens said Grant had been subjected to “grotesque racist abuse, including threats to his safety” which have been reported to police.

“This has become particularly virulent since he appeared as part of the ABC’s Coronation coverage,” Stevens said.

“It is abhorrent and unacceptable.

“Stan is one of Australia’s best and most respected journalists and broadcasters. The ABC stands by him and condemns the attacks directed towards him.”

The New South Wales police have been contacted for comment.

Stevens said Grant was one of the panellists on the coronation coverage and was asked to participate as a Wiradjuri man to discuss his own family’s experience and the role of the monarchy in Australia in the context of Indigenous history.

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But Grant took the brunt of the "tirade of criticism, particularly in the usual sections of the media that target the ABC" that followed the broadcast.

"Reporting on his contribution to the panel discussion has been unfair, inaccurate and irresponsible," he said. "It has contributed to fuelling horrendous personal and racial abuse."

The Australian and radio broadcasters Neil Mitchell and Ray Hadley denounced the broadcaster for hosting a panel discussion about the impact of colonialism on Indigenous Australians and the relevance of the monarchy in 2023.

Despite the coronation coverage being labelled "despicable" by monarchists, viewers loved it and gave the national broadcaster an easy ratings win over the commercial networks.

Mitchell said the ABC had "totally misread the mood" and focused on "bagging the living daylights out of the monarchy".

Headlines in the Australian included "ABC's royal rants fail to lure viewers" and "ABC's coronation coverage labelled 'bile'".

Joining Grant on the ABC panel for the coronation, hosted by Jeremy Fernandez and Julia Baird, was lawyer and Indigenous writer Teela Reid, Liberal backbencher and monarchist Julian Leeser and co-chair of the Australian Republic Movement Craig Foster. The panel discussion lasted 45 minutes in the lead-up to the coronation and was over hours before the event itself.

For his part Grant pointed out that the crown represents the invasion and theft of Aboriginal land. "In the name of the crown my people were segregated on missions and reserves," he explained on Friday. "Police wearing the seal of the crown took children from their families. Under the crown our people were massacred."

The ABC has lodged an official complaint with Twitter about the "relentless racial filth" Grant is subjected to after every episode of Q+A. Twitter has

been contacted for comment but has no real Australian presence since Elon Musk took ownership of the company.

“I am not beyond criticism,” the triple Walkley-award winner said. “I occupy a privileged and prominent place in the media – I should be critiqued. And I am not thin skinned. Aboriginal people learn to tough it out. That’s the price of survival.”

The ABC permanently appointed Grant, 59, as the full-time host of the weekly flagship discussion program in August 2022, a year after Hamish Macdonald quit and was replaced by rotating hosts.

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Beijing police launched an investigation into comedian Li Haoshi, AKA House, under a 2021 law that criminalised insulting China's military. Photograph: Dong Wenjie/Getty Images

China

Chinese police detain woman for supporting comedian who joked about military

Comic Li Haoshi made joke about soldiers that Beijing authorities deemed insulting

Helen Davidson in Taipei and Chi Hui Lin
Fri 19 May 2023 05.52 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 10.21 EDT

Chinese police detained a woman for posting online in support of the comedian who was punished for making a joke that authorities said insulted the Chinese military.

According to state media, the 34-year-old woman, reportedly surnamed Shi, admitted to police that she had posted "inappropriate" comments about Chinese soldiers.

Shi's post was in reaction to the stiff punishment delivered to Li Haoshi, also known as House, over a joke about two dogs chasing a squirrel reminding him of one of Xi Jinping's military slogan. After an audio recording of the joke went viral, Beijing police launched an investigation under a 2021 law which criminalised insulting China's military, the People's Liberation Army.

"We will never allow any company or individual use the Chinese capital as a stage to wantonly slander the glorious image of the PLA," China's ministry of culture and tourism bureau said.

His employer was fined £1.68m. Related hashtags were viewed more than 2bn times, with some comments supportive of the comic. Li later apologised on Weibo, which is strictly monitored and censored, and said he felt "deeply guilty and regretful" about the joke, before his account was suspended.

On Tuesday, in a post that appears to have been taken down, Shi posted: "Why should HOUSE be banned? Aren't all soldier brothers just dog brothers?"

The Global Times reported she was put in administrative detention, which allows police to hold someone for up to 15 days without charge for a minor public order offence.

On Weibo, news about Shi had been read about 4m times by Friday, with most comments generally angry at her for supporting Li.

"Without the military, how could you have a stable life today? You are not grateful for your words, you are not a human being!" said one.

"They never thought that they would be insulted by some bad-minded youngsters years later for having defended the country," said another.

The furore over Li's joke has prompted some comedy operators to cancel shows, and spread fear among performers about crossing government lines.

One overseas Chinese comic said Li's joke had nothing to do with politics, and that the case made her feel "shocked and desperate".

"I didn't think that the red line would be so easily crossed and that there would be no mercy when it was," said the comic, who requested anonymity.

"Even internet users, who have no public influence, are being pursued … The whole atmosphere has become not just official censorship, but [also] self-censorship and mutual censorship. For a long time, in this way, one thinks and creates with fear. I feel that all areas of creativity and expression have no room for survival."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/19/chinese-police-detains-woman-for-supporting-comedian-who-joked-about-military-li-haoshi-house

Headlines thursday 18 may 2023

- **Sewage English water companies offer apology and £10bn investment for spills**
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- **Live Royal Mail posts £1bn loss; BT cutting up to 55,000 jobs**
- **BT Group to axe up to 55,000 jobs by 2030 as it pushes into AI**
- **Royal Mail £1bn loss reported after postal workers' strikes**

Water UK said the public was ‘right to be upset about the current quality of our rivers and beaches’. Photograph: Geoffrey Swaine/Shutterstock

Pollution

English water companies offer apology and £10bn investment for sewage spills

Under-fire bosses announce ‘unprecedented plan’ to reduce last year’s 300,000 incidents of sewage pollution

- **Down the drain: how billions of pounds are sucked out of England’s water system**

Alex Lawson
Wed 17 May 2023 19.01 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 07.47 EDT

Water companies in England have apologised for repeated sewage spills and pledged to invest £10bn this decade in an attempt to quell public anger over

pollution in seas and rivers.

The companies will triple their existing investment plans to plough funds into the biggest modernisation of sewers “since the Victorian era” to reduce spills of overflowing sewage into England’s waterways.

Industry body Water UK said the plans will cut the number of overflow incidents by up to 140,000 each year by 2030, compared with 2020.

Environment Agency figures earlier this year showed there were a total of 301,091 sewage spills in 2022, an average of 824 a day.

The spending on more than 350,000 miles of sewer comes on top of the current £3.1bn being spent between 2020 and 2025.

Shareholders in water companies will initially fund the investments. However, the costs will be recouped from customers through unspecified increases in their bills determined by regulators, in a move which threatens to add further pressure to household costs.

The investment will see new facilities built to hold surges in rainwater, increased capacity for sewage treatment works, measures to reduce rainfall entering sewers and fixing misconnected pipes from properties.

An online hub will launch next year, giving the public almost live information on overflows and the state of rivers and coastal waters. The companies also pledged to support up to 100 communities in creating new protected water for swimming.

The move comes after intense criticism of water companies from politicians and campaigners.

Water UK, which represents 25 companies across the UK, issued an apology on behalf of its English companies and said the public was “right to be upset about the current quality of our rivers and beaches”.

There have been calls for greater fines for breaching environmental laws and The Environment Agency has even suggested that water company bosses

should be jailed for serious pollution.

Ruth Kelly, the chair of Water UK, said: “The message from the water and sewage industry today is clear: we are sorry. More should have been done to address the issue of spillages sooner and the public is right to be upset about the current quality of our rivers and beaches.

“We have listened and have an unprecedented plan to start to put it right. This problem cannot be fixed overnight, but we are determined to do everything we can to transform our rivers and seas in the way we all want to see.”

Privatised water and sewage companies in the UK paid £1.4bn in dividends in 2022, up from £540m the previous year. Annual bonuses paid to water company executives rose by 20% in 2021, as water bosses paid themselves £24.8m, including £14.7m in bonuses, benefits and incentives, in 2021-2022.

Last week the chief executives of Yorkshire Water and Thames Water and owner of South West Water declined their bonuses in an acknowledgment of the public anger over companies’ dumping of sewage in Britain’s rivers.

The Liberal Democrat leader, Ed Davey, said: “This apology and plan just don’t go far enough. For years water companies have arrogantly dismissed the public’s fears of rivers, lakes and coastlines being damaged by sewage discharges.

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“This announcement does nothing to match the billions water firms have paid out in dividends to overseas investors, or stop their CEOs being handed multimillion pound bonuses.”

Davey also called on the environment secretary, Thérèse Coffey, to apologise.

In a letter apologising to its customers, Yorkshire Water said it is investing £180m in reducing discharges from storm overflows over the next two years.

Its chief executive, Nicola Shaw, said: “Tackling overflows, which were designed into the system as a relief valve, is a priority for us, but it is also a significant task … further investment from our shareholders is helping us tackle this issue.”

Last month, Coffey said the government would introduce legislation to put plans to reduce storm overflows on a “new legal footing”.

Stuart Singleton-White, head of campaigns at the Angling Trust, said, “This must be only the beginning. The problems our rivers face will not be solved by sorting out overflow spills, chucking in some money for swimming, and putting nature-based solutions on the end of pipes.”

