



# The Guardian

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## Headlines friday 13 january 2023

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## [Business live](#)Business

# UK may avoid 2022 recession after growing 0.1% in November – as it happened

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## Economic growth (GDP)

# UK economy grew by only 0.1% in November

Figure comes as people began Christmas shopping, while World Cup gave pubs and bars a boost

- [UK may avoid recession but it won't feel like it for many](#)
- [Business live updates: UK may avoid 2022 recession](#)



Shoppers and pedestrians pass under the Christmas lights on Oxford Street, London, in November 2022. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/EPA

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Fri 13 Jan 2023 02.34 ESTLast modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 14.24 EST

The [UK economy](#) unexpectedly grew by 0.1% in November as consumers headed to the shops in the run-up to Christmas and pubs and bars enjoyed a

boost from the men's World Cup.

Raising the government's chances of avoiding a long recession, City economists said hard-pressed consumers had proved more resilient than forecast despite the cost of living crisis.

However, business groups warned that the economy was likely to suffer over the coming months as higher mortgage rates and the withdrawal of state support for energy bills begin to hit disposable incomes further.

A downturn in the manufacturing sector also limited the strength of the economy and meant that over the three months to November the economy contracted by 0.3%, according to the [Office for National Statistics](#).

The British Chambers of Commerce said it was significant that the boost to consumer-facing industries, including retail, wholesale and hospitality, had failed to overcome a dramatic loss of sales compared with pre-pandemic levels.

“The figures provide further evidence that UK economic growth is heading in the wrong direction despite this period normally being among the busiest for the retail sector.

“While month-on-month GDP grew by 0.1%, this is a volatile measure. The three-month average, standing at -0.3%, sends a clearer signal of the current trajectory of the economy,” it said.

The ONS said that sectors selling directly to consumers had suffered an 8.5% fall in income since February 2020 and that [unlike other G7 countries](#), the whole economy remained smaller than it was three years ago.

Cost of living pressures are likely to become more acute this year as tax rises and the withdrawal of government subsidies take effect.

[GDP graphic](#)

Ministers are poised to increase unit gas and electricity prices for consumers from April, pushing the average bill to £3,000, up from £2,500.

Meanwhile, interest rate rises by the Bank of England mean average annual payments for millions of mortgage holders will increase by £3,000.

The Bank of England has warned that the UK is probably set for a long recession, as defined by two consecutive quarters of contraction. The economy shrank by 0.3% in the third quarter between July and September, and figures for the October to December period will be published next month, confirming whether or not the economy entered recession at that point.

Samuel Tombs, the chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said the verdict “hangs in the balance” but it was almost certain a recession was coming in the first half of 2023.

“Looking ahead, we continue to think that GDP will drop substantially in the first and second quarters of this year.”

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James Smith, a senior economist at ING, downplayed the prospect of the UK suffering a bigger downturn than other developed nations.

“We’re looking for a peak-to-trough fall in GDP of a little more than 1.5%, which would match closest with the early 1990s recession in terms of scale,” he said.

“And despite the UK’s many woes, particularly in the jobs market, we aren’t convinced Britain will be a serious outlier from the rest of Europe on

the hit to GDP this year, even if it probably does sit in the bottom half of the pack.”

Analysts have warned that some of the trends in the data were difficult to judge after a series of events that distorted the usual pattern.

November’s 0.1% rise represented a slowdown compared with 0.5% growth in October, when the economy rebounded from a weak September, caused in part by the closure of many businesses for the Queen’s funeral. A Reuters poll of City economists predicted the economy would shrink by 0.2 % in November.

Jeremy Hunt said his priority was to bring down inflation to alleviate the cost of living crisis and revive the economy.

“We have a clear plan to halve inflation this year – an insidious hidden tax which has led to hikes in interest rates and mortgage costs, holding back growth here and around the world,” the chancellor said.

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## [Economic growth \(GDP\)](#)

### [Analysis](#)

# The UK may avoid a recession for now but it won't feel like it for many

[Larry Elliott](#) Economics editor

Jeremy Hunt is not getting carried away by November growth, and monthly GDP moves can be erratic

- [UK economy grew by only 0.1% in November](#)
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A customer uses a self-service checkout at a supermarket. UK household budgets have been hit by the cost of living crisis. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Fri 13 Jan 2023 04.43 ESTLast modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 14.26 EST

In normal circumstances the fact that the UK economy eked out a bit of growth in November would be of little relevance, especially since the 0.1% monthly expansion was partly the result of extra spending on food and drink during the World Cup.

Yet for a government sorely in need of some good – or even some less bad – news, the latest bulletin from the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) provides some hope that the economy may have avoided falling into recession in late 2022.

The technical definition of a recession is that gross domestic product – a measure of economic activity – declines for two successive quarters. The UK contracted in the third quarter of last year and until the release of Friday's official data, many economists thought it would decline in the fourth quarter as well. GDP was expected to fall rather than grow slightly in November.

However, after two monthly increases in a row – there was growth of 0.5% in October – it would now take a 0.4% fall in December for the economy to shrink in the fourth quarter of 2022 and so technically be in recession.

### [GDP graphic](#)

That is quite possible. Monthly movements in GDP are notoriously erratic, especially at the turn of the year when they are affected by spending patterns over the Christmas period. December's cold snap coupled with widespread industrial action could easily have led to a 0.4% fall in output, particularly if rising energy bills and double-digit inflation made consumers more cautious.

Jeremy Hunt's response to the ONS data suggests the chancellor is not getting carried away by the performance of the economy in November, and wisely so. As the Treasury pointed out, the International Monetary Fund is predicting a third of the world economy will be in recession this year and the UK could clearly be one of the countries affected.

Even if the economy has so far avoided recession – and that remains touch and go – it doesn't mean it will necessarily continue to do so in the face of rising interest rates and higher taxes over the coming months.

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There is also the little matter of the brutal squeeze on living standards caused by wages rising less quickly than prices. The Resolution Foundation thinktank says typical household disposable incomes are on course to drop by 7% – or £2,100 – this year. So even if the economy is not actually in recession, for many people it will still feel like it.

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## 2023.01.13 - Spotlight

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## Caroline Polachek: ‘Seeing Fiona Apple and Björk succeed without compromise felt so aspirational’

[Shaad D'Souza](#)



‘There’s a side of vulnerability that’s not always pretty’ ... Caroline Polachek. Photograph: Aidan Zamiri

The American avant-pop star started out as an indie darling who went on to write songs for Beyoncé. Now, she’s back with an album that could make her Gen Z’s Kate Bush



[@shaaddsouza](#)

Fri 13 Jan 2023 04.21 ESTFirst published on Fri 13 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

A few months ago, Caroline Polachek was filming the music video for her 80s pop fantasia [Welcome to My Island](#), trying to explain that her makeup needed to capture “the mania that comes with desire and striving”. “I was like: ‘I need to look desperate and pathetic,’” she says. Her reference point was someone “crawling out of a house party”, mascara bleeding on to their cheeks. Her glam team were bemused. “*Excuse me?*” she recalls them saying.

Her directive was firm. A musician for nearly 20 years – from indie darling in Chairlift to songwriter for Beyoncé, ambient experimentalist and now alternative pop star – Polachek, 37, has perfected the art of writing songs about the kind of emotion that, as she describes it, “doesn’t fit in the world”. With its crisp guitar solo and howling vocals, Welcome to My Island takes that idea to the next level, evoking the “side of vulnerability and openness that’s not always pretty”. It’s not darkness, she says, but “an essential part of being alive”.

This is Polachek’s speciality. Her [acclaimed debut solo album, 2019’s Pang](#), dealt in adrenaline-rush feelings good and bad: love, loneliness, euphoria, panic. Its onomatopoeic title and woozy, glittering sound touched on the feeling of freefall she experienced during a period of intense upheaval that saw her get divorced and find a new partner. Her big feelings struck a chord during the shut-in months of the pandemic, spawning a viral single in the knowingly exaggerated [So Hot You’re Hurting My Feelings](#), while her operatic vocals (like an alien take on Céline Dion), theatrical aesthetic and immaculate perfectionism captured a huge young fanbase.



Caroline Polachek on stage at All Points East in London in 2022.  
Photograph: Jim Dyson/Getty Images

Before *Running Up That Hill* returned to the charts, Polachek was shaping up to be something like Gen Z's Kate Bush – a producer and vocalist interested in music that's formally eccentric and unapologetic about her own *too much*-ness. “Emotions and pure expression and energy spilling and splashing out all over the place – I find it a very musical idea,” she says.

Polachek and I are speaking in early January, six weeks before the release of her second album, *Desire, I Want to Turn Into You*. Ratcheting up both the fantastical elements of its predecessor as well as its humour and pop instinct, *Desire* is an eclectic, elaborate and cheekily deranged sequel, and one of the year's most anticipated releases: after the remarkable success of *Pang* – as well as her buzzy collaborations with Charli XCX, Christine and the Queens and Flume – it feels as if Polachek is finally reaching critical mass as a solo artist.

Speaking from her home in Los Angeles – where she and her boyfriend, artist and [Kurt Cobain opera librettist](#) Matt Copson, live half the year (the other half they spend in London) – Polachek describes *Desire* as “a very maximalist album”. It features bagpipes, Spanish guitar and beats that run the gamut from trip-hop to dembow – the result of her wanting it to feel



“very soulful and alive” and in touch with the chaos and upheaval of the pandemic. “This Obama era of imagined stability is actually very unnatural,” she says. “This state of migration and stress and mortality – and this mysterious relationship with the virus and weird superstitions and pseudoscience and stuff that comes out of it – is all so universal, and has been the backdrop for so much art-making throughout all existence. I felt very connected to that.”

Early on during the pandemic, Polachek experienced that “stress and mortality” first-hand. She caught Covid early on, days after a show at London’s Heaven nightclub on 11 March 2020, documenting on Instagram the then unfamiliar symptoms as they developed. Shortly after, her father contracted the virus: he died in April, age 75. Polachek has said that “saying goodbye to him over FaceTime was one of the most painful experiences of my life”.

The pair had a complicated relationship. He was a professor of Chinese history at Columbia and Princeton universities, and later worked in finance. Despite the acclaim and success she earned in Chairlift and solo, she says he never came to see her play and “never approved” of her art, finding her music “too pop and too commercial, and therefore less authentic because it wasn’t insurrectionist or radical enough”.

She delves into their relationship on *Welcome to My Island*, which she describes as “manic as fuck”. It finds Polachek comparing herself to her father. In the frantic bridge, she half raps: “I’m my father’s daughter in the end / He says, ‘Watch your ego, watch your head, girl / You’re so smart, so talented / But now the water’s turning red / And it’s all your fault, and it’s all your mess.’”

Polachek’s father had struggled with depression and bipolar disorder, and had “completely failed at being able to take care of himself in any of the most essential ways”, she says. “That section was really an exploration of all these ways in which we’re failing and imperfect – you tend to one side of your life, but then you turn around and the other is collapsing.” She thinks her father would have appreciated how the verse “did justice to the situation in its honesty. It felt important to sort of include this idea of

hereditary mania and imperfection, and also empathy in that way – we’re always sort of treading water our whole life, right up till the end.”

The idea of spiralling – whether in terms of musical flow or psychological state – became key to *Desire*. Rather than set aside time to record, she and co-producer [Danny L Harle](#) took a fluid approach to making the album: it started life in their Covid bubble in London, in the early days of the pandemic, and they finished it over the subsequent two years, recording a lot of it in hired studios while Polachek was supporting Dua Lipa on tour.

Growing up listening to artists like Fiona Apple, Kate Bush and Björk and seeing these women who claimed a lot of attention, seemingly without compromise, felt so aspirational to me

“Everything had to happen out in public and once the material started developing its own personality – these sprawling, longform structures and playful, abstract lyrics – I realised the content and the form are very related,” she says. Last summer she tested the waters with the sexy, darting [Bunny Is a Rider](#), which matches a lithe funk bassline with a dembow beat, to instant rapture. She calls the song “a very direct manifesto of my being decidedly unavailable ... being offline and off grid, I think that’s the sexiest thing ever.”

Polachek calls other songs on *Desire* experiments in “lateral spiralling” – “writing something that had no verses and no choruses, just pure flow, where I enter the song and I’m just vibing”, she says, creating a horizontal corkscrew with her finger – while others, such as the verdant *Blood and Butter*, are about “spiralling upward”. Polachek explains: “The upward spiral is maybe the closest thing we can experience to heaven – a kind of heaven on Earth, which we feel in moments of total selflessness and falling in love. They’re really the moments where you feel yourself turning into something else.”

This sort of heady earnestness is part of Polachek’s appeal: her lyrics prize fragility, beauty and metaphor, a rarity in a modern pop landscape that tends to be literal and diaristic. (One typically brilliant Polachek simile on Pang described waiting for someone to reciprocate your crush as “feeling like a

butterfly inside a plane”).) Although she won’t be drawn on the specifics of Desire’s lyrics – and, regardless, many of them feel free-associative or collagist – Polachek is curious and witty when discussing desire as a concept. She is prone to taking long pauses, looking away from her webcam before turning back with a glint in her eye. When I ask her about a recurring paradox on the album – the desire to need nothing – she responds like we’re friends trying to tease out the mysteries of life together: “That’s part of the illusion of falling in love – feeling as if you could live off that like air or water. That’s the most manic point of falling in love, isn’t it?”



Chairlift in 2016 ... Polachek and Patrick Wimberly on stage in LA. Photograph: Emma McIntyre/Getty Images

Polachek matches these dizzying expressions with outlandish, almost distasteful, aesthetic clashes: there are children’s choirs and flamenco guitars; Ray of Light-style trip-hop sits next to Celtic folk and sunny, early 00s-style radio pop. She says that much of the album’s sound was inspired by the feeling of being in a city and “having daily life washing over me” – she describes one song, Pretty in Possible, as feeling like “twisting through a crowd of people [in a] neutral, headless state”. Although her trademark upper register – as she’s joked, “haters will say it’s Auto-Tune” – appears a lot here, so do new parts of her voice: a breathy and rhythmic lower tone, a

honeyed midrange. Polachek draws the 00s pop blockbuster moments back to her “earliest archetypal euphoric moments with feminine pop”.

I wouldn't be the artist I am without my autonomy – I've never had a suggestion box, and I never will

As a child, listening to windswept hits by the likes of Sophie B Hawkins or Céline Dion made Polachek feel: “Oh, these are songs that have a soul, that can take care of me.” It wasn't that she thought they were “particularly cool, but that there was something very solid about them”, she explains. “Some moments on this album are me really reaching to see if I can do my own version of that feeling of solidity or arrival or heart.”

The song Smoke captures that warmth: Polachek's voice brims with passion and devotion (“You are / The big answer tonight”) over synths that buzz like neon bulbs. “I really wanted to have some undeniable, anthemic diva moments, and so I was really picking apart what I'm interested in about those [artists]. It's not a bombastic sound, it's not vocal flexing, it's something else. What is that quality? And where's the fine line where it goes over the edge into becoming horrible, versus feeling really gorgeous and comforting and soulful?”

In trying to find that line, Polachek is in conversation with a number of other A-list stars who have evoked 00s pop recently, Lorde and Haim among them. That, coupled with Pang surprisingly landing a single in rotation at BBC Radio 1, suggests that Polachek may be in spitting distance of more mainstream success. But she says she's not gunning for arenas. While she loved the “potency” of what she witnessed on tour with Dua Lipa – “there's so much vitality and positivity in her music, and she totally embodies it in her philosophy and as an athlete” – she tries “not to think about the material or lifestyle connotations that come with that”, and describes the idea of dealing with paparazzi as “absolute hell”.

This isn't the first time Polachek has been struck with a “next big thing” tag. Chairlift, her first band, broke through with Bruises, which was featured on one of the [classic iPod ads](#) and earned them a deal with

Columbia Records. Polachek quickly became known for her unique voice and adventurous musical instincts: she collaborated with everyone from Dev Hynes to SBTRKT, co-produced and co-wrote a song for Beyoncé and No Angel, and featured in a Calvin Klein campaign.

After Chairlift broke up in 2017, so that she and bandmate Patrick Wimberly could pursue solo ventures, Polachek essentially started over thanks to Pang. In late 2019, she played a 200-capacity launch show in LA; by mid-2021, she was headlining the city's 6,000-capacity Greek Theater. While stadium fame doesn't appeal, this kind of evolution on her own terms does. "I've always really believed in the idea of alternative with a capital-A," she says. "Growing up listening to artists like Fiona Apple, Kate Bush and Björk and seeing these women who claimed a lot of attention, seemingly without compromise, felt so aspirational to me. Growing this project is a cool adventure: how can I do it in a way that feels like I still have all of my creative sovereignty and also my privacy?"

Sovereignty is one thing; privacy, an entirely different beast. Polachek is now one of the many niche pop stars with ardent stans tracking her every move. She says that she finds stan culture "so generative and creative" and is grateful for the "porous and emotional relationship" they share. But she is keenly aware of the toxicity it can generate. "There is so much deep-seated misogyny in stan culture and I think the idea of ownership is really toxic – the idea that because I have streamed your music, I own you and you owe me things," she says. "I wouldn't be the artist I am without my autonomy – I've never had a suggestion box, and I never will."



Polachek at the El Rey Theatre, LA, in 2018. Photograph: Scott Dudelson/Getty Images

She continues: “I think there’s this expectation that female pop musicians can be puppeteered by our fanbase, and I want nothing to do with it. I don’t envy bigger artists who have to contend with a really aggressive wall of voices telling them how to live their lives – I will reject that at all costs.”

Polachek brings up Lana Del Rey and Rosalía as contemporaries who she sees carrying on the freethinking legacy of Bush and Apple. Del Rey seems to have drawn a potential blueprint for an artist like Polachek: one of the most-streamed and most-influential artists of her generation, she worked her way to the centre of pop without any real chart success or radio support. It’s not hard to see Polachek following a similar path.

For now, though, she’s relishing seeing her desires become reality. “When we started the Pang cycle, I could barely afford a little backdrop that was half the size of this wall behind me,” she says. “Now I can build a landscape on stage and really bring my ideas to life with music videos. Thinking about that makes me really emotional, because it’s something I’ve wanted my entire career – and now I have it.”

Desire, I Want to Turn Into You is out 14 February on Perpetual Novice/The Orchard.

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# Lisa Marie Presley – a life in pictures

Priscilla, Lisa Marie and Elvis Presley at home, in the early 1970s.  
Photograph: Magma Agency/WireImage

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## [Pollutionwatch](#)[Air pollution](#)

# Pollutionwatch: citizen science helps raise alarm on UK air pollution

Rising numbers of people are taking air pollution measurements to push authorities to take action



The village of Disley, Cheshire, with the city of Manchester in the distance. Air pollution concerns are not confined to towns and cities. Photograph: Bailey-Cooper Photography/Alamy

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Fri 13 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

More and more people are making their own air pollution measurements and using these to press for action from national and local governments.

Last year Mark Tebbutt installed Chorley's seventh air pollution monitor. Since 2013 Tebbutt, his family and friends have been buying and operating their own air pollution instruments. These are mounted on garden fences and on the sides of houses across the Lancashire town. You can find their data [online](#) alongside those from more than [30,000 citizen scientists](#) around the world.

Tebbutt's network often [measures](#) particle pollution in the evenings, as people sit around their fires: "I began making measurements out of concern about wood smoke pollution from the proliferation of domestic solid fuel burning in Chorley. I wanted to prove to the council that the area has an air pollution problem. I also use the real-time levels to lobby various people and agencies on social media."

Air pollution concerns are not confined to towns and cities. Jo Clark, who lives in rural north Wales, also has her [own monitor](#): "I have been able to show others, such as my local authority, how the particle pollution goes up and down over the days, months and years – and how it can vary from the very general ambient levels forecast and reported by Defra or the Welsh government."

The London mayor and [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#) are taking a different approach by distributing 60 free [Breathe London sensors](#) to community groups.

Andrew Grieve, who works on the project at [Imperial College London](#), says: "In our experience the groups see collecting local air quality data as an opener to discussing broader visions for their neighbourhood with their community and as a way to get a seat at the table with city authorities."

That is certainly how some of the groups are seeing it. [Rectory Road residents' association](#) in north London, which has joined the Breathe London project, said: "As a large BAME community, we feel we have been ignored; our asks haven't been met and we are struggling to have any serious commitment and action to tackle toxic air pollution." Others including [Victoria Park Harriers and Tower Hamlets athletics club](#) are keen

to use the data to help their community at times when air pollution is bad and to help them advocate for change.

Governments have struggled to act on the concerns of citizen air-quality scientists and harness the opportunities they present. Citizen science has a long history in observations of the natural world. For example, ornithological research relies heavily on volunteer observers who share their data but air pollution measurements are usually the domain of university or government scientists that use standardised approaches and expensive instruments. Although less accurate, citizen measurements may help to raise awareness of air pollution problems and make the case for more action.

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## [Role playing games](#)

# ‘People are leaving the game’: Dungeons & Dragons fans revolt against new restrictions

Wizards of the Coast, which owns the game, is preparing to change longstanding licensing rules



A D&D game pack in 1983. Photograph: David Pimborough/Alamy

[Alaina Demopoulos](#)

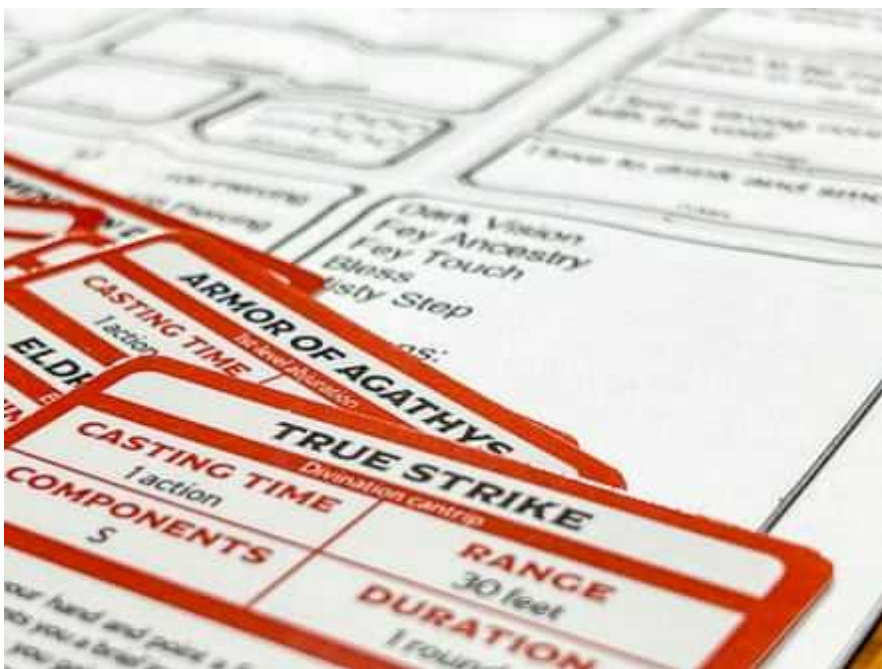
Fri 13 Jan 2023 16.31 EST First published on Fri 13 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

It's been a tough week for Dungeons & Dragons fans.

The reins were pulled in on users who come up with their own storylines and new characters, creating legions of imaginary worlds that spin off of the original fantasy roleplaying game. They have also been able to make and

sell products required to play or based on the game under an open game license (OGL) agreement.

But as Gizmodo first [reported](#), a leaked new agreement drafted by Wizards of the Coast (WoTC), the Hasbro subsidiary that owns D&D, threatens to “tighten” the OGL that has been in place since the early 2000s. [It would grant](#) WoTC the ability to “make money off of these products without paying the person who made it” and companies that make over \$750,000 will have to start paying Hasbro a 25% cut of their earnings.



‘It honestly feels like your grandfather paid for your college education, and now that you’re 40 years old and have a stable career, he says you owe him 25% of all the money you’ve been making.’ Photograph: Thomas Grespan/Getty Images/iStockphoto

“I almost cried about it two nights ago,” said [Baron de Ropp](#), who is 36 and lives in Tennessee. He’s been playing D&D since he was nine years old, learning the ins and outs from older relatives who shared plans, called “adventures”, which map out a general storyline for each game. While some adventures are written by D&D itself, many others are written by individual “dungeon masters”. Under the proposed license, these plans could soon be owned by Hasbro.



“It honestly feels like your grandfather paid for your college education, and now that you’re 40 years old and have a stable career, he says you owe him 25% of all the money you’ve been making,” he said.

De Ropp moonlights as a dungeon master – the person responsible for guiding a group of players through an adventure and describing various elements and encounters in that imaginary world – at corporate team-building events and runs a local high school’s club. The one word that sums up his feelings now is “betrayal”.

“Many people are simply leaving the game altogether,” said William Earl, a 28-year-old YouTuber whose [videos](#) largely focus on D&D culture. He said he had cancelled his subscription to D&D Beyond, Hasbro’s digital game companion, and would never buy another WoTC product.

More than 66,000 fans signed an open letter addressed to Hasbro, D&D Beyond, and WoTC, expressing disgust at the proposed changes. They view the changes as nothing but a money rush and an attempt to squash small-time creators who do not pose a serious threat to Hasbro. (The company did not respond to a request for comment.)

Fans say the cottage industry they’ve been able to build is what has allowed D&D to thrive over the years, and thrive it has. There are more than 13 million active players worldwide, and the game’s popularity exploded at the height of the pandemic. Groups [got together remotely](#), taking on identities like elves and witches, to combat lockdown-induced loneliness. Many did so using software that allowed fans to play remotely and was made by creators under the original OGL.

Players can go back through the history of D&D in guidebooks and online forums to find adventures that were written 30, 40 or 50 years ago. Then, they can replicate those events at their own table. “I want games to live for ever, so that my grandkids can use these plays, too,” De Ropp said. He worries that a centralized ownership of adventures by Hasbro would put a chokehold on the community’s creativity.

Jay Cushing, a dungeon master based in New York who has played D&D for over a decade, believes that D&D's "community of nerds" will find inventive ways to get past any proposed licensing.

They already have: sites like the now defunct Trove allowed users to download PDFs of old adventures for free, without compensating creators. "We are people who are not always using the correct avenues of content sharing, so nothing is going to stop people from making their own content," Cushing said.



Chris Pine attends a panel for Dungeons and Dragons: Honor Among Thieves last year in San Diego. Photograph: Richard Shotwell/Invision/AP

While fans were still digesting Hasbro's content restrictions, they were hit with news that D&D is headed into the mainstream. This week, Paramount+ announced it will adapt D&D into an eight-episode live-action series penned by the Dodgeball film-maker Rawson Marshall Thurber. And a Chris Pine film set in the universe is coming later this year. But with an impending boycott and chaos among creators, will anyone watch?

Earl, the YouTuber, says it's impossible to capture the spirit of D&D in a major TV series. "D&D is a collaborative, interactive storytelling experience," he said. "The appeal is that you engage with the narrative and

share that experience with others. Pizza, potato chips, Diet Coke, and laughter, that's as much a part of the D&D experience as dragons, dwarves and demons."

Dungeon masters who spoke to the Guardian said they would probably give the adaptations a shot. But in their eyes, even the most realistic CGI or special effects cannot compare to the magic that happens when friends gather around a table and improvise.

"Theater of the mind is really where this game thrives," Cushing said. "When my players and I reminisce about something that happened in the game, we all see it differently in our minds. That multifaceted nature is really what makes D&D glow. Your wildest imaginations can be turned into media, but you watch it and see that your imagination was better the whole time."

For De Ropp, D&D media shouldn't take itself too seriously or follow the tone of a moody Marvel-esque blockbuster. "People want to kick in the door, steal some goblins, steal some treasure," he said. "Slapstick, campy humor caters to that idea best."

- Shortly after publication of this piece, D&D Beyond posted a statement saying: "It was never our intention to impact the vast majority of the community." The company is reversing its position on the OGL to protect "educational and charitable campaigns, livestreams, cosplay" and other content created by community members. It has also announced that the redrafted agreement will not include "any royalty structure" or the "license-back provision that some people were afraid was a means for us to steal work". In the statement the company attempted to deny this was a blunder, saying: "You're going to hear people say that they won, and we lost because making your voices heard forced us to change our plans. Those people will only be half right. They won – and so did we."
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## 2023.01.13 - Opinion

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## [Opinion](#)Industrial action

# A lesson for Sunak: when the Tories take on striking workers, they don't always win

[Andy Beckett](#)



The prime minister is pitting the public against trade unionists — forgetting that, in millions of cases, they are the same people



Illustration: Thomas Pullin/Thomas Pullin for the Guardian

Fri 13 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 12.41 EST

In Britain, the feelings that strikes arouse in Tory politicians can be more complicated than you might think. At first, there is often outrage that the usual supremacy of bosses over workers has been suspended. Preserving such hierarchies is one of Conservatism's main aims.

