

## Catch up: Israel continues to bomb Lebanon; Sue Gray quits



**Israel** continued to bombard Beirut, **Lebanon's** capital, overnight. On Saturday Hamas said that an airstrike on a refugee camp in northern [Lebanon](#) had killed Saeed Atallah Ali, one of the group's commanders. Israel claims to have struck some 2,000 Hizbullah targets in southern Lebanon, though this has not prevented the Iran-backed militants firing back. Elsewhere Israeli forces struck a mosque in Deir al-Balah, a town in northern Gaza, killing at least 19 people according to Palestinian authorities.

**Sue Gray** quit as chief of staff to **Keir Starmer**, Britain's prime minister. The former civil servant, who had been criticised for being ineffective, will be succeeded by Morgan McSweeney, one of the architects of the Labour Party's election victory in July. The two reportedly had a fraught relationship. [Sir Keir](#) also announced a number of other changes to his staff.

Oliver Blume, Volkswagen's boss, warned that the **tariffs** on Chinese electric vehicles approved by the **EU** on Friday could [endanger](#) the German auto industry in an interview with *Bild am*

*Sonntag*, a German newspaper. He predicted China would retaliate, exposing homegrown firms to “significant disadvantages” in the Chinese market. Germany, which exports cars to China and has several factories there, voted against the measure.

**Vietnam’s** GDP grew by 7.4% in the three months to the end of September compared with the same period a year earlier. Analysts had expected growth of only 6.1%, fettered by the effects of Typhoon Yagi, which caused factory activity to contract for the first time in five months. Vietnam’s [strong growth](#) was supported by high levels of foreign investment and export demand.

Rwanda will trial a vaccine designed to combat the **Marburg virus disease** after having declared an outbreak on September 27th. The disease, which has no approved treatment and can be fatal in up to 88% of cases depending on the strain and how infections are managed, has killed 12 people so far. The Rwandan government has recorded 46 confirmed cases.

**Saudi Arabia** increased the official selling price of crude for buyers in Asia, according to Bloomberg. **Oil prices** surged by more than 8% last week, marking the biggest weekly gain in nearly two years. Traders are worried that if Israel targets Iran’s oil facilities, Iran and its proxies could retaliate by disrupting the region’s energy infrastructure.

The **European Court of Justice** said Romania must recognise the name and gender of a Romanian-British dual citizen who legally [transitioned](#) to male while living in Britain when it was still in the **European Union**. The ruling could make more conservative and restrictive EU states recognise **gender transitions** from those that make the process easier.

**Word of the week:** Kokpar, one of the oldest nomadic games in Kazakhstan. It involves men on horseback fighting over a goat carcass. [Read the full story.](#)

**Correction:** In an earlier edition we incorrectly said that Janos Kovrig was detained and tortured in 1949. In fact, it was in 1946.

## Salvini's waning popularity



Ardent supporters of Italy's League, a hard-right party, will gather outside Pontida, a village in northern Italy, for their party's annual rally on Sunday. This year they will be joined by leading radical conservatives from outside Italy, including Victor Orban, the Hungarian prime minister, and Geert Wilders, a Dutch firebrand. Their backing will provide a much-needed respite for Matteo Salvini, the party's leader.

Mr Salvini risks a six-year prison sentence for kidnapping migrants. He is on trial over his order to stop 177 migrants from leaving a boat in 2019, when he was a member of a previous cabinet. As infrastructure minister in [Giorgia's Meloni's right-wing coalition government](#), he has often sparked outrage.

Mr Salvini's biggest problem is that support for his party has fallen from a peak of 37% in 2019 to less than 10%. Mr Salvini has survived so far with swagger and bluster. But he looks increasingly vulnerable.

# Tunisia's unhappy election



He ran against the establishment, and then he replaced it. On Sunday Kais Saied will probably win a second term as [Tunisia's president](#). His loyalists have sidelined dozens of would-be candidates: some were arrested on bogus charges, others disqualified on equally thin grounds. The only two challengers left on the ballot are an ally of Mr Saied's and a little-known businessman. The latter was sentenced to imprisonment last month.

Many Tunisians will probably not even bother to vote. Opposition groups have urged a boycott. In the last round of legislative elections turnout was a meagre 11%. Mr Saied has neglected the economy, the main issue for most voters. Unemployment is 16%, among the highest rates in the region. Mr Saied has repeatedly rejected a deal with the IMF, which has made it hard for heavily indebted Tunisia to borrow. Voters are unhappy, but they will not have much choice.

# Kazakhstan's nuclear-power dilemma



Kazakhs vote on Sunday in a referendum on whether to embrace nuclear power—a controversial question, given Kazakhstan's history as an atomic-weapons testing ground under the Soviet Union. Between 1949 and 1989, the Soviets exploded 456 nukes in north-eastern Kazakhstan. The health and environmental consequences still reverberate today.

The government says that a nuclear plant is vital to ensure energy security and meet net-zero targets. Opponents propose investing in renewables instead. The authorities have silenced naysayers, arresting anti-nuclear activists and banning rallies.

Polls suggest that more than 70% of voters support the government's plan. But if a majority votes in favour, the next vexing question will be who will build the plant. Rosatom, Russia's state-owned nuclear company, is in the running, to many Kazakhs' displeasure. Moscow already controls 95% of Kazakhstan's oil export routes. Sceptics are apprehensive about granting their [bellicose neighbour](#) even more sway over Kazakhstan's energy sector.



# A satire of the Marvel Universe



Armando Iannucci is perhaps the foremost satirist of the 21st century. He has skewered British, American and Russian politics in “The Thick of It”, “Veep” and “The Death of Stalin”; banal broadcasting via the character of Alan Partridge; and the genre of science-fiction (“Avenue 5”). Now he has turned his attention to a cultural behemoth: the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

“The Franchise”—which debuts in America on HBO on Sunday—follows the cast and crew of “Tecto: Eye of the Storm”, a lucrative superhero movie. The film is completely ludicrous, with a nonsensical plot and shallow characters. Daniel (Himesh Patel), the first assistant director, must mediate between egotistical actors, the precious director and bullish executives from Maximum Studios.

It is clear how Mr Iannucci and his co-creators, Jon Brown and Sam Mendes, feel about the enterprise. After a fraught day filming a scene with an “invisible jackhammer”, a crew member wonders: “Have you ever thought, ‘Am I killing cinema?’”

# McLaren's new hypercar hits the road



Petrolheads get excited by the prospect of a new supercar. But an even rarer vehicle, a hypercar, is about to hit the road. The anticipation is turbocharged. On Sunday McLaren, a British firm that also runs a [Formula 1 team](#), unveiled its contribution to the loudest, fastest and priciest class of cars on the road.

The W1 is the successor to McLaren's flagship hypercars: the F1, launched in 1992, and the P1, released 20 years later. Its V8 engine will deliver 1,258bhp, around ten times the power of many family cars. That means the hypercar could go from 0-62mph (100kph) in under two seconds, and reach the P1's top speed of 217mph, making it the most powerful McLaren in the market. But hypercars do not come cheap. The W1 will cost over £2m (\$2.6m). Nor do they come easy: most of the 399 cars McLaren is making are already allocated to loyal customers.





# Kokpar

*one of the oldest nomadic games in Kazakhstan. It involves men on horseback fighting over a goat carcass.*

*Read the full story.*

**Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers.**

*Harry Truman*