A spokesperson for Ofwat, the water regulator, said: “We welcome the apology from water companies and this now needs to be turned into action.

“We have been pushing water companies to do more, faster, for their customers and for our waterways and beaches. We look forward to seeing the plans and how companies will step up performance.”

This article was amended on 18 May 2023. An earlier version referred in the headline to UK water companies, when the apology is from English water companies.

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BT has about 80,000 staff in the UK. Photograph: Doug Peters/PA

BT

BT to axe up to 55,000 jobs by 2030 as it pushes into AI

Telecoms group aims to become ‘leaner’ as it cuts more than 40% of its 130,000 global workforce

- Business live – latest updates

Mark Sweney
@marksweney
Thu 18 May 2023 04.41 EDTFirst published on Thu 18 May 2023 03.06 EDT

BT has said it will become a “leaner business” as it announced plans to reduce its workforce by as much as 55,000 by 2030, more than 40% of its

global employee base, including about 10,000 jobs replaced by artificial intelligence.

The telecoms company employs about 130,000 staff globally, with approximately 30,000 of those contractors through third parties, and has about 80,000 staff in the UK.

On Thursday, BT said it intended to reduce its total workforce to about 75,000 to 90,000 between 2028 and 2030.

The telecoms group has embarked on a rollout of full fibre broadband and 5G infrastructure and has benefited from digital trends such as AI.

The company said that over the rest of the decade it expects to complete the most labour intensive part of the rollout of next-generation full-fibre and 5G networks across the UK, meaning fewer engineers will be needed.

The company also aims to benefit from a broader move to digitise its business and take advantage of new technology, such as artificial intelligence, which could be used to make areas such as call handling and network diagnostics less labour intensive.

Philip Jansen, the BT chief executive, said the introduction of AI across its business could result in the elimination of the equivalent of about 10,000 roles.

“For a company like BT there is a huge opportunity to use AI to be more efficient,” he said. “There is a sort of 10,000 reduction from that sort of automated digitisation, we will be a huge beneficiary of AI. I believe generative AI is a huge leap forward; yes, we have to be careful, but it is a massive change.”

While Jansen said that the job cuts would come from across the global business, a “big chunk” of those were expected to be in the UK as fibre broadband and 5G rollout was completed and old 3G and copper technology phased out.

“When we stop building the network we won’t need that workforce,” he said. “We will rely on a much smaller workforce and new networks are much more efficient. There will be fewer contractors, natural attrition and reskilling. Only 5,000 [job cuts] in this plan are what you would call ‘normal’ restructuring. This is not new news to any of our union partners.”

However, Prospect, the union that represents thousands of BT managers, expressed concern at the size of the cuts planned over the next seven years.

“Prospect are deeply concerned by the scale of these cuts,” the Prospect national secretary, John Ferrett, said. “Announcing such a huge reduction in this way will be very unsettling for workers who did so much to keep the country connected during the pandemic. As a union we want to see the details behind this announcement in order to understand how it will impact upon members and have demanded an urgent meeting with the chief executive.”

However, the Communications Workers Union (CWU), which represents the majority of BT workers, said the cuts plan was not a surprise to members.

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“The introduction of new technologies across the company along with the completion of the fibre infrastructure build replacing the copper network

was always going to result in less labour costs for the company in the coming years," said a spokesman.

"However, we have made it categorically clear to BT that we want to retain as many direct labour jobs as possible and that any reduction should come from subcontractors in the first instance and natural attrition."

BT, which reported a 12% drop in pre-tax profits to £1.7bn for the year to the end of March, aims to make £3bn in annualised cost savings by 2025.

The company also reported that its pay-TV sport joint venture with Warner Bros Discovery made a £123m loss for the year.

BT said the joint venture had "underperformed against business plan" due to a range of factors including "cost of living pressures affecting the premium sports subscription market".

On Tuesday, Vodafone announced it is to make 11,000 job cuts over the next three years, the largest in the telecoms company's history.

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Royal Mail workers held a series of strikes over pay and working conditions. Photograph: Kirsty Wigglesworth/AP

Royal Mail

Royal Mail reports £1bn loss after postal workers' strikes

Parent company IDS posts loss of £748m as it blames industrial action and failure to increase productivity

- Business live – latest updates

Kalyeena Makortoff
@kalyeena
Thu 18 May 2023 09.16 EDTFirst published on Thu 18 May 2023 03.37 EDT

Royal Mail has reported a £1bn loss, with bosses blaming strike action by workers and a failure to increase productivity for its poor performance

during a year in which it cut 10,000 jobs.

The poor performance led International Distributions Services (IDS), which owns Royal Mail, to report an overall loss of £748m for the year to 26 March. That compares with a profit of £577m a year earlier.

IDS said Royal Mail swung to a loss "due to industrial action" by unionised staff over pay and working conditions that eventually led to the resignation of its chief executive, Simon Thompson, last week, as well as an "inability to deliver the in-year benefits of planned productivity improvements".

While the company finally reached a deal which the union agreed to put to its membership last month, the postal service also suffered a drop in demand for Covid test kit deliveries, as well as a dip in online shopping, which led to a boom in parcel deliveries during the pandemic.

Together, those problems overshadowed what IDS said were successful efforts to cut costs and "rightsize" the business in the second half of the financial year.

Those efforts included slashing 10,000 jobs at Royal Mail, a target it reached months before schedule and which will save the business about £150m over the next financial year. IDS's chief financial officer, Mick Jeavons, said "there is no further job cut plan, or target".

However, further cost cuts may still be rolled out. "We'll continue to revise and improve performance in all our units every year," the IDS chair, Keith Williams, said.

The company said its deal with the Communications Workers Union, which will be voted on by members at the end of the month, opened the door for "further operational efficiencies" that would make Royal Mail more competitive.

Royal Mail, which was privatised in 2013, has spent nearly a decade trying to revamp the business amid a decline in letters and a surge in online

shopping that has led to an increase in competition for parcel deliveries.

While the pay deal – which was reached after workers staged 18 days of strike action – will cost about £600m, IDS said it would largely be covered by cost cuts over the next two years.

Williams said there was now a “clear path towards a more competitive and profitable Royal Mail, delivering improved services for our customers while further reducing our environmental impact”.

However, bosses have not ruled out plans to potentially break up the business. “That’s not our current intention. We feel we’re moving forward, but it is still an option if we don’t,” Williams said.

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But he acknowledged the quality of its services had declined, just days after the communications regulator launched an investigation as it emerged more than a quarter of Royal Mail’s first-class mail was not delivered on time.

“Quality of service has been significantly affected by industrial action and high levels of absence. I am sorry that we have not delivered the high standards of service our customers expect. Improving quality of service is our top priority,” he said.

“Our plan is to return to group profitability this year but also seize the opportunity for both businesses to deliver ongoing profits thereafter, to the benefit of both our employees, customers and shareholders.”

Thompson, who took on the job in early 2021, will leave in October after a bruising tenure that included being accused of “incompetence or cluelessness by MPs”.

IDS bosses said they were not aware of whether personal attacks from either politicians or unions played a part in Thompson’s decision to step down. “We’ve been at a crossroads and we were moving forward, and Simon decided this was the opportunity for him to step down and appoint new leadership,” Williams said.

IDS stock was the biggest faller on the FTSE 250 in early trading, down 3.2%.

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2023.05.18 - Spotlight

- **The rubbishscapes of Essex Why our buried trash is back to haunt us**
- **‘All of us are worthy of love’ How to start dating again after heartbreak**
- **‘It’s not a pop-the-champagne moment any more’ Is the UK album chart broken?**
- **Rolf Harris: Hiding in Plain Sight review The awful truth behind the abuse that shocked a nation**

The rubbishscapes of Essex: why our buried trash is back to haunt us

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The Guardian - Back to homeThe Guardian

‘It’s not just trusting other people; it’s trusting myself.’ Illustration: Monika Jurczyk AKA Monsie

Dating

‘All of us are worthy of love’: how to start dating again after heartbreak

Has a bad breakup made you lose faith in romance – or even yourself? Are you fed up with scouring the apps? Here, relationship experts explain the healthiest ways to look for love

Emine Saner
@eminesaner
Thu 18 May 2023 05.00 EDT

Since she separated from her partner five years ago, Sarah has been on two dates. “Every time I think about it, I recoil at the idea of trusting someone like I did before,” she says. On the rare occasion she looks at a dating app – the last time, she deleted it after 24 hours – she scours the profiles for warning signs. “It’s very hard for me to see positives in people’s profiles. Would I like to meet someone again? Absolutely. But I think my trust levels are damaged. I struggle trying to make any sort of connection.”

Sarah, 44, and her partner had been together for eight years. They had agreed they would try for children in the future, but, over the years, she says, her partner became selfish and used her financially. When they finally broke up, he told her he had never had any intention of starting a family. “When that imploded, everything felt like it had ended, because I’d lost my sense of self during that time. It was a catastrophic change for me, even though I

needed to be out of that relationship." At the time, it felt as if she had "failed as a human being", she says. "It's not just trusting other people; it's trusting myself. I let myself get into a situation before and now I don't trust my own judgment; will I see it next time?"

When the Guardian asked readers to get in touch about relationships that had made them lose faith in love, the responses covered a huge range of experiences, from surviving abuse to discovering affairs to simply feeling let down after being ghosted.

One woman, who is black, realised that she was being "fetishised by white men". On her last date, in which she met a man for the second time, he tried to kiss and touch her; when she asked him not to, he told her he wasn't going to see her again. "All these experiences reinforce my belief that men get physical quickly," she wrote – and they are quick to reject her when they don't get what they want.