But then there is sometimes a sense of opportunity: a belief that the strikers and their supporters may fall into a familiar trap, set by decades of anti-union legislation and press propaganda. Ever since Margaret Thatcher defeated the miners and other unions in the 1980s, Conservatives have believed that strikes can be used to make Tory governments look tough, and to discredit Labour and the wider left. The succession of aggressive, deliberately provocative [anti-strike measures](#) announced over the last six months by the governments of Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and now Rishi Sunak all reflect an assumption that taking on the unions is one of the few remaining strategies that might get the Conservatives re-elected.

'From clapping nurses to sacking them': Starmer and Sunak clash on NHS strikes – PMQs video

Yet there is also a third, almost forgotten Tory approach to strikes. Before the Thatcher government, her predecessor as Conservative premier, Edward Heath, faced with strikes that, like today's, were highly disruptive and yet had considerable public support, was sometimes forced to negotiate and make concessions. As the leader of an unpopular government presiding over a fragile economy that the strikes were weakening further, Heath reluctantly accepted that the unions could not all be beaten.

The briefly more constructive tone of some of [this week's talks](#) between ministers and union leaders could be a sign that Sunak, too, will ultimately have to concede at least partial victories to some of the strikers. Like Heath, he is not a dominant or charismatic enough prime minister to change the national conversation about strikes and unions, as Thatcher did. His administration could finally mark the beginning of the end for the version of union-bashing Conservatism she invented, which seems increasingly irrelevant to today's world of poverty wages and modest union memberships.

Alternatively, the industrial relations of Sunak's premiership could be much messier. Like the party he leads – for now, at least – the prime minister's political thinking is an unstable, quite possibly unsustainable mix, including a desire to be pragmatic and “reasonable”, a dogmatic belief in markets as the best distributors of economic rewards, and an elite remoteness from ordinary working lives.

His government's attitude to the strikes is to be more conciliatory and more confrontational at the same time. Some strikers may be offered one-off bonuses and better pay rises; others, if they refuse to provide so-far-undefined “minimum service” in sectors from health to education may in future be sacked – despite being participants in walkouts that were democratically agreed and wholly legal when launched.

For days now, the government has presented this minimum service legislation as an [even-handed measure](#), to “restore the balance between those seeking to strike and protecting the public from disproportionate disruption”. But claiming that a better “balance” between trade unionists and the public is required – rather than acknowledging that in millions of cases trade unionists and the public are the same people – has been a

partisan Tory ploy for decades. British life has been tilted against unions since the 80s. And the Tories have never shown any interest in balancing the relationship between the public and other, more powerful and disruptive, but right-leaning, economic protagonists, such as the City of London.

The disingenuous and vaguely worded minimum service bill also echoes recent [draconian legislation](#) aimed partly at road-blocking climate activists, “to balance the rights of protesters against the rights of others to go about their daily business”. Sunak may present himself as a centre-right technocrat, but partly out of panic at the mounting opposition to his government and Conservatism in general, he is increasingly ruling as an authoritarian.

The government insists it supports the right to strike. The business secretary, Grant Shapps – often selected to try to make extreme policies sound moderate – said on the BBC’s Today programme earlier this week that the “ideal outcome” of the bill would be for the government “to have the power” to set minimum service levels “and never have to use it”, because unions would voluntarily set their own. But this scenario is less reassuring than it was meant to sound. If strikes in much of the economy are required to come with their own strike-breaking operations, of a size dictated directly or indirectly by the government, something fundamental to workplace politics has been altered.

It’s possible that the bill may never become law, since it seems to contravene protections for unions in the European convention on human rights. And even if the legislation survives challenges in the courts, the Commons and the Lords, and on the streets (the TUC has announced a “national [right to strike day](#)” on 1 February) it may be hard to implement. Minimum service levels will have to be defined for a vast range of different workplaces, and then enforced without sacking too many essential staff or creating too many union martyrs.

Yet to focus on such difficulties, enormous though they are, is to miss part of the point of this latest attack on strikers. Like many Tory policies since and including Brexit, the bill is meant to be symbolic and divisive as much

as practical, to create bogeymen and energise Tory supporters. If inflation falls as expected between now and the election, and the strikers' pay claims therefore seem less justified to many voters, then a continuing anti-union culture war might be timely. Without a Thatcher, fresh rightwing ideas or much remaining administrative energy, today's Tories probably can't run a reforming government that really hurts the left – but they can pretend.

The problem with this impersonation of radicalism, though, is that it requires enough voters to be taken in. And Johnson's drifting premiership, Truss's shambolic tenure and now Sunak's tone-deaf performance in 10 Downing Street have removed the Conservatives' credibility as a governing party. Even the union-hating press hasn't given the minimum service bill as much coverage as you might expect, which suggests uncertainty about its significance.

Half a century ago, as well as negotiating with unions, Heath's government also tried to weaken them through legislation. The 1970 industrial relations bill eventually became law despite huge protests. But it was widely flouted, and he lost the next election. If you're a struggling Tory prime minister, victories on paper over the workers probably won't save you.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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## [Prince Harry](#).

# Harry wanted men to talk about their problems. Now therapy has been weaponized against him

[Sam Wolfson](#)



The duke and his brother have spent years as mental health advocates – and therapy has fueled Harry's public outpouring





‘There’s no doubt in Harry’s mind that this months-long revelation world tour would not have been possible without the help of his shrink.’  
Photograph: Chris Jackson/Getty Images

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While the revelations in Prince Harry’s book have shock value, the format they come in does not. The tell-all memoir, ghostwritten with the most salacious stories parcelled into pre-publication interviews, is a media set piece. Subject, publisher and publicists all know their roles and – bar a few early leaks – things have been staged-managed effectively.

But what’s so unusual about Harry’s revelations is how they have been compared to, and intertwined with, a far less premeditated form of disclosure: therapy.

Harry’s experience in therapy has driven his outpouring – and that experience has become a stick with which the palace can beat him, as well as a strange coda to Harry and William’s advocacy for mental health awareness.

From about 2016, [Prince William](#) became perhaps the most prominent celebrity proponent of discussing men's mental health. He launched the mental health charity Heads Together. He made a film for the BBC where he discussed mental health struggles with footballers including Thierry Henry and Gareth Southgate. He focused his campaigning efforts on men, trashing the idea of a British stiff upper lip and encouraging talk.

William's intervention came at a time when mental health was having – this is an unpleasant phrasing – a moment in vogue. Co-opted by brands and the zeitgeist in the same way LGBTQ+ rights and feminism had been in years before, it was the issue du jour. The Headspace app exploded in popularity. Every depressing observation from the #sosadtoday Twitter account became a meme. Celebrities who had previously been scorned were suddenly celebrated for “opening up” about their depression.

every five seconds a woman doubts her abilities and that woman is me

— so sad today (@sosadtoday) [December 15, 2018](#)

The vast majority of the attention was on middle-class people suffering from anxiety or depression. When every magazine, television programme and website launched a “special series” on mental health, they rarely talked about schizophrenia or debilitating OCD. Instead there were cloying and largely meaningless hashtags ([Instagram offered #HereForYou](#), [iHeartRadio attempted “Let's Talk”](#); Burger King launched a series of [depression-themed meals](#) including the Blue Meal, Salty Meal and DGAF Meal).

And to a fault, the main solution offered was simply talking. Start the conversation, it's time to talk, open up – these were the drumbeats of this supposed revolution.

William himself posited this as the great solution at the time: “It's a sign of strength to talk about and look after your mind as well as your body ... Catherine and I are clear that we want both George and Charlotte to grow up feeling able to talk about their emotions and feelings.”

If we want to remove the stigma around mental health, it cannot be enough to start a conversation; we must also reckon with where that conversation goes

Indeed it was William, initially, who encouraged Harry seek professional help. And there's no doubt in Harry's mind that this months-long revelation world tour would not have been possible without the help of his shrink. He explains in the book that seeking therapy was the beginning of a disconnect with his family. From then, his therapist becomes a crucial figure in his life. In one of the most shocking revelations, an alleged physical attack by William, Harry says immediately afterwards he called his therapist. He also told ITV: "If I wasn't doing therapy sessions like I was and being able to process that anger and frustration, I would've fought back, 100%."

Harry has recently switched from a demographic group very unlikely to seek therapy – British men over 35 – to one of the groups for whom therapy has reached almost total penetration: wealthy Angelenos. He says the US is more accepting of people seeking help. The real picture is a bit more mixed – it is true that white and wealthy Americans in urban areas are more likely to seek talk therapy than Brits, but many other Americans are prescribed drugs for mental health issues without receiving support from a counsellor or therapist. Still, it is more normalised for people without immediate mental health disorders to have regular therapy in the US – where it is a huge industry, with nine mental health startups reaching private valuations exceeding \$1bn last year – than it is in the UK, where services are largely operated by an ad hoc mixture of hard-to-access NHS support and freelance psychotherapists .

Something about being a man seeking that kind of help has riled both the palace and the public.

In the memoir, Harry claims that William believed his brother was being "brainwashed" by his therapist. This language was echoed this week by a source "close to the royal family" who told [the Independent](#): "The King, Camilla and William believe the situation will remain unchanged while the Duke of Sussex remains effectively 'kidnapped by a cult of psychotherapy and Meghan'."

This is the kind of anonymous press briefing Harry suggests comes directly from his family, although we have no way of knowing if that is the case. But if it were, it would hardly be the first time a family encouraged a suffering child to go to therapy, only to be horrified when they come back with issues to raise.



‘From about 2016, Prince William became perhaps the most prominent celebrity proponent of discussing men’s mental health.’ Photograph: PA

Talking, is, for many people, an important step in dealing with the repression of bad things that have happened or bad things they have done. There is overwhelming evidence that talking itself alone can improve the situation – but more often it’s the starting point to other actions. Unearthing the horrors of childhood, as Harry has done in his therapy, doesn’t necessarily bring much comfort – but it can alert someone not to allow the same patterns to continue.

If we are serious about removing the stigma around mental health, it cannot be enough simply to *start* a conversation; we must also reckon with where that conversation goes. In Harry’s case, it has led to realisations about a cruel and sometimes abusive childhood and adult life: he was refused a hug or even eye contact from his father as he was told about his mother’s death, forced to parade publicly behind his mother’s coffin, told by his father he

was a back-up and that he might not even be his real son, sent to boarding school aged eight and refused privacy at any point. In later life, he claims, his stepmother and father colluded to provide stories about his behavior to the tabloid press in order to improve their own PR standing. Is he a bit weird as an adult, at times unable to read the room, with a tendency towards defensive poshness? Absolutely. Is it any wonder why? Not at all.

Of course, just because Harry's wellbeing might be helped by speaking to a therapist, it doesn't follow that he needs to go on an international press tour. Where there is discomfort from the public with Harry's disclosures, it's not – as much of the British press would like to suggest – because of a loyalty to the palace, or a sense that he's oversharing. It's because he's a wealthy privileged man, the original nepo baby, clearly monetising his pain in order to make a new life for himself while also demanding privacy.

But in this instance, a public outpouring is the only instance in which he can prevent the same things happening. It's a one of those strange and rare cases where the profitable thing to do is also the right one. When Hollywood actors, many of them also very privileged, spoke out about sexual misconduct, racism and bullying on set, most people did not admonish them for doing so. Much of that pain was also dredged up in therapy, but for closure it had to brought to the public. When you bang the drum for talking, it can sometimes end up with things being said.

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## OpinionGlobal development

# I have seen how top-down solutions condemn the world's poorest to eternal poverty

Anthony Kalulu in Namisita

A western-led approach has failed to remedy the problem. Maybe, post-pandemic, a new focus on the poor is needed



A boy tries to revive a cooking fire. In my region, Busoga, has a poverty rate of 74.8%. The national average in Uganda is 63%. Photograph: Jake Lyell/Alamy

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Fri 13 Jan 2023 02.15 EST

In 2020, many people said the world must not “go back to normal”, to the same old ways that defined it before the Covid pandemic. The Overseas Development Institute, a UK-based thinktank, even said “[normal was the problem](#)”.

I really wish the world would remember this.

Whether it is a health crisis or the climate emergency, the world’s ultra-poor are the ones who feel the pinch the hardest – during the crises themselves, and in the rebuilding afterwards.

Before [Uganda](#) declared its first lockdown in March 2020, households in my area of Kamuli, in the east of the country, were in dire need of food. People found it very hard to secure items such as masks and sanitary supplies. After all, many were living in chronic poverty even before Covid.

That is why I believe, if this pandemic was any lesson not to go back to normal, then poverty is what needs to be addressed.



The world doesn't necessarily need new sources of funding to end global poverty. The money needed is the same amount that's already being spent – badly.

Last year, I turned 41. I have never set foot outside sub-Saharan [Africa](#), the centre of chronic poverty in the world. I have known its true wrath. Only a few years ago there were times when I would go days without food.

Uganda has its fair share of poverty but in my region, Busoga, it is the highest, [according](#) to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (Ubos), with a rate of [74.8%](#), compared with a national average of 63%. The deeper you go into the countryside, the harder life becomes. If you discount urban centres such as the tourist city of Jinja, the poverty rate in rural Busoga, such as my village of Namisita, is well above 90%.

This poverty is reflected in news [headline](#) after news [headline](#). Busoga is a byword for people living a near-ancient way of life in abject poverty.

Nationally, 60% of working Ugandans [earn](#) 200,000 Ugandan shillings (£44.50) a month, about £1.50 a day. But in Busoga many are unemployed. This is especially true in my neighbouring districts of Kamuli and Buyende, home to more than a million people: there are people who earn 50,000 to 100,000 Ugandan shillings (about £11 to £22) in an entire four-month planting season; people who have rags for bedding in their houses.

In [March](#) last year, a woman visited my project, the [Uganda Community Farm \(UCF\) in Namisita](#), to ask for seed, in preparation for rains anticipated in April. Her story was typical: “I don't have soap. I don't have salt. I would like to hire an ox plough to help prepare my land, but I don't have any money.”

Life here has much in common with many other impoverished communities, and current initiatives aimed at ending global poverty make it impossible to escape.

In 2015, when the UN's [global goals](#) were launched, I was hungry, and had been since childhood. I decided it was time for me to take matters [into my own hands](#), and make change my goal.

Today, I know a thing or two about the global antipoverty world. And it is not working.

It's a near impossibility to get anyone from the development sector to work together on poor people-led solutions

Take Buyende, a Busoga town of more than 400,000 people, where you would be hard pressed to find any agency that has visited in recent decades. It is the same in many other communities across Busoga.

According to a 2021 [Ubos report](#) “poverty programmes and interventions have not had any dent in reducing poverty”. This is because interventions have always been top to bottom. Humanity is still convinced that the best solution for the world's poor is to sit and wait for the right people from the global north to come and help.

Today, [only 1% of all the money intended to end poverty](#) (official development aid and humanitarian assistance combined), goes directly to the extreme poor.

Only 1% of all official development assistance (funding from agencies such as USAid and UKAid), and an even smaller portion ([0.4% in 2018](#)) of all international humanitarian assistance (all charitable funding included), goes directly to grassroots organisations in the global south.

In 2018, only 5.2% of the \$9bn (£7.5bn) in US foundation funding earmarked for sub-Saharan Africa went to local organisations – the African Visionary Fund, a partnership between the Segal Family Foundation and other US grantmakers, says on its [website](#), quoting the US Council on Foundations.

That means about 99% of antipoverty funding stays in the hands of the global development sector, which means western agencies.

For people like us, the only way to escape poverty is to wait for a chance visit by the sector to our village.

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However, the sector has historically operated at arm's length from the poor, and is very inaccessible. It is a near impossibility to get anyone from the development sector to work together on poor people-led solutions.

There are millions of well-meaning people who genuinely want to make the world a better place, and who *innately* want to help people escape poverty, but who have been conditioned into believing that the best way to do it is by safely placing that support far from the poor themselves, being careful not to work with them directly – on the premise that the African poor are wannabe fraudsters.

Only the most “legit” people – those from the global north – must be at the helm. For example, after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, this is what was being said in [Forbes](#): “Don’t send money overseas. Even though Haiti is a foreign disaster, don’t send a donation to a foreign bank account. Experts say this is never legit.”

“Within 24 hours of the Haitian earthquake, scammers were at work trying to profit from the disaster,” said [CS Monitor](#). “Beware of bogus online help for Haiti”, warned [NBC News](#). “Be careful about those impulse donations,” said [ABC News](#).

For those of us here, if you contact someone in the global north and ask for a tweet about your cause, they will cringe and decline – often without even

taking time to learn about what you're doing. They have been conditioned to think you are a conman.

This is mostly down to the international media, and the global development sector itself – the same people who are supposed to be the allies of the poor.

To those conditioned to be wary of the world's poor, I ask: please change your minds. By clinging to this worldview, you are helping to condemn people to eternal poverty.

There is no such thing as humans who are more legitimate than others. We are all the same. The only thing that makes us different is opportunity, or the lack of it.

Even those labelled “fraudsters” or “Nigerian prince” scam artists are only where they are because of economic inequality.

The top-down approach has had more than a good run: it just hasn't worked. The only thing it has accomplished is to keep those in poverty on the sidelines.

The world has spent more than enough time trying to end global extreme poverty, with the same approaches and the same failures.

If the Covid pandemic is to be a lesson for the world not to go back to normal, now is the time to put the ultra-poor at the helm.

- *Anthony Kalulu is a farmer in Namisita, eastern Uganda. He is founder of the nonprofit [Uganda Community Farm](#), working to end extreme poverty*

## [Opinion](#)Alcohol

# Already ‘failed’ Dry January? There’s another way, and I’ve been doing it for years

[Barbara Speed](#)



Like other sober-curious people, I wanted *slightly* more of a handle on what I drank. So I started logging every drink in an app. And, reader: it helped



Customers drinking outside the Nellie Dean of Soho pub in London, December 2022. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

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I am not doing Dry January this year. I didn't do it last year, or the year before that. But I do know, down to the glass, what I drank on every single one of those January days. Two post-new year amarettos on 2 January 2021; two glasses of prosecco on 9 January 2020 (if I'd known what was coming in March, I might have stretched to three); a lone bottle of beer on a Sunday in 2019.

This isn't some incredible feat of memory. The data is at my fingertips thanks to something I started doing just over five years ago, in late 2017. Every day – or, let's be realistic, often a few days later – I plug the amount I've had to drink into an app.

I should start by saying that this wasn't sparked by any deep concern about my drinking. (If you're worried about your alcohol consumption, contact your doctor, or an organisation such as [Action on Addiction](#).) Instead, I had a feeling that I suspect many of the Dry January-curious share: that I wanted *slightly* more of a handle on what I drank, and to drink *slightly* less. I thought I was probably within healthy limits, but I wasn't certain. Not



knowing felt like choosing “cash without balance” when getting money out in my twenties: a combination of avoidance and shame that I hadn’t been quite as temperate as I’d meant to be.

All other benefits of moderation aside, tracking freed me of that feeling – it helped me press the “balance please” button and confront the numbers on the screen. I didn’t start with any particular targets, but simply noting what, when and how much I drank. The [app I use](#) (which is made by the charity Drinkaware) colour-codes your calendar according to the drinking and no-drinking days, and it was useful to notice that a few green (no-drinking) days in a row left me sleeping better, while a string of blue (drinking) days would have the opposite effect.

Logging my drinks was a constant reminder that some are much stronger than others, and would make the difference between ordering a small over a large, a single over a double. Going sober for the night means later pressing a large “drink free day” button, with the accompanying dopamine kick.

A big part of making the habit stick, and of its value, lies simply in remembering: having a running counter in your head of glasses and sizes, even during an interminable wedding or a confusing series of 2am rounds. Facing down the empty app after a week-long Italian holiday was not an easy task, and I wouldn’t place much stock in the accuracy of some of my data. But forcing yourself to simply notice – not judge, not even necessarily restrict, but notice – what you’re drinking is, I think, a useful step.

I’ve been doing this so long that remembering what I’m drinking has become subconscious, rather than a fun-spongeing, night-out-ruining tallying exercise. But the tracking means that it’s far harder to rely on alcohol as a complete switch-off, an escape from reality: you are always present, quietly counting. For some, that may be a downside, but for me it’s a helpful line in the sand.

Dry January works brilliantly for lots of people, and can, of course, be combined with other forms of alcohol moderation. Where it doesn’t appeal to me – and, I’m sure, to others – is that it is something you can easily fail. I might get a little mixed up on the number of glasses of wine I had and



forget to track them for a few days, but I can fix that a week later with the help of a bank statement and some guesswork.

Habits that allow you to make up for the occasional lapse are much easier to stick to than the all-or-nothing of Dry January, which also contains its own get-out clause of, “I’ve had a beer, I’ve failed – that’s the end of that.” Perhaps that’s why I’ve only completed one single Dry January, back in 2016, but have kept up my tracking habit for over 1,800 days.

I don’t blame you if, like more than one of my friends, you think this all sounds a little excessive. Tracking your life can have a dark side – counting calories, for instance, is [unsupported by evidence](#) and can lead to over-restriction and disordered eating. But I would argue that alcohol is different. We don’t need to drink it to survive, and a greater sense of control can be a helpful counterweight to a culture that encourages endless drinking around Christmas and total abstinence at the beginning of the year.

Which brings me to the million-dollar question: has tracking my drinking actually reduced it? The data suggests that it has – my consumption has been falling over the years, though that could be partly a product of becoming older and more boring. In 2018, I drank 1,055 units – an average of 20 a week. By 2022, it was 770 units (14.8 a week), with around four non-drinking days every week.

What is certainly true is that in 2017, I could not have imagined facing up to those numbers myself, let alone sharing them with strangers. So the app has, without question, given me the thing I went looking for in the first place: a better relationship with alcohol.

In the UK, [Action on Addiction](#) is available on 0300 330 0659. In the US, [SAMHSA](#)’s National Helpline is at 800-662-4357. In Australia, the [National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline](#) is at 1800 250 015; families and friends can seek help at [Family Drug Support Australia](#) at 1300 368 186

- Barbara Speed is a Guardian Opinion deputy editor
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## 2023.01.13 - Around the world

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## [Donald Trump](#)

# Trump to ramp up efforts to secure 2024 Republican nomination after slow start

Events aim at giving ex-president a narrative reset after being criticized for his 'low energy' and inactivity, sources say



Donald Trump speaks during an event at his Mar-a-Lago home on 15 November in Palm Beach as he officially launched his 2024 presidential campaign. Photograph: Joe Raedle/Getty Images

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Washington  
[@hugolowell](#)

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Donald Trump is scheduled to venture out of his Mar-a-Lago resort and conduct a swing of presidential campaign events later this month, ramping up efforts to secure the Republican nomination after facing hefty criticism

over the slow start to his 2024 White House bid, according to sources familiar with the matter.

The [former US president](#) is expected to travel to a number of early voting states for the Republican nomination – the specific states have not been finalized – around the final weekend of January, the sources said, where he is slated to announce his state-level teams.

The move comes after a slow start to the campaign and an announcement speech at Mar-a-Lago that has been widely panned as “low energy” and inactive in terms of events, further knocking Trump’s political image after key Senate candidates he endorsed in November’s midterms faced embarrassing defeats.

That has apparently given enough confidence for a host of [Republicans](#) to prepare their own White House runs and though Trump says he believes a wide field will be beneficial, he seems set to face possible candidates including the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, and ex-cabinet officials such as Nikki Haley.

Trump’s quick blitz of travel on his private plane is aimed at giving him something of a narrative reset, the sources said, as well as conveying a sense of swagger and the insurgency feel of his 2016 presidential campaign that he has told advisers in recent weeks he is determined to recapture.

The campaign has otherwise planned for Trump to gradually increase the number of political events this year, while it first spends time building out the wider political operation with the aim of starting to peak in activity at the start of election year.

The idea, the sources said, is to do the less glamorous but operationally necessary groundwork now, when Trump remains the only declared candidate for the presidency, to build as large a head start as possible for when DeSantis or others formally enter the 2024 fray.

In the weeks since Trump announced his candidacy at Mar-a-Lago last November, the campaign appears to have spent the majority of its time

building its fundraising operation based off small-donor lists that his political action committees have amassed since 2016.

Trump has historically had among the best lists in politics-and the team has started to transfer the rich data of names, email address, phone numbers and contributions histories over to the campaign.

The snag has been that the lists are technically owned by his Pacs, and the campaign has needed to find workarounds to access the data; for instance, Trump has raised money through another Pac that shares proceeds between an entity like Trump's Save America Pac and the 2024 campaign.

The campaign has also focused on expanding the pool of potential donors, one source familiar with the matter said. In recent weeks, it has stepped up efforts to identify moderate Republican voters who have supported Trump politically but have not made contributions for possible ad targeting.

Trump has endorsed this strategy of completing the groundwork while he remains the only declared candidate for 2024, people close to the campaign said, and has largely shrugged off his initial anger at having the launch derided as "low energy" after a disappointing midterms for the GOP.

Still, Trump has remained attuned to criticism that the campaign had a slow start and appears to have taken steps to make the leadership team for his latest bid for the White House similar to the 2016 team, which featured a group of core aides and advisers.

The campaign is being helmed by Susie Wiles, the top political adviser to Trump for the past two years who helped him win Florida in his previous two presidential bids, and Chris LaCivita, a veteran strategist and former political director for the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Both Wiles and LaCivita are considered seasoned political operatives who know how to run successful campaigns but Wiles in particular is expected to be an asset for 2024 as DeSantis considers a presidential run, given she previously worked as a top adviser for DeSantis.

The group of top aides also includes the former White House political director Brian Jack, former Trump 2016 campaign rapid response director Steven Cheung serving as the senior adviser for communications, Justin Caporale who helped create some of the most memorable Trump rallies in the past, and Trump's in-house counsel Boris Epshteyn.

But even as Trump assembles what Republican operatives consider the gold standard for a presidential campaign team, whether he heeds their advice over the long term remains an issue.

The former president invariably turns to informal advisers on all topics and over the objections of his professional team, particularly when he finds people who might be willing to affirm his own ideas and impulses, or find him convenient exits from otherwise uncomfortable realities.

To be sure, part of the reason for Trump's early 2024 campaign announcement was his own eagerness to begin a new campaign. But it was also a result of advice that declaring his candidacy might make the justice department less inclined to pursue criminal investigations or indictments against him.

That theory did not pan out, and the 2024 campaign launch led the attorney general, Merrick Garland, to appoint a special counsel whose prosecutors have in fact been even more aggressive and escalatory than before Trump announced his third bid for the White House, the Guardian [has previously reported](#).

The legal blowback underscores how Trump at times has demonstrated a remarkable ability for self-sabotage, such as when he was waived off taking a meeting with the disgraced rapper Kanye West but did it anyway, and [ended up also having dinner with the white supremacist Nick Fuentes](#).

Advisers have also wrestled with Trump's impulses for airing grievances about the 2020 election, even when the topic was shown to be a loser in the midterm elections. But even at his campaign launch, Trump could not help himself, and discussed it at length in his speech.

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## [Global development](#)

# Long-awaited trial of 24 aid workers accused of espionage starts in Lesbos

Trial of Sarah Mardini and fellow defendants lifts lid on ‘farcical’ treatment of humanitarians, say campaigners



Sarah Mardini in Athens the day after her release from Athens' high security Korydallos prison where she spent over 100 days in pre-trial detention. Photograph: Helena Smith/The Guardian

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[Helena Smith](#) in Mytilene

Fri 13 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 04.57 EST

Sarah Mardini, the refugee immortalised in the recent Netflix movie, [The Swimmers](#), was the talk of Lesbos this week as the long-awaited trial of 24 aid workers accused of espionage, got underway on the island.

Eight years after the Syrian and her younger sister, Yusra, saved 18 fellow passengers from a sinking dinghy off the isle, it was Mardini's name that stood out as appeals court judge, Styliani Spyridonidou, conducted a roll call of defendants at the start of a hearing that has fuelled widespread human rights concerns. But, although Mardini's story hogged the Greek headlines, the 27-year-old student, accused of spying after returning to the island to assist refugees, was not present.

“As on Tuesday she will not be attending on Friday,” said Zacharias Kesses, her Athenian lawyer, referring to proceedings that were cut short on Tuesday amid chaotic scenes in Mytilene's courthouse that saw the presiding judge slam the bench as lawyers, talking over one another, called for the indictments to be annulled. “What has happened has been very traumatic for her but she is happy that, at last, the trial has begun.”

Rights groups, who have appealed for the humanitarians to be acquitted of charges roundly described as [“farcical”](#), say Mardini’s absence is just one reason why the hearing is so deeply flawed.

Granted asylum in Germany, the Syrian who spent over [100 days](#) in pre-trial detention in Athens’ high security Korydallos prison, following her arrest in the summer of 2018, has since been barred from entering Greece where authorities have labelled her a threat to national security. Her presence would necessitate the travel ban being appealed.

