

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Middle East Images/AFP via Getty

Three Americans—two soldiers and a civilian interpreter—were killed in central **Syria**. According to the Pentagon, they had been supporting operations to counter the Islamic State group when they came under fire from a lone gunman, who was subsequently killed. Three other American service members were wounded; local reports also say that at least two Syrian soldiers were injured.

Israel said it had killed a senior Hamas commander in a strike on Gaza city. The target, Raed Saad, is believed by Israel to have played a key role in the attacks of October 7th 2023. Hamas did not confirm his death, but criticised Israel for violating their ceasefire deal. Gaza health authorities reported that five people were killed and 25 injured in the attack.

Belarus released 123 prisoners as part of an American-brokered deal. Among those freed were **Ales Bialiatski**, a Nobel peace-prize laureate, and **Maria Kolesnikova**, a prominent political activist. In return America lifted some sanctions that it had imposed on Belarus for human-rights abuses and for its role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The measures withdrawn include sanctions on potash, an ingredient in fertiliser and one of Belarus's most important exports.

Thousands of protesters marched through Budapest, the capital of **Hungary**, after a video emerged of an official in a state-run juvenile detention centre beating and kicking inmates. Peter Magyar, the leader of the opposition, called for the government of Viktor Orban, which [faces elections in four months](#), to resign over its failure to protect children in its custody.

Anutin Charnvirakul, **Thailand's** prime minister, vowed more [military action](#) against **Cambodia** hours after Donald Trump announced a new ceasefire between the two neighbours. Mr Charnvirakul said Thailand would keep fighting until “we feel no more harm and threats”. The latest round of fighting along the countries’ disputed border broke out on Monday and has killed at least 20 people.

Iran detained a **tanker** in the Gulf of Oman as part of a crackdown on attempts to smuggle its heavily subsidised fuel out of the country. State media reported that the vessel of unknown provenance was carrying 6m litres of “smuggled diesel”. They claimed that its crew, which came from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, had ignored orders to stop and lacked the necessary paperwork.

SpaceX said it was preparing for an **IPO** in 2026 and revealed a share buyback scheme that values the [rocket-maker](#) at around \$800bn. That would make SpaceX, which is run by Elon Musk, the world’s most valuable private company. In a message to employees, the firm said it wants to go public to finance its Starship rocket, among other initiatives.

Word of the week: *embourgeoisement*. France’s National Rally is gaining a white-collar following on top of its established working-class vote. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Jordan Bardella

Stopping Europe's populist right

This week Jordan Bardella, the leader of France's [National Rally](#), met Nigel Farage, head of [Reform UK](#), a British populist-right party, in London. They had reason to be cheerful. The 30-year-old Mr Bardella is favourite to win France's presidential election in 2027 (his mentor, Marine Le Pen, is appealing against a court decision that barred her from running for office for five years). Meanwhile Mr Farage's party is ten points ahead of its nearest rivals in Britain, according to [The Economist's tracker](#).

European centrists have long warned of catastrophe if the populist right should triumph. This week [The Economist argues](#) that approach is doomed to fail. Voters might think mainstream parties, with their shrill demonising, are deflecting from their own shortcomings. And while some populist-right administrations are dangerous, others are not: Giorgia Meloni has run Italy much like a conventional politician. A wiser strategy, we suggest, is to engage with populists' policies—and thus either improve them or expose their folly.



Photograph: Alamy

A controversial film release in Japan

In May 2017—months before the #MeToo movement erupted in the West—Ito Shiori accused Yamaguchi Noriyuki, a prominent Japanese journalist, of raping her. #MeToo never truly took hold in Japan. Nevertheless Ms Ito punctured a [long silence](#) around sexual violence. Prosecutors dropped criminal charges against Mr Yamaguchi, but Ms Ito filed a civil lawsuit and eventually won damages in 2019. “Black Box Diaries”, her documentary chronicling a gruelling quest for justice, premiered in America in January 2024. It has since won numerous awards and earned an Oscar nomination. But it was never released in Japan.

That changed this weekend when the documentary finally premiered in Tokyo. An unexpected backlash had delayed the release. Ms Ito had grown accustomed to attacks from the right, but the recent brickbats came from left-leaning feminists who accused her of using unauthorised footage and of not protecting her sources (she apologised and made some edits). Ordinary Japanese, unsure what to make of the furore, can now judge the film for themselves.



Photograph: Alamy

A Liverpool legend's uncertain future

Football-mad Egypt is home to dozens of clubs, but its most popular one might be in England. [Millions of Egyptians](#) have become fans of Liverpool thanks to the exploits of Mohamed Salah. The Egyptian forward has scored 250 goals for the club, making him its most marketable star. But now Egyptians are turning off Liverpool. After a bad run of results Arne Slot, Liverpool's coach, dropped Mr Salah for three matches; the player then declared he no longer had a relationship with the boss.

For days it looked as though Mr Salah had played his last game for Liverpool. But on Friday things changed after “peace talks” between the player and his coach. On Saturday Mr Salah featured in Liverpool’s match against Brighton. That will do little to quell the speculation. Clubs from Saudi Arabia want to sign Mr Salah when the transfer window opens in January. One of the Premier League’s greatest careers could yet come to an ignominious end.