> A therapist can help with impartiality and with identifying what you could learn from your experiences

One man, 54, has spent almost his entire adult life single after a negative experience with a girlfriend at university: "I've never come to terms with the loss and have been unable to move on with my life," he wrote. A 47-year-old woman wrote: "I'm tired. Tired of all the history of failure and emotional damage. I can't face trying anew for absolute fear of being blinded by love."

"The pain of being in a toxic relationship doesn't leave you and you wonder if you are going to go back to the same thing again," says Jo Hemmings, a behavioural psychologist and relationship coach. "It makes people reluctant and fearful of patterns repeating themselves."

Hemmings says you need time to think about what happened and whether there were clues that you missed or chose to disregard. It can help you realise what you don't want, "even if it doesn't give you a great deal of information about what you do want". A therapist can help with impartiality

and with identifying what you could learn from your experiences, she says: “It’s comforting to have friends who all say: ‘I hated them anyway,’ but it’s not always that helpful.”

There is nothing wrong with being single, stresses Hemmings, but if you would like to be in a relationship again, taking your time will pay off. How long it takes differs for everyone, but one sign that you may be ready is when it doesn’t feel like the odds are against you. “Am I ready to go for it, take that risk, use what I’ve learned from previous poor relationships and put them into effect?” says Hemmings. “Or do I still think it’s probably not going to pan out well? Do I not trust men, or women?”

There is always a risk that you will be disappointed or heartbroken again, she says: “You’ve got to be aware that any relationship could unravel for whatever reason.” But by taking the time to learn from previous relationships, rather than jumping into another, “you get better at spotting the signs”.

Many of us “tend to see relationships in terms of pass or fail,” says Cate Campbell, a sex, relationships and trauma psychotherapist. “If you think of them in terms of self-development, then it’s more difficult to pass or fail: this is what happened, this is what was successful about it, this is what I want in the future, this is what I don’t want.” Campbell asks: if you are scared to restart your love life, what is it that you are scared of? “Repeating the pattern? If you know what it is, you can be alert to it. Often, it is the fear of rejection. In that case, think about what you actually want. Do you want this to be a lifelong relationship, or are you just looking for some fun? What form should that fun take? Go into the relationship knowing that and not thinking: ‘I’ll only be validated if this person wants to be with me for ever.’”

Of course, recovering from a bad relationship depends on how bad it was. It can take years if the relationship was abusive – and some people don’t realise that was the case, “which makes them at risk of a similar situation next time”, says Campbell. Consequently, it makes sense not to rush into another relationship, but to allow time to recover from what has happened.

Having been in an abusive relationship actually makes it more likely that someone will get involved again too quickly, says Campbell, often as a way of trying to expunge the past. “Early red flags include love-bombing and excessive attention, especially when the new partner wants to spend time with you alone rather than with a group of friends,” she says. “Another would be a new partner’s early stories about their heartbreak or a ‘crazy ex’. It’s always wise to consider that the ex may have a very different version and to remain cautious initially.”

‘For many people who have been hurt, the kneejerk reaction is to go on dating apps.’ Photograph: Guido Mieth/Getty Images

When we talk about losing faith in love, “what it really means is losing faith in our own lovability”, says Hilda Burke, a psychotherapist and couples counsellor. “A lot of people come into therapy when they’ve had a bad relationship experience or breakup, and often the first step is training them to believe that they are lovable, that all of us are worthy of love. That starts with being more loving towards ourselves. When you’re in that frame of mind, you think: ‘Why wouldn’t someone like me and love me?’”

Instead, for many people who have been hurt or feel rejected, the kneejerk reaction is to go on dating apps. “We have something in our hands that offers a promise of love, or sex: ‘I could just swipe and find someone who finds

me attractive.' We can get an increase of dopamine, it can take the pain away in the moment," says Burke. But this is not helpful – especially when many people's experiences of apps comes with more rejection. "My new clients are often in that cycle of being hurt, feeling unlovable, going back to somewhere that offers this mirage of connection, but ultimately feeling more rejected, disappointed and disillusioned."

When you are ready to date again, especially if you are using apps, Burke recommends meeting in person before long. "I think messaging for a long time builds up a fantasy of what that person might be and might offer you, and it can lead to a disappointment when you meet," she says. (She recommends a short daytime date, to temper the pressure and expectations.) "There's disappointment and rejection, even though there hasn't actually been a relationship, but there has been an attachment. Do you want a fantasy, or do you want a real-life connection with someone?"

> You've got to be aware that any relationship could unravel for whatever reason

After her marriage ended, Lauren threw herself into dating within months. "In retrospect, I recognise that I was brittle and defensive. I was probably exactly the kind of person I was trying to avoid dating: somebody that wasn't ready and shouldn't have been there in the first place," she says. It was a distraction from the pain of her marriage breakdown, which had ended when she discovered her husband was having an affair when their baby was two weeks old. "It was an excuse to dress up. All my friends wanted to talk about was my divorce and how awful it was, how badly I'd been treated, and I just wanted something completely different."

For months, she says, her ex-husband had gaslighted her, making her think her suspicions were unfounded. She came out of the relationship "feeling very unsteady, with that sense of: 'I don't know what was real.' And that's very unsettling." It wasn't until last year, 13 years after the end of her marriage, that she felt able to look for a new relationship. "I think it was a gradual mellowing over time," she says.

Her son made her question the feelings she had towards men in general. “He talked to me about how it’s quite hard to grow up surrounded by the narrative of toxic masculinity. I realised that it wasn’t just society he was getting that from; he was getting it from me at home as well. It really made me reflect on how ingrained my cynicism had become.” She looked at her son. “Obviously, I’m biased – I’m his mother – but he’s a really big-hearted, generous, lovely young man. So there’s probably others out there.”

She met her boyfriend on a dating app after putting up an honest profile. “He’s one of the most incredible people I’ve ever met,” she says. “A man overflowing with kindness and curiosity and fun. He has completely restored my faith in men. Whatever happens to our relationship, it feels so joyful to have healed my heart enough to be able to open it up completely to someone, to know that I might get hurt again, but feel strong and optimistic enough to take a chance.”

Some names have been changed

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‘It’s great for the people it happens to’ … Enter Shikari. Photograph: Jamie Waters

Music

‘It’s not a pop-the-champagne moment any more’: is the UK album chart broken?

Artists are hitting No 1, then dropping out of the Top 100 the following week. Industry figures ponder whether the chart is still a barometer of taste – or just a marketing ploy

Safi Bugel
Thu 18 May 2023 04.47 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 07.44 EDT

Last week, Ed Sheeran secured the fastest-selling album of the year so far with his latest release, – (Subtract). The achievement comes as little surprise. Indeed, after six consecutive No 1 albums (a combined total of 46 weeks at the top spot) – and prompting the Official Charts Company (OCC) to rewrite the singles chart rules after he landed 16 songs from ÷ in the Top 20 in 2017 – he's no stranger to storming the charts.

But elsewhere in the official albums chart, things are much less secure. It's increasingly common for artists to break into the Top 10 for one week before suddenly plummeting or disappearing altogether. Last month, Ellie Goulding reached No 1 with her new record, Higher Than Heaven; but in its second week, it dropped to No 84. Meanwhile, a confusing mix of plucky indie acts with loyal fanbases, decades-old releases and greatest hits compilations sit side by side in the chart, prompting questions about what they actually represent in 2023.

"The charts have lost validity as a barometer of the public's musical interests," says Gareth Dobson of Wichita Management, which represents

acts such as Ride and Los Campesinos! One physical sale is equal to 150 song streams, and with artists able to clock up units from pre-order sales drives, including special edition releases, tickets for in-store performances and accompanying merchandise, rather than listens alone, he instead sees a No 1 album as an indicator of a successful marketing campaign.

“Chart position seems more about how you’ve managed to incentivise your fanbase rather than how popular you are,” he says, explaining why figures often begin to drop after the initial push. “It’s more of a status symbol than any true meaning of your artist’s value in the world.”

Ellie Goulding’s Higher Than Heaven went to No 1 … then dropped to No 84. Photograph: Official Charts Company/PA

From a PR perspective, he says getting into the Top 10 is still an exciting feat, especially for smaller artists and the independent sector: two weeks ago, pop-rockers the Lottery Winners beat career artists Jessie Ware and the National to the top spot. However, with high ranking expected to be short-lived – the Lottery Winners didn’t last a second week in the Top 100 – the charts no longer hold the weight they once did.

“You used to put records out and, if they charted well you’d see if you could hang in there for a few weeks,” says Dobson. “Now there’s an automatic

assumption that you will disappear from view almost literally the day after the first chart position. It's not quite a pop-the-champagne moment any more. It's very different to what it used to be."

Since June 2014, songs played on streaming services such as Spotify have been included in the album chart count, a shift that rewards enduring listenership, rather than real-time enthusiasm. But on the other hand, some argue that with its continuing emphasis on physical product, the chart fails to reflect the public's listening habits and neglects artists who rely exclusively on digital releases, among them many UK rappers.