Few cases have been as emblematic for Europe’s increasingly oppressed migrant solidarity community as this. In 2015, at the height of the refugee crisis, Lesbos was on the frontline of the greatest movement of people since the second world war.



Former aid worker Seán Binder, who is among the defendants on trial for espionage in Mytilene, the island’s port town, this week. Photograph: Helena Smith/The Guardian

Amnesty International has slammed the legal proceedings as being indicative of the lengths to which Greek authorities will go to deter volunteers helping asylum seekers at land and sea borders from which, increasingly, they have been violently repulsed.

“We are talking about young volunteers who should be applauded for saving lives of refugees in distress,” says Giorgos Kosmopoulos the group’s chief migration campaigner. “Instead, they are faced with these farcical charges whose sole intent is to keep them away from Greece’s shores while authorities conduct [pushbacks](#).”

In addition to spying, the aid workers who include Greek nationals, stand accused of illegal use of radio frequencies and forgery. Classed as misdemeanours under Greek law the crimes are punishable by up to eight years in prison, although lawyers say the indictment had been so sloppily assembled, with the defendants listed as numbers, not everyone knew which offence they were alleged to have committed.

Accusations of espionage are based on allegations that while on Lesbos the volunteers monitored coastguard radio channels and vessels to gain advanced notification of the location of smugglers’ boats. In an 86-page report, compiled after a six-month inquiry, police singled out the use of an “encrypted messaging service” – namely the popular communication app, WhatsApp – to back the spying claims.

The defendants had all signed up with the Emergency Response Centre International, among the plethora of NGOs that at the height of the crisis attracted thousands of young [idealists](#) to Lesbos, then a magnet for migrants making the perilous Aegean sea crossing from Turkey.

The now defunct search and rescue group has been described by police as a criminal gang established for the purpose of money laundering and bringing people illegally into the country.

The trial comes more than a year after being [postponed](#) when a lower tribunal ruled it lacked the competence to hear the case, prolonging a judicial drama that has not only highlighted the growing pressures on civil society but Europe’s hardening stance towards refugees.



Somali refugee Hanad Mohammed in a Mytilene police cell after Lesbos appeals court ruled that his 146-year-long sentence for people smuggling will be overturned. Photograph: Helena Smith/The Guardian

On Monday, Hanad Mohammed, a Somali convicted of people smuggling and sentenced to 146 years in prison, had sat in the same court, his head bent deep in prayer, for an appeals hearing that ultimately allowed him to walk free.

With Mardini absent, it was Seán Binder, a German-born Irishman and trained rescue diver, also championed by rights groups, who was the subject of press photographers on Tuesday. The 29-year-old law graduate, similarly held for three months in pre-trial detention, after his arrest in late 2018, sat alongside other defendants on wooden seats beneath the bench as lawyers argued for the case to be thrown out citing procedural errors. When the court reconvenes on Friday it will either rule that the hearing continues, or will uphold their objections that to do so would amount to a denial of fair process.

Much is at stake. The trial is a preamble to proceedings that could escalate when investigating magistrates conclude a separate inquiry into the much more serious charges of people smuggling, fraud, membership of a criminal organisation and money laundering, also levelled at the 24 aid workers -

felonies under Greek law that carry 25-year prison terms. Although the investigation, first opened four years ago, has not yet led to any indictments it has exacerbated an ordeal that Binder has [described](#) as “a sword of Damocles” with the lives of the accused put on hold until it concludes.

“If they thought we were the heinous criminals that they allege we are, I’d have thought they’d want us in prison as soon as possible,” he sighed standing outside the courthouse in the island’s port town.

“But here we are, four years on, being tried for the misdemeanours and even if on Friday we have the best outcome we could still have to wait another 15 years for the felonies trial to begin.”

Greece’s centre-right government has described its migration policy as “strict but fair” and when asked about the Lesbos trial the Guardian was told it “would never comment” on a court case.

But the controversial trial has also been decried by the European Parliament as “the largest case of criminalisation of solidarity in Europe”.

Standing beside a banner emblazoned with the words “death of Europe [sic] values” Grace O’Sullivan, an Irish Green party MEP, deplored what she described as “the barefaced political motivations” behind the charges.





Irish Green party MEP Grace O’Sullivan, who has accused Greece of criminalising migrant solidarity workers, in Mytilene this week. Photograph: Helena Smith/The Guardian

“It’s rare for MEPs to weigh in on individual cases in national courts,” she said, “but this case has proved to be so full of barefaced political motivations intended at shutting down all search and rescue operations on the EU’s borders, that political leadership must make its voice heard. We should be rewarding humanitarians for living up to the EU’s proclaimed values, and yet here we are threatening them with 25 years in prison.”

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## California

# Frantic search continues for boy, five, swept away in California floods

Kyle Doan, pulled into raging waters as he and his mother, Lindsay Doan, were trying to escape sudden flooding



Kyle Doan, the five-year-old swept away in floodwaters near San Luis Obispo county. Photograph: Courtesy of the Doan family

[\*Dani Anguiano\*](#) in Los Angeles and [\*Gabrielle Canon\*](#) in Sacramento county

Fri 13 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 12.15 EST

The danger lurking along a country road in central California's wine country was not clear to Lindsay Doan as she drove her five-year-old son to school on Monday morning.

The region, like much of the state, had been hit by a deadly series of storms but the family had traveled through the area the previous day, her husband told the Guardian, and countless times before on their commutes. Nothing

initially appeared wrong and unlike past occasions, there were no signs indicating the road was closed.

It only became clear the road was not safe as floodwaters began to carry the vehicle into a creek near the village of San Miguel. Kindergartner Kyle Doan was calm, telling his mother, “Don’t worry Mommy. It’s OK – everything will be all right,” according to his father, Brian Doan. As they exited the vehicle together, water rushing in, the fast-moving currents and debris pulled him from his mother’s arms and forced Lindsay underwater. Nearby residents were able to rescue her with a rope, but the water carried Kyle away too quickly.

With assistance from the national guard, law enforcement search and rescue teams have spent days searching for the five-year-old, who his father described as an affectionate and bright boy who loved dancing, playing with Pokémon cards and watching Paw Patrol. The search is one of several that has taken place in recent weeks as a devastating series of storms battered the state. The rains and wind have toppled trees and power lines and flooded rivers and creeks, [killing at least 18 people](#), including three in Sacramento county who were found dead in or near their cars.

California is more recently accustomed to disasters due to drought and wildfire, but the latest turn of extreme weather has highlighted the challenges that come with such a rapid deluge. It has also raised questions about how the state will manage the risks of [catastrophic megafloods](#) expected to become more common due to the climate crisis.



A rescue team searches Kyle Doan in San Luis Obispo County, California.  
Photograph: San Luis Obispo County Sheriffs Office/Facebook/Reuters

In San Luis Obispo county, where Kyle disappeared, and the Sacramento region, the rapid onset of flooding caught people off guard.

Locals who more easily navigate the backroads in rural parts of Sacramento county said the drivers there never stood a chance. Fueled by downpour, the Cosumnes River escaped its banks and waters rose quickly and furiously, submerging large stretches of road under a vast brown-tinged sea.

There were no visible signals in the darkness on the night of New Year's Eve and into the following day, vehicles followed one-by-one into the flood. Dozens had to be rescued. Some from the tops of their floating cars. Others weren't able to escape. Three people died after they were swept off the roads or into the rushing water.

Cosumnes Fire crews responded to 259 calls for service on Dec 31-Jan 1. That's twice the amount in a typical 48-hour period. We thank our local, regional and state public safety partners and dispatchers who helped us serve and protect our community throughout these winter storms. [pic.twitter.com/S1OTIsALp6](https://pic.twitter.com/S1OTIsALp6)

— Cosumnes Fire Dept. (@CosumnesFire) [January 7, 2023](#)

“Those poor people had no clue where to go – and there were no signs,” said Liz Ehlers whose property borders the area where levees were breached near Highway 99. She and her husband Tim rushed to evacuate during the height of the storm, stacking furniture and other belongings on tables as the water seeped into their home.

Even in their ranch truck, with a strong familiarity of the streets and roads that weave through the pastures and farmland in the area, the escape was a harrowing one. “The water at the railroad tracks was 4ft deep – and that was before the levees broke,” she said. When the main route flooded and the highway was closed, people relied on navigation apps to get through “and that tells you to go right into it”, she said.

In the dimly lit area, the rushing waters blended into the darkness. “It came up over 99 so fast those people didn’t have a chance – there was no warning,” her husband, Tim Ehlers, added.

Lindsay and her son were taken by surprise on a road they had traveled frequently – the family had driven down it the previous day. It was meant to be the pair’s first day back in class since winter break – Lindsay is a special education teacher at her son’s school – and Kyle was excited to return, having only recently fully recovered from a fracture in his leg that had required multiple surgeries.

“My wife was driving a 4,000lb SUV. It wasn’t until she was in the water she realized how different it was in 18 hours and there was no signage to tell her not to take this road,” Brian said.



‘I’m optimistic today maybe we’ll find him,’ said Brian Doan. Photograph: Courtesy of the Doan family

The water quickly pushed their vehicle off the road and into trees and began filling with water. Lindsay instructed her son to take off his seatbelt and come through her door. He was calm just as he had been when he broke his leg, his father said. But the waters and debris immediately overwhelmed Lindsay and her son, separating them.

“People don’t understand when there’s fast-moving water with debris it’s impossible to swim. You can’t maintain control. My wife was getting knocked down under the water,” he said. “[Kyle] was further down, he was on his back, and they could not reach him. The footing is just enormously difficult. The soil is very much chocolate pudding in a lot of spots. There’s so much water saturation.”

The vehicle was later found overturned, Brian said: “It was the right thing to do to get out of that car.” Officials told him they recovered debris from the vehicle as far as two miles away, he said.

The search has continued daily since Monday, although authorities suspended the search several times earlier in the week due to severe

weather. His family hopes he will return home, but is prepared for the fact that may not happen.

“I’m optimistic today maybe we’ll find him,” Brian said. “We’re not gonna be able to get to that next phase until we find him. I’d love great news but I’ve been readying myself. I have to be strong for my family.”

The family has been overwhelmed by the support they have received from the community, he added, and the efforts to find his son. “He’s a really good five-and-a-half-year-old,” he said, his voice breaking.

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## Fukushima

# Fukushima water to be released into ocean in next few months, says Japan

Authorities to begin release of a million tonnes of water from stricken nuclear plant after treatment to remove most radioactive material



A worker stands near tanks used to store treated radioactive water used to cool the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. The water is soon to be released into the ocean. Photograph: Hiro Komae/AP

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo*

Fri 13 Jan 2023 00.50 EST Last modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 14.24 EST

The controversial release of more than a million tonnes of water from the wrecked [Fukushima](#) Daiichi nuclear plant will begin in the northern spring or summer, Japan's government has said – a move that has sparked anger among local fishing communities and countries in the region.



The decision comes more than two years after the government approved the release of the water, which will be treated to remove most radioactive materials but will still contain tritium, a naturally occurring radioactive form of hydrogen that is technically difficult to separate from water.

Japanese officials insist the “treated” water will not pose a threat to human health or the marine environment, but the plans face opposition from fishermen who say it risks destroying their livelihoods, almost 12 years after a magnitude-9.0 earthquake triggered a [huge tsunami](#) that killed more than 18,000 people along Japan’s north-east coast.

Tsunami waves crashed into [Fukushima](#) Daiichi, knocking out its backup electricity supply, triggering meltdowns in three of its reactors and sending large quantities of radiation into the atmosphere in the most serious nuclear accident since Chernobyl a quarter of a century earlier.

The wastewater in Fukushima is being stored in more than 1,000 tanks that officials say need to be removed so the plant can be decommissioned – a process expected to take 30 to 40 years.

Japan’s foreign ministry said in July that regulators had deemed it safe to release the water, which will be gradually discharged into the Pacific ocean via a tunnel after being treated and diluted.

The plan’s operator, Tokyo Electric Power (Tepco), has said its water treatment technology – known as [Alps](#) – can remove all radioactive materials from water except tritium, which it says is harmless in small amounts.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has also pointed out that nuclear plants around the world use a similar process to dispose of wastewater containing low-level concentrations of tritium and other radionuclides.

South Korea and China have voiced concern about the discharge, while the Pacific Islands Forum [said](#) recently it had “grave concerns” about the

proposed release.

Writing in the Guardian, the forum's secretary general, Henry Puna, said [Japan](#) "should hold off on any such release until we are certain about the implications of this proposal on the environment and on human health, especially recognising that the majority of our Pacific peoples are coastal peoples, and that the ocean continues to be an integral part of their subsistence living".

The South Korean government, which has yet to lift its ban on Fukushima seafood, has said that releasing the water would pose a "grave threat" to marine life. Fishing unions in the area oppose the release, warning it would cause alarm among consumers and derail more than a decade of efforts to reassure the public that Fukushima seafood is [safe to eat](#).

Under the plan approved by Japan's cabinet on Friday, fishermen who fear that the release will impact their livelihoods will be able to access a new ¥50bn (\$385m) fund, the Kyodo news agency said.

"We would like to thoroughly explain these measures to fishing communities and other relevant parties while listening to their concerns," the chief cabinet secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, said at the meeting, according to Kyodo.

The liquid, which Japanese officials claim is "treated" rather than "contaminated", comprises water used to cool the damaged reactors, and rain and groundwater that seeps into the area.

Kyodo said the IAEA had conducted several safety reviews of the plan and would issue a report based on its findings, as well as providing support before, during and after the discharge.

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[Joe Biden](#)

## Trump appointee named special counsel in Biden papers investigation

Robert Hur chosen by US attorney general after classified materials discovered in Delaware and Washington

US attorney general outlines investigation into classified documents found at Biden's home – video

[Hugo Lowell](#) in Washington and [Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

Thu 12 Jan 2023 15.30 ESTFirst published on Thu 12 Jan 2023 11.14 EST

The US attorney general, Merrick Garland, appointed a special counsel on Thursday to investigate Joe Biden's retention of classified documents from his time as vice-president.

The move to name Robert Hur, a former Trump-appointed federal prosecutor and former top justice department official, was a rapid decision from Garland to insulate the department from possible accusations of political conflicts or interference.

Hur will be responsible for investigating the potential unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents at Biden's home and his former thinktank, and will have the authority to prosecute any crimes resulting from the investigation, the order signed by Garland said.

"I will conduct the assigned investigation with fair, impartial and dispassionate judgement. I intend to follow the facts swiftly and thoroughly, without fear or favor, and will honor the trust placed in me to perform this service," Hur said in a statement released by the justice department.

The decision to appoint a special counsel comes at a fraught moment for Garland, who only just named Jack Smith in November to serve as special

counsel investigating Donald Trump's unauthorized retention of national security material and his role in the January 6 Capitol attack.

Speaking at justice department headquarters in Washington, Garland said "extraordinary circumstances" – namely that the president, to whom he and the department reports, could yet become ensnared in the investigation – necessitated an independent prosecutor to oversee the inquiry.

The announcement comes amid growing scrutiny of whether Biden was involved in taking the documents to either his [Delaware](#) home or the office space at the University of Pennsylvania's Biden Center for Diplomacy in Washington, where he was an honorary professor until 2019.

Special counsels are prosecutors with more independence than other federal prosecutors, who can be installed for high-profile investigations when there are conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts, though they ultimately answer to the attorney general.

The Biden special counsel will examine approximately 10 classified documents found at the thinktank, which included US intelligence memos and some materials [marked as Top Secret/Secret Compartmented Information](#), and an unconfirmed additional number of classified documents that were in the garage and a storage space nearby.

US attorney general outlines investigation into classified documents found at Biden's home – video

From the information released so far, there are [major differences between the Biden case and that involving Trump](#), who retained hundreds of classified documents and only partially complied with a grand jury subpoena that led to the FBI search of Mar-a-Lago last August.

By contrast, Biden and his lawyers proactively returned the classified documents dating back to the Obama administration when he was vice-president to the government as soon as they were discovered. Biden was also not responding to a grand jury subpoena.

Biden's personal lawyers found the first set of documents at the Penn Biden Center on 2 November and alerted the National Archives and the justice department. The archives then issued a formal referral, leading Garland to task the Trump-appointed US attorney John Lausch to conduct a review.

Biden's lawyers then found additional classified documents in Delaware on 20 December. On 5 January, Lausch recommended that Garland appoint a special counsel to conduct an investigation. Lausch added it could not be him, since he was due to return to private practice, according to a source familiar with the matter.

The revelation about the new documents came hours after the White House press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, said the White House was committed to handling the matter in the "right way", pointing to Biden's personal attorneys' immediate notification of the National Archives.

"As my colleagues in the counsel have stated and said to all of you yesterday, this is an ongoing process under the review of the Department of Justice. So we are going to be limited on what we can say here," Jean-Pierre said.

Before the special counsel appointment, Biden told reporters: "I'm going to get a chance to speak on all this, God willing, soon. People know I take classified documents and classified material seriously. I also said we're cooperating fully and completely with the justice department's review."

The top Republican on the House intelligence committee has since requested that the US intelligence community conduct a "damage assessment" to assess the impact of their storage in an unauthorized location.

In a statement on his Truth Social platform shortly before Garland spoke on Thursday, Trump [said](#) Garland should "immediately end special counsel investigation into anything related to me because I did everything right, and appoint a special counsel to investigate Joe Biden who hates Biden as much as Jack Smith hates me".

According to a justice department biography, Hur's prosecutorial career has included cases including gang violence, drug trafficking and domestic terrorism, as well as white-collar crime such as fraud, tax offenses, intellectual property theft and public corruption.

Hur graduated from Harvard College and received his law degree from Stanford. He clerked for Chief Justice William Rehnquist before working for the current FBI director, Christopher Wray, when he ran the justice department's criminal division during the George W Bush administration.

Most recently, he was a partner at the highly esteemed law firm Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher after he left the justice department at the end of the Trump administration, where he served as the principal associate deputy attorney general, the top adviser role to the deputy attorney general.

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## Headlines tuesday 10 january 2023

- [Strikes Ministers to unveil anti-strike laws as disputes continue to paralyse UK](#)
- [Live Grant Shapps rejects government's own assessment that anti-strike bill could lead to more strikes](#)
- [Workers' rights Rishi Sunak has abandoned Tory pledge, says former jobs tsar](#)
- [NHS Strikes still going ahead despite Rishi Sunak's U-turn on pay talks](#)



## Industrial action

# Ministers to unveil anti-strike laws as disputes continue to paralyse UK

Business department says bill will enforce ‘basic’ level of service from different sectors during stoppages

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



A passenger looks at information screens at New Street station in Birmingham during a strike by RMT members last Saturday. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

[\*Jamie Grierson\*](#) and [\*Jessica Elgot\*](#)

Tue 10 Jan 2023 05.18 ESTFirst published on Tue 10 Jan 2023 02.47 EST

Ministers are to unveil controversial new legislation designed to curb the effectiveness of strike action as industrial disputes continue to paralyse services across the UK.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has previously said the bill will enforce a “basic” level of service from different sectors if workers choose to strike.

Shapps said there was currently a “lottery” if workers chose to strike, alleging that nurses were willing to guarantee a national level of service during strikes but ambulance unions were not. “There was a sort of regional postcode lottery. That’s the thing we want to avoid,” he told Sky News.

The legislation is likely to face a difficult passage in the House of Lords and a legal challenge by unions once it is passed – meaning minimum service levels are unlikely to be able to be enforced for many months.

The government’s own impact assessment has suggested that the legislation could lead to “an increased frequency of strikes ... and more adverse effects in the long-term”.

Shapps told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme that he did not see that as a risk and said the government hoped it would never have to use the new power, citing the disparity between nurses and ambulance workers and saying he hoped agreements could be made without the need for enforcement.

“This would, I hope, bring everybody to the table to provide those same minimum safety levels,” he said.

“I do think the minimum safety levels make a huge amount of sense. I hope that rather than actually using the legislation, we’ll be able to just get this safety and security in place for people. It can’t be right that the British people are exposed to that variance and service depending on where they happen to live.”

The Trades Union Congress general secretary, Paul Nowak, said the change in law would risk further strikes.

“This legislation would mean that, when workers democratically vote to strike, they can be forced to work and sacked if they don’t comply. That’s

undemocratic, unworkable, and almost certainly illegal,” he said. “Let’s be clear: if passed, this bill will prolong disputes and poison industrial relations – leading to more frequent strikes.”

The introduction of the bill to parliament on Tuesday comes after crisis talks on Monday between ministers and unions [failed to resolve ongoing disputes](#) with nurses, teachers and rail workers.

Rishi Sunak's anti-strike laws may be illegal, says RMT chief – video

However, ministers have laid the ground for a U-turn on pay for [NHS](#) staff by agreeing to discuss backdating pay offers from April and one-off cost-of-living payments that were previously ruled out.

Relations are likely to be soured, however, by the introduction of the legislation on the day after the talks. Defending the proposed legislation, Shapps said the government wanted to end “forever strikes”.

He told Times Radio: “Everyone knows we want to bring these strikes, which in some cases, railways for example, seem to have turned into sort of forever strikes. We want to bring this to a close and the government is bending over backwards to do that.”

He added: “Other countries like Germany and France and elsewhere do have minimum safety levels in place and we want to make sure that we’re doing the same thing to protect the British people.

“All we’d be doing here is bringing ourselves into line with what is already practised in many other countries.”

Labour has warned that bill could allow employers to sue trade unions and sack workers. The party has said it will oppose the bill and repeal it once in government.

Shapps has played down criticism that minimum service levels legislation could lead to NHS staff being sacked. He said: “This sort of talk that somebody will be sacked is no more true than it would be under any

employment contract and that's always the case when people have to stick to the law.”

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Unions warned it could see key workers facing the sack if they exercise their right to strike, and that if it becomes law it could “poison industrial relations” and lead to more walkouts.

The health secretary, Steve Barclay, is reportedly considering backdating next year's NHS staff pay increase, as well as making a one-off cost-of-living payment.

In a meeting with health unions, Barclay is said to have suggested that improvements in efficiency and productivity within the health service could “unlock additional funding” to lead to an increased offer for the 2023-24 pay settlement in the spring.

Those comments were criticised by Unite, one of the unions that attended the talks, saying that asking for staff to work harder for more money was insulting. But Shapps said that was not what was meant.

“There are many, many new things which have come in which could make the practice of healthcare, the running of railways and other things much more efficient,” he told Sky News.

“I think what the health secretary was saying is that let's try and take advantage of those things, and that's our route to being able to pay people

for greater productivity.”

Sara Gorton, the head of health at the Unison trade union, said the discussion represented a “tone change” from the UK government after months of ministers refusing to budge beyond what had been recommended by the independent pay review bodies.

Unions said there was no “tangible offer” made, however, with Gorton calling for “cold hard cash” to be offered so members can be consulted over stopping strikes.

While there were positive noises about the talks in some quarters, other unions were incensed by the lack of perceived progress and it was clear the discussions were not enough to prevent the likelihood of further strikes in the health sector.

Physiotherapists also said they would be announcing industrial action dates later this week despite the talks, while the GMB union said ambulance strikes would go ahead as planned on Wednesday.

The Fire Brigades Union general secretary, Matt Wrack, said: “This is an attack on all workers – including key workers, who kept our public services going during the pandemic. It’s an attack on Britain’s Covid heroes and on all workers. We need a mass movement of resistance to this authoritarian attack.”

## [Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

# Labour asks Sunak to say how much money he ‘wasted’ by taking private jet from London to Leeds – as it happened

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## Business

# Rishi Sunak has abandoned Tory pledge on workers' rights, says former jobs tsar

Matthew Taylor says PM has delayed putting in place many of measures from 2019 manifesto

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



Rishi Sunak visits a construction site in April 2021. His government is planning to block public sector strikes. Photograph: Lee Smith/AFP/Getty Images

[Kiran Stacey](#)

Tue 10 Jan 2023 04.45 ESTLast modified on Wed 11 Jan 2023 05.57 EST



The Conservatives' former employment tsar has accused Rishi Sunak of abandoning the party's commitment to improving workers' rights after the business minister said many of the policies in the 2019 manifesto would not be implemented imminently.

Matthew Taylor, who was [recruited by Theresa May](#) to conduct a wide-ranging review of Britain's employment laws, said the government had delayed putting in place many of the measures he recommended in 2017.

He was commenting after Kevin Hollinrake, the business minister, said in a series of written answers that the government had no immediate plans to implement several of the policy proposals that stemmed from that review. Meanwhile, the government is about to unveil its [controversial anti-strikes bill](#) that some worry could undermine employment protections further.

Taylor told the Guardian: "There comes a point when repeated delay starts to feel like an abandonment of an agenda. That is a great pity because, at a time when industrial relations are at the forefront, the challenge of improving the quality of work is, if anything, even more urgent than when I wrote my report."

Taylor, who previously worked as head of the No 10 policy unit under Tony Blair, was recruited by May in October 2016 to lead a review of modern employment. His appointment was seen as a coup for the Conservatives, and a key plank in the party's attempts to win over economically insecure Labour voters.

May spoke at the launch of the report in 2017, [saying](#): "The issues it confronts go right to the heart of the government's agenda and right to the heart of our values as a people."

Many of Taylor's policy recommendations were included in the party's [2019 manifesto](#), but have barely been mentioned since. They included making it easier for men to take paternity leave, allowing workers to request more predictable contracts and creating a single regulator to enforce employment law.

In recent weeks, Angela Rayner, Labour's deputy leader, has tabled a series of parliamentary questions asking about the status of each of these pledges.

In response, Hollinrake said the government [would legislate](#) to encourage more predictable contracts only "if parliamentary time allows". He [refused to say](#) whether the government still intended to update its guidance on unpaid internships, which it first promised to do in 2018. And he said the government was consulting on or analysing a range of other issues, including [paternity rights](#) and [more predictable hours](#).

Asked whether the government still intended to create a single employment regulator [he responded](#): "Timing will be dependent on the legislative timetable."

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Ministers are preparing to publish details of legislation [designed to reduce the impact of strikes](#) by forcing public services to provide guaranteed minimum levels of service.

Labour will oppose that bill, and Rayner said Hollinrake's answers were further evidence that employment rights were being undermined.

"For all the Conservatives' claims that they would make Britain the best place in the world to work, they've junked their commitments to ensure stable employment and prevent exploitation," she said.

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## Industrial action

# NHS strikes still going ahead despite Rishi Sunak's U-turn on pay talks

PM changes tack to allow negotiations on wages but unions remain frustrated at lack of clear offer

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



NHS staff marching outside Downing Street during the nurses' strike in December. Photograph: Tayfun Salcı/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

[Jessica Elgot](#), [Denis Campbell](#) and [Gwyn Topham](#)

Mon 9 Jan 2023 14.09 ESTFirst published on Mon 9 Jan 2023 10.05 EST

Strikes by paramedics and nurses will go ahead from this week despite Rishi Sunak's major U-turn on allowing new pay negotiations, with unions frustrated at ministers for not yet making a concrete offer.

The health secretary, [Steve Barclay](#), has agreed to discuss the possibility of a lump-sum payment or backdating a future pay deal in order to end NHS strikes, according to multiple sources. Further talks are expected later this week, the Guardian understands, as well as negotiations between Barclay and the Treasury.

Though health unions publicly attacked the talks as disappointing, both union and government sources acknowledged a significant change in approach, with ministers prepared to ease the pain staff were experiencing because of the cost of living.

Ministers met health, rail and education unions over the course of Monday in an effort to avert a range of industrial action in the coming months.

Another key U-turn is widely expected to be part of a renewed effort to end rail strikes. One senior industry source said they believed ministers were open to dropping the controversial driver-only operation clause inserted in a deal before Christmas – which the unions have said was at the behest of the government.

The government will meet the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and Network Rail later this week. Mick Lynch, leader of the RMT union, indicated that he would have further talks with the RDG negotiators representing train operators this week, fuelling hope that a resolution could be reached. Lynch and the RMT have regularly maintained they need binding written commitments, and are likely to want to see a redrafted formal offer which would not cross their longstanding red line on the role of guards and train crew.

The national executive of the train drivers' union Aslef is due to meet next Monday to formally consider an offer of 8% over two years, made on Friday, that would include Sunday working – a deal that is likely to be rejected.

Unions including the Royal College of [Nursing](#) (RCN), Unison and Unite met Barclay on Monday morning, though there was widespread

disappointment that the health secretary did not have a concrete offer to put forward.

But in a significant shift, Unison's Sara Gorton said Barclay accepted that health workers would have to be offered more pay as part of the settlement for this year, 2022-23, despite having insisted for weeks that the pay deal was closed. "The secretary of state is very, very clear that resolving this dispute means not just talking about pay for the next period but actually pay for the current year. So very clear that resolving the dispute will take boosting pay ahead of 1 April," she said.