Photograph: Kimberley French/Netflix

Kate Winslet's family affair

Kate Winslet's directorial debut, "Goodbye June", is a Christmas film that is in turn merry and melancholic. Helen Mirren stars as the titular June, whose health takes a turn during the holidays. June's four children: Julia (Ms Winslet), the hot-headed Molly (Andrea Riseborough), eccentric Helen (Toni Collette) and sentimental Connor (Johnny Flynn) put their differences aside to care for the family's matriarch.

The cast's brilliant performances make up for the sometimes thin screenplay, penned by Ms Winslet's son Joe Anders. As June deteriorates there are several poignant moments, such as when she writes a letter to Helen's unborn child. The other grandchildren provide some much needed cheer. Ms Winslet recently expressed her dislike of the term "nepo baby", insisting her children have not had a "leg up" in their careers. Yet it is hard to imagine "Goodbye June" would have been made without her involvement.



Photograph: Getty Images

Weekend profile: Omar García Harfuch, Mexico’s “Batman” with big political ambitions

Mexico will [probably end 2025](#) with about 24,300 murders. That is a grim tally, but less than the more than 30,000 recorded annually since 2018. A big reason for the drop is Omar García Harfuch, the 43-year-old federal security minister.

Mr García Harfuch improved the police’s use of data and is building a new investigative police force. His [crime-fighting achievements](#) have earned him the nickname “Batman” and credibility with Donald Trump’s administration, while prompting talk of presidential ambitions.

Mr García Harfuch studied at police academies in Mexico and the United States, including that of the FBI. He rose up the ranks of the federal police, working in intelligence and leading the criminal investigations unit. As Mexico City’s security secretary from 2019 to 2023—when Claudia Sheinbaum, now Mexico’s president, was mayor—he cut the capital’s homicide rate by 40%. In 2020 he survived an ambush in broad daylight where gunmen shot him three times.

His political rise is also impressive. Despite not being a man of Morena, the populist party that has ruled since 2018, in 2023 he won the internal race to become its candidate for mayor of Mexico City. But he stepped aside to help Morena meet Mexico’s gender

quota and was elected a senator. Soon after Ms Sheinbaum appointed him security minister. A technocrat with national appeal, Mr García Harfuch's name already circulates as a possible contender for the presidency in 2030.

He faces a hard road. His grandfather was defence minister when there was a notorious student massacre in 1968; his father once led the regime's feared political police. A report on the Ayotzinapa disappearances, when 43 students from a teacher-training college were abducted by gangs with the help of security forces, in 2014, mentioned Mr García Harfuch as being involved in shaping the so-called "historical truth". He has said he had no operational role and was never accused of wrongdoing.

The biggest threat to his rise is the scale of the task. Homicides are down, but other crimes, such as extortion and kidnapping, are rising. Gangs are becoming entrenched in some areas. Mr García Harfuch can build intelligence-led policing and professionalise the ministry, but he cannot alone demilitarise public security or root out the political corruption that feeds gangs.

Still, he is one of the few Mexican public figures with technical competence and clout. His calm presence and public image give him rare credibility in a system Mexicans deeply distrust. He is not a populist and does not promise miracles. But he has a plan—and so far, the discipline to stick to it.



Illustration: The Economist

Mini crossword

We publish a new interactive edition of our crossword daily, allowing you to enter and check the answers and see explanations. Try it [here](#).

There are two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers.

Cryptic clues:

1 across - A rash separation (5)

2 across - DIY takes the French back to maximum output (5)

3 across - Excuse me Dr, I've somehow swallowed an urge (5)

1 down - Lowly hood? Barmy place to make a movie (9)

Straight clues:

1 across - Buzzing habitats (5)

2 across - An amount produced (5)

3 across - Big swing (5)

1 down - The home of a mighty media merger battle (9)



Illustration: The Economist

The winners of the week's quiz

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Kate Knowles, Penrhyndeudraeth, Wales

Andrew Hutchings, Budapest, Hungary

Ewen Mackenzie-Bowie, Auckland, New Zealand

They all gave the correct answers of: Robinson Crusoe, Rock Hudson, the Boxer rebellion, two minute silence and contract bridge. The theme is songs by Simon & Garfunkel: Mrs Robinson, I Am A Rock, The Boxer, The Sound of Silence and Bridge Over Troubled Water.

The questions were:

Monday: The experiences of the marooned Alexander Selkirk were the reported inspiration for which famous novel?

Tuesday: Roy Harold Scherer found fame as an actor under which stage name?

Wednesday: A Chinese resistance movement against foreign powers between 1899 and 1901 is generally known by what name?

Thursday: What do people in many countries observe at 11am on November 11 (or the nearest Sunday to that date) to mark the casualties of two world wars?

Friday: In which card game are “Blackwood” and “Stayman” two of the best-known conventions used by players to cooperate?

*The present crisis of Western
democracy is a crisis in
journalism.*

Walter Lippmann