> I like to see physical stuff out in the world, but it is weird thinking about all that plastic and cardboard

Ian Johnsen

"When you've got a race that relies largely on people purchasing music, it's going to be skewed," says Ian Johnsen, manager of Enter Shikari, who recently hit the No 1 spot for the first time in their 24-year career before dropping off the charts altogether the following week. Not to mention that turning to physical releases in order to score a chance of reaching the top of the charts comes with an additional environmental cost. "Everyone is trying to sell vinyl or CDs to make up for the fact that their streaming in the first week isn't gonna be anywhere near the numbers of an Ed Sheeran or an Adele or whoever the megastar releasing an album at that time is," he says. "As someone who collects vinyl, I like to see physical stuff out in the world, but it is weird thinking about all that plastic and cardboard."

Though Johnsen believes the chart in its current form is "failing to catch up with the realities of the world", he's unsure how it could be amended without further affecting smaller acts. In the meantime, he sees ticket sales as a more honest reflection of the public's engagement with an artist, partly because it can't be gamed as much. "It's very difficult to rally the troops around ticket sales like you can with a record," he says. "You can buy a ticket for you and your mate, but it's not like you're telling your mum to as well."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, OCC chief executive Martin Talbot disagrees with the notion that the albums chart is unrepresentative of the nation's taste, or that it needs fixing. He says the short stints of albums at No 1 is not the fault of the charts, but instead of the artists' inability to break into the mainstream market via engagement with streaming services.

"The fact that Ellie Goulding hasn't held on in the Top 20 shows how difficult it is," he says. "It's always been difficult to be successful, it's always been difficult to rise up above the rest of the market. That's kinda the way it is." He tells me that such a sharp drop is an outlier and that most albums stick in the charts after their initial success.

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Taylor Swift currently has nine albums in the Top 100. Photograph: OfficialCharts.com/Rex/ Shutterstock

As for the enduring chart positioning of old albums and compilations – Taylor Swift had nine albums in the Top 100 last week – Talbot pegs it to the "odd" albums market. "The fact that two or three years ago was the first time that Unknown Pleasures by Joy Division went into the Top 10, 40 years after it was first released – we have this perception [that] all these iconic records from the past were really big hits at the time, but they weren't necessarily. So the albums chart has always been slightly strange in terms of the consumption and the music popularity that it reflects." Less easily explained, then, is the fact that eight of the nine Swift albums currently in the chart have previously reached No 1.

While Talbot acknowledges that the rapid turnover of albums has become more common, he believes it can create more opportunity for new artists to experience a big moment. "It can be a profile builder that can help in [getting] their next deal, tours, radio play, all of those kinds of things. Actually having impact with the chart can really mean something," he says.

Johnsen agrees that reaching the top of the charts can be an invaluable opportunity for marketing purposes, but he questions its long-term validity in such a time of flux. "It's great for the people who it happens to, but once

you’re having these battles, you think: is this really the best use of everyone’s time?” he says. “I would say to newer artists, don’t think about it too much. Think about nurturing an audience rather than achieving this one-off thing.”

This article was updated on 18 May to correct an error: the Lottery Winners are not from Brighton.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/may/18/its-not-a-pop-the-champagne-moment-any-more-is-the-uk-album-chart-broken

Rolf Harris pictured in 1972. Photograph: ITV

TV reviewTelevision & radio

Review

Rolf Harris: Hiding in Plain Sight review – the awful truth behind the abuse that shocked a nation

This two-part ITV documentary lets the presenter's victims tell their stories with sensitivity, as well as asking wider questions – about the people who enabled his sexual assaults

Lucy Mangan
@LucyMangan
Thu 18 May 2023 04.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 04.14 EDT

There can be few people who, when the outpouring of allegations of historic child sexual abuse against the late Jimmy Savile began in 2012, did not at least acknowledge that there had always been something unsettling about the man, even if their only exposure to him was a few seconds of Jim'll Fix It. Those who followed him more closely would have read the clues to his monstrousness scattered in his autobiography, the hints he gave to interviewers that his apparent philanthropy was a front to allow him to get away with things, or the casual jokes he made about sex with young girls ("My case comes up next Thursday!"). Of course those who worked in the prisons and hospitals that allowed him free access to patients knew far more – from the nurses who would refuse to leave vulnerable patients alone with him to the higher-ups to whom those nurses did not feel able to complain.

But Rolf Harris was different. When he was arrested in 2013 and charged as a result of the Operation Yewtree police investigation (leading to a conviction on 12 counts of indecent assault – one later overturned – and a nearly six-year sentence, of which he served half), there was genuine shock and disbelief. Nobody saw it coming, I don't think. Except his many victims,

of course, whose years of silent suffering are firmly attested to in this two-part documentary.

Karen Gardner was 16 in 1978 when she jumped at the chance to help in the filming of Star Games (a celebrity version on ITV of the BBC's It's a Knockout). She was assigned to assist Harris on the day and "for the first couple of hours he was lovely". He then went on to assault her three times. She declines to say exactly what he did – a growing trend in these kinds of documentaries, and a pleasing sign of evolution in both survivors' confidence and programme-makers' attitudes – but notes that her period was due "and my breasts were very tender. There was no doubt he'd done it and done it deliberately. It was humiliating, degrading and awful. And your blood turns to concrete." As in other victim testimonies later in the programme, she notes the look in his eyes – lascivious, triumphant, free of remorse. He was 48 at the time: "Ten years older than my dad." She stayed silent for years because she thought she must have done something to deserve it. But "I bloody didn't".

The programme follows what is now, sadly, an established formula. The entertainer's career is outlined, salient points emphasised – Harris's friendship with Savile and appearances on Jim'll Fix It, plus his involvement with an anti-child abuse campaign where he urged children to tell a trusted adult about anything that was happening to them – and commentary supplied from TV insiders such as Michael Grade and Mark Lawson explaining the place the star had in the social firmament. All this is interspersed with accounts from those who were exploited by him. This includes a friend of Harris's daughter, Bindi, who speaking via her psychotherapist, claims that she (the friend) was abused by him for years from the age of 13.

That we have seen and heard it all before in recent documentaries about celebrities (several on Savile, R Kelly, Michael Jackson, Bill Cosby, Harvey Weinstein, Jeffrey Epstein and Prince Andrew) doesn't lessen its power but gives it cumulative strength.

There are signs, too, that such documentaries are preparing to broaden their focus. The programmes about R Kelly have increasingly asked questions about his enablers – the people who helped him get the girls and keep them

confined to his mansion, turning a blind eye to the obvious wrongdoing – and the many who colluded in Epstein's horrors (beyond Ghislaine Maxwell). Here, makeup artist Suzi Dent remembers Harris groping her whenever she had to powder his face but just as angrily recalls that not one of the men in the room stood up for her despite her repeated requests for him to leave her alone. "It was the green light to have fun with me."

So many green lights everywhere, still. So many stories to come.

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Rolf Harris: Hiding in Plain Sight is on ITVX, with an Australia screening to be confirmed.

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2023.05.18 - Opinion

- **The law is gone but they are still in jail: who will free Britain's most wronged prisoners?**
- **Yes, banning no-fault evictions is a good start. But renters are still at the mercy of rogue landlords**
- **No, ADHD is not a con. If that's the message you got from Panorama's exposé, you weren't paying attention**
- **Record numbers of British workers are sick. No wonder the economy is too. But there is a cure**

Illustration: Alex Mellon/The Guardian

OpinionSentencing

The law is gone but they are still in jail: who will free Britain's most wronged prisoners?

George Monbiot

Victoria was sentenced to 21 months but has served 15 years. Even the politician who introduced indefinite detention now says he regrets it

Thu 18 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 13.19 EDT

There are those of us who exist in a more or less free society. And there are those who, while also living within the borders of the United Kingdom, exist in a police state. If the rest of us knew these people existed and what was being done to them in our name, we would scarcely believe it.

No one, including Victoria Carter (an assumed name), would deny that her crimes warranted a significant prison sentence. She had come from a terrible place: a father who beat her up, an alcoholic mother whose friends sexually abused her, extreme poverty as all the money was spent on drink. As a young teenager, she ran away from home, after which she had more than 10 placements in foster care and care homes. She responded with anger, violence and self-destruction.

As a teenager, she was convicted of criminal damage and burglary. She tried to kidnap a man she believed had abused her younger sister. She then went through a phase of alcoholism, during which she had sex with two underage

teenagers, leading to a conviction for sexual offences. In an alcoholic rage, she set light to photos of her mother, scorching the carpet of her lodgings and earning herself an arson conviction.

In 2007, in her early twenties, she was prosecuted for actual bodily harm, among other offences. Her lawyer told her to expect a sentence of up to four years. This, the judge remarked, was roughly what she would have got under different circumstances: three and a half years. But instead he handed down a sentence of "imprisonment for public protection" (IPP).

IPP sentences were introduced in England and Wales by the New Labour government as it sought to prove it was tough on law and order in the Criminal Justice Act 2003. If an offender had previously been convicted of one of 153 offences deemed to present a danger to the public, and had then committed another such crime, the courts had no choice but to impose either an IPP sentence or life imprisonment. IPP means indefinite detention.

The crimes that qualified were wide-ranging. One defendant received an IPP sentence with a minimum term of just 28 days, but extended indefinitely. Another was imprisoned with a tariff of two years for stealing a bicycle. He served 12 and is now in a mental health institution.

These sentences included a "tariff": the period after which the prisoner could be assessed for release. Victoria's was 21 months. But IPP sentences carry a presumption against parole. Rather than the Parole Board having to prove that a prisoner presents a danger to the public, the prisoner has to prove that they don't. As the then justice secretary, Kenneth Clarke, said in 2011: "It is almost impossible for the prisoner to prove that, so … hardly any are released."