Gorton also said Barclay asked the unions him to help him make the case to the Treasury for health getting more investment. "We'll certainly do that," she said.

The Guardian revealed on Monday that the government is understood to be considering offering a one-off payment to health workers, possibly in the form of a hardship payment to get them through the winter.

That offer was not made to unions in the meeting, but a government source said Barclay had made clear he was willing to consider the possibility of a lump sum or of backdated pay at a higher rate from January 2023 into the next round of pay talks for next year.

But union sources were scathing about Barclay's apparent failure to offer any of his own new ideas on how to break the deadlock. One said they did not understand why the government had invited union representatives for talks about pay but then apparently made no new suggestions.

A Whitehall source said the talks had been "useful and constructive" and that there was more common ground. They said the government was taking "a new approach in the past few days", but said Barclay wanted to have an open conversation about productivity and efficiency.

That would mean a more generous pay settlement if more money could be found through savings, they added. "There will be more money available if we can work together."

Unite, one of the unions involved in the talks, said those terms put forward by the government were “an insult to our members”. The union’s Onay Kasab said: “All the government are interested in is saying that in order to justify a payment, then we need to come up with productivity savings in the [NHS](#). That is absolutely ludicrous. This isn’t a factory we’re talking about.

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No 10 proposals to end NHS strikes 'insulting', says union official – video

“We are talking about people who are working well beyond their contracted hours anyway just to get the job done because they can’t hand patients over and because they care so much.”

The RCN branded the talks “bitterly disappointing” and said government “intransigence” was increasing the likelihood of next week’s nurses’ strikes going ahead. Joanne Galbraith-Marten, the RCN’s director of employment relations and legal services, said: “This intransigence is letting patients down. Ministers have a distance to travel to avert next week’s nurse strike.”

Downing Street admitted that the government was taking a “new approach” by discussing pay – having previously said it was off the table – and was prepared to go further than before on providing financial support to help struggling workers now. “We recognise that despite those high [pay] awards this year, global economic headwinds are putting household budgets under pressure,” the prime minister’s spokesperson said.



Ambulance workers in England and Wales are planning to strike for 24 hours on Wednesday, while action by nurses is scheduled for 18 and 19 January.

[Teaching unions met the education secretary](#), Gillian Keegan, on Monday before the results of a formal ballot of NEU members on strike action due next week. Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, expressed frustration at the lack of progress in the union leaders' meeting with Keegan.

He said: "The meeting was constructive but largely unsatisfactory in that our concerns over the long-term erosion of teacher pay and conditions, the inadequacy of this year's pay award, and the ongoing teacher recruitment and retention crisis, remain unresolved."

He said the education secretary had promised to look at union submissions to the pay review body for next year's school teacher pay award, but no progress had been made on this year's below-inflation award.

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## 2023.01.10 - Spotlight

- [Spare by Prince Harry review A flawed attempt to reclaim the narrative](#)
- [Brother, where art thou? Prince William bears the brunt of Harry's angry book](#)
- ['The curtain has been lifted' Can the Golden Globes overcome controversy?](#)
- [Golden Globes 2023 Who will win and who should win the film awards](#)

## Autobiography and memoir

### Review

# **Spare by Prince Harry review – a flawed attempt to reclaim the narrative**

By turns sympathetic and absurd, this is a memoir that deals in the tropes of tabloid storytelling even as it lambasts them



Prince Harry claims he is no great reader, but seems to have devoured every word devoted to him in the press. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA



[Charlotte Higgins](#) *Chief culture writer*

Mon 9 Jan 2023 19.01 EST Last modified on Tue 10 Jan 2023 04.01 EST

The monarchy relies on fiction. It is a constructed reality, in which grown-up people are asked to collude in the notion that a human is more than a human – that he or she contains something approaching the ineffable essence of Britishness. Once, this fiction rested on political and military power, supported by a direct line, it was supposed, to God. Nowadays it relies on the much frailer foundations of habit, the mysteries of Britain’s unwritten constitution, and spectacle: a kind of symbolism without the symbolised. Ceremonials such as the late queen’s funeral are not merely decorative; they are the institution’s means of securing its continuance. The monarchy is theatre, the monarchy is storytelling, the monarchy is illusion.

All this explains why royals are so irresistible to writers of fiction, from Alan Bennett to Peter Morgan: they are already halfway to myth. And, it seems, no one cleaves harder to the myths than the royals themselves. There’s a fascinating passage in Prince Harry’s autobiography, *Spare*, in which he describes his father’s delight in Shakespeare: how he would regularly take his son to Stratford, how he “adored Henry V. He compared himself to Prince Hal.” Harry himself tried *Hamlet*. “Hmm. Lonely prince, obsessed with dead parent, watches remaining parent fall in love with ... parent’s usurper? I slammed it shut.” At Eton, he was cast as Conrade, one

of Don John's comic minions in *Much Ado About Nothing*. To his surprise, he was rather good. "Being royal, it turned out, wasn't all that far from being on stage."

Prince Harry portrays himself as no great reader. Studying invited reflection; reflection invited grief; emotions were best avoided. But he does himself an injustice. He is a voracious reader – of the press. For years, it seems, he devoured every syllable published about him, in outlets from the *London Review of Books* to the *Sun* to the faecal depths of below-the-line on social-media feeds. His father's most oft-quoted refrain in the book is "Don't read it, darling boy"; his therapist, he writes, suggested he was addicted to it. *Spare* is about the torment of a royal in the age of the smartphone and Instagram; a torment of a different order from even that suffered by his mother, and certainly by Princess Margaret, forbidden from marrying the man she loved by her own sister. (For Harry, Margaret is "Aunt Margo", a cold-blooded old lady who could "kill a houseplant with one scowl" and once gave him a biro – "Oh. A biro. Wow" – for Christmas.)

The fiction of royalty can be maintained only if its characters are visible, hence its symbiotic but rarely straightforward relationship with the media. *Spare* contends that portrayals of the royals in sections of the press – aside from having at times involved shocking criminality, outright invention, intolerable harassment and overt racism – have also often depended on a kind of zero-sum game, in which one family member's spokesperson will attempt to protect their client at the expense of another, trading gossip for favours. Harry, in his role as the expendable "spare", has often been the victim of this process, he argues. Narrative tropes and archetypes as old as the hills have been invoked in the distortions: the wayward son; the warring brothers. In Meghan's case, something even more corrosive: the witch-like woman.

It is the monarchist press for which Harry reserves special loathing. The *Telegraph's* royal correspondent "always made me ill", he writes; and he cannot bear even to name Rebekah Brooks, chief executive of News UK, referring to her anagrammatically as Rehabber Kooks. As for her boss: "I

didn't care for Rupert Murdoch's politics, which were just to the right of the Taliban's". Clueless as Harry may be about the sheer extent of his privilege – early in the book he writes, "It sounds posh and I suppose it was" of childhood meals of fishfingers served under silver domes by footmen – he isn't remotely a snob, nor, I infer, temperamentally of the right.

Prince Harry on why he wrote memoir: 'I don't want history to repeat itself' – video

A striking passage recounts the prince's talking to his therapist about Hilary Mantel's 2013 LRB [essay](#) about Kate Middleton. It became notorious, wilfully misread by the tabloids as being anti-Kate, even though it was the monstrosity of the *representation* of the now Princess of Wales that Mantel was skewering. Harry recalls his disgust at Mantel's calling the royal family "pandas" – cosseted, fascinating animals kept in a zoo. "If even a celebrated intellectual could dismiss us as animals, what hope for the man or woman on the street?"

Still, he half gets what Mantel was driving at. The words "always struck me as both acutely perceptive and uniquely barbarous," he writes. "We did live in a zoo." Describing his unpreparedness for having his funding cut in 2020, he writes: "I recognised the absurdity, a man in his mid-30s being cut off by his father ... But I'd never asked to be financially dependent on Pa. I'd been forced into this surreal state, this unending Truman Show in which I almost never carried money, never owned a car, never carried a house key, never once ordered anything online, never received a single box from Amazon, almost never travelled on the Underground."

In her essay, Mantel remarked that "Harry doesn't know which he is, a person or a prince". Spare is clearly the prince's attempt to claw back personhood, to claim his own narrative. Of his tabloid persecutors, he writes: "I was royal and in their minds royal was synonymous with non-person. Centuries ago royal men and women were considered divine; now they were insects. What fun, to pluck their wings." That, of course, is half-remembered Shakespeare: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; They kill us for their sport," says the blinded Gloucester in *Lear*. The gods in Harry's version are neither Olympians nor kings, but paparazzi and reporters – and so the circle has turned.

Spare is by turns compassion-inducing, frustrating, oddly compelling and absurd. Harry is myopic as he sits at the centre of his truth, simultaneously loathing and locked into the tropes of tabloid storytelling, the style of which his ghostwritten autobiography echoes. Had he seen more of the golden jubilee year of 2002, he would have observed that his impression that “Britain was intoxicated ... Everyone wore some version of the union jack” was quite wrong; swaths of the UK were indifferent, some hostile. His observations about the darkness of the basement flat he once occupied in Kensington Palace, its windows blocked from the light by a neighbour’s 4x4, will seem insulting to those who can’t find a home, or afford to heat one. The logical corollary of the views he now holds would be a personal republicanism, but needless to say that is not the path he takes: “My problem,” he writes, “has never been with the concept of monarchy.” What he shows, though – whether intentionally or not – is that the monarchy makes fools of us all.

Spare by Prince Harry, The Duke of Sussex (Transworld, £28). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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## Prince Harry

### Analysis

# Brother, where art thou? Prince William bears the brunt of Harry's angry book

[Caroline Davies](#)

Charles, Camilla and the press all come under attack, but the charge sheet against William is long

Prince Harry on why he wrote memoir: 'I don't want history to repeat itself' – video

Mon 9 Jan 2023 19.01 EST Last modified on Wed 11 Jan 2023 05.17 EST

Harry's wrath. Harry's revenge. Harry's truth. The Duke of Sussex's memoir Spare is finally hitting bookshops and its pages are dripping with accusation, anger and sorrow.

Harry's brother, the Prince of Wales, the "heir" to Harry's "spare", [is portrayed as](#) taking sibling competitiveness to "Olympiad" levels, throwing tantrums over Harry encroaching on his territory: Africa.

"I let you have veterans, why can't you let me have African elephants and rhinos?" William is said to have wailed, as the two squabbled over their causes. And even ordering Harry to shave off his beard for his wedding, because William was himself not allowed to have one. "Beardgate," Harry says of the row that lasted days.

His father, the king, is largely well-meaning though distracted, and generally forgives his son's transgressions while gently urging him to learn from his mistakes. But he fails in his younger son's eyes in being too terrified to take on the press – "the same shoddy bastards who'd portrayed him as a clown", "his tormentors, his bullies" – who were now "tormenting and bullying" Harry and Meghan.

Harry's stepmother, Camilla, the Queen Consort, is accused of playing "the long game, a campaign aimed at marriage and eventually the crown" with the spin doctor she is said to have persuaded Charles to hire leaking her conversations with William. When she eventually married Charles, "in a funny way, I even wanted Camilla to be happy. Maybe she'd be less dangerous if she was happy," Harry writes.

But when Camilla suggests one way the Sussexes can escape the "red-hot maelstrom" of press attack is by Harry becoming "governor general" of Bermuda, Harry writes: "Right. Right, I thought, and one added bonus of that plan would be to get us out of the picture."

Competitiveness, it seems, looms large within the royal palaces. When Harry suggests Meghan would give up acting and accompany him on royal duties, Charles, who funded his sons, is said to have replied: "Hmm. I see. Well darling boy, you know there's not enough money to go around." He was already having to pay for William and Kate, out of the millions he received annually from the duchy of Cornwall, Harry writes. But it was clear it wasn't about money, he continues, "what he really couldn't stomach" was someone "coming in and overshadowing him. And Camilla."

The picture he paints is of the royals all bidding to top the court circular annual Christmas Eve list for most engagements. The family "tolerated, even leaned into the nonsense of the court circular for the same reason it accepted the ravages and depredations of the press: fear. Fear of the public. Fear of the future. Fear of the day the nation would say: 'OK, shut it down,'" he writes.

It was suggested the then Duchess of Cambridge change the spelling of her name, Catherine, to Katherine with a K "because there were already two royal cyphers with a C and a crown above: Charles and Camilla. It would be too confusing to have another."

"Pa and Camilla" also didn't like William and Kate "getting loads of publicity". Harry cites one example of Kate attending a tennis club on a day Charles also had an engagement. "Just make sure the duchess doesn't hold a tennis racket in any of the photos," Charles's press team ordered, aware such a picture would wipe "Pa and Camilla off the front pages".

Harry is excoriating on the press; absolutely venomous in his description of Rebekah Brooks, after a “drugs shame” story about him was splashed across the front pages. He doesn’t name her – writing only “an anagram of Rehabber Kooks”. In response to the drug story, Harry claims, Charles’s team had spun Harry “right under a bus”, making up a story about Harry being taken to visit a rehab centre; so it would “bolster” Charles’s reputation, which had “sagged” since Diana’s death. “No more the unfaithful husband, Pa would now be presented to the world as the harried single dad coping with a drug-addled child.”

Harry claims one small victory against his nemesis: the royal rota of media correspondents. He didn’t want a single royal correspondent inside the chapel at his wedding “unless [Rupert] Murdoch himself apologised for phone hacking”. The palace warned it would spark “all-out” war. But Harry won.

Fingers are pointed in all directions over leaked stories. When papers started writing about tensions between the Cambridges and the Sussexes, the four met to discuss their origin. William finally conceded he had mentioned “strife” between the two couples while having dinner with “Pa and Camilla”. Harry writes: “I put my hand over my face. Meg froze. A heavy silence fell. So now we knew. ‘I told you, Willy. You ... of all people ... should’ve known ... ’” The inescapable implication is that the leaks emanated from Charles’s office.

Sources close to Camilla are reported to have [denied](#) that she leaked details of any private conversations.

On taking on the press, Harry said he told his father and brother: “I might learn to endure the press, even forgive their abuse, I might, but my own family’s complicity, that was going to take longer to get over. Pa’s office, Willy’s office, enabling these fiends, if not outright collaborating.”

Palace courtiers do not escape his loathing, “the Bee, the Fly and the Wasp”, understood to be senior courtiers in Buckingham Palace, Kensington Palace and Clarence House.

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The Duke of York gets a brief mention, buried deep in the book. It represents the first time a royal has commented on [the Andrew debacle](#). When he and Meghan discussed the threat of losing their security, Harry writes, they thought: “Not in this climate of hate. And not after what happened to my mother. Also, not in the wake of my Uncle Andrew. He was embroiled in a shameful scandal, accused of the sexual assault of a young woman, and no one had so much as suggested that he lose his security. Whatever grievances people had against us, [accusations of] sex crimes weren’t on the list.”

But it is William who bears the brunt of his attacks: William, who Harry says, ignored him at Eton; William who “complained” when Harry set up his Invictus Games that it would use up all the funds in their joint Royal Foundation; William who refused to have Harry as his best man for fear he’d go off script in the speech; William who, when Harry suggested Westminster Abbey or St Paul’s Cathedral for his wedding to Meghan, instead suggested “Tetbury”. “Tetbury? The chapel near Highgrove? Seriously, Willy? How many does that place seat?”

Harry attended Sandhurst before William, as the latter went to university. At Harry’s “passing out”, William saluted. “He couldn’t resort to his typical attitude when we were sharing an institution, couldn’t pretend not to know me – or he’d be insubordinate. For one brief moment, Spare outranked Heir,” writes Harry.

There was competitiveness, too, over their mother. On the 20th anniversary of Diana’s death, at her graveside in Althorp, William said he thought their

mother was there, guiding him and had been helping him “start a family” and that she was helping Harry, too. “I nodded. ‘Totally agree, I feel as though she’s helped me find Meg.’ Willy took a step back. He looked concerned. That seemed to be taking things a bit far. ‘Well now, Harold. I’m not sure about that. I wouldn’t say THAT!’”

The book opens with a scene set at Windsor, at the time of the Duke of Edinburgh’s funeral, as Harry goes to meet his father and brother to seek understanding over his decision to leave the royal fold. He sees the two walking towards him. They looked “grim, almost menacing, shoulder-to-shoulder, tightly aligned, in lockstep – in league”. He was the outsider, now.

The meeting does not go well. He looks around his surroundings in the gardens of Frogmore House and at a gothic ruin. No more gothic than the Millennium Wheel, he writes.

“Stagecraft – like so much around here, I thought.”

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## [Golden Globes 2023](#)

# **‘The curtain has been lifted’: can the Golden Globes overcome controversy?**

After allegations of impropriety and issues with diversity, the Golden Globes are returning but is the industry ready to take them back?



This year, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association is hoping for a splashy return to former glory. Photograph: Michael Tran/AFP/Getty Images





[Benjamin Lee](#)

Tue 10 Jan 2023 01.13 EST

The moment Tom Cruise, recently re-throned King of Hollywood, decided to publicly boycott the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, it might have been wise to call it a day, the Maverick seal of disapproval hammering with nails a coffin already almost closed shut. But the HFPA, the controversial group behind the Golden Globes, didn't flinch at the actor's snub when [he handed back his prior awards](#) in May 2021, and instead soldiered on, for better or worse.

Cruise was one of many big names protesting against the problematic practices of the group, whose shadowy dealings were brought to light in two ground-shifting exposés in the Los Angeles Times just months earlier. The group of journalists, long seen as both question mark and punchline within the industry, was revealed as both embarrassingly lacking in diversity (among its 87 members, not a single one was black) and guilty of "ethical lapses" with studios and publicists courting votes with gifts and trips around the world. A lawsuit filed by a Norwegian journalist denied entrance accused them of a "culture of corruption". It opened the floodgates to more – [a leaked anti-Black Lives Matter email](#) from a former HFPA

president, [members resigning](#) after labelling the organisation as “toxic” – and after celebrities, and their publicists, backed away, [so did the US TV network NBC](#), cutting off a deal estimated to be worth \$60m a year.

Last year’s ceremony was a hushed one – no celebrities, no press, no TV cameras – but this year the HFPA is hoping for a splashy return to former glory, re-partnering with NBC, hiring comedian Jerrod Carmichael as emcee (the first ever solo Black host in the show’s history) and confirming attendance from celebrities such as Jamie Lee Curtis, Quentin Tarantino and Ana de Armas. Can the tide really turn?

“Hollywood’s wait-and-see approach has gone on for pretty much over a year now – at this point, the longer it takes, the further the Globes get from reclaiming any semblance of their former glory,” said David Canfield, who covers the awards season for Vanity Fair. “Nominees didn’t do reaction interviews on the morning of. I know of no studio after-parties.

“It’s easy to see this tepidness, currently rooted in an uncertainty around embracing this embattled group, become a new kind of normal.”

Since the original controversy broke, the HFPA has implemented a string of new hit-and-miss correctives, from [hiring a diversity consultant who promptly resigned](#) to introducing a hotline to record incidents of misconduct to restructuring the makeup of the group, [adding 103 new members](#), with 58.3% self-identifying as “ethnically diverse”.

“I think they’ve definitely taken measures,” said Stacy Perman, whose original reporting for the LA Times led to the changes. “They’ve changed their bylaws, they’ve prohibited gifts, they’ve put some limits and curbs on their members’ travel. But the biggest change is that Todd Boehly, the chairman of [private equity firm] Eldridge industries, is buying the [Golden Globes](#) and transforming the organisation from a not-for-profit to a for-profit. It still needs the California attorney general sign-off, but I think that’s the biggest change and that raises a whole new set of questions about the organisation.”

Last month [Perman interviewed Boehly](#), who also bought Chelsea FC for a record-breaking \$4.93bn in 2022, and the billionaire detailed that by paying members a yearly salary of \$75,000, it would help to remove some of the conflicts of interest that had been there before. Previously HFPA members were able to secure exclusive access to talent at various events and press conferences that then led to paid assignments. Boehly said he was helping to remove anything that “might have created the opportunity to be swayed by things other than just being authentic and having real integrity.” But Boehly also owns stakes in influential trade publications Variety and the Hollywood Reporter as well as film distributor A24, whose titles have accrued 10 nominations this year, raising new concerns.

Notably, one of A24’s biggest nominees, Brendan Fraser up for best actor for his performance in Darren Aronofsky’s The Whale, has said that [he won’t be attending](#) after accusing the former HFPA president Philip Berk of groping him at a lunch event in 2013. “I have more history with the Hollywood Foreign Press Association than I have respect for the Hollywood Foreign Press Association,” Fraser said to GQ.



Brendan Fraser, star of The Whale. Photograph: Michael Tran/AFP/Getty Images

It remains to be seen if some of the night's biggest contenders, including Cate Blanchett, Daniel Craig, Colin Farrell and Michelle Yeoh, will also boycott. This week's second round of confirmed presenters include Jenna Ortega, Hilary Swank, Jennifer Coolidge and Letitia Wright, while the Ukrainian president, Vladimir Zelenskiy, will be appearing via video message, introduced by Sean Penn.

Perman called the atmosphere in Los Angeles "muted" in the days building up to Tuesday's ceremony.

"Campaigns and publicists behind nominees, especially those in need of an Oscar boost, are hardly rooting against the opportunity to make an actual splash on Tuesday night," Canfield said. "I think the biggest remaining concern is brand viability. The cat is out of the bag that this small, fairly random assortment of voters hasn't exactly been the most reliable, representative, or, frankly, qualified.

"Even as they clean up their act and promise, for now, a national televised audience, how much does one really gain from boasting about winning a Golden Globe? The curtain has been lifted."

Controversy aside, they also land at an unsure time for awards shows in general. The last televised Globes ceremony saw a 60% drop in viewership in 2021, the lowest since it returned to NBC in 1996. This year's return to the network is part of a tentative one-year agreement, after which the HFPA would be able to "explore new opportunities for domestic and global distribution" according to NBC.

"I think ratings are a non-starter, honestly," Canfield said. "The show is airing on a Tuesday night with a relatively unknown host, at least by the Globes' standards, so I expect something close to 'Disaster!' trade headlines the morning after, even if that metric is outdated."

It's also been [a difficult time for awards-aiming movies at the box office](#) and while the nominees do include hits such as Avatar: The Way of Water, Top Gun: Maverick and Everything Everywhere All At Once, many of the films such as The Fabelmans, Tár and Babylon have struggled to find an audience.

“Do people care, beyond the immediate media/Hollywood bubble?” Canfield said. “Will the speeches be good and starry? Will Jerrod Carmichael – a brilliant comic – find the right tone as emcee? The Globes knew how to deliver a good show. If they can do that again, it’s a step in the right direction.”

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## [Golden Globes 2023](#)

# Golden Globes 2023: who will win and who should win the film awards

Will Steven Spielberg's love letter to the movies bring him some love? Will Cate Blanchett score another best actress win?



Stephanie Hsu, Michelle Yeoh and Ke Huy Quan in Everything Everywhere All at Once Photograph: Allyson Riggs/AP



[Benjamin Lee](#)

Tue 10 Jan 2023 02.43 EST

After an almost two-year period of what felt like an unending cycle of embarrassing reveals and nervous repair work, the [Golden Globes](#) are finally, sort of, pretty much, maybe, kinda back.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association has been accused of a great many things – racism, bribery, giving *The Tourist* three nominations in 2010 – and after last year’s ceremony was both celebrity- and TV camera-free, the industry now awaits to see if Tuesday’s ceremony will be enough to return them to former glories.

But aside from whether anyone will, or should, watch what happens, which nominees will, or should, come away winners?

## **Best film (drama)**





A still from *The Fabelmans*. Photograph: Merie Weismiller Wallace/AP

After the pandemic temporarily decimated the box office, the slow crawl back has led to a debate over exactly what awards bodies will be celebrating this season. Will there be more impetus than usual to reward the audience-alluring blockbusters as a way of recognising their importance in keeping so many people employed? While Baz Luhrmann's flashy biopic hit *Elvis* might well have found its way into this category on any other year, it's less guaranteed that Tom Cruise's smash sequel *Top Gun: Maverick* would have been a contender, given its reliance on spectacle at the price of pretty much anything else. If voters were going for this commercial reasoning then it could be either the latter film or James Cameron's juggernaut *Avatar: The Way of Water*, which continues to creep up the all-time box office list, that wins out (although Cruise's public boycott of the Globes could play a part in his film being denied a win). But I'm betting the HFPA opts for Steven Spielberg's autobiographical ode to the movies *The Fabelmans* which might have bombed on the big screen but its message of the power of film will send a similar message. Todd Field's spiky character study *Tár* is sadly too knotty for HFPA voters to unravel.

**Will win:** *The Fabelmans*

**Should win:** *Tár*

**Shoulda been nominated:** Empire of Light

## **Best actress (drama)**



Cate Blanchett in a still from Tár. Photograph: Courtesy of Focus Features/AP

While Tár as a whole might be, sadly, too chilly for some voters to fully embrace, they will probably find its star [Cate Blanchett](#) hard to resist, delivering an all-timer of a performance as a morally challenged composer losing her grip. Blanchett has a history of adoration from the Globes with three wins and another eight nominations (she even squeaked through for the thoroughly dreadful Where'd You Go, Bernadette) and with most agreeing that this is a career-best turn, it's doubtful the HFPA won't take the opportunity to add to her mantelpiece. Her closest competition would probably be Michelle Williams for The Fabelmans although heat around her has cooled as Blanchett has managed to scoop up the majority of critics circle prizes in recent months. Next in line would be Viola Davis for The Woman King, the kind of robust, mainstream crowd-pleaser that the Globes are known for liking, while Ana de Armas for Blonde, and Olivia Colman for Empire of Light, might be viewed as the best things about the films they're in but that won't be enough.

**Will win:** Cate Blanchett, Tár

**Should win:** Cate Blanchett, Tár

**Shoulda been nominated:** Florence Pugh, The Wonder

## **Best actor (drama)**



Austin Butler in a still from Elvis. Photograph: Album/Alamy

It's been a notoriously weak year for male actors, the female category overstuffed with contenders, while the men have trailed far behind. There are, in my opinion, two ways for this category to go, given that the arguable best actor Oscar frontrunner is in the comedy and musical category. The first would be Brendan Fraser winning for Darren Aronofsky's *The Whale*, the kind of pre-packaged transformative awards performance that voters have always loved, but Fraser has spoken out against the HFPA and an alleged groping incident involving the former president. He's a confirmed no-show at this year's ceremony but even without that swirling, the film has been falling out of favour with many critics, who have rightfully criticised its creaky theatricality and awkward acting. The second, and more sturdy, scenario sees Austin Butler win for his role as Elvis, a film that has slowly become one of the surest things of this awards season. Voters love music

biopics and lower-wattage competition from Hugh Jackman in *The Son*, Bill Nighy in *Living* and Jeremy Pope in *The Inspection* will only make Butler's path to the stage even smoother.

**Will win:** Austin Butler, Elvis

**Should win:** Austin Butler, Elvis

**Shoulda been nominated:** Jack Lowden, *Benediction*

## **Best film (comedy or musical)**



Ke Huy Quan in a scene from *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.  
Photograph: Allyson Riggs/AP

There are reasons to think that Martin McDonagh's friendship-turned-sour comedy *The Banshees of Inisherin* might come out on top here – it leads the field with the most nominations – the HFPA picked *Three Billboards* in the same year that the Academy didn't – but I think the category, and the night itself, will be dominated by the multiverse caper *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. It might seem like a younger, edgier choice for the HFPA but beyond the buttplug jokes is a simple and, for many, rousing story about family. It also, like so many best comedy or musical winners, is essentially

more of a drama, re-raising the debate about how seriously comedy is taken at the Globes. Elsewhere, Glass Onion will probably be seen as too much of a frippery, Babylon too divisive and Triangle of Sadness too odd.

**Will win:** Everything Everywhere All at Once

**Should win:** Triangle of Sadness

**Shoulda been nominated:** Bros

## **Best actress (comedy or musical)**



Michelle Yeoh in Everything Everywhere All at Once. Photograph: A24/Allstar

While she might have fallen out of the best actress Oscar race, it's pleasing to see Emma Thompson recognised here for her never-better turn as a woman exploring her sexuality in the wonderfully revealing Good Luck to You, Leo Grande. With a different campaign and in a different year, it might have been hers to lose. But the wins will probably continue for Everything Everywhere All at Once and Michelle Yeoh's barnstorming central performance. There's a great swell of support for her and the career that has preceded this and she'll probably become only the second woman of Asian



descent to win this category. Elsewhere a deserving Lesley Manville for her lovely Cinderella tale Mrs Harris Goes to Paris and the far less deserving pair of Anya Taylor-Joy for The Menu and Margot Robbie in Babylon will have to settle for the sidelines.