‘David Blunkett: ‘I got it wrong. The government now have the chance to get it right.’’ Photograph: ITV/REX/Shutterstock

Those who do manage to get out face a “life licence”, which cannot be reviewed for at least 10 years. The licence conditions are extremely strict. Released IPP prisoners can be sent back for infractions as petty as a missed probation appointment because their bus did not arrive, or even because the support service they were instructed to use no longer exists

In 2012, after widespread condemnation and a ruling by the European court of human rights that such sentences were “arbitrary and therefore unlawful”, IPP terms were abolished by the Conservative government. But the measure was not retrospective. As of the end of last year, 2,892 IPP prisoners remained behind bars. Of these, 1,498 were recalled back to prison and 1,394 had never been released; of this latter group, almost 97% of prisoners were more than two years past their tariff date, and nearly half were 10 years beyond it. Victoria was released at the beginning of this year, after serving more than 15 yearsof a 21-month tariff.

The former supreme court justice Lord Brown has called IPP sentences “the greatest single stain on the justice system”. When Michael Gove was justice secretary, he recommended “executive clemency” for IPP prisoners who had served terms much longer than their tariffs. But he didn’t act on it. David

Blunkett, the Labour home secretary who introduced the sentences, regrets them, stating: "I got it wrong. The government now have the chance to get it right."

But the government, always glancing at the media, refuses to take it. In February, it rejected the recommendation of the House of Commons justice committee that remaining IPP prisoners should be resentenced. Successive justice secretaries have failed to use the power they acquired in 2012 to introduce a presumption of release. So while people who committed far worse crimes come and go, IPP prisoners are forgotten, cast into a judicial oubliette from which some might never emerge.

The effects on their mental health of never knowing when or whether they might be released can be devastating. Rates of self-harm among these prisoners are more than twice as high as among prisoners serving life sentences.

In March 2008, when she began to understand what her sentence really meant, Victoria tried to kill herself, and very nearly succeeded. But then she became determined to sort herself out. She took every available course of psychotherapy and counselling, sat GCSE exams and started an Open University degree. She knew she wasn't ready for parole when her tariff ended. Two years later, she didn't qualify on the grounds that, through her own choice, she was still taking a psychotherapeutic course. But after a further two years, when she came up for parole again, she had turned her life around. Unfortunately, the standards of proof required for parole were impossible to meet.

Her application was refused and she spiralled into despair. She lost three and a half stone, started self-harming and taking drugs. She attempted suicide again. She became trapped in a vicious cycle. Being refused parole causes severe mental health problems for IPP prisoners, but mental illness is one of the criteria for the refusal of parole. So down they spiral. Instead of seeking help, some try to hide their problems from staff so as not to jeopardise their chances. Severe cuts have restricted the courses these prisoners can take, without which they have no hope of release.

Victoria is a remarkable woman: honest about what she was and what she did, acutely aware of the pain she caused, determined to lead a useful and purposeful life. But, close to 40, she is constantly confronted by the missing years. “I deserved to be punished,” she told me. “But did I deserve more than 15 years? No. I have days when I just sob in my bed. Just to get out some of the sadness of what I have lost.”

A great wrong has been done. Almost everyone in power accepts it is wrong. But none are prepared to address it.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist

This article was amended on 18 May 2023. An earlier version said that at the end of last year, 2,892 IPP prisoners remained behind bars, and that almost 97% were more than two years beyond their tariff date and nearly half were 10 years beyond. That meant to refer to government figures, which showed that of the 2,892 IPP prisoners who remained behind bars, 1,498 were recalled back to prison and 1,394 had never been released. Of the latter group, almost 97% of prisoners were more than two years past their tariff date, and nearly half were 10 years beyond it.

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‘There are many other improvements we want to see to the bill.’ Photograph: Patricia Phillips/Alamy

Opinion Renting property

Yes, banning no-fault evictions is a good start. But renters are still at the mercy of rogue landlords

Dan Wilson Craw

The renters reform bill is long overdue – but until the rules are enforceable the odds remain stacked against renters

- Dan Wilson Craw is the acting director of Generation Rent

Thu 18 May 2023 05.33 EDTLast modified on Fri 19 May 2023 03.31 EDT

Anyone who has been looking for a new home to rent knows the market is brutal. Navigating mass viewings and intrusive referencing processes, and making agonising decisions on space and location in order to find something in your budget, is exhausting. When you finally sign a tenancy agreement and get hold of the keys, you feel like you can breathe a sigh of relief.

Unfortunately, any sense of security that your home is yours is a mirage. After the initial fixed term of the tenancy, landlords can ask you to leave with only two months' notice and without specifying a reason.

There is a law that lets them do this. Section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act, the so-called "no-fault evictions" rule, essentially provides that if you complain about disrepair, such as mould sprouting through the paintwork, your

landlord can avoid fixing it by serving an eviction notice. Councils have powers to intervene but rarely use them.

Thankfully this is all set to change, with the renters (reform) bill published by parliament yesterday proposing to abolish section 21 and require landlords to prove a legitimate ground for eviction. The government originally promised this four years ago under Theresa May, so it has been a long wait to get to this point, during which nearly 65,000 households have faced homelessness after receiving a section 21.

The bill proposes creating a property portal, where landlords will be required to register their properties and tenants will be able to check their compliance. An ombudsman will provide an alternative to the courts and local authorities for renters whose landlords are ignoring their complaints. And renters will be given a legal right to ask to keep a pet – though landlords can decline this if they have a good reason.

All these measures are the consequence of tireless campaigning by Generation Rent, our allies on the Renters Reform Coalition and the thousands of renters who have taken action. In March, hundreds of us from around England congregated in Westminster to meet our MPs and demand the bill be published.

But even though we now have a bill, we haven't secured all the rights that renters need. There are still gaps in protection and potential loopholes that could undermine security of tenure and allow dodgy landlords to continue to exploit tenants.

For example, landlords who seek eviction to sell or move into the property themselves will be banned from re-letting the property after the tenant moves out – but only for three months. Many landlords have no mortgage so could use this as section 21 by the back door.

And even though tenants will have more power to negotiate rent increases or challenge them at a tribunal, there is nothing stopping rents rising as fast as they are in the wider market, meaning renters will still be vulnerable to unaffordable hikes that force them out.

Even when a landlord evicts tenants to sell up or move in, tenants will benefit from no more protection and support than they get under the current system. They would only be immune to such evictions for the first six months of the tenancy and then only have two months to move out, with no discretion for judges in cases of hardship and no financial support to mitigate the stress of being uprooted.

There are many other improvements we want to see to the bill, but one of the most important is to make the new rules enforceable. There's no point requiring landlords to register or prove genuine eviction grounds if underfunded councils are responsible for identifying those who do not. Tenants could have a huge role to play in this. Just as failure to comply with existing landlord licensing schemes means tenants can claim back up to a year's rent, we need compensation for tenants whose landlords break the rules. That would give renters an incentive to visit the portal, check their landlord – and, if the government designs it properly, learn about their rights as tenants.

The bill won't solve everything – without increases in local housing allowance and housebuilding in areas of high demand, rents will remain unaffordable. But after years of campaigning, this is a huge opportunity to rebalance the relationship between tenants and landlords. It's not a time to sit back – renters now need to start contacting their MPs and put pressure on them to pass a bill that brings renting into the 21st century.

- Dan Wilson Craw is the acting director of Generation Rent

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Photograph: SIphotography/Getty Images/iStockphoto

OpinionAttention deficit hyperactivity disorder

No, ADHD is not a con. If that's the message you got from Panorama's exposé, you weren't paying attention

Adrian Chiles

Until I got a diagnosis, ADHD made my life heart-stoppingly, nerve-shreddingly difficult. Many of those affected still struggle to get the treatment they need

Thu 18 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 05.57 EDT

‘Turns out it’s all a con, then,” someone said to me. This was attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) they were talking about, in reference to Monday evening’s BBC Panorama, which showed what looked like the decidedly doubtful practices of some reassuringly expensive private providers of psychiatry. So brilliant were some of the clinicians at the places featured that with the benefit of but a short questionnaire and a brief online chat, we were told they were able to diagnose ADHD and prescribe potent medication. Great! What service! And what a marvellous business plan: dosh for diagnoses, money for meds.

Panorama could hardly have made it clearer that while a handful of private clinics may be guilty of misdiagnosing ADHD, that doesn’t mean that ADHD itself isn’t a serious, debilitating condition. But if you’ve been a sceptic all along, or weren’t watching carefully enough, or you didn’t watch at all and merely half-heard or half-read something about the BBC

programme, then you might well be the person who says to me: “Turns out it’s all a con, then.”

To be clear, it isn’t. Many lives are blighted by undiagnosed and untreated ADHD. It will often lead to chronic underachievement at school, in the workplace and relationships, and to generally terrible decision-making in every aspect of life. Self-medication often leads to addiction issues. Those with ADHD are vastly over-represented in the prison population. Suicide rates are appallingly high among men and women with ADHD. And these are overwhelmingly the kind of people who will wait for ever for diagnosis on the NHS and are extremely unlikely to have a grand to spare for a consultation at a private clinic, good or bad. This is an unfolding tragedy about which I’m available to make a Panorama show any time they care to ask.

My ADHD plainly didn’t manifest itself as described above. I have been rather successful in my line of work, so I can hardly say it held me back. What I can say is that for an awfully long time I found my life heart-stoppingly, nerve-shreddingly difficult, as I veered wildly between the thrill of it all, and the crippling anxiety and depression. More than anything else, it was simply unsustainably exhausting and, I came to realise, potentially life-shortening. For a long time I thought this all came with the territory. But my diagnosis showed me it didn’t have to. Once I knew what had been going on between my ears for all my life, with the help of therapy and some medication, I was equipped to make changes that slowly improved everything.

I wrote about my experience in these pages and banged on about it on the radio and television. Several people were kind enough to tell me that they recognised themselves in the picture I painted, and sought help. This is great, but the fact is that people like me – ie those who can afford to pay; apparently successful, high-profile ADHDers – seriously distort the whole picture. From a distance, it must look like all the adults with ADHD are doing rather well for themselves.

> With depressing inevitability, some businesses saw this as a trough into which to put their snouts

Not a week goes by without some actor, musician, writer or whoever sharing their diagnosis. I can see how this might sound like bleating self-pity and get on people's nerves. To be honest, I get on my own nerves sometimes. This candour, or over-sharing perhaps, has helped to ease stigma around the condition and even – misguidedly in my view – seen it portrayed as some kind of superpower. But it has also had the unintended consequence of further overwhelming the already creaking NHS. ADHD has almost gone from being something no one wants to be labelled with, to a sought-after diagnosis – a demand the NHS can't meet. And where there's desperation, there's money; so in gallops the private sector, for good or ill. For those who can afford it, the care you pay for can be a lifeline. But, as Panorama suggested, it can also be a disgraceful con.

The worst thing, in terms of the stigma around ADHD, is that we're in danger of coming full circle. In the beginning it was a disorder with which no adult wanted to be labelled. It was something that particularly naughty schoolkids supposedly had. Then it became better understood. Those who could pay the money got the care they needed and sang hosannas about it. So the stigma slowly dissipated and demand for treatment rose. With drearily depressing inevitability some businesses saw a trough into which to put their snouts and, for a healthy price, hand out dodgy diagnoses. People see this is happening and so conclude that the whole thing is at best a bit of a craze and at worst a con. And before we know it, those with ADHD, or who think they might have it, are subject to a new, virulent variant of the stigma and shame we started out with in the first place.

Imagine being in their position, like a young woman I know in the same business as me. She's pretty sure it's ADHD that is making her life so miserable and wants to address it. With no hope of an NHS appointment any time soon, she has scraped together more money than she can sensibly spare to go private. So now she's stuck between the NHS, which can't help, and an expensive private consultation she possibly can't rely on. "I just feel I'm now in this awful dilemma. Going private should be an easy, albeit very expensive, solution, but now people might dispute the diagnosis anyway," she says.

"No one *wants* ADHD, no one *wants* to hand over a substantial amount of money, no one *wants* to take medication every day. All we want is clarity,

and for everyday life not to be so damn difficult.”

Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist

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Junior doctors strike, London. ‘The government’s long-running battle with nurses and junior doctors has been a spectacular own goal.’ Photograph: Maureen McLean/Shutterstock

Opinion Health

Record numbers of British workers are sick. No wonder the economy is too. But there is a cure

Larry Elliott

The Tories have failed to pursue the obvious answers to this crisis, punishing ill people and NHS strikers instead

Thu 18 May 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 05.40 EDT

Britain has a sick economy. That's not a metaphor for the flatlining of growth over the past year, but a statement of fact. Never before have so many people been out of the labour force due to long-term sickness or disability. Never before has there been such a loss of human potential.

Better health is desirable in itself. Ill-health makes people miserable, so it shouldn't really matter whether or not there were economic benefits from reducing the number of people who might want to work if they fell well enough to do so. Gross domestic product is not everything.

But in this instance, fewer people inactive because of health issues would be good both for personal wellbeing *and* for the economy. It is a win-win as opposed to the current lose-lose.

Here's how things currently stand. The number of people who say they are not looking for work because of long-term ill health rose by 86,000 in the first three months of 2023 to 2.55m and is now 438,000 higher than it was before the start of the pandemic three years ago.

Clearly, Covid-19 represented a serious blow to the nation's health and put pressures on an already severely stretched NHS. Of that 438,000 increase, some will be suffering from long Covid, while others found the stress of lockdown followed by the cost of living crisis affecting their mental health.

There are two things that would help instantly: an end to the strikes that have been affecting the NHS for months, and extra investment to start clearing the patient backlog. The government's long-running battle with nurses and junior doctors has been a spectacular own goal.

At the start of 2023 Rishi Sunak made five pledges. One was to have shorter NHS waiting lists, currently running at more than 7 million for England alone, by the end of the year, while another was to get the economy growing.

The two are linked. A quarter of the 2.55 million people inactive due to ill health say they want a job; better and speedier treatment would help them find one, fill some of the million job vacancies in the economy and boost growth.

To make a real difference will require more than the cosmetic measures contained in Jeremy Hunt's "back to work" budget. As the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has rightly noted, radical reform of statutory sick pay is needed to expand coverage to those on the lowest incomes and increase its generosity so that it is closer to the level of someone earning the "national living wage".

One thing is certain: toughening up the eligibility criteria for long-term sickness benefits will do nothing other than make the lives of some of the most vulnerable people even harder. The deep-seated nature of Britain's ill-health problem means a punitive approach won't work.

It would be wrong to assume that the UK went into the crisis a healthy nation. Rather, the Covid-19 shock aggravated worrying pre-pandemic

trends. A recent report from the left-leaning Institute for Public Policy Research thinktank said the death rate from all causes fell between 1990 and 2011, but then started to rise. The prevalence of cancer, diabetes, depression and hypertension all increased in the 2010s. In 1960, the UK ranked 7th for life expectancy among the rich nation members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. By 2020 it had dropped to 23rd.

According to the IPPR study, poor physical and mental health is costing individuals close to £2,000 a year in lost earnings and reducing the size of the economy by £43bn. Illness is, unsurprisingly, unevenly distributed geographically and by class, gender and ethnicity.

Times have been hard for the past 15 years. The 1990s and the early 2000s saw a long economic upswing in which real incomes grew and – under the Labour governments – spending on the NHS grew faster than at any time since it was created in 1948. Since 2007, there have been two deep recessions that have left wages – in inflation-adjusted terms – lower than they were 15 years ago.

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Jobs have been reasonably easy to come by during this period, but they have often been low-paid, insecure and non-unionised. More than 50% of those living below the official poverty line are in a working household, and the

constant struggle to make ends meet has taken its toll, both physically and mentally.

At the same time, spending on the NHS has become far less generous, with nugatory increases in funding since 2010. The need to make savings did not just mean that there was a shortage of capacity when Covid struck, it also meant underinvestment in prevention and mental health.

This is a bad place to be, and rather than setting itself the modest target of reducing waiting lists by the end of the year, the IPPR says the government should show more ambition and commit to a 30-year mission to turn the UK into the healthiest country on the planet.

That's a worthy aim, but achieving it won't be easy. It will require – among other things – better paid and more secure jobs; a greater role for unions in the negotiation of working conditions; a willingness to embrace new ideas such as hybrid working and shorter working weeks; and a recognition that the NHS needs to become a genuine National Health Service rather than a national illness service dealing with problems that could have been prevented.

Above all, it will require a recognition that inactivity as a result of ill-health is a symptom of a deeper malaise: the unhealthy state of modern British capitalism.

- Larry Elliott is the Guardian's economics editor
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File photo of Jack Teixeira. The air national guard member has been charged with being behind the Pentagon leaks of classified material. Photograph: Social Media Website/Reuters

Pentagon leaks 2023

Pentagon leaks suspect was warned off viewing classified material – prosecutors

Jack Teixeira was admonished repeatedly for accessing and taking notes on intelligence documents, says court filing

Associated Press
Wed 17 May 2023 22.29 EDT

Jack Teixeira, the US air national guard member charged with being behind the so-called Pentagon leaks of highly classified military documents, was warned repeatedly over his mishandling of classified material, according to a court filing.

Justice department lawyers made the disclosure in court papers that urged Teixeira be kept behind bars while he awaits trial in the case stemming from the most consequential intelligence leak in years. The judge is expected to hear more arguments on Friday before issuing a ruling.

Teixeira is accused of sharing highly classified documents about top national security issues in a chatroom on Discord, a social media platform that started as a hangout for gamers. He has not yet entered a plea.

Prosecutors allege that Teixeira continued leaking documents even after he was rebuked on two separate occasions last year due to his "concerning actions" related to classified information that were observed by superiors.

A memo from September 2022 states that Teixeira had been seen taking notes on classified intelligence information and putting the notes in his pocket. Teixeira was instructed at the time to no longer take notes in any form on classified intelligence information, the memo says.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
102D INTELLIGENCE WING (ACC)
MASSACHUSETTS AIR NATIONAL GUARD
OTIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE MASSACHUSETTS

15 Sep 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

FROM: 101IS/OPs

SUBJECT: A1C Jack Teixeira

1. On 15 September 22, MSgt H[redacted] was made aware that A1C Jack Teixeira of the 102 ISS had been observed taking notes on classified intelligence information in the 102d SCIF (BLDG 169). SSgt K[redacted] told MSgt H[redacted] that he observed A1C Teixeira put the note into his pocket and at that time asked A1C Teixeira if he planned to shread it. On 15 September 22, SMSgt H[redacted] and MSgt H[redacted] met with A1C Teixeira to discuss the incident. [redacted]

2. A1C Teixeira has been instructed to no longer take notes in any form on classified intelligence information. [redacted]

US air force memo about Pentagon Leaks suspect Jack Teixeira revealed in court filings Photograph: US dept of defence/courtlistener.com

Another memo from late October says that Teixeira was "potentially ignoring the cease-and-desist order on deep diving into intelligence information" given to him the month before. The memo says Teixeira attended a meeting and proceeded to ask "very specific questions". He was told again to focus on his job, not any "deep dives" into classified intelligence information.