**Will win:** Michelle Yeoh, Everything Everywhere All at Once

**Should win:** Emma Thompson, Good Luck to You, Leo Grande

**Shoulda been nominated:** Amandla Stenberg, Bodies, Bodies, Bodies

## **Best actor (comedy or musical)**



Colin Farrell in The Banshees of Inisherin. Photograph: AP

Quite possibly the easiest category of the night to predict has [Colin Farrell](#) rightfully sprinting away with this one for his exquisitely measured performance in The Banshees of Inisherin. It's the comedy or musical category but it's Farrell's quieter, dramatic moments that should help seal the deal and it'll play into HFPA's desire for big stars winning big awards. His competition here is pretty much non-existent as he's the only contender gaining genuine awards traction outside of the Globes, with Babylon's

Diego Calva, White Noise's Adam Driver, The Menu's Ralph Fiennes and Glass Onion's Daniel Craig all unlikely to feature in the Oscar race.

**Will win:** Colin Farrell, The Banshees of Inisherin

**Should win:** Colin Farrell, The Banshees of Inisherin

**Shoulda been nominated:** Billy Eichner, Bros

## **Best supporting actress**



Jamie Lee Curtis in Everything Everywhere All at Once. Photograph: A24/Allyson Riggs/Allstar

There is a genuine route here for Angela Bassett to triumph for her scene-devouring turn in Black Panther: Wakanda Forever given the actor's long, respected career and the film's powerful off-screen emotional arc but it will most likely be a night for the category's other elder stateswoman. [Jamie Lee Curtis](#), one of the only nominees confirmed to be attending the ceremony, will probably follow her Everything Everywhere All at Once co-stars to the stage (even if her slot should have gone to Stephanie Hsu) after two wins in the past and another five nominations. Curtis was also memorably one of the only celebrities who took part in last year's ceremony, via video,



showing her support for the HFPA. The Banshees of Inisherin's Kerry Condon is a lock for a best supporting actress nod at the Oscars but might have to sit this one out, deserving as she might be. The nomination for Triangle of Sadness breakout Dolly de Leon is a win in itself while Carey Mulligan's nod for She Said feels like filler given how the film hasn't performed elsewhere.

**Will win:** Jamie Lee Curtis, Everything Everywhere All at Once

**Should win:** Dolly De Leon, Triangle of Sadness

**Shoulda been nominated:** Judy Davis, Nitram

## **Best supporting actor**



Ke Huy Quan in a scene from Everything Everywhere All at Once.  
Photograph: Allyson Riggs/AP

Unusually, there are two nominations here for the same movie – both Brendan Gleeson (who is arguably a lead) and Barry Keoghan for The Banshees of Inisherin – and as such, may well cancel the other out. Brad Pitt's inclusion for Babylon is mostly because, well, he's Brad Pitt, while Eddie Redmayne is unlikely to leap ahead for The Good Nurse, a film with

very little buzz. Ultimately, HFPA and academy voters love a strong narrative and there's probably no stronger this year than Ke Huy Quan, the out-in-lead frontrunner for Everything Everywhere All at Once. A successful child star in the 80s, he struggled to find work in the decades after, eventually retreating from the industry. But he was lured back for what ended up being his magnum opus, playing multiple roles with aplomb and his understandably emotional string of speeches during the awards circuit (he's already won a ton) will probably continue this week.

**Will win:** Ke Huy Quan, Everything Everywhere All at Once

**Should win:** Ke Huy Quan, Everything Everywhere All at Once

**Shoulda been nominated:** Judd Hirsch, The Fabelmans

## Best director



Steven Spielberg on the set of The Fabelmans. Photograph: Merie Weismiller Wallace/AP

There was some mild pushback over the lack of diversity in this category (no Sarah Polley for Women Talking or Gina Prince-Bythewood for The Woman King) but it's a competitive year for the big guns and it's likely that

the biggest will win out. While James Cameron could rightfully be awarded for the sheer size of the undertaking behind Avatar: The Way of Water, Baz Luhrmann for the trademark dazzle of Elvis and the Daniels for the lower-budgeted ingenuity of their Marvel-esque Everything Everywhere All at Once (I think Martin McDonagh's work on The Banshees of Inisherin will be deemed too minor in comparison), it looks like it will be Steven Spielberg's year. The HFPA hasn't handed him the best director award since Saving Private Ryan at 1999's ceremony, despite five nods in the years since, and with his intimate movie-loving drama The Fabelmans also set to win best drama, I can see him getting further reward here for saluting the reason the Globes allegedly exist in the first place.

**Will win:** Steven Spielberg, The Fabelmans

**Should win:** James Cameron, Avatar: The Way of Water

**Shoulda been nominated:** Todd Field, Tár

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## 2023.01.10 - Opinion

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## [OpinionLabour](#)

# It's multiple choice time for ruthless Starmer: will he retain or scrap tuition fees?

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



As the state of education comes under scrutiny, Labour's leader faces some hard choices over the promises he made in 2020



‘Expect to see the political focus shifting this week from an imploding NHS to education.’ Keir Starmer at Friern Barnet school in north London last year. Photograph: James Manning/PA

Tue 10 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 10 Jan 2023 06.11 EST

It’s that time of year when the kids have just gone back to school, and every working parent who just scraped through the Christmas holidays breathes a sigh of relief. But not, perhaps, for long.

Within days we’ll know whether teachers in England and Wales have voted to join university lecturers on strike, an agonising decision for many in the profession: they understand better than anyone the implications of more missed lessons for pupils still struggling to catch up post-pandemic. But teaching unions are already arguing that much as nurses have done in the NHS, they’re attempting to draw attention to a broader crisis brewing in schools, one that is already damaging children’s education.

Teacher vacancies overall are at their [highest since 2010](#), thanks to a combination of post-pandemic burnout, stressful workloads and low morale, as well as pay. More than one in 10 new teachers now quit within a year of qualifying, suggesting some find the reality of classroom life a brutal shock.



Expect to see the political focus shifting accordingly this week from an imploding NHS to education, with Labour flagging up its plans to slap VAT on private school fees and spend the money on state schools. Like Keir Starmer's pledge to [scrap non-dom status](#) and spend the money on training doctors, it's a symbolic act of redistribution that's catchy, relatively electorally painless, and guaranteed to embarrass a prime minister who educates his own daughters privately and [won't say whether he uses a private GP](#). But it's also the easy bit. The harder argument Starmer must now confront is over tuition fees.

When he ran for party leader in 2020, Starmer made support for scrapping student fees one of his [10 campaign pledges](#). Asked last week if he stood by it, he [audibly hedged his bets](#): fees obviously weren't working, he said, and young people were being overburdened with debt, but "the damage that has been done to our economy means that ... we will cost everything as we go into that election". He's right to reopen this argument, but shouldn't expect an easy ride.



‘When he ran for leader in 2020, Starmer made support for scrapping student fees one of his 10 campaign pledges.’ Photograph: Jack Taylor/Getty Images

To the delight of some who voted for him and the understandable rage of others, Starmer has already moved a long way from the platform on which he ran for leader less than three years ago. Back in 2020, he promised to make the “moral case for socialism”, and raise income tax for the top 5% of earners. Now [he tells this newspaper](#) that taxes are already so high there isn’t a lot of scope for raising them much further, and that Labour won’t be getting out a “big chequebook” in power. Back in 2020, he vowed to support common ownership for rail, mail, energy and water; now, he says he [isn’t “ideological” about nationalisation](#).

Starmer’s defence is that a lot has changed in a few short years; that in 2020 he couldn’t have known what economic scorched earth a future [Labour](#) government would inherit following the pandemic, a bungled Brexit and a brief but disastrous experiment with Trussonomics. A cynic might say that having ducked a lot of difficult arguments in 2020, when he wasn’t strong enough to win them, Starmer has chosen to confront them only now from the vantage point of a whopping great lead over the Tories that most Labour supporters are desperate not to jeopardise. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between. But there is a certain ruthlessness to this Labour leader, a willingness to discard positions deemed to have outlived their usefulness.

What’s unusual about the tuition fees policy, however, is that it wasn’t just popular with Labour members wedded in principle to free higher education but with middle-class parents hoping to save a fortune on their children’s education. The first generation forced to fork out £9,000 a year for their degrees, meanwhile, will be in their 30s by the next election – an age at which, unlike twentysomethings, they’re reliably likely to vote – and are palpably furious about the debt they’ve been saddled with. Unlike targeting a handful of elite private schools that the vast majority of children don’t actually attend, a U-turn on tuition fees would be genuinely politically painful.

But the argument for reviewing it remains compelling: if you had upwards of £9bn to spend on education, as a party committed to ending inequalities, would you really spend it scrapping tuition fees? Or would you find other ways to patch up a clearly broken higher education funding model, where fees increasingly don’t cover the costs of teaching anyway, and spend any



spare cash on bringing back maintenance grants for those from poorer backgrounds and closing the attainment gap in schools?

It's unclear yet which way Starmer will jump. But he's right, at the very least, to be asking the question.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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## [OpinionPolitics](#)

# I thought new year predictions would be more fun than resolutions. Big mistake

[Zoe Williams](#)



In search of a family activity that is a little bit chilling, a little bit divisive and not that enjoyable? I have the perfect answer



Here today ... Liz Truss outside Downing Street on 6 September 2022.  
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Tue 10 Jan 2023 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 10 Jan 2023 15.16 EST

On New Year's Eve 2021, probably because some other doughnut in a newspaper said it was a fun idea, the family all wrote down predictions for the year ahead and sealed them in a box. When we opened them at the weekend, it turned out my son hadn't done one at all, hadn't even put a decoy in, and it's a mystery how he got away with it, given we were all sitting right there. So now I'm looking forward to his career in magic. The youngster, even though 13 is not that young, misunderstood the concept of a prediction, and instead included her ambitions for a multiplayer video game that she no longer plays.

So that left three: I had said I thought Covid would be seen as no different from a cold, that nobody would self-isolate or even test any more, and everything would be completely normal. Mr Z's was in two parts – Liz Truss would be prime minister, and [Ukraine](#) would be further annexed. The other 15-year-old had said she would always have £100 in her bank account.

And so the hair-splitting began. Obviously Liz Truss is not prime minister, and “annexed” is too formal and coherent a term for the Russian incursions into Ukraine. Equally obviously, Truss was for a bit, and Russia has invaded, and thus this should be classed as prescience. I disputed this on a technicality, that the only measure of a prediction is if it’s true, although my real objection was that I think he manifests these negative events with the power of his pessimism.

Covid, meanwhile, has gone the way I said, but I omitted one crucial element: that while we treat it like a cold, it remains nothing like a cold. So “completely normal” is really “existing in a state of suspended denial”, a circumstance I have manifested with the power of my inane optimism.

The 15-year-old, though, does have £100 in her bank account; she got a job, and even better than that, it’s in a posh butcher. She literally brings home the bacon.

Overall, I would say that this wheeze was a little bit chilling, a little bit divisive, not that fun. The take-home is: think twice before you listen to a doughnut in a newspaper.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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## Music

# From Abba to enka: how my 10-year-old fell in love with 1940s Japanese music

Daniel Robson

This post-war Japanese sound, primarily sung by ladies in their 50s and 60s, is adapting to seek a younger audience. My besotted daughter is first in line



‘Last boss’ ... enka star Sachiko Kobayashi performing in Tapei in 2010. Photograph: VCG/Visual China Group/Getty Images

Tue 10 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Wed 11 Jan 2023 05.56 EST

Since her father is a longtime music journalist and her mother is a musician, it was inevitable that my 10-year-old daughter would fall in love with music. But I never imagined that the music she would fall in love with would be enka.

Enka is often considered “traditional” Japanese music – its early roots are in the 19th century and most enka singers dress in traditional kimonos. But modern enka was actually born in the postwar period of the late 1940s as [Japan](#) was learning about western music from the settling US troops. This so-called “traditional” Japanese genre is heavily influenced by jazz and the blues, country, and even rock, with intricate guitar lines fused with the stringed instruments shamisen and koto.

Over this incredibly diverse bed of influences, performers sing deeply emotional lyrics based on themes of loss, loneliness, despair, heartbreak and – just as often – celebration and joy. It’s a mishmash of dozens of kinds of music, and too dramatic to be called easy listening. Enka is enka. For readers in the west, the most obvious example would be Kaji Meiko, whose song The Flower of Carnage dramatically soundtracks the beheading of Lucy Liu’s character O-Ren Ishii in Kill Bill Vol 1.

Fuyumi Sakamoto: Yozakura Oshichi – video

My daughter listens to enka all day, every day. She’s had musical obsessions before, from western artists such as Selena Gomez and Abba to the godawful J-pop virtual boyband Strawberry Prince. But her love for enka and postwar “kayokyoku” songs has continued for well over a year, with no end in sight. Her favourite singer is [Fuyumi Sakamoto](#). Now in her mid-50s, Sakamoto has been singing for 35 years, honing her voice to incredible sensitivity. Fuyumi-chan, as my daughter endearingly calls her, is capable of plumbing the depths of despair or scaling the heights of elation, always touching the listener’s heart. It goes without saying that her target audience is not children, but adults who have faced life’s hardships and survived.



Enka's undisputed queen, the late Hibari Misora, performing at Tokyo Dome in 1988. Photograph: Newscom/Alamy

My daughter sings Sakamoto's songs at karaoke, practises her mannerisms, learns facts about her life. On learning that we and Sakamoto shared a mutual musician acquaintance, my daughter wrote her idol a gushing letter to pass along and received an autographed CD in return – which she now carries everywhere she goes. Her bedroom walls are covered in posters and magazine clippings of enka stars. She wants to be an enka singer when she grows up. It reminds me of me when I was about her age – only instead of posters of brooding young rock stars like Kurt Cobain, it's all ladies in their 50s and 60s.

How did my daughter come to fall so heavily for a style of music that is generally made by and for seniors? We live in Tokyo and my daughter is half Japanese. Enka has always been in the mix on our home stereo – but then so has rock, punk, pop and dance. So why was it enka that stuck? “I like the lyrics of enka songs and the way the performers sing them,” my daughter explains. Although the themes of enka songs tend to be quite mature, she says she is able to relate to them: “The way the singers express the lyrics makes the deeper meanings easier to understand.”



Curiously, enka is finding ways to connect with younger audiences. Every year on New Year's Eve in Japan, national broadcaster NHK produces a five-hour live music show in the countdown to midnight called Kohaku Uta Gassen – the [2022 edition](#) was watched by about 20m households nationwide. The lineup is mostly made up of the year's pop hits, but there is always a sprinkling of enka, meaning that younger generations are exposed to it whether they like it or not.

And during the pandemic, some enka stars, suddenly unable to perform for large groups of old folks, went online to reach their audience. Among them, megastar Sachiko Kobayashi – known as “Last Boss” because of her larger-than-life performances and insanely outlandish outfits akin to the often extravagant garb worn by the last bosses faced in many computer games – began her new career as a YouTuber, making meme-filled videos designed to appeal to a younger audience. And it worked – with videos where this high-class star makes fish-out-of-water visits to McDonald's, tries a [part-time job in a bakery](#), or [undertakes the Mentos cola challenge](#) with explosive results, Kobayashi's channel has amassed 165,000 subscribers.

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Sachiko Kobayashi goes to McDonald's – video

A few weeks ago, my wife and I took our daughter to see the 50th anniversary concert of top enka singer [Sayuri Ishikawa](#). In a sea of seniors, my daughter was the only kid there. But Ishikawa surprised us all halfway through the concert by inviting the 46-year-old Japanese rapper Kreva on stage to perform a couple of songs together. Ishikawa has [worked with Kreva before alongside tattooed rocker Miyavi](#), as well as [alternative pop](#)



[icon Sheena Ringo](#) and [ex-Megadeth guitarist Marty Friedman](#), but it was cool to see with our own eyes how enka is embracing more modern forms of music and adapting with the times.

My daughter has started to influence her classmates to listen to enka, and she encourages Guardian readers to check out Fuyumi Sakamoto, Sayuri Ishikawa and enka's undisputed queen, the late Hibari Misora, for a starter education in this most uniquely Japanese genre of music. "I'll listen to enka for the rest of my life," she says – and I believe her.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/jan/10/from-abba-to-enka-how-my-10-year-old-fell-in-love-with-1940s-japanese-music>

## [Opinion](#) Prince Harry.

**Prince Harry is upset his brother didn't like his beard. They may be royals but the petty sibling grievances are all too familiar**

[Bridie Jabour](#)



Harry and Meghan are just another ultra-rich, out-of-touch couple but even the most privileged face the ordinary suffering of growing up



‘There is nobody on Earth that can enrage you like your brother or your sister, and over the absolute mildest things possible.’ Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

Mon 9 Jan 2023 21.12 ESTLast modified on Tue 10 Jan 2023 00.26 EST

In the inescapable story that is Harry v William, what is most striking is how petty some of the grievances sound.

Prince Harry is upset [his brother didn't like his beard](#).

Prince Harry is upset [about the size of his digs at the palace](#).

Prince Harry is upset [his brother didn't want to hang out with him at school](#).

Getting paid to lament your older sibling refusing to hang out with you at school 15 years ago is an amazing gift, even by the diamond standard of gifting that is the royal family.

Hold the front page Daily Mail, I'm hearing a teenager didn't want to hang out with his younger brother at school. Oh, you're literally putting this family fight on the front page!

That Harry believes these to be genuine injustices, remembered over decades, that sound trivial to any third party, should be instantly familiar to anyone with a sibling.

There is nobody on Earth that can enrage you like your brother or your sister, and over the absolute mildest things possible.

When I was 16 and my youngest sister was 10 she once hid in a wardrobe in my room for two hours just so she could be close to me and my friends. She wasn't eavesdropping, she just desperately wanted to feel part of my crew. When she tumbled out of the wardrobe the "red mist" as Harry has referred to it, descended. I screamed unprintable profanities that shocked one of my friends, an only child, so much that she still brings it up almost 20 years later.

At the time I just wanted to be left alone by this needy child who was OBSESSED with me. Now at 34 my heart aches for that little girl who wanted a little of my love. Sorry Alice!

Although that doesn't stop me STILL behaving like a six-year-old again sometimes when in the presence of my brother and sisters. Behaving in ways I would never even think about in the presence of anyone else. They can get so under your skin that the way they decide to peel an orange, you just *know* is being done on purpose to irritate you.

Instead of having the promised maturing effect, having my own children has only transported me right back to the intense outrage that dogged me whenever I perceived a sibling to be getting different treatment to me. Never mind that you *have* to treat your children differently, from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. (But also remember when I wasn't allowed roll-ups in my lunchbox but when I left home my siblings got roll-ups in theirs!)

"You're not allowed to hit him," I reprimand my older son, while privately, deep inside my soul, I am actually on his side. "It's so unfair when your little brother plays with your toy without asking!" I think to myself, but never say.

I witness the same playing out of childhood feuds when my little sister sees the exact same scenario between my sons. As a beloved aunt she doesn't have to do the "grownup" thing a parent is forced into of "not taking a side" (cue eye-roll).

"Don't hit your little brother!" she thunders at the older one.

"Now hug him!" she continues.

"Now tell him you love him!" She keeps going.

"He only wants to play with you! Just be nice to him!" she finally finishes. Leaving my five-year-old somewhat dumbfounded at the emotion he has provoked.

Your siblings are most likely the people you will have your longest relationship in life with. All things going as they should, your parents will die before you (but not too soon) and then the only person who has known you your entire life will be your brother and sisters.

They understand what it was like to watch dad throw a cricket bat into the river because we broke a window (exhilarating); to be brave enough to hide under the house in the dirt with the snakes to win a game of torch tag (exhilarating); to make up yet another game while waiting in the car for an hour for mum (mind numbingly boring).

They remember what it was like to be children together. To live in a world where adults were interlopers and we spoke a language they didn't understand. (I was reminded of this when my younger son began talking and we had to ask his older brother to translate it for us. He always knows exactly what he's saying. I vividly remember doing the same with my youngest sister for my parents.)

For William and Harry this must be felt deeply. The only other person who knew what it was like to lose your mum in horrific circumstances and then have what felt like the entire world express their grief more freely than you.

But it's clear, like everyone else in their childhoods, they have their own unique experiences of the same event.

I'm not doing something as ridiculous as *choosing a prince's side*. (If you feel compelled to take a side, say the phrase out loud so you can hear how stupid it sounds: "I am on prince so-and-so's side.")

I do have sympathy for Harry and Meghan, particularly the disgusting way Meghan was treated by the tabloid media in the UK. But it is limited by the impression that they didn't seem to see anything wrong with the institution, despite the human suffering it was built on, until they themselves suffered. Ultimately, they are [just another ultra-rich, out-of-touch couple](#).

What is glaring to me from the Netflix documentary, the TV interviews Harry has done and the extracts from his book, is his ordinary suffering. You brawl with your brother, you miss your brother, you want your brother to understand you, nobody knows you like your brother.

Even in the most privileged lives, with true tragedy, there's the ordinary suffering of growing up. Of having to share, of feeling left out, of games of favourites, banal fallings out, regrets, funerals, weddings, births, who is owed what, who suffered more and who is entitled to what (even when what you are feeling entitled to is a bigger room at the palace).

It's all so familiar.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/10/prince-harry-is-upset-his-brother-didnt-like-his-beard-they-may-be-royals-but-the-petty-sibling-grievances-are-all-too-familiar>

## 2023.01.10 - Around the world

- [Kevin McCarthy House adopts new rules Democrats decry as a 'ransom note to America'](#)
- [Taiwan Invasion by China would fail, but at huge US cost, analysts' war game finds](#)
- [China 'Wolf warrior' foreign affairs spokesperson moved to new role](#)
- [George Santos Republican faces campaign finance complaint](#)
- [Afghanistan Pakistan sends back hundreds of refugees to face Taliban repression](#)

[Kevin McCarthy](#).

## House adopts new rules Democrats decry as a ‘ransom note to America’

Partisan lines divided the vote on rules, with no Democrats voting for them and only one Republican voting against



Kevin McCarthy at the US Capitol in Washington DC on Saturday.  
Photograph: Jon Cherry/Reuters

[Oliver Laughland](#) and agencies

Mon 9 Jan 2023 16.20 EST Last modified on Tue 10 Jan 2023 08.40 EST

The Republican-led US [House of Representatives](#) on Monday adopted a package of internal rules that give rightwing hardliners more leverage over the chamber’s newly elected Republican speaker, Kevin McCarthy.

Lawmakers voted 220-213 for the legislation, with only one Republican voting against. All 212 Democrats voted against the rules package, saying it was full of concessions to the right wing of the Republican party.



The rules package, which will govern House operations over the next two years, represented an early test of McCarthy's ability to keep his caucus together, after he suffered the humiliation of 14 failed ballots last week at the hands of 20 hardliners before finally being elected speaker on Saturday.

The legislation includes key concessions that hardliners sought and McCarthy agreed to in his quest for the speaker's gavel. The changes include allowing a single lawmaker to call for his removal at any time. Other changes would place new restrictions on federal spending, potentially limiting McCarthy's ability to negotiate government funding packages with President Joe Biden, whose fellow Democrats control the Senate.

Democrats denounced the legislation as a rules package for "Maga extremists" that would favor wealthy corporations over workers, undermine congressional ethics standards and lead to further restrictions on abortion services. "These rules are not a serious attempt at governing. They're essentially a ransom note to America from the extreme right," Representative Jim McGovern said.

McCarthy was hard at work on Capitol Hill on Monday prior to the House going into session trying to head off any such revolt and ensure a smooth passage for the rules package later in the day. He can only afford to lose a handful of votes from his party in the House to avoid defeat on any measure.

A clutch of establishment [Republicans](#) had indicated on Sunday they might withhold their support for the new rules package unless more details of McCarthy's concessions made to the right were revealed, such as promising chairmanships of powerful committees that longer-established and more moderate members have been eyeing.

Pressure groups on Monday stepped in to make clear there would be consequences if the first vote of McCarthy's speakership turned into a standoff.

On Friday, hours before McCarthy formally was elected to the speakership, Texas's Tony Gonzales said he would oppose the rules package, reportedly over McCarthy's willingness to cut spending to the defense department.

That prompted the conservative group FreedomWorks on Monday to signal that Gonzales should be frozen out if he rebels.

If Tony's a 'NO' on the House Rules Package he should not be welcomed into the 119th Congress. [#ampFW](#)  
[#HouseofRepresentatives](#) <https://t.co/X2tGxa3FqO>

— FreedomWorks (@FreedomWorks) [January 9, 2023](#)

The South Carolina moderate Republican Nancy Mace on Monday said she was “on the fence”.

Speaking to CBS News on Sunday, Mace said of the fringe members who almost sank McCarthy’s speakership bid last week: “My question really is today: what backroom deals did they try to cut, and did they get those?”

She added: “We don’t know what they got, we haven’t seen it. We don’t have any idea what ... gentleman’s handshakes were made. And it does give me a little bit of heartburn because that’s not what we ran on.”

The package itself was published on [Friday evening](#), and includes a measure to allow a single member to force a “motion to vacate” the speakership, weakening McCarthy’s position, and a key demand of the holdout conservatives.

It also includes reinstating a provision to allow lawmakers to propose amendments to appropriations bills, adds a 72-hour window for members to read bills before they vote, and a commitment to vote on legislation on term limits for members of Congress.

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## Taiwan

# Taiwan invasion by China would fail, but at huge US cost, analysts' war game finds

Military experts said every participant would experience 'enormous' losses in any potential conflict



A US thinktank used wargames to analyse China's chances of taking Taiwan in a future invasion scenario. Photograph: Anonymous/AP

*Agence France-Presse*

Mon 9 Jan 2023 22.21 EST Last modified on Sat 14 Jan 2023 04.37 EST

A Chinese invasion of [Taiwan](#) would probably fail if the United States helped defend the island – but would come at a debilitating cost to the American military itself, according to a US thinktank.

Military experts brought together by the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) to war game the conflict said every likely direct participant in a war – the United States, China, Taiwan and Japan – would experience “enormous” losses.

Chinese missiles would probably destroy US airbases in [Japan](#) and as far as Guam, and sink two US aircraft carriers and between 10 and 20 destroyers and cruisers as the invasion opened.

But the Chinese invading force itself would be destroyed before it ever occupied any significant part of Taiwan and ultimately it would be prevented from its goal of capturing the island’s capital Taipei, according to most scenarios tested.

That, as well as damage incurred on mainland targets from Taiwanese counterattacks, could destabilise Chinese Communist party rule, the report says.

“We reached two conclusions,” said Eric Heginbotham, a security expert at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

“First, under most circumstances, [China](#) is unlikely to succeed in its operational objectives, or to occupy Taipei,” he said.

“Second, the cost of war would be high for all involved, certainly to include the United States.”

The wargaming tested 24 different scenarios focused on China attempting to seize the island by invasion in 2026. Crucial was the United States: without America’s help, Taiwan would be conquered by the People’s Liberation Army in three months or less.

The war game assumed the invasion would begin with an opening bombardment by China that destroys most of Taiwan’s navy and air force in a few hours. The Chinese navy would encircle Taiwan and begin ferrying a

landing force of thousands of PLA soldiers and their equipment across the Taiwan Strait.

In what the war gamers called the most likely scenario, Taiwan's army would bog the invaders down on the coast.

"Meanwhile US submarines, bombers, and fighter/attack aircraft, often reinforced by Japan Self-Defense Forces, rapidly cripple the Chinese amphibious fleet," the report said.

"China's strikes on Japanese bases and US surface ships cannot change the result: Taiwan remains autonomous," it said.

Matthew Cancian of the US Naval War College said there were crucial variables on which that success depends.

First, he said, Taiwan itself must be determined to fight back.

Secondly, Japan must give its permission for the United States to launch counterattacks from its bases on Japanese territory.

Without that, Cancian said, "then the US intervention would not be enough to continue Taiwan's autonomy."

In such cases the human losses would be high, some 10,000 in the first weeks of the war. The war game raised important unknowns, such as whether the United States would risk nuclear war by attacking China directly.

It also asked if the US and Japanese public would be prepared to accept the losses that came with defending Taiwan, saying US losses could damage Washington's ability to project global power for a very long time.

"The United States might win a pyrrhic victory, suffering more in the long run than the 'defeated' Chinese," the report said.

The report said both Taiwan and the US military need to build up forces, focusing on the most survivable and effective weapons, to create more deterrence to a Chinese invasion.

“Despite rhetoric about adopting a ‘porcupine strategy,’ Taiwan still spends most of its defense budget on expensive ships and aircraft that China will quickly destroy,” it said.