A third memo from February this year says Teixeira was observed viewing information "that was not related to his primary duty and was related to the intelligence field". Teixeira "had previously been notified to focus on his own career duties and to not seek out intelligence products", the memo said.

"The Defendant even continued to share information with his online associates, defying these admonishments and taking further efforts to conceal his unlawful conduct," prosecutors wrote.

Lawyers for Teixeira, who was arrested last month on charges under the Espionage Act, are urging the judge to release Teixeira to his father's home, noting that the man didn't flee when media outlets began publishing his name shortly before his 13 April arrest. His lawyer told the judge last month that Teixeira "will answer the charges" and "will be judged by his fellow citizens".

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
102D INTELLIGENCE WING (ACC)
MASSACHUSETTS AIR NATIONAL GUARD
OTIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE MASSACHUSETTS

27 Oct 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

FROM: 101IS/OPs

SUBJECT: A1C TEIXEIRA

1. On 25 Oct 22, MSgt H[redacted] was made aware that A1C Teixeira was potentially ignoring the cease-and-desist order on deep diving into intelligence information given on 15 Sep 22. On 20 Oct 22, A1C Teixeria attended the ISS morning meeting where the weekly CIB was being given by SSgt C[redacted] and upon SSgt C[redacted] finishing his brief, A1C Teixeria proceeded to ask very specific questions and [redacted] On 26 Oct 22, when asked if he had been accessing JWICs to look up classified intelligence information, [redacted]

2. A1C Teixeira has been instructed by SMSgt H[redacted] to continue to cease-and-desist on any deep dives into classified intelligence information and focus on his job as a 1D. Additionally, he was offered the opportunity to explore cross training into 1N0 or 1N4 AFSCs but declined any cross training opportunity at this time.

US air force memo about Pentagon Leaks suspect Jack Teixeira revealed in court filings Photograph: US dept of defence/courtlistener.com

In their own court filing on Wednesday, Teixeira's lawyers noted there have been many Espionage Act cases in which courts have approved release, or the government did not seek to keep the person behind bars pretrial. They have also said there is no allegation that Teixeira ever intended for documents to be distributed widely.

But prosecutors said in their filing that one of the servers on the social media platform he posted classified information to had at least 150 users at the time the information was shared and "now may have many more users that are actively seeking access to information".

"Among the individuals with whom the Defendant shared government information are a number of individuals who represented that they resided in other countries and who logged on to the social media platform using foreign IP addresses," prosecutors wrote.

In messages, Teixeira bragged about the scope of information he had access to, writing, "The information I give here is less than half of what's available," prosecutors said. He also acknowledged he wasn't supposed to be sharing the information, prosecutors said, writing in another message, "All of the s--- I've told you guys I'm not supposed to," according to the Justice Department's filing.

In earlier court records, prosecutors revealed that Teixeira kept an arsenal of weapons before his arrest and has a history of violent and disturbing remarks.

The leaked documents appear to detail US and Nato aid to Ukraine and US intelligence assessments regarding allies that could strain ties with those nations. Some show real-time details from February and March of Ukraine's and Russia's battlefield positions and precise numbers of battlefield gear flowing into Ukraine from its allies.

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Fighters from the Rapid Support Forces ride in a technical vehicle in the East Nile district of greater Khartoum, Sudan. Photograph: Rapid Support Forces/AFP/Getty Images

Sudan

‘On every corner someone disappears’: the frantic search for Sudan’s missing

Since fighting erupted last month, dozens of people have vanished, but communities are organising to find and bring them home

Kaamil Ahmed
Thu 18 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 01.12 EDT

Kamal Ali Osman sent a text message to his family saying he was being stopped by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the militia group whose checkpoints now throttle the roads of the Sudanese capital, Khartoum.

Minutes later, the text was deleted from his phone. He has not been heard from since.

Osman, 60, had been returning home after delivering some medication to his father in another part of Khartoum. It was only through contact with an RSF source that his family were able to confirm find out that their father was being interrogated. Two weeks on, they have heard nothing more.

Kamal Ali Osman, who has not been heard from since he told his family he was being stopped by the RSF in Khartoum two weeks ago.

“We were shocked and scared. Why did he delete the message? We think he was forced to delete it,” said Osman’s daughter, Israa Ali Osman, 22, who was away in Egypt with other family when the fighting erupted in Sudan on 15 April between the RSF and the national army.

The family are among many who have been posting pictures and contact information on social media over the past month, desperately searching for loved ones who have gone missing in the weeks since the conflict began. Many people disappeared after venturing out of their homes for food or medication.

Osman's daughter said there was no reason for him to be held – her father has no military involvement.

A relative who went to search for Osman found his car parked in an area where the RSF keep their vehicles. His daughter says he recently had a heart operation and needs daily medicines.

"We are constantly worried about him and his health," she said. "My younger brothers always ask about him and my mother is worried as she suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure. We haven't eaten or slept well for two weeks."

At least 190 people have gone missing since 15 April, according to the Missing Initiative, a volunteer organisation founded after the RSF attacked a peaceful sit-in demanding civilian rule in 2019, killing at least 120 people, with more going missing. Its work has never stopped, as people have continued to disappear, particularly after a military coup in 2021.

"It has never stopped because violence has never stopped. The city was never safe and the country as a whole was surrounded by forces everywhere, whether RSF or army. On every corner, every day, there is someone to disappear after each and every protest," said Fadia Khalaf, co-founder of the initiative.

Some are detained or disappeared, and others reportedly killed with their families unable to recover their bodies.

The process starts with a report from families, then the group's members use their contacts to investigate. It is a long process that can weigh heavily on those involved.

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"It's very draining on everyone – the team, families, relatives. It does make you depressed and eventually you just burn out and feel like you can't do anything any more. It becomes very heavy – on your heart, on your brain," Khalaf said.

"It feels heavier than before because it wasn't on the same scale. This is a war. There is no country, there's no government, there's no police. They're bombing everywhere – hospitals, factories, houses, mosques. You feel lost. I'm not talking only about the missing, the whole situation is really overwhelming."

A doctor points to damage outside the East Nile hospital in Khartoum, where airstrikes and street battles have forced thousands to flee in recent weeks. Photograph: RSF/Reuters

Despite the daunting task, the team has continued to work around the clock and are having success – managing to return 25 people to their families so far. “It feels amazing and we’re actually finding people every day as well. It feels really good in the middle of this chaos,” Khalaf said.

Like Osman, Siddig Ismail Mohamed Tahir went missing after being arrested by the RSF in late April. He had left the family home and was answering calls before his phone was turned off.

“My dad would never do that, and that’s when we knew,” said his daughter Sarah Siddig, who lives in Manchester with her sister. “It was the most horrible feeling. I could never explain the confusion, pain and fear we felt. There were a thousand things going through our heads because we knew anything could have happened.”

After five hours of trying to get through on the phone to Khartoum, she posted on social media calling for help. Eventually, information came through about where he was being held. As British citizens, the family contacted the UK Foreign Office.

“I honestly feel like they didn’t understand the urgency of the situation,” she said. But after they contacted the British ambassador to Sudan, Giles Lever, their father was released.

“I met my father in Birmingham airport, that’s where the evacuation plane arrived. We were all standing around the airport waiting for him. Once we saw him, we hugged him so tight while crying our eyes out. My dad was just laughing and telling us that he’s OK – he always does this because he never wants us to be worried about him.

Smoke over the capital, Khartoum, as fighting continued on 6 May. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

“He had a scar on his leg after being grazed by a bullet during his detention. I remember crying so hard thinking that the bullet could have hit anywhere, but overall I’ve never felt so much relief.”

Since then, Siddig has been trying to help others find missing people, offering support and advice. “The Sudanese community is unmatched. The amount of help we got was overwhelming. People we don’t even know were risking their lives for my dad,” she said.

“It’s the hardest thing anyone can ever go through. I hope I can help as many people as I can. It’s a scary experience and I was lucky enough to have my sister’s help, many people are going through this alone.”

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The mishandled luggage rate soared to 7.6 bags per 1,000 passengers in 2022, with 26m pieces delayed, lost or damaged globally. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

Air transport

Mishandled baggage rate almost doubled globally in 2022 as airlines scrambled after Covid

New statistics lay bare the extent of the disruption during the ‘summer of lost luggage’

Elias Visontay Transport and urban affairs reporter
Thu 18 May 2023 05.46 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 12.15 EDT

It was the year of “the summer of lost luggage”, in which travellers across the world told stories of disappearing bags as the aviation industry struggled to keep up with rebounding demand.

Now, newly collated statistics show the extent of the disruption: the rate of mishandled baggage almost doubled globally in 2022, with 26m pieces of luggage delayed, lost or damaged.

That mishandled luggage rate soared to 7.6 bags per 1,000 passengers in 2022, up from 4.35 in 2021 and 5.6 in 2019, according to the aviation data company SITA's annual insights report.

For international flights, the mishandling rate was 19.3 bags per 1,000 passengers, more than eight times higher than the rate of 2.4 for domestic flights.