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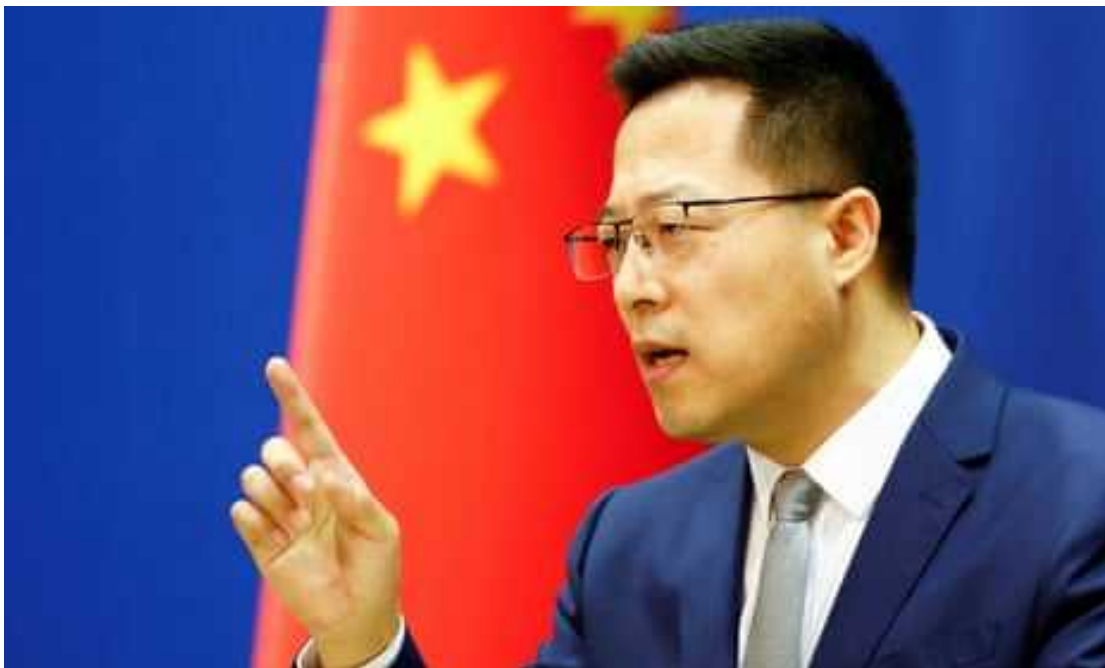
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## China

# China's 'wolf warrior' foreign affairs spokesperson moved to new role

Zhao Lijian's shift to low-profile department seen by some as a sign of Beijing softening its diplomatic strategy



Zhao Lijian has built a reputation on his hostility towards the west and combative defence of China's policies. Photograph: Carlos García Rawlins/Reuters

*[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei*  
*[@heldavidson](#)*

Tue 10 Jan 2023 04.29 EST Last modified on Tue 10 Jan 2023 05.17 EST

The face of China's "wolf warrior" diplomacy, Zhao Lijian, has been moved from his role as foreign affairs spokesperson to a low-profile department, in what some analysts say is a demotion.



Zhao is the most well-known of the ministry of foreign affairs' public-facing spokespeople, making a name for himself during his three years fronting the foreign press, with strong criticism and hostility towards the west and combative defence of China's policies.

However, he has not been seen at the daily briefings since early December, and on Tuesday it was announced Zhao had been appointed as deputy director of the ocean affairs department's division of borders and maritime affairs.

Some analysts have interpreted the move as a sign of Beijing softening its "wolf warrior diplomacy" ahead of an incoming new foreign minister, while others thought it could be linked to recent embarrassments stemming from his wife's Weibo posts.

Zhao was appointed as foreign affairs spokesperson in 2020, after a stint in the Pakistan embassy where he rose to prominence with aggressive posts – often targeting the US – on Chinese and western social media. He was seen as the most prominent of China's diplomatic wolf warriors – named after a popular Chinese film franchise – who were characterised by an aggressive stance departing from Beijing's previously more restrained approach.

He was a frequent critic of US policy and western media, often accusing journalists of smearing China and propagating lies, particularly over reports on the Chinese government's human rights abuses in Xinjiang and crackdown on Hong Kong. During the Covid pandemic he also appeared to promote baseless conspiracy theories about the virus's origin.

With tens of millions of followers online, his unapologetic statements and posts stoked a growing cohort of nationalistic Chinese, but often antagonised foreign governments or officials.

In December 2020, Australia's prime minister was goaded into holding a press conference to personally address an [offensive illustration Zhao had shared](#) in reference to alleged Australian war crimes, which depicted an Australian soldier cutting the throat of an Afghan child.

In 2019, Susan Rice, the former national security adviser for Barack Obama, called Zhao a “racist disgrace” over tweets he posted about race relations in the US, accusing its government of hypocrisy in condemning China’s abuse of Uyghurs.

His new appointment, while technically a sideways move, takes him out of the spotlight. Other foreign ministry spokespeople have gone on to ambassadorships and other high-ranking appointments, and Zhao had been seen as a bureaucrat on the ascent.

Zhao’s new role involves the management of China’s land and sea borders. According to the department’s website, the division is also involved in negotiations with other governments over maritime delimitation and border disputes. While it is an important department, political experts have said Zhao’s post as one of three deputies is relatively low profile and unpopular, and in reality a likely demotion.

“He will naturally have little exposure and influence, and will not be the person at the heart of decision-making,” said Chen Fang-Yu, an assistant professor in political science at Soochow University in Taiwan.

The shift has been seen by some as a sign of a softening diplomatic strategy as Beijing and western governments seek to stabilise relations. It comes less than a month after Qin Gang, China’s ambassador to Washington, was promoted to foreign minister. Qin, a trusted adviser to Xi, is a proponent of restoring ties with Washington.

“Transferring Zhao Lijian away is not only a policy and personnel adjustment, but can also send a major signal to the outside world and show the whole world the action of adjusting wolf war diplomacy,” said Chen.

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Some analysts and Chinese social media users disagreed, noting there were still [firebrand diplomats](#) in other [public posts](#), and speculating Zhao may have been sidelined after a couple of embarrassing incidents.

In November, social media posts by Zhao's wife were unearthed and shared widely on the internet. Among the posts were revelations that she had been living a "peaceful" life in Germany while much of China was under lockdown, prompting complaints of double standards. Another post in which she lamented not being able to find fever medication also sparked controversy.

"Many netizens believe that a series of remarks by Zhao Lijian's wife have a negative impact on Zhao Lijian's image and career," said one person on Weibo, among what were otherwise primarily supportive visible comments.

Others noted a rare instance of [Zhao being left speechless](#) by a question from Reuters about the recent anti-lockdown protests.

Drew Thompson, a visiting senior research fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew school of public policy at the National University of Singapore, and a former US defence department official, warned against "looking for tea leaves in the absence of transparency."

"Zhao's transfer is definitely a lateral move, rather than a clear promotion or demotion," he said.

"It is also unclear whether it signals a shift in China's diplomatic approach, whether Xi Jinping is rejecting the in-your-face, obnoxious style of wolf warrior diplomacy that Zhao Lijian epitomises."

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## Republicans

# Republican George Santos faces campaign finance complaint

Controversial newly elected congressman who appears to have made up most of his résumé is subject of FEC complaint



George Santos makes a gesture with his left hand as he casts his vote for the House Republican leader, Kevin McCarthy, for speaker. Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters

[\*Martin Pengelly\*](#)

[\*@MartinPengelly\*](#)

Tue 10 Jan 2023 02.00 EST

The newly sworn-in Republican congressman George Santos, whose campaign résumé has been shown to be largely made-up, is the subject of a [complaint](#) filed with the Federal Election Commission.

The complaint concerning the New York representative was [filed](#) with the FEC on Monday by the Campaign Legal Center (CLC), a non-partisan watchdog group.

Santos won his seat, which covers [parts of Long Island and Queens](#), in November.

He has since been the subject of relentless scrutiny, exposing claims about his education, business career and family background, including claims to be descended from [Holocaust survivors](#) and that his mother's death was a [result](#) of the [9/11 attacks](#).

Santos has admitted "[embellishing](#)" his CV. He is [under investigation](#) by authorities in New York and [in Brazil](#), in the latter case over alleged use of a stolen chequebook.

His Democratic predecessor in the New York seat has called him a "conman" and members of Congress have [called for action](#) against him.

But Republican leaders have taken no action and after last week's five-day standoff over Kevin McCarthy's bid for speaker, Santos – who cast one vote for McCarthy while [appearing to make](#) a white supremacist sign – is now a member of the US House of Representatives.

In a [statement](#) on Monday, the CLC alleged that Santos and his 2022 campaign committee, Devolder-Santos for Congress, "violated federal campaign finance laws by engaging in a straw donor scheme to knowingly and willfully conceal the true sources of \$705,000 that Santos purported to loan to his campaign".

The group also said Santos "deliberately report[ed] false disbursement figures on FEC disclosure reports, among many other reporting violations; and illegally us[ed] campaign funds to pay for personal expenses, including rent on a house that Santos lived in during the campaign".

The complaint notes multiple campaign expenditures, [widely reported](#), of \$199.99, one cent below the \$200 FEC threshold for the provision of receipts.

It also notes that Santos has [struggled](#) to explain the source of his wealth, and says it is “likely” that after losing an initial run for Congress in 2020, he “and other unknown persons worked out a scheme to surreptitiously – and illegally – funnel money into his 2022 campaign.

“The concealed true source behind \$705,000 in contributions to Santos’s campaign could be a corporation or foreign national – both of which are categorically barred from contributing to federal candidates – or one or more individuals, who would be precluded from contributing such a large amount, far in excess of [official] contribution limits.”

Citing reporting by outlets including [the New York Times](#), the CLC complaint says: “Particularly in light of Santos’s mountain of lies about his life and qualifications for office, the [FEC] should thoroughly investigate what appear to be equally brazen lies about how his campaign raised and spent money.”

Santos did not comment, CBS News reporting that he declined several requests.

Adav Noti, senior CLC vice-president and legal director, [told the same network](#): “Voters deserve the truth. They have a right to know who is spending to influence their vote and their government and they have a right to know how the candidates competing for their vote are spending those funds.

“George Santos has lied to voters about a lot of things, but while lying about your background might not be illegal, deceiving voters about your campaign’s funding and spending is a serious violation of federal law.”



## Global development

# Pakistan sends back hundreds of Afghan refugees to face Taliban repression

About 250,000 Afghan asylum seekers have arrived in Pakistan since August 2021, but a migrant crackdown has left many of them in fear of being jailed or deported



Afghan children at a refugee camp in Karachi, Pakistan, last summer. Now children are among the hundreds being deported. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

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[About this content](#)

[Zofeen T Ebrahim](#) in Karachi

Tue 10 Jan 2023 01.45 EST Last modified on Tue 10 Jan 2023 04.36 EST

More than 600 Afghans have been deported from [Pakistan](#) in the past three days, and hundreds more face expulsion in a renewed crackdown on migrants.

On Saturday, 302 people were sent back to [Afghanistan](#) from Sindh province and 303 on Monday, including 63 women and 71 children. A further 800 people are expected to be deported in the coming days.

About [250,000 Afghans](#) have arrived in Pakistan since the Taliban [seized power](#) in August 2021.

Last summer, authorities began deporting Afghans for illegally entering the country, but arrests and detentions have increased since October. Nearly 1,400 Afghans, including 129 women and 178 children, have been detained in Karachi and Hyderabad alone, the largest number of arrests made to date in Pakistan, say lawyers.

Pakistan has not adopted the [UN Refugee Convention 1951](#), which confers a legal duty on countries to protect people fleeing serious harm.

Moniza Kakar, a Karachi-based human rights lawyer, said nearly 400 of the arrested Afghans had valid visas on their passports or proof-of-residence cards, which they said were confiscated by police before they were jailed.



In December last year, photos of Afghan women and children imprisoned in Karachi went viral. Photograph: Handout

Umer Ijaz Gilani, an Islamabad-based lawyer, said deporting Afghan asylum seekers was a “clear violation of the non-refoulement principle” (forcibly returning refugees or asylum seekers where they may be persecuted). He urged the Pakistan government’s National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) to direct state authorities to stop the deportations.

“The NCHR has the jurisdiction ... if it fails to exercise it, we might go to the high court,” said Gilani, who is supporting 100 Afghan human rights defenders seeking asylum in Islamabad. He said his clients were extremely disturbed about the arrests in Sindh.

Farah Zia, the director of the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, condemned the treatment of Afghans, particularly the arrests of

women and children “because their vulnerability is compounded by their gender and age and lack of connections with local networks”.

In December, leaked photos of imprisoned women and children in Karachi [went viral](#).

Last year, the commission wrote to the government, urging it to develop a more humane policy towards Afghan refugees.

The Sindh authorities have defended their actions. “The government is only taking action against illegal immigrants; those living without a valid travel document,” said their spokesperson Murtaza Wahab.

Nida Amiri\*, a registered asylum seeker in Karachi, told of “sleepless nights” since the crackdown. Her husband, a prominent government official, is in hiding in Afghanistan. “I have headaches, and my blood pressure refuses to come down,” said Amiri, 47, who left Kabul in December 2021 and is now working as a cook.

She added: “I would rather die in prison than return to Kabul, where we cannot even breathe freely.”

She has a registration card from the Society for Human Rights and Prisoners’ Aid (Sharp), which partners with the UN high commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) to initially assess asylum cases. But a Sharp employee said the card “cannot save her from being hauled in”.



Nida Amiri and her daughter Afshaneh Noor. Photograph: Zofeen Ebrahim

Amiri's 21-year old daughter, Afshaneh Noor, said that living in Pakistan may not be easy, but if she was sent back she would be "a prisoner in my home". "It's the worst place on Earth to be in for a woman, right now," she said.

Her 14-year-old sister and nine-year-old brother are no longer allowed to go to school, she said, because their mother is so worried they'll be detained. "She has told us to always carry the Sharp card and to avoid leaving the home unless absolutely necessary," said Noor. "We tell people we are from Chitral [a region in northern Pakistan bordering Afghanistan]."

Nadera Najeeb\*, 43, a widow and mother of six, belongs to the Hazara community, a predominantly Shia Muslim minority group [persecuted by the Taliban](#). She entered Pakistan illegally with five of her children – two sons and three daughters – two months ago. "I was forced to run away, otherwise my daughters would be raped by the Taliban," she said. Before leaving, she married her eldest daughter to a cousin's son, leaving her in Kabul.



Nadera Najeeb: 'I took this difficult journey to keep my kids safe.'  
Photograph: Zofeen Ebrahim

Najeeb, who works at a fishery in Karachi, has begun to wear a black *abaya* – a long, loose coat that covers her head and face so that only her eyes show. “This way no one can tell I’m an Afghan or belong to the Hazara community,” she said. “I took this difficult journey to keep my kids safe; if we’re put behind bars and then sent back, all this will be for nothing.”

Qaiser Khan Afridi, a UNHCR spokesperson, said the organisation is working to identify the most vulnerable asylum cases for resettlement, including women-headed households and families with children at risk. The UNHCR was striving to find “durable solutions” for refugees, but it was up to governments to grant asylum.

“Resettlement, unfortunately, cannot be available for the entire refugee population as the opportunities are limited,” he said.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identities*

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## Headlines monday 9 january 2023

- [Brazil protests Lula vows to punish 'neo-fascists' after Bolsonaro supporters storm congress](#)
- [Reaction US lawmakers call for Bolsonaro extradition](#)
- [Congress attack What we know so far](#)
- [Video Minister shows aftermath of damage](#)

## [Brazil](#)

# Brazil protests: Lula vows to punish ‘neo-fascists’ after Bolsonaro supporters storm congress

President tours scene of riot and orders federal government to take control of policing in capital Brasília as extremists refuse to accept his presidency

Brazil: how exactly the storming of government buildings unfolded – video timeline

[Tom Phillips](#) in Brasília and [Andrew Downie](#)

Sun 8 Jan 2023 23.32 EST First published on Sun 8 Jan 2023 14.17 EST

Brazilian president [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#) has toured the wreckage of his presidential palace after an extraordinary day of political violence in the capital, Brasília, saw thousands of far-right extremists run riot through the country’s democratic institutions in a failed attempt to overthrow his week-old government.

The massed attack by supporters of the ex-president [Jair Bolsonaro](#) was a stunning security breach that was immediately compared to the 6 January invasion of the US Capitol by followers of Donald Trump in 2021.

Lula was not in Brasília at the time of the attack but he gave an angry speech blaming Bolsonaro for the chaos and promising that “anyone involved will be punished”.

Calling those who took part in the attacks “vandals, neo-fascists and fanatics”, Lula ordered a federal intervention in the capital, bringing policing under the control of the central government.

“What we are witnessing is a terrorist attack,” the news anchor Erick Bang announced on the GloboNews television network as word of the upheaval spread. “The three buildings have been invaded by coup-mongering terrorists.”

“It was much worse than what happened at the Capitol,” the former supreme court judge Marco Aurélio Mello told the O Globo newspaper on Sunday night after police made at least 300 arrests relating to the attack.

Shocking video footage showed pro-Bolsonaro militants sprinting up the ramp into the Palácio do Planalto, the presidential offices, roaming the building’s corridors and vandalising the nearby supreme court, whose windows had been smashed.

Videos posted on social media showed fires burning inside the congress building. Furniture was broken and tossed around, objects were reportedly stolen in the presidential palace and the supreme court, and in some places sprinklers appeared to be dousing chambers.

“They are throwing chairs out of the windows,” said another bewildered GloboNews commentator, Eliane Cantanhêde. “They are destroying public buildings.”

Brazil protests: Minister shows aftermath of damage after mob stormed his office – video

Lula, a veteran leftist, was [sworn in as Brazil’s new president](#) last Sunday in celebrations attended by hundreds of thousands of Brazilians.

But thousands of pro-Bolsonaro extremists have refused to accept Lula’s narrow victory in October’s election, spending recent weeks camping outside army bases across the country and calling for a military coup.

Bolsonaro, a far-right former army captain whose main international ally was Trump, flew out of [Brazil](#) on the eve of Lula’s inauguration and is currently in Florida. He responded to Sunday’s events with a short string of social media posts defending his record in government while saying invasion of public buildings crossed the line.

“Peaceful demonstrations, within the law, form part of democracy,” he wrote on Twitter. “However, depredations and invasions of public buildings like those that happened today, as well as those practiced by the left in 2013 and 2017, are exceptions to the rule.”

Bolsonaro stopped short of condemning the mob outright and instead hit out at Lula’s claims that he was responsible.

“Throughout my mandate, I have always stayed within the four lines of the constitution, respecting and defending laws, democracy, transparency and our sacred freedom. In addition, I reject the baseless accusations attributed to me by the current head of the executive branch in [Brazil](#).”

Bolsonaro supporters storm Brazil’s congress, presidential palace and supreme court – video

Military police in Brasília were conspicuous by their absence on Sunday and the mobs faced little opposition as they marched towards the three branches of government.

On Sunday night the supreme court justice Alexandre de Moraes ordered Ibaneis Rocha, the pro-Bolsonaro governor of the federal district, where Brasília is located, to be removed from his post for 90 days amid outrage that authorities had failed to prevent the attack.

De Moraes wrote that the attacks “could only have happened with the acquiescence, or even direct involvement, of public security and intelligence authorities.”

Lula said capital law enforcement bodies showed “incompetence, bad faith or malice” and promised swift action.



Supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro demonstrate outside Brazil's congress in Brasília, Brazil. Photograph: Adriano Machado/Reuters

By the end of the afternoon, authorities appeared to have retaken control of some of the buildings, and police said 300 people had been arrested. TV footage showed dozens of people handcuffed and lying on the ground, watched over by law enforcement officers.

Lula's response came a few hours after a pro-Bolsonaro mob marched 8km from the army headquarters in Brasília towards the heart of Brazilian politics, the Three Powers Plaza, which houses the supreme court, the presidential palace and congress.

The militants – many wearing the yellow and green Brazil flag that became a symbol of Bolsonaro's far-right movement – broke through police lines at about 3pm and surged on to the ramp leading into the congress building.

Soon after another prominent Lula ally, André Janones, shared footage that showed scores of radicals inside the grounds of the Palácio do Planalto, the presidential offices where last week's inauguration ceremony was held.

“Terrorists have invaded the Planalto,” Janones [tweeted](#).

Observers have spent months warning that Bolsonaro hardliners might stage a South American version of the US's Capitol invasion in the hope of overturning Lula's win. During his tumultuous four-year administration, Bolsonaro repeatedly hinted that a military takeover might be in the works and battled to undermine Brazil's internationally respected electronic voting system.

“Bolsonaro and his team have looked very closely at what happened on January 6 trying to understand why it was that a sitting president failed in his effort to overturn election results,” the former US ambassador to Brazil, Thomas Shannon, [told the Guardian](#) before last year's election.

The weeks leading up to Lula's 1 January inauguration saw two clear signals of the violence that was to come.

On 13 December, radicals tried to storm the federal police headquarters in Brasília, [torching buses and cars](#) as they moved through the city. Just before Christmas another extremist Bolsonaro supporter was arrested and allegedly confessed to a plot to bomb Brasília's airport in an attempt to spark turmoil that might justify a military coup.

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## [Brazil](#)

# World leaders condemn Brazil violence as US lawmakers call for Bolsonaro extradition

Joe Biden says situation in Brazil is ‘outrageous’ as presidents across South America denounce ‘assault on democracy’

Mass arrests made in Brazil after invasion of government buildings – video

[Jonathan Yerushalmy](#) and [Sam Jones](#)

Mon 9 Jan 2023 05.39 ESTFirst published on Sun 8 Jan 2023 19.24 EST

Joe Biden said the situation in Brazil was “outrageous” after supporters of the former president Jair Bolsonaro [invaded the country’s congress, presidential palace and supreme court](#) on Sunday, with some senior US lawmakers calling for the far-right figure to be extradited from the US.

Biden’s words of condemnation were echoed by world leaders across the globe, including some of Brazil’s closest neighbours.

Brazil’s president, [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#), who defeated Bolsonaro in a closely fought election last year, announced a federal security intervention in Brasília lasting until 31 January after capital security forces were overwhelmed initially by the invaders.

“I condemn the assault on democracy and on the peaceful transfer of power in Brazil. Brazil’s democratic institutions have our full support and the will of the Brazilian people must not be undermined,” Biden said on Twitter.

Brazil protests: Minister shows aftermath of damage after mob stormed his office – video



The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, tweeted that “using violence to attack democratic institutions is always unacceptable”, and called for an immediate end to the invasion of Brazil’s democratic institutions.

The US national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said the US condemned any effort to undermine democracy in Brazil. “President Biden is following the situation closely and our support for Brazil’s democratic institutions is unwavering. Brazil’s democracy will not be shaken by violence,” Sullivan said.

Bolsonaro flew out of Brazil on the eve of Lula’s inauguration and is in Florida. Many in the US – and across the world – saw echoes of the US Capitol invasion of 2021 in the actions of Bolsonaro’s supporters and called for the former president to be extradited.

Joaquin Castro, a member of the US House foreign affairs committee, told CNN that Bolsonaro had used “the Trump playbook to inspire domestic terrorists to try and take over the government”.

“Right now Bolsonaro is in Florida ... he should be extradited to Brazil ... The United States should not be a refuge for this authoritarian who has inspired domestic terrorism in Brazil”, he said.

The US House Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, said: “Nearly two years to the day the US Capitol was attacked by fascists, we see fascist movements abroad attempt to do the same in Brazil.”

She called for the US to “cease granting refuge to Bolsonaro in Florida”.

Nearly 2 years to the day the US Capitol was attacked by fascists, we see fascist movements abroad attempt to do the same in Brazil.

We must stand in solidarity with [@LulaOficial](#)’s democratically elected government. ☐☐

The US must cease granting refuge to Bolsonaro in Florida.  
<https://t.co/rzsZl9jwZY>

— Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (@AOC) [January 8, 2023](#)

Chile's president, Gabriel Boric, called the storming of Brazil's institutions a "cowardly and vile attack on democracy".

Colombia's president, Gustavo Petro, said: "Fascism has decided to stage a coup ... It is urgent for the OAS [Organization of American States] to meet if it wants to continue to live as an institution."

The Argentinian president, Alberto Fernández, tweeted that he committed his country's "unconditional support for @LulaOficial in the face of this attempted coup he is facing".

Venezuela's president, Nicolás Maduro, said he rejected "the violence generated by Bolsonaro's neo-fascist groups which have assaulted Brazil's democratic institutions. Our support for @LulaOficial and the Brazilian people who will surely mobilize in defence of peace and their president."

The UN secretary general, António Guterres, called Brazil "a great democratic country" and said he was confident the "will of the Brazilian people and the country's institutions" would be respected.

Bolsonaro supporters storm Brazil's congress, presidential palace and supreme court – video

The European Council president, Charles Michel, said Lula had been "democratically elected by millions of Brazilians through fair and free elections", and condemned "the assault on the democratic institutions of Brazil".

France's Emmanuel Macron said Lula could count on his country's "unwavering support" and that the "will of the Brazilian people and the democratic institutions must be respected".

Spain's prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, also offered Lula his full support, adding: "We categorically condemn the assault on the congress of Brazil and call for an immediate return to democratic normality."

A similar call came from Italy's far-right prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, who said the scenes from Brazil were "incompatible with any form of democratic dissent".

Portugal's foreign minister, João Gomes Cravinho, claimed much of the responsibility rested with Bolsonaro and said "it would be very important if he had a message of condemnation in the face of the disorder that is currently happening in Brasília".

The Australian government said it "condemns the attack on Brazil's congress, supreme court and presidential palace", which a department of foreign affairs and trade spokesperson said was "unacceptable; democratic institutions and processes must be respected".

Human Rights Watch blamed the attack on a "years-long campaign by former president [Jair Bolsonaro](#) and his allies to undermine democratic principles and spread baseless claims of electoral fraud". The organisation released a statement calling the storming "an abhorrent attack on Brazil's democratic institutions by people who are seeking to deny the right of Brazilians to vote for and elect the leaders of their choice, including by urging military intervention".

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## [Brazil](#)

# Brazil congress attack: what we know so far

President Lula denounces ‘fanatical fascists’ and announces federal security intervention after Bolsonaro supporters storm political buildings in capital

- [Full report: Bolsonaro supporters storm congress, presidential palace and supreme court](#)



Supporters of Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro on the roof of the national congress building in Brasília after storming it on Sunday. Photograph: Eraldo Peres/AP

[Helen Sullivan](#)

[@helenrsullivan](#)

Sun 8 Jan 2023 20.06 ESTLast modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.49 EST

- **Thousands of supporters of Brazil's far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro invaded the country's congress, presidential palace and supreme court on Sunday, in a grim echo of the US Capitol invasion two years ago by backers of former president Donald Trump.**
- **About 6.30pm local time, three hours after initial reports of the invasion, security forces managed to retake the three buildings,** Brazilian media reported. TV images showed dozens of rioters being led away in handcuffs. Police said 300 people had been arrested over the attacks.
- **The leftist president, [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#), announced a federal security intervention in Brasília** – bringing policing under the control of the central government – lasting until 31 January after capital security forces initially were overwhelmed by the invaders. He said the law enforcement bodies showed “incompetence, bad faith or malice” and promised swift action. Lula, as the president is widely known, defeated Bolsonaro in election run-offs last year.
- **Bolsonaro responded to Sunday's attacks with social media posts defending his record in government while saying invasion of public buildings crossed the line.** “Peaceful demonstrations, within the law, form part of democracy,” he wrote on Twitter. “However, depredations and invasions of public buildings like those that happened today, as well as those practiced by the left in 2013 and 2017, are exceptions to the rule.” He stopped short of condemning the mob outright and instead hit out at Lula's claims he was responsible.
- **In a press conference, Lula blamed Bolsonaro and complained about a lack of security in the capital,** saying authorities had allowed “fascists” and “fanatics” to wreak havoc. “These vandals, who we could call ... fanatical fascists, did what has never been done in the history of this country,” said Lula, who was on an official trip to São Paulo state. “All these people who did this will be found and they will be punished.” The president later toured the wreckage of his presidential palace.

- **The sight of thousands of yellow-and-green clad protesters running riot in the capital capped months of tension** after the 30 October vote. Bolsonaro, an acolyte of Trump who has yet to concede defeat, peddled the false claim that Brazil's electronic voting system was prone to fraud, spawning a violent movement of election deniers. Bolsonaro flew to Florida 48 hours before the end of his mandate and was absent from Lula's inauguration. The violence in Brasília could amplify the legal risks Bolsonaro faces. It also presents a headache for US authorities as they debate how to handle his stay in Florida.
- **Supreme court justice Alexandre de Moraes ordered Ibaneis Rocha, the pro-Bolsonaro governor of the federal district, where Brasília is located, to be removed from his post for 90 days** amid outrage that authorities had failed to prevent the attack. De Moraes wrote that the attacks "could only have happened with the acquiescence, or even direct involvement, of public security and intelligence authorities".
- **Two Democrats in the US Congress, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Joaquin Castro, called for Bolsonaro's extradition from the US.** "The US must cease granting refuge to Bolsonaro in Florida," Ocasio-Cortez said, as she compared the protests to the 6 January storming of the US Capitol. "Nearly two years to the day, the US Capitol was attacked by fascists, we see fascist movements abroad attempt to do the same in Brazil."
- **The US president, Joe Biden, condemned what he called the "assault on democracy and on the peaceful transfer of power in Brazil",** adding that Brazil's democratic institutions "have our full support and the will of the Brazilian people must not be undermined".
- **The supreme court, whose crusading justice Alexandre de Moraes has been a thorn in the side of Bolsonaro and his supporters,** was ransacked by the occupiers, according to social media images that showed protesters clubbing security cameras and shattering the windows of the modernist building.