This was largely because flight transfers were more likely on international journeys, SITA's chief executive, David Lavorel, said. Errors during flight transfers were the largest contributor to mishandled baggage in 2022, accounting for 42% of affected luggage.

Lavorel described the rise in mishandled baggage as an "exponential increase".

"The swift comeback took the industry by surprise," he said. This left ground handlers scrambling to navigate the surge in traffic with reduced staff, he said.

There were 3.42 billion air passengers in 2022, up from 2.28 billion in 2021 but still down from the pre-pandemic peak of 4.54 billion in 2019.

Nicole Hogg, a baggage expert with SITA, said a less favourable consequence of the return of air travel was the emergence of "baggage mountains".

"The sudden influx of travellers caught the industry off guard, resulting in global issues and significant disruptions from Europe to Australia and the Americas."

Mishandling rates were considerably worse for airlines operating in Europe, with a rate of 15.7 mishandled bags per 1,000 passengers, compared with

6.35 in North America and 3.04 in the Asia-Pacific region.

Larger airports that had passengers transferring through them experienced “the most severe repercussions”, she said, which had a flow-on effect at smaller airports attempting to return baggage to owners at their destinations.

Hogg noted the sector’s workforce, which had been decimated by Covid border restrictions and forced many workers into new industries, was still hampered by labour shortages and inexperienced workers fresh to aviation.

These workforce issues also caused cancellations, delays and long security queues at airports in 2022, and continued to threaten the industry’s post-pandemic recovery, Hogg said.

The surge in mishandled baggage to 7.6 per 1,000 passengers – although still an improvement on 2007’s rate of 18.88 – means the industry has lost significant ground on the progress it made over the previous decade in improving luggage handling through technological advances and automation, the SITA report said.

A mishandled piece of baggage is one that is reported as delayed, damaged, stolen or lost, with the global rate taking into account all claims made with airline or ground-handling companies on behalf of passengers.

Of the 26m mishandled bags in 2022, 80% were delayed, an increase of 9% on the previous year. Damaged bags accounted for 13% of mishandled bags, while 7% were lost or stolen.

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Fire and police investigators inspect Loafers Lodge in Wellington, New Zealand. Photograph: George Heard/AP

New Zealand

Man arrested and charged with arson after fatal Wellington hostel fire

Police not ruling out ‘further, more serious charges’ after boarding house blaze that killed at least six

Charlotte Graham-McLay in Wellington
Thu 18 May 2023 06.48 EDTFirst published on Wed 17 May 2023 23.03 EDT

A man has been arrested and charged with two counts of arson following a fire that erupted in a Wellington, New Zealand boarding house this week, killing at least six people.

The man is due to appear in the Wellington District Court on Friday. Officers are not seeking anyone else in relation to the blaze, Inspector Dion Bennett

said in a statement on Thursday.

“Police have not ruled out further, more serious charges in relation to the deaths at the scene,” Bennett said. The man has not been named.

His arrest followed the recovery by officers of the first two victims’ bodies from the charred hostel building on Thursday. There is not a definitive total of the number of people missing.

It was believed that “less than 20” residents were unaccounted for, including the six confirmed dead, Bennett said on Wednesday. None of those killed or missing have been formally named.

The blaze took hold after midnight on Tuesday at the 92-room hostel, which provided short and long-term accomodation. The residents of the building, called Loafers Lodge, included workers at the nearby hospital, tradespeople, many clients of Wellington’s social support agencies, and nine people under supervision by the Department of Corrections.

The blaze has prompted questions about the standards of New Zealand’s boarding houses and other accommodations used by the county’s most vulnerable people.

New Zealand’s prime minister Chris Hipkins on Wednesday said he had asked housing minister Megan Woods to examine building regulations to see if changes should be made.

The fire which broke out at the Loafers Lodge hostel in Wellington on Tuesday. Photograph: Xinhua/Shutterstock

“I’ve already asked officials to give me advice in terms of what we need to do to ensure that buildings are safe for New Zealanders,” Dr Woods told reporters on Wednesday, in response to questions about whether she would undertake a full review of the country’s building code.

Meanwhile, the chief executive of the fire service, Kerry Gregory, on Thursday defended the organisation’s response to the blaze after claims in domestic news outlets that firefighters had lacked the equipment needed to tackle it.

“I want to reassure the public that fire and emergency are ready, able and capable of responding,” he told reporters, adding that 33 trucks and 80 firefighters had been sent to the scene and that firefighters had done an “excellent job”.

But the number of firefighters in New Zealand are “not where we need them to be”, Gregory added.

Gregory told reporters on Thursday that New Zealand’s fire service is working with ageing fleets – 27% of fire appliances are operating beyond their target life of 20-25 years – and stations that are not fit for purpose.

An operational review into how the fire was tackled will be launched, he said.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, the building director of Loafers Lodge, Greg Mein, also defended the maintenance of the hostel.

“Myself, the management, the family … of the owner, everyone is just gutted by this. It’s just done us in completely,” he said.

Mein said a recent, routine building safety exam – confirmed by the City Council – showed “all the services are up to standard and … everything was a-OK”.

With Australian Associated Press

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Cipla's Durban plant. The long-acting cabotegravir jab almost eliminates the chance of being infected with HIV through sex, at far less cost than the branded version. Photograph: Gallo/Getty

Fair AccessGlobal health

Injectable HIV-prevention drug to be made in South Africa for the first time

Indian drug company to make cheaper generic version of CAB-LA, potentially protecting millions of people in Africa from the virus

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About this content

Zano Kunene

Thu 18 May 2023 01.30 EDTLast modified on Thu 18 May 2023 07.35 EDT

An affordable version of a groundbreaking HIV-prevention drug will be made in South Africa for the first time, potentially giving millions of people at risk of HIV infection in Africa access to a two-monthly jab that can almost eliminate their chances of contracting the virus.

The Indian drug company Cipla confirmed that a generic version of the prophylaxis, long-acting cabotegravir (CAB-LA), would be manufactured at its plants in Benoni, near Johannesburg, or Durban.

Cabotegravir blocks HIV from entering a person's cells. Studies have shown that it reduces to almost zero an individual's chances of getting infected with the virus through sex. As it is easier to take regularly, CAB-LA has also been found to work better than a daily HIV-prevention pill, which is available for free in South Africa and several other African countries.

The confirmation follows an announcement in March that the developers of CAB-LA, ViiV Healthcare, and the UN-backed Medicines Patent Pool

(MPP), had granted licences to three companies, including Cipla.

The other two companies, Aurobindo and Viatris, are also Indian corporations that are already producing antiretroviral drugs for HIV treatment.

The branded version of CAB-LA sells for about $3,500 (£2,800) for one injection in the US – a price that puts it out of reach for lower-income countries. Even at a lower, "not-for-profit" price at which the manufacturer said it would sell the medicine to 90 poorer countries, including South Africa, the brand-name version is probably too expensive for the South African government to buy.

Last year, celebrities and leading figures in healthcare, including Winnie Byanyima, executive director of UNAids, called for ViiV to lower the price of the drug. But being granted a licence to produce a generic version of a branded medicine is only the first step.

"CAB-LA is a sterile, injectable product with a very complex manufacturing process," Kimberly Smith, ViiV's head of research, told Bhekisisa, a health news site, last year. For a pharmaceutical company to make a generic version of the medicine, the technology behind the manufacturing must be shared, so it could take up to five years before the product is on the market.

ViiV holds the patent for CAB-LA until 2031 in South Africa, which means that unless licences were granted for other generics, the company would have no competition for at least eight years.

Even one new contender can dramatically affect medicine prices, according to an analysis by the Food and Drug Administration, the US medicines regulator. It estimated that one generic manufacturer entering the market cut the price wholesalers paid manufacturers for a drug by 39%. Products with six or more generic producers were on average 95% cheaper than when only a single branded option was available, the report found.

Less than 40% of the medicines Africa needs can be made on the continent, and only 38 countries are estimated to have any drug manufacturers. Where they do exist, the companies rarely make medicines from scratch.

When ready-made and packaged medicines are imported, they can be expensive and it is significantly cheaper to import the raw materials to make the medicine locally, according to an analysis by the consultancy McKinsey.

Intellectual property deals such as the one brokered by the MPP can also lessen the impact of medicine shortages because alternative suppliers are available. Poorer countries suffer without such an agreement, as they did during the Covid pandemic, when the west bought up most of the stock of vaccines.

By the time Africa had enough doses to vaccinate about 9% of the continent's population in early 2021, Canada had paid for enough jabs to vaccinate its population five times over.

In 2020 India and South Africa led a campaign at the World Trade Organization for intellectual property rights to be waived on Covid vaccines, medicines and tests, proposing that pharmaceutical companies should explain how to make the drugs, as well as what was in it.

In June 2022, a watered-down version of the proposal was accepted, but it only covered vaccines until 2027 and not medicines, treatments or tests. And it only applied to patents, not technology transfers, so generics firms would only know the ingredients and not the manufacturing process.

Licensing generics did not remove the risk of drug shortages, said Esteban Burrone, MPP's head of policy, explaining that the lower profit margins could deter manufacturers from producing generics.

For this reason, pharmaceutical companies seeking a sub-licence must agree to create "broad access" once awarded manufacturing rights. For CAB-LA, Burrone said they "zoomed in on the three manufacturers who are most ready" to address demand rapidly.

This is an edited version of an article written for the Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/may/18/injectable-hiv-prevention-drug-to-be-made-in-south-africa-for-the-first-time

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