- **Brasília's governor, Ibaneis Rocha, wrote on Twitter that he had fired his top security official, Anderson Torres, previously Bolsonaro's justice minister. The solicitor general's office said it had filed a request for Torres' arrest.**

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## [Brazil](#)

# Brazil protests: Minister shows aftermath of damage after mob stormed his office – video

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## 2023.01.09 - Spotlight

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# **‘I’ll never drink like that again’: Kathleen Turner on booze, health and falling in love with Michael Douglas**

[Ann Lee](#)



‘I’m becoming legendary’ ... Kathleen Turner. Photograph: Nicky Johnston/Camera Press

Body Heat made her a star in the 80s. Then, after a string of hit movies, illness forced her to take a step back. The actor talks about her fights with directors, her rage at white male privilege and her return to the screen as a foul-mouthed political lobbyist



[@\\_ann\\_lee](#)

Mon 9 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.45 EST

Kathleen Turner is pondering her acting career, a smile playing on her lips. “I’m becoming legendary, which I think only means that I have been around that long,” she purrs regally. It is, after all, more than 40 years since Lawrence Kasdan’s erotic thriller *Body Heat* turned her into one of Hollywood’s most in-demand stars.

Now, at 68, she’s coming to TV screens with *White House Plumbers*, playing Dita Beard, a foul-mouthed lobbyist involved in the Watergate scandal that ruined president [Richard Nixon](#) in the early 1970s. HBO’s new political drama revolves around E Howard Hunt (Woody Harrelson) and G Gordon Liddy (Justin Theroux), two members of a covert White House special investigations unit. They were supposed to protect the presidency, but they ended up bringing it down.

Beard is a true survivor, says Turner, video-calling from her home in New York. She “was the one that blew the whole damn thing open, then tried the most fantastical ways to get around it”. These included faking heart attacks. “She’s the only one who ended up well, with a horse farm in Virginia, where she lived happily ever after with her daughter. As opposed to everyone else, who pretty much ended up in jail.”



Kathleen Turner in *White House Plumbers*. Photograph: Phil Caruso/HBO

While [Watergate](#) dominated politics 50 years ago, Turner describes the show as “very pertinent” to what’s happening today. “I’m always intrigued by this political stupidity, which has been going on for years: that you can say something, and it can be a flat-out lie, yet you expect people to believe it. It’s just extraordinary to me. I mean, this whole Trump business with the endless, consistently disproven lies, it’s just fascinating. Who thinks like this?”

On screen, Turner is magnetic – fierce, bold and sultry, with an impeccable sense of comic timing to match that oh-so-husky and commanding voice. There’s nothing more satisfying than watching her deliver a killer one-liner. As mysterious Matty in 1981’s *Body Heat*, she was powerfully seductive, coolly flirting with William Hurt by telling him: “You’re not too smart, are you? I like that in a man.”

It was her first film role, after a stint on the schlocky soap opera *The Doctors* made her a sex symbol overnight. She followed this up by poking fun at the femme fatale trope in the wacky comedy *The Man With Two Brains*, opposite Steve Martin. A few years later, she would parody it again by voicing Jessica in the animated whodunnit *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

From the start, Turner has tried her hardest to avoid being typecast. She leapt from playing a mousy novelist in 1984's *Romancing the Stone* to a prim fashion designer moonlighting as a sex worker in *Crimes of Passion* and then a time-hopping housewife in *Peggy Sue Got Married* (which earned her an Oscar nomination). Is there a common thread that ties her roles together? "It's rage," she says. "I was so angry at the shit that goes down – the white male privilege crap." Disgust laces each word. "Somebody sent me an interview that I did 35 years ago. Everything I said in that, about equal pay, protecting women's rights and health, I am still saying today, so one can get discouraged."

Turner has always stood up for herself, channelling her rage into action. She hated the script for *Romancing the Stone*'s sequel *The Jewel of the Nile* and tried to get out of making it (she was threatened with a \$25m lawsuit but eventually came to a compromise with co-star and producer Michael Douglas). She dug her heels in, too, when director Ken Russell asked her to do a nude scene in *Crimes of Passion*.



With Nicolas Cage in *Peggy Sue Got Married*. Photograph: Cinetext/Tristar/Allstar

"I learned very early that I had to have script approval," she says. "They couldn't make changes without consulting me. I learned that my first time

in Los Angeles doing a screen test – the script they gave me in New York was not the script they gave me in LA. It was a women’s mud wrestling film. We had to put on bikinis and get sprayed with oil. So I went to the bathroom, got a roll of toilet paper, slapped it on my shoulder and hip, and wrote Miss Missouri across it.” She lets out a cackle of pure glee. “I got out of the audition.”

But speaking up earned her a reputation for being difficult. Is there any truth to it? “Being decisive, knowing what I want, is too much of a male characteristic, so therefore I must be difficult,” she says. “Listen, if you talk to anyone who’s actually worked with me, you’ll never hear that.”

Turner’s parents didn’t approve of her choice of career. The third of four children, she was born Mary Kathleen Turner in Springfield, Missouri, to a mother and father who both worked for the US Foreign Service. They lived in Cuba and Venezuela before moving to Britain when she was a teenager. There, Turner started acting while studying at the American School in London. One week before she graduated, her father died of a coronary thrombosis. He was, she says, “an extremely disciplined, in some ways rigid man. He had no idea what acting was. He equated it with being a streetwalker.”

She studied theatre at Southwest Missouri State University and the University of Maryland, moving to New York in 1977. When she started auditioning for commercials, Turner realised her distinctive voice set her apart. “Right away, they told me I would have trouble getting a job because of my voice. Well, I wouldn’t trade it for the world. You kidding? I love it!” In her 2008 memoir, *Send Yourself Roses: My Life, Loves and Leading Roles*, Turner writes about making her voice even deeper. How did she do that? “Exercise. Run the scales, push it lower and lower. It’s a muscle.”

Some of Turner’s most memorable roles have been alongside Douglas in *Romancing the Stone* and *The Jewel of the Nile* – fun, Indiana Jones-style action adventures – and *The War of the Roses*, a devilishly spiky black comedy about feuding exes. Their chemistry on and off the screen was electrifying. While on location in Mexico for *Romancing the Stone*, it threatened to spill into real life. Turner was single, while Douglas was separated from his first wife, Diandra Luker.



“I think we might have been falling in love,” says Turner. “But then Diandra flew down and made it clear that she did not consider Michael to be available. So that ended that because I can’t get involved with another woman’s relationship. But oh my, that attention is delicious!” How close did she get to dating Douglas? “None of your business,” she drawls. As the shoot came to an end, she met Jay Weiss, a property developer, and married him in 1984. The couple, who divorced in 2007, have a daughter, Rachel, a singer-songwriter.

Turner reunited with Douglas as the ex-wife of his acting coach on Netflix comedy series *The Kominsky Method*, which ended in 2021. “He’s such a good friend. It made it very easy to play ex-husband and wife. In a funny way, we were. Not that I ever married the man – never would have, never could have!”

After a string of box office hits in the 80s, Turner was flying high and “having a ball”. But then she was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease that affects the joints and organs. She was filming the black comedy *Serial Mom* in 1993 when she realised her feet were so swollen that she couldn’t fit into any of her shoes. Soon the illness became completely debilitating. “I couldn’t walk. I couldn’t hold a glass. The only way I could go up and down stairs was on my butt, pushing myself. The pain is very bad because there’s no way to sit, lie or stand that allows you to escape it. People don’t understand because it’s not life-threatening. It will not kill me, but it kills your life.”



With Michael Douglas in *Romancing the Stone*. Photograph: 20th Century Fox/Sportsphoto/Allstar

She started avoiding lead parts, plumping for smaller, less demanding roles. Did her illness derail her career? “Yeah, but I wouldn’t accept it. I am a very stubborn woman. I got back to full strength, as full as I would ever be again. They told me I would be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. Now, that was almost 30 years ago. And I look at what I’ve done in 30 years and I think: ‘Well, go to hell!’”

The steroids and pain medication she took to treat the disease made her gain weight and certain corners of the press would savagely pick apart her appearance. Rumours spread that she had a drinking problem. Turner says she felt “complete betrayal”, but refused to publicly disclose what was wrong with her. “It was self-defence not to discuss this mysterious disease. They would hire drunks or even drug addicts all the time.” But she was convinced no one would cast her if they knew what was really wrong with her. “Better to be quiet and let them think whatever the hell they wanted to. But it hurt a lot.”

Alcohol eventually became a real problem, however, as Turner drank to ease the pain of her illness, although she was careful never to drink while working. Still, she says: “It was incredibly stupid. I had this thing in my

head where I thought: ‘I’m not taking pain pills – they are addictive and dangerous.’ But it was OK to have that second or third vodka.” Until she had a sudden burst of clarity. “I thought: ‘I am wasting my entire day with my daughter, with my husband, because I’d close myself down and drink.’”

She checked into rehab in 2002, where she recalls meeting fellow patients, former doctors and nurses, who told her they had killed somebody because of their “inattention”. “I couldn’t see that in myself at all. I thought: ‘OK, it’s not me. I’m not an alcoholic, but I am an abuser [of drink].’ So I stopped drinking for a couple of years.” Nowadays, she has a cocktail when she feels like it. “I don’t imagine I’ll ever drink like that again. But then I don’t have that amount of pain, either.”

Turner is now in remission from rheumatoid arthritis, although she still has flare-ups. She has worked steadily over the years, gravitating to theatre, where there are better roles for older women. When she was 46, she played Mrs Robinson in a West End production of *The Graduate*, stripping off every night on stage. She even created her own one-woman cabaret show, *Finding My Voice*. There have also been appearances as an overprotective mother in the film *The Virgin Suicides* and a sexually voracious talent agent in the TV comedy *Californication*.

Fans of the sitcom *Friends* will remember her from 2001 as Chandler’s parent Charles, who performed as drag queen Helena Handbasket. The show’s co-creator Marta Kauffman confirmed last year that [the character was a trans woman](#), although other characters referred to her as Chandler’s father. “There was no question of casting a trans person or a drag queen – it was never considered,” says Turner. “It never crossed my mind that I was taking a role from someone.” Would she say yes if she was offered it today? “Probably not. But I certainly don’t regret having taken it. It was a challenge!”



With William Hurt in *Body Heat*. Photograph: Warner Bros./Allstar

When she's not filming, Turner teaches acting at various universities in the US. She reads "endlessly" and likes to hold poker nights with her female friends, where they eat sushi and drink bourbon. "I don't lack interests," she says. "I would like to be more active physically. But at the moment I'm having a bad flare-up."

Turner once said that turning 60 freaked her out. Now that she is approaching her 70s, how does she feel? "I talked to Maggie Smith about that." Adopting an impeccable English accent, she mimics the 88-year-old British star. "She said: 'Darling, every age just seems so young now!' You think: 'OK, she's done some of her best work in later years.'"

She sounds inspired and then, suddenly, pensive. "Part of me goes: Jesus, do I get to stop working at some point? On the other hand, I can't imagine not working. So there you go."

*White House Plumbers* is coming soon to Sky Atlantic and Now, and will screen on Foxtel in Australia in March

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### [Review](#)

# Harry: The Interview review – so horribly sad it could have turned the Queen anti-monarchy

In the space of one hour and 40 minutes, the king's second son is moving, charming – and absolutely devastates the royals and all they stand for

Prince Harry on why he wrote memoir: 'I don't want history to repeat itself' – video



[Lucy Mangan](#)

[@LucyMangan](#)

Sun 8 Jan 2023 17.40 ESTLast modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 10.58 EST

If she had lived to see this, it wouldn't have killed the Queen. But it might have made her a republican.

[Harry: The Interview \(ITV1\)](#) lasted an hour and 40 minutes (including ad breaks) and left no royal turn unstoned. Via excerpts from [his memoir, Spare](#), and answers to questions from ITV journalist Tom Bradby, the king's second son, Prince Harry, laid waste the monarchy – or at least the myths on which it so greatly depends.

We were softened up first by the memory of his childhood and the shattering death of his mother when he was 12 – a psychic wound that rarely fully heals even for children brought up in the most functioning families, which few would claim the Windsors to be. A very moving segment of the audiobook is played – beautifully read by Harry himself – about how he demanded and got to see the secret government file about Diana's death. His press secretary removed the most awful photos but let him see as much as he thought Harry could bear, because he knew he had to.

As we go on, however, the interview becomes sadder and sadder. He is there, Harry tells us, and he has written his memoir because the accumulated “briefings, leakings and plantings” by the palace over the years, against him and Meghan, amount to the equivalent of “countless” volumes against them and make a mockery of the royal family's motto: “Never complain, never explain.” The accommodation the institution has come to with the tabloid press, and the hypocrisy around it clearly – to use a phrase we lower echelons find handy in times of strife – boils his piss, and probably rightly so.

There are tales of William and Kate taking against Meghan from the start because, he says, they allowed stereotypes (American, actor, divorced, biracial) to put up a barrier between them. Camilla is depicted as a calculating woman who began “to play the long game – a campaign aimed at marriage and eventually the crown” after William and Harry asked their father not to marry her; and Camilla and Charles as using Kate and William's relationship to bolster their own PR, the younger couple going on to do the same with Harry and Meghan's.

Harry and Bradby talk about the three phone-hacking claims the former has outstanding against News Group, the Mirror and the Daily Mail, and the

possibility that the opprobrium and harassment he and Meghan attract from the press is partly an effort to intimidate him into settling.

In response to questions about how all that he has done, and is now doing, squares with his wish for privacy, Harry says he has tried all other available, private avenues to get his family and/or the institution (he doesn't, as Diana did, call it The Firm, but the intimation is the same) to protect and support him but they have declined – or rather, denied the need to do so.

He is charming, articulate, and – unless the Windsor clan has reared a world-class actor – telling us the truth as he sees it. In PR terms, it will surely serve its purpose. The book will sell in its millions, his story will appeal to the younger demographic, bolster his celebrity and maybe allow him a more manageable kind of fame than the one he was born into – which is probably his best hope at this point.

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Speaking as a member of an older demographic who remembers Harry and William being born, Diana's death, the funeral and all the rest of it, it left me only with a great sorrowful weariness: for all that has been done wrong, all that has been lost and how, in the end, how sad and ordinary every little life, however gilded, can be.





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[David Lynch](#)

## Deviant obsessions: how David Lynch predicted our fragmented times



Fragmented ... Lynch at the 1990 Cannes film festival. Photograph: Jean-Christian Bourcart

His work is freaky and frightening, yet today the Twin Peaks director cuts an almost cosy figure. As he turns 77 – a number of significance – we explore how real life caught up with his dark visions

[Phil Hoad](#)

[@phlode](#)

Mon 9 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.46 EST

Beyond his holiness Saint Keanu, if there is another universally beloved figure online it is David Lynch. He is the internet's eccentric grandpa: unfailingly ringing in the day with his [daily weather reports](#), banging the gong for transcendental meditation and [crafting miniature farmyard barns](#) for his youngest daughter, Lula.

His other line, perhaps the most overtly Lynchian, is his [daily lottery](#) in which – for seemingly no other reason than gratuitous delight and enigma – he draws a random numbered ball. A confirmed numerologist, [his preferred integer is seven](#). Dorothy Vallens's apartment – the nexus of lust, violence and voyeurism in [Blue Velvet](#) – was on the seventh floor. So was the Philadelphia office of Gordon Cole, the FBI chief played by the director in Twin Peaks. On 20 January, David Lynch will be 77. So there is no better time to ask: how did this once-cult artist – whose work is filled with seething psychopaths and funky dwarves and who for the past 20 years has reverted solely to his most experimental and challenging work – become such a cosy cultural presence?

This turn of events seems all the more unlikely when you consider his position in the mid-90s. [Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me](#), a harrowing, humour-free sojourn with incest, was booed by the press at Cannes in 1992, and five years later Lost Highway wasn't much more warmly received. If "Lynchian" – defined by David Foster Wallace in his [seminal 1996 essay](#) as "a particular kind of irony where the very macabre and the very mundane combine in such a way as to reveal the former's perpetual containment within the latter" – was a quantifiable sensibility, it either remained marginal, or people were already tiring of it, or both.

Weirdly, that is not the case now. Lynchian is the go-to adjective to describe any sniff of the uncanny and esoteric on screen, from *Donnie Darko* to *True Detective*. It will never be a mainstream quality, but it exists explicitly in orientation towards the mainstream, often represented by the discordant versions of 50s Americana that appear so often in his work. And so his destabilising vision has become a common lens for discerning the truth about the “normal world”: that white picket fence America paints over deviant and sometimes evil obsessions, as in *Blue Velvet* and *Twin Peaks*, or that Hollywood is in fact a nightmare factory, as in *Mulholland Drive* and *Inland Empire*. Lynch playing John Ford, maybe the most establishment of all golden age directors, in Steven Spielberg’s [The Fabelmans](#) is a neat joke about his skewwhiff relationship with the mainstream.



Violence and voyeurism ... Isabella Rossellini, in *Blue Velvet*. Photograph: Everett Collection/Alamy

Maybe the most naturally Lynchian congregation are the hipsters, among whom subversion and irony thrive and where Pabst Blue Ribbon – recommended beverage of *Blue Velvet*’s resident psychopath Frank Booth – is drunk. Lynch himself has the boho quiff, the retro fetish and a single-minded commitment to his art that the hipster contingent would approve of.

This is the man who toiled for five years to make [Eraserhead](#), breaking off during night shoots to do his paper round delivering the Wall Street Journal. Since the fiasco of [Dune](#), he has been fiercely uncompromising to the point where he managed to persuade a major TV network to effectively fund an 18-hour avant garde drama in the [third series of Twin Peaks](#). He's a living, nicotine-hoovering paladin of personal creativity, who despite appearing in documentaries and penning books bigging up what he calls "[the art life](#)" maintains a hilarious obstinacy in never revealing anything specific about his process, or the meaning of his work.

Lynch's great moral conviction has been to show us how good and evil co-exist in the same person

Flowing out from this single-mindedness is the radiant sincerity filling Lynch's films, something missing in Foster Wallace's irony-based classification. This, as much as the trademark freakiness, is what continues to draw people to him in this era of social-media posturing and fakery. He consciously amps up this earnestness in Twin Peaks' lead character Dale Cooper, and it is most clearly visible in the almost embarrassing levels of romanticism in [The Elephant Man](#) and [The Straight Story](#).

But Lynch is sincere about all sorts of other feelings, especially the unbidden and the inadmissible. Wallace calls it a "psychic intimacy" delivered from a primitive part of the director's psyche. Few could make innocuous childhood learning a source of blackly comic primal dread, as in his 1968 student film [The Alphabet](#). Almost everything he does, no matter how ostensibly offbeat, is underscored by authentic emotion: compare the first 17 episodes of Twin Peaks, when Lynch was fully involved, with the heavy-handed, self-conscious kookiness of much of what followed. Occasionally, this spelunking of his inner self becomes too intense: there's a one-note quality to both [Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me](#) and *Lost Highway*. But it is never less than completely unfiltered.



Dream or reality? ... Naomi Watts and Laura Harring in *Mulholland Drive*.  
Photograph: Universal/Allstar

He is disturbingly forthcoming with sexual violence, too, often meted out towards a gallery of victimised women that parallels Hitchcock. Post-#MeToo, you would have thought this might render him unpalatable – or at least put him in the crosshairs of some heavy discourse. Dorothy Vallens, Laura Palmer, *Lost Highway*'s dismembered dame Renee, the bitter Tinseltown washup Diane Selwyn in [Mulholland Drive](#), *Inland Empire*'s “woman in trouble” Nikki Grace: Lynch definitely has a type.

But he consistently inverts misogyny and flips the male gaze by fully inhabiting these women with a fervour that's rare for a male director. He plays with the [Madonna/whore](#) dichotomy of film noir women, but transmutes it into something higher. After we learn that *Twin Peaks*' prom queen Laura Palmer was a doomed classic femme fatale, she is resurrected as a metaphysical symbol of the capacity to withstand cycles of violence.

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In his structural masterpiece [Mulholland Drive](#), it is ultimately ambiguous whether bushy-tailed ingenue Betty Elms is the dream-creation of homicidal failure Diane, if this dream is more real than the reality, or if it even matters which is correct. But this magnificent suite of role-playing contains Hollywood in all its aspirations and sordidness, and Diane's infatuation and bitterness with the dream factory are our own. These besieged women come to us as ghosts of past systemic oppression, but end up disordering it in a way that keeps Lynch on speaking terms with current gender politics. As the recent documentary [Lynch/Oz](#) puts it, in his work trauma is a source of transcendence.

If Lynch is capable of this radical empathy, sometimes I wonder if the darkness in his films is equally his. As much as the stricken women, his films are populated by exuberantly coiffed straight men who seem like his proxies; hapless bystanders to monsters such as Blue Velvet's Frank Booth but haunted by the possibility of becoming them. Which is what happens to Bill Pullman's frenzied saxophonist Fred, another Lynchian stooge, in the grip of a "psychogenic fugue" in Lost Highway. It's striking not only that Lynch directed the pivotal episode of [Twin Peaks](#) himself – Lonely Souls, where the identity of the demonic killer Bob is finally revealed in shockingly brutal style – but how personally he stamps it. "Leland says you're going back to Missoula, Montana," Bob rages at his latest victim, referring to the director's hometown.



Surreal horror ... Jack Nance in Eraserhead. Photograph: Libra Films/Allstar

That sort of displacement is the artist's prerogative, and Lynch is by all accounts a good egg in real life: open to collaboration and protective of his actors. He gives excellent meme, such as [nominating Vladimir Putin](#) for the ice bucket challenge, and has canonical hair. But he remains strongly part of the zeitgeist for deeper reasons: the times have caught up with him and become more Lynchian, more bewildering, fragmented and subject to shocking disruptions. The US of [Twin Peaks: The Return](#) was not the rose-tinted nostalgic haven of the first; in fact, it actively rubbished that sentiment. Or as Pullman said recently about Lost Highway: "Maybe that reality is what we're living in now. Where people suddenly say things where you can't believe they're the same person."

Online especially, we respond to this fragmentation with ever-more polarised positions, ones that seek to permanently separate virtue from vice. But Lynch's great moral conviction has been to show us to what extent good and evil are inextricably wound around each other and coexist in the same person. Excessive zeal, like stainless Agent Cooper, is replaced by his scowling, mullet-haired doppelganger. Corruption and entropy are part of life; not exactly a commercial proposition, which is probably why Lynch hasn't made a feature in more than 15 years. But even if not everyone wants



to lend their ear, he burrows onwards – as in Blue Velvet – down into the cochlea and inside our heads. Happy birthday, Mr Lynch, and thanks for showing us the way to seventh heaven.

Lynch/Oz is available on DVD and [Dogwoof on Demand](#).

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## The age of extinctionFungi

# The burning question about fungi: what happens to them in extreme heat?

Scientists in Italy are testing the impact of fire and drought to learn how the changing climate affects underground fungal networks



Toby Kiers, an evolutionary biologist, says: ‘If we don’t understand what is going on underground ... we’re just missing such a huge part of the picture.’ Photograph: Seth Carnill

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*Jonathan Moens*

Mon 9 Jan 2023 02.45 EST Last modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.22 EST

When Toby Kiers and a group of fungi experts hiked the Apennine mountains in northern Italy last July, the country was experiencing its [worst drought for 70 years](#). But Kiers, an evolutionary biologist at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, saw the dried vegetation and burnt forests of the drought- and fire-stricken areas bordering Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna as a unique learning opportunity.

Armed with rubber mallets, measuring tape and GPS devices, Kiers and her team were investigating a very particular life form: the bustling fungal life beneath their feet.

“What we want to do is track how fungal communities are changing under climate change,” says Kiers. “It will allow us to predict what we need to protect and what we can conserve.”

Kiers was not so interested in mushrooms – the fruiting bodies of fungi, which contain spores and take on myriad shapes and sizes. Instead, she

wanted to learn more about the complex fungal systems that live below ground, known as mycorrhizal networks.



Toby Kiers and her team hiking in Italy's Apennine mountains. Photograph: Seth Carnill

Mycorrhizal networks are made up of white, thread-like filaments that many scientists believe play countless ecological roles: they may exchange essential nutrients with trees through the roots, help with the absorption and retention of water, protect plants against pathogens, and hold the soil together by acting as a giant underground net. The thread-like system is so vastly multilayered and interconnected that it is sometimes referred to as the [“wood-wide web”](#).

It's still unclear if and how these webs help trees flourish, but Kiers believes that studying these underground networks in such stark conditions could help scientists identify drought-resistant fungi that can help crops thrive and shield plants from the consequences of rapidly rising temperatures.

“These fungi can act as ‘biofertilisers’ – they take in phosphorus, nitrogen, potassium, and give it to the plant,” says Paola Bonfante, former professor of plant biology at the University of Turin.



Toby Kiers hammers a cylindrical tube into the soil to take a sample of mycelium. Photograph: Seth Carnill

The research could also help scientists anticipate how fungal communities may adapt to climate change in regions susceptible to droughts and fires. Many European countries – including Spain, Greece and Portugal – as well as other parts of the world experienced devastatingly hot summers last year, with raging fires and unusually long droughts.

The initiative is part of a [broader project](#) by the [Society for the Protection of Underground Networks](#) (Spun) to collect more than 10,000 samples of fungi from across the globe. As executive director of Spun, Kiers is working with [GlobalFungi](#) and the [Crowther Lab](#) to use satellite and big-data analyses to identify biodiversity hotspots where they can sample these mycorrhizal networks.

Mycorrhizal networks often develop unique relationships with specific species of trees and ecosystems, and in Italy the team took samples near various trees, including pine, beech, chestnut and hazelnut, and in different locations. Samples were also taken in a recently burnt area, and from a similar location nearby that had not been affected by fire, for comparison. An important question is whether mycorrhizal networks were able to withstand the fire and, if so, how that was possible, says Kiers.

To take the samples, the team hammered cylindrical tubes into the soil-containing mycelium – the thin, white strands that constitute a mycorrhizal network – and poured the contents into plastic bags, mixing them thoroughly. Subsamples were then put into plastic tubes and labelled with the geographic coordinates.

In the future, Kiers hopes to return to these sites and compare them with those in more temperate ecosystems. “We want to come back in a year, in two years, and resample and try to understand and look at the recovery process,” she says.



The scientists put the different soil samples into bags bearing the geographic coordinates so they can return to these sites to look at the recovery process. Photograph: Seth Carnill

In the meantime, the samples have been sent to Matteo Chialva and Prof Luisa Lanfranco, plant biologists at Turin University. They will conduct genetic sequencing tests that will “allow us to know what organism was present underground”, says Chialva.

Of the estimated 2.2-3.8m species of fungi on Earth, only about 600 have been evaluated for the [IUCN’s Red List of Threatened Species](#). Of these, [about half](#) are considered threatened.



“We’re definitely worried,” says Kiers. “The ultimate goal is to really focus on underground biodiversity and be able to say: this is valuable diversity as well.”

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Kiers hopes the findings will tell researchers which genes lend fungi their drought-resistant properties and which molecular mechanisms enable them to be resilient.

We know a lot about fungi, but mostly what happens in a petri dish

*Paola Bonfante*

Scientists already know that some mycelium have [flame-retardant properties](#) and others become more efficient at storing water and nutrients when under stress. They also know that mycorrhizal fungi that tend to mingle with crops are probably more resistant to drought than ones that associate with the roots of large forest trees, says Bonfante.

In Antarctica, one fungus, *Cryomyces antarcticus*, stores high quantities of melanin in its cell wall. Melanin, the same pigment that makes human skins more or less dark and protects against ultraviolet radiation, can protect fungi from drought and fire, says Dr Claudia Coleine, a microbiologist at the University of Tuscia, in Viterbo, near Rome, who studies organisms living in extreme environments and was not involved in the project.

“We’re starting to understand different molecular mechanisms that allow fungi to survive in extreme conditions,” she says.



The thin white strands of mycelium. The system is so multilayered and interconnected that it has been referred to as the ‘wood-wide web’. Photograph: Seth Carnill

Bonfante emphasises that laboratory tests alone will not be enough. “We know a lot about fungi, but mostly what happens inside a petri dish,” she says.

Mycorrhizal networks are so deeply interconnected with trees, plants, microbes and other organisms that studying them in isolation means our understanding is limited. Scientists will need to bridge the gap between these two realms by validating their findings in natural settings, she adds.

Kiers agrees. “If we don’t understand what is going on underground and how they’re influencing what we do care about, like chestnut trees and flowers and bees and honey, we’re just missing such a huge part of the picture.”



*Find more [age of extinction coverage here](#), and follow biodiversity reporters [Phoebe Weston](#) and [Patrick Greenfield](#) on Twitter for all the latest news and features*

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## 2023.01.09 - Opinion

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[Opinion](#)Public services policy.

# When state services fail, citizens pay extra or sink. This is Sunak's Britain now

[Nesrine Malik](#)



I've seen what happens in countries when wealthy people go private and the rest suffer. Now, from the NHS to rail services, that's life here



A woman waits in the cold with her husband for an ambulance after a fall in Eton last month. Photograph: Maureen McLean/REX/Shutterstock

Mon 9 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 09.57 EST

It's official. A two-tier health system, that long feared prospect that rings the death knell of the NHS, [has arrived](#). Trusts with long waiting lists are offering and promoting "quick and easy" private services in their hospitals. It's not a choice anyone would relish, but increasingly those who can are giving up and paying up. If you're after a hip replacement, £12,000 can make the difference between a two-year and a two-week wait. You can get an MRI for £379 in 48 hours, and with it a diagnosis that could save a limb or a life.

The story is the same across England's public infrastructure. Those who can, after standing on a packed train platform, the clock ticking down to an important appointment, will decamp above ground and take a taxi. Those who can will work several jobs to pay exorbitant and rising rent because they have no access to social housing. Those who can will take the hit, and those who can't will be stranded, on the streets and in the wards.

Every time you have taken that hit, and no one can blame you for trying to move or heal, you have paid a ransom in a transaction where the

government had held you hostage to your needs. By failing to provide public services, by privatising them, or by refusing to engage with striking workers, the government effectively withholds your rights, for which you have already paid through taxes and national insurance, and dares you to blink first. Whether you can afford to blink has little to do with your real wealth, because loans, credit cards and, if you are lucky, family are there to help you cope.

The result is a poorly regulated monopoly of exploitative private interests that mops up unmet demand or “helps” satisfy it: [private health practices](#) that charge an eye-watering amount just for a remote consultation, and ride-hailing companies [whose prices surge](#) when public transport is down or the weather is severe and yet still cannot keep up with demand. There are the [instalment payment](#) finance bolt-ons that appear when you check out online with items that you cannot afford. This network, emerging and dystopian as it feels in England’s specific economic climate at the moment and Britain’s in general, is not unique. It is part of a global pattern that exists in every country where the state has withdrawn, or was never present in the first place.

It rises from the dust of disintegrating public amenities. As a child, I remember my father driving me, curled up in the back of the car in the middle of the night, through the streets of Khartoum to find an emergency room that would treat sudden crippling back pain. We returned at dawn, still unseen. All public hospitals were either deserted or overrun with patients. Today, in the same city, things are different. You have the option of treatment in a number of shiny private clinics and hospitals, but only if you have the money for a down payment that is required before you are even allowed to take a seat.

You also, as you do in many similar African economies, have options for almost everything that the state does not, or cannot provide. In Lagos, Nairobi, even more relatively affluent cities such as Cairo and Johannesburg, you have the choice to rent a private vehicle, from a motorcycle to beat traffic to an air-conditioned Uber, that can take you to your destination as you drive past rickety and unsafe public transport minibuses. There are electric generator providers who will sell you a wide

range of devices to keep your lights on when the power goes out. There are sellers of water pumps to tease out the water from the mains, and another set of contractors to build you giant water containers to store that water when even the pumps don't work any more.

Policing is patchy and unreliable, so you can pay someone to guard your home in the night. If you need to deal with state bureaucracy, which is slow, unpredictable and extractive, there is a private army of fixers that will help you, for a fee of course. Think of them as that expensive "fast track" you take to renew your British passport for urgent travel.

You still pay tax. Whenever the state can get its hands on your cash, it will take a chunk and you will pay it knowing that it is not going anywhere from which you will benefit.

This is the endgame – fast approaching here, in localised form – when the state stops performing its primary function, which is to provide basic human rights to health, shelter, energy, water and transport. Beyond the very wealthy who float above everyone else, the world becomes bifurcated into two classes, the same two that we are also beginning to see emerge in the UK. On the one hand, a class that may perish or starve, and another with disposable income diverted from self-improvement, leisure and savings to fund the creation and maintenance of a makeshift system of self-funded utilities.



Paddington train station in London on 24 December, 2022. Photograph: Belinda Jiao/Getty Images

The danger in this is less about the deliberate defunding of the public realm by the government – serious though that is. It lies more in the divestment from the public realm by the people. The withdrawal of the state creates not a physical place, but a mental place, where you give up on the government altogether. This is a place where you perceive what were rights before as luxuries: where each self-providing home or community becomes a mini-state.

Politicians feed this psychological reshaping. The most chilling aspect of Rishi Sunak's premiership so far is a studied remoteness that seems to ask: "What does this have to do with me?" We told you there would be challenges, he says, [in the face of a crisis](#) of historic proportions. How about [more maths](#) in schools and [fewer migrant boats](#) in the Channel? Keir Starmer finally finds some fire in his belly to tell us there will be [devolution of decision-making](#) (a good thing, local politicians may be more minded to protect and invest in public infrastructure), but no extra spending under Labour. So that's the future for communities: penniless autonomy.

At some point, poor countries and very rich capitalist countries end up in the same place – hoarding resources and leaning on the private sector to

keep the lights on, and passing on the cost of that to the citizen.

But poverty hasn't brought us to a place where our transport, housing market and healthcare system are buckling; we are here thanks to conscious political choices disguised as a fact of nature. The spirit of public service can only be kept alive through constantly combating this swindle of scarcity; through maintaining anger and holding on to a sacred definition of what rights and expectations we have – and seek to retain. Pay up if you have to, but don't give up. Because they are counting on you to do just that.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist

This article was amended on 9 January 2023 to correct the approximate cost of a private hip replacement in the UK from £1,200 to £12,000.

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[OpinionNHS](#)

## As a doctor, I know the NHS can be brought back to life – I saw it happen under New Labour

[Rob Higgins](#)



Don't believe the lie that the private sector offers better healthcare. The NHS can deliver, if it's given the necessary resources



‘In a recruitment and retention crisis, what employer in their right mind would be hellbent on forcing a humiliating real-terms pay cut on its employees?’ NHS staff on strike in London, December 2022. Photograph: Velar Grant/ZUMA Press Wire/Shutterstock

Mon 9 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 10.35 EST

I started to experience crisis in the [NHS](#) when I qualified as a doctor in 1981, and it would only get worse and worse over the next decade. The main indicators of failure were, and still are, delays in planned surgery and in emergency care.

I got used to patients coming to see me doped up on morphine and in a wheelchair because of excruciating pain from an arthritic hip, after waiting two years or more for surgery. I would write letters to orthopaedic surgeons pleading the case, knowing they would simply join a pile of similar letters. There was, by the way, no point trying to get on to the waiting list two years before you needed your new hip; only those who needed surgery urgently earned the ticket to start waiting.

Dialysis treatment for kidney failure was rationed, with our take-on rate per million population for new patients the laughing stock (if it wasn’t so tragic) of Europe and of the world. If you were a bit old or had a few other

health problems, the kidney specialist would tell you, often rather unconvincingly, that dialysis wasn't suitable and you would soon die of kidney failure.

While I was angry about delivering third-rate care, I was also optimistic. It didn't feel like the end of the NHS, it just needed a sympathetic government. Under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, the Labour government [almost doubled healthcare spending](#) as a share of GDP – lo and behold, it was affordable for the nation and transformed clinical outcomes. People could get elective surgery in a reasonable time, they could choose which type of dialysis suited them best and, of course, a full range of treatment across all specialities was deliverable. The keystones of the NHS were broadly preserved, namely national standardised terms of service for all staff, reasonably fair pay (certainly looking back from a 2023 perspective) and a requirement to deliver care equitably across the nation.

Innovation led by staff blossomed. I didn't start a telephone clinic service in 2006 because managers wanted me to; it was because there was a demand for the service from my patients and I wasn't too overwhelmed by other work. A new programme of kidney transplants started in Coventry saved the NHS money and transformed lives. There are many, many more examples from my experience and even more from around the NHS as a whole.



‘Under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, the Labour government almost doubled healthcare spending as a share of GDP.’ Brown and Blair at London’s Chelsea and Westminster hospital, April 2002. Photograph: Reuters

So I don’t accept the premise, touted so often by some politicians and media that it has almost become gospel, that the NHS cannot deliver great healthcare. In my experience, an adequately resourced service will deliver top-rate healthcare at a price point other providers cannot equal. For every fault in the NHS, I can point to just as many, if not more, examples of private delivery being either more expensive or lower quality (or both). Remember that the NHS is publicly accountable for its failings, in a way that other providers can dodge, if they are so minded.

In the early 2000s I was hopeful that these qualities of the NHS would be recognised and valued – but it turned out I was naive. Yes, some threats were seen off, or so I thought. Tax relief on healthcare insurance was a failure, delivering only subsidies to those already paying insurance. The [private finance initiative \(PFI\)](#) policy, using private funding to pay for infrastructure projects, was an [expensive way of building hospitals](#). Employment of ancillary staff by PFI providers did nothing obvious to improve quality and reduce costs, even after getting staff off national terms of conditions of service and cutting their pay. I saw companies that thought

they could see a way of making money in NHS clinical services mostly fail, usually through being unable to deliver a safe service of acceptable quality.

In 2023, elective surgery and emergency departments are again in crisis, even though people are (so far) getting far better care than in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Yet 2023 still feels far worse. A word cloud from those working in 2023 would feature “burnt out”, “let down”, “despair”, “crisis”. Thirty five years ago I would have said “angry”, “avoidable”, “we can do better”.

The big difference between then and now is that the NHS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s had an obvious solution – more resources. When these were delivered, the service was transformed. In 2023 the solution isn’t so easy. Yes resources are important, but where would any extra funding go? Would it be channelled towards helping the NHS in the medium to long term?

Adding to the uncertainty, what is the current government plan for the NHS? In a recruitment and retention crisis, what employer in their right mind would be hellbent on forcing a substantial and humiliating [real-terms pay cut](#) on its employees? When he was health secretary, Jeremy Hunt gave, in sporting parlance, a jolly good beating to junior doctors in 2016 when he [saw off their industrial action](#) and imposed a new contract. It seems now, as chancellor, he is determined to deliver the same treatment to nurses and others. But to what end?

Do we want a service based broadly on the NHS that we know works, or do we want a fragmented service dependent on private providers? Some individual providers may be competent, but would be working among many others of varying quality. Who wants to risk their wellbeing against the real possibility that healthcare could collapse into the same kind of chaos we are witnessing in the energy industry and railways? Failure of healthcare will cost you a lot more than money or travel delays.

I would back the service that has a proven track record of being clinically effective and cost effective when adequately resourced, with national terms and conditions of service, and services commissioned equitably and

working for the greater good. We needed it 30 years ago, and we need it now.

- Rob Higgins qualified as a doctor in 1981 and was consultant in general and renal medicine at the University [Hospitals](#) Coventry and Warwickshire from 1995 to 2015. He returned to work during the 2020 Covid crisis

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## [Opinion](#)Life and style

# Thinking of abandoning your New Year resolutions? I'm nailing mine!

[Emma Beddington](#)



Rather than give up booze or go vegan for a month, I set myself three ridiculously easy tasks. I'm already feeling incredible – and disgusted with myself



‘There’s a healing shame to confronting your filth.’ Photograph: d3sign/Getty Images

Mon 9 Jan 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 02.34 EST

How are your resolutions going on this, the precise day (unscientifically speaking) when everyone gives in to the general bleh of the season? Perhaps you didn’t make any. The balance has been shifting for a while, but it feels like this year, anti-resolution messaging is stronger than pro. With everything being demonstrably terrible and every sign it will get worse, why bother? As [TikToker @erin.monroe put it](#): “I don’t need 2023 to be my year, I need it to not be a soul-sucking drag through earthly purgatory.” To which, amen (and also good luck).

Celebrity endorsements of not bothering are widely available. “I’ve been dogged by a feeling, as real as any of the parts of myself I ‘should’ be remodelling: I’m so fucking sick of trying,” [Lena Dunham posted on Instagram](#). Happy Valley actor [Siobhan Finneran dispatched a question](#) about whether she was making resolutions, protesting that January was hard enough, especially with the self-employed tax deadline looming (I feel you, Siobhan). “Denying yourself a drink or some chocolate is just too much,” she said. “Enjoying finishing off the Christmas leftovers.”



I realise I ended last year urging everyone [to become neo-nihilists and not bother with anything](#) and I'm starting this year doing the same; it's become something of a personal brand. But if you can't get on board with your animal self just doing what it loves, there are alternatives. How about radically downgrading your self-improvement goals? The New York Times says that's OK, in its exploration [of the low-key hashtag #dontsuck2023](#). I tried "low-res" last year. Mine was to buy a box of chocolates and eat one every day in January. (Smashed it!) This year, similarly devoid of meaningful aspirations, I resolved to bring all the clothes I need to get dressed into the bathroom in the morning, saving myself the freezing trudge along the landing to find knickers. Days 1 to 3 went well, but I forgot my trousers on day 4 and lost heart.

So I've changed tack and I commend my new strategy to you: the one-off resolution. Why commit to doing something all year when you could just do it once, neatly avoiding the impulse to fail then give up? Rationally, we know that all of us being imperfectly better – recycling more, eating less meat – does more good than a handful committing to absolute purity, but our all-or-nothing mindset means Veganuary is cancelled after a bite of buttered toast.

If you resolve to do something only once, it's harder to fail. Taking into consideration my general lethargy – I even brush my teeth sitting down – I have set myself three eminently achievable goals. The first was to clean my computer keyboard. I did it yesterday, and if starting the year absolutely disgusted with yourself floats your boat, it's a winner. There's a healing shame to confronting your filth – yours and no one else's – that is very January sackcloth and ashes. (Were those actual ashes on my keyboard? No, too sticky.) I Googled how to clean it, disregarding pages of "Don't let it get dirty in the first place" advice (sure, nerds), then ended up scrubbing it with soapy water, an old toothbrush and a tampon because I didn't have any of the recommended cotton buds or screen wipes. Still, it's decontaminated, still working (just) and I feel incredible: chastened, purged and with no intention of keeping it clean in future.

Resolution No 2 is finding out where to recycle my sons' disposable contact lens cases, which have been piling up for three years and are now a

significant trip hazard. The last one is to order a sandwich other than the one called Alan in my local sandwich bar. Alan is an absolute wrong 'un – a deranged combo of mushrooms, olives, sun-blushed tomatoes, red onion and mustard I only ordered because of the name. But now, paralysed by choice, I find myself ordering then unhappily eating Alan, repeatedly. This year it stops. And by “stops”, I mean, I’ll try to order a different sandwich once before 31 December. My personal hashtag for the year? #dontsuckoncein2023.

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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## [Opinion](#)[LGBTQ+ rights](#)

# Let me tell you what it's like being gay in the straightest town in England and Wales

[James Cottis](#)



The contrast to Brighton – the UK's gay capital – is Rochford, where I grew up and still live. It's worked for me, but it hasn't always been easy



‘I find it sad that people still feel they can’t be themselves.’ Brighton Pride parade. Photograph: Tristan Fewings/Getty Images

Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 05.27 EST

I grew up in the straightest place in England and Wales: Rochford, a small town, in Essex. Last week, in figures revealed by the Office for National Statistics from its 2021 census, just [1.6% of the people living in my town said they were LGB+](#) – it was probably even more straight in the mid-90s, when I was about 15 and realised I was gay. Then, it felt like a complete taboo. My way of dealing with it was to try to put it at the back of my mind. I went through school, college and university doing exactly that.

When I left university and got involved in politics, I didn’t meet many openly gay people. At the time, there were a few out MPs in the Labour government – people such as [Chris Smith](#), [Ben Bradshaw](#) and [Stephen Twigg](#) – but none in the Conservatives, the party I joined when I was 18, until [Alan Duncan](#) came out a couple of years later. It still felt like a taboo. I was petrified about coming out or even telling anyone I was gay.

I was elected to the district council in 2006, and got a lot of local press attention because, at 24, I was the youngest councillor. Then I started hearing whispers that some people thought I was gay, and I would laugh it

off. I was still in denial, but it got to the point a couple of years later when I became interested in the LGBT community.

Rochford, unsurprisingly for the straightest town in England, did not have any gay clubs – for that you had to go down the road to Southend or, as I preferred, to Heaven, the gay club in London. For me, like many other young people finding out about their sexuality, it became the place I could be who I really was. It felt as if I was living a double life – as a country boy in Rochford during the week, and a different person on a Saturday night in London. I didn't worry, because I thought I'd never bump into anyone from Rochford – the straightest town, remember – at Heaven, but sometimes it did happen. "I'm not gay," I would immediately tell them, "I'm just here with friends."



'I thought I'd never bump into anyone from Rochford at Heaven, but sometimes it did happen.' Photograph: Everynight Images/Alamy

I stood for re-election in 2010, and decided that if I won, I would come out. I did. I told close friends first, then my family. Nobody was bothered, or particularly surprised. It might not, thankfully, be considered a big deal now, but 12 years ago, in a small rural area, it was and so I was advised to tell the leader of the council too.



Nobody treated me any differently, most local people either didn't know or didn't care. I was aware that I represented a number of older people, who may have had negative attitudes about LGBT people, and I had to tread carefully, but I never experienced any hostility in Rochford. I did, though, from my own party. I planned to stand for election again in 2014, but some local [Conservatives](#) took a dislike to me and tried to stop me standing. I believe it was because of my sexuality – one mentioned, disparagingly, an interview I'd given to a local BBC radio station a few months earlier, in which I talked about coming out.

But this is not an accurate picture of what the wider Conservative party is like. People have asked how I can be a member of the party of section 28 – and I have also campaigned for the Republicans in the US and been accused of promoting homophobic policy – but I believe Conservative attitudes have moved on, including legalising same-sex marriage. Apart from that one incident with my local party, I've never felt unwelcome. At one Conservative Pride party, I was on the dancefloor with Liz Truss, then foreign secretary, to It's Raining Men.

I still live in Rochford, where I'm now on the parish council, I'm a property investor and finishing a master's on US foreign policy. I don't feel the need to move away from the supposedly straightest town in England. I've never felt any overt homophobia, although it's not somewhere I would necessarily walk around holding hands with a partner.

There are other LGBT people in the town and surrounding area, and probably many more than the census revealed. Maybe the people who were marking the tick boxes felt they couldn't be honest, even to themselves.

Rochford has an older population than Brighton, which has the highest proportion of LGBT people. You tend to find that in these rural areas, there are a lot of older gay couples but they keep themselves to themselves and you know that they will never come out publicly.

I find it sad that people still feel they can't be themselves. But if the Conservative party has changed, one day so will Rochford.

- James Cottis is a Conservative district councillor and property investor
  - ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***
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## 2023.01.09 - Around the world

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- US 'Lack of respect': outcry over Amazon employee's death on warehouse floor
- Harvey Weinstein Ex-film mogul faces 18 more years in prison as LA sentencing looms
- Egypt Norwegian cargo ship refloated after running aground in Suez canal
- Tanzania Hopes rise for new era of press freedom as number of censured journalists falls

## [China](#)

# 90% of people in China province infected with Covid, says local health official

Data from the health commission for central Henan suggests 88 million people in the province may have had the virus



Millions of people in China are expected to travel in the lead-up to lunar new year, leading to fears of a surge in Covid cases. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Mon 9 Jan 2023 01.13 ESTFirst published on Mon 9 Jan 2023 00.16 EST

Almost 90% of people in China's third most populous province have now been infected with Covid-19, a top local official has said, as the country battles an unprecedented surge in cases.

Kan Quancheng, director of the health commission for central Henan province, told a press conference that “as of January 6, 2023, the province’s Covid infection rate is 89%”.

With a population of 99.4 million, the figures suggest about 88.5 million people in Henan may now have been infected.

Visits to fever clinics peaked on 19 December, Kan said, “after which it showed a continuous downward trend”.

The [opening of China’s borders on Sunday](#) was one of the last steps in the dismantling of the country’s zero-Covid regime, which began last month after historic protests and has led to a huge wave of infections.

Covid cases are expected to soar further as the country celebrates lunar new year later this month, [with millions set to travel from big cities](#) to visit vulnerable older relatives in the countryside.

In the first wave of pre-holiday travel, official data showed 34.7 million people travelled domestically on Saturday – up by more than a third compared with last year, according to state media.

While Beijing’s move to drop quarantine requirements is expected to boost outbound travel, [many nations are demanding negative tests from visitors from China](#), seeking to contain an outbreak that is overwhelming many of China’s hospitals and crematoriums.

Officially, China reported just 5,272 Covid-related deaths as of 8 January, one of the lowest rates of death from the infection in the world.

But the World Health Organization has said China is [under-reporting the scale of the outbreak](#) and international health experts estimate more than 1 million people in the country could die from the disease this year.

China’s top health officials and state media have repeatedly said Covid infections are peaking across the country and they are playing down the threat now posed by the disease.

“Life is moving forward again!”, the official newspaper of the Communist party, the People’s Daily, wrote in an editorial on Sunday praising the government’s virus policies, which it said had moved from “preventing infection” to “preventing severe disease”.

“Today, the virus is weak, we are stronger.”

China’s state Xinhua news agency said the country had entered a “new phase” in its Covid response.

Asian shares lifted to a five-month high on Monday as investors bet that China’s reopening would help revive the \$17tn economy and bolster the outlook for global growth.

“It’s a huge relief just to be able to go back to normal ... just come back to China, get off the plane, get myself a taxi and just go home,” Michael Harrold, 61, a copy editor in Beijing, told Reuters at Beijing Capital International Airport on Sunday after he arrived on a flight from Warsaw.

Harrold said he had been anticipating having to quarantine and do several rounds of testing on his return when he left for Europe for a Christmas break in early December.

State broadcaster CCTV reported on Sunday that direct flights from South Korea to China were close to sold out.

However, a spike in demand will be hampered by the limited number of flights to and from China, which are currently at a small fraction of pre-Covid levels.

Korean Air said earlier this month that it was halting a plan to increase flights to China due to Seoul’s cautious stance towards Chinese travellers. South Korea, like many other countries, now requires travellers from China, Macau and Hong Kong to provide negative Covid test results before departure.

Flight Master data showed that on Sunday, China had a total of 245 international flights, combining inbound and outbound, compared with 2,546 flights on the same day in 2019, representing a fall of 91%.

China's domestic tourism revenue in 2023 is expected to recover to 70-75% of pre-Covid levels, but the number of inbound and outbound trips is forecast to hit just 30-40% of pre-Covid levels this year, China News reported on Sunday.

*Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report*

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## [Amazon](#)

# ‘Lack of respect’: outcry over Amazon employee’s death on warehouse floor

Work carried on as usual in the facility as workers were not informed of colleague’s death even as the body lay on the floor



Demonstrators hold a banner during a protest against Amazon in New York in December 2019. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

[\*Michael Sainato\*](#)

Mon 9 Jan 2023 03.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.21 EST

On the morning of 27 December 2022 at the Amazon DEN4 warehouse in Colorado Springs, Colorado, 61-year-old Rick Jacobs [died](#) on the job after experiencing a cardiac event, right before a shift change. What happened next has angered his former colleagues.

Witnesses say a makeshift barrier around the deceased worker using large cardboard bins was used to block off the area on the outbound shipping dock where the incident occurred, and workers criticized the response and lack of transparency about the incident. [Amazon](#) denied boxes were used to cordon off the area, but said managers stood around to make sure no one came near for privacy and security.

As workers arrived for their day shift, they say they were not notified about what was going on and continued working as usual while a deceased colleague remained in the facility and emergency responders awaited the arrival of a coroner.

“Finding out what had happened after walking through there had made me feel very uncomfortable, as there is a blatant disregard of human emotions at this facility. Management could have released those employees affected by offering [voluntary time off], so that they did not need to use their own time, but nope, that did not happen,” said an Amazon employee at the warehouse who works the day shift. They requested to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation.

“No one should have been told to work alongside a dead body, particularly after witnessing it. Day shift comes in at 7am or 7.30am, and we were never informed until we arrived to where it had occurred. No warnings before walking into the building. No on-site counselor. Simply a flyer put out days later informing us of how to receive mental health counseling.”

In a phone call, an Amazon spokesperson said Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) laws and privacy concerns for the family of the deceased meant the company was not able to disclose details about the individual or the incident. They disputed claims that anyone was working near the body or that boxes were used to cordon off the area. They declined to comment on the record citing privacy and respect for the deceased.

Amazon did not follow up with a comment in regards to what, if any, protocols the company has for these incidents or what resources were provided to workers immediately after the event or subsequently.



Another worker at the Amazon warehouse said that when they arrived to work that morning there were police and fire trucks at the warehouse, but no explanation as to why. Later, she found out from colleagues that a worker had died on the previous shift.

“Instantly I was pissed that we’re all business as usual and there’s a human being lying dead in the outbound area and I have to hear about it in the break room,” said the worker, who also requested to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation. “Why is it that we are still working as usual when someone is dead downstairs? I was angry that they think that our lives don’t matter, that they’re going to sweep me out of the way to get a package out.”

Workers criticized the lack of transparency and the response from management, as they weren’t provided any information until a week after the incident, and the lack of standard operating procedures for incidents such as these, given other worker deaths have occurred at Amazon warehouses before.

A week after the incident, the worker said management finally addressed it at a standup meeting on 4 January. They left feeling dissatisfied with the explanation and lack of responsibility taken from management.

“What gets me is the lack of respect for human life. We shut down for maintenance. Do you think we could not have had a little respect and shut down long enough to at least get the body out of the facility and clean up after him before people are milling around like nothing’s happening?” the worker said.

“It’s not the first death at an Amazon facility. Amazon is a huge corporation. There should be protocols. It doesn’t matter if this is the first death or the 10th death. There should be protocols on how you handle that. Maybe while the investigation is going on, you don’t let the day shift in, you postpone it until at least until the body’s gone.”

Numerous worker deaths have been reported at Amazon in recent years, including [three deaths](#) in New Jersey and [one](#) in Pennsylvania over summer 2022. Amazon has faced intense scrutiny over working conditions due to

the company's [high injury rates](#), [mishandled human resource errors](#) and [high employee turnover](#).

Another worker at DEN4 said they were supposed to work the day after the incident, but used their personal time off after hearing about what happened from other workers.

“I refused to work due to circumstances and out of respect for the gentleman that had passed,” the worker said. “It wasn’t handled fairly at all.”

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## [Harvey Weinstein](#)

# Harvey Weinstein's sentencing on Los Angeles rape conviction delayed

Ex-film mogul faces up to 18 additional years in prison after being convicted of forcibly raping a woman in California



Harvey Weinstein appears in court in Los Angeles in October. Photograph: Étienne Laurent/AFP/Getty Images

[Lois Beckett](#) in Los Angeles

[@loisbeckett](#)

Mon 9 Jan 2023 14.46 ESTFirst published on Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.00 EST

Harvey Weinstein's sentencing on his second rape and sexual assault conviction in Los Angeles has been delayed until February, as his lawyers ask for a new trial.

Winstein, 70, faces up to 18 additional years in prison after being convicted of forcibly raping a woman in California in 2013. He is already serving a

23-year prison sentence after being convicted of rape and sexual assault charges in New York in 2020.

Los Angeles superior court judge Lisa Lench said at a brief hearing on Monday morning that she expects Weinstein will be sentenced on 23 February, should the motion for a new trial be denied.

The disgraced film producer, who appeared in court on Monday in a jail uniform, has been publicly accused of rape, sexual assault or sexual harassment by more than 90 women in incidents stretching back decades, a public reckoning that galvanized the #MeToo movement in 2018.

Weinstein pleaded not guilty to all charges in both of his criminal trials, and has denied ever engaging in non-consensual sex.

After nearly three years of incarceration in New York during the Covid-19 pandemic, the former film producer faced a second criminal trial in Los Angeles, the city where he was once a Hollywood kingmaker, in October 2022. He [was convicted](#) in December on three counts of rape and sexual assault against a European model and actor who testified anonymously as “Jane Doe 1”.

Four women testified in the Los Angeles case that Weinstein had raped or sexually assaulted them in California, but after a month-long trial, Weinstein was only convicted of charges based on the one woman’s allegations. Jurors acquitted Weinstein of charges based on another woman’s account and were unable to reach a verdict on two other women’s allegations, including those of the film-maker Jennifer Siebel Newsom, the wife of California’s governor and the most high profile accuser yet to testify against Weinstein in court.

Only Jane Doe 1 is expected to give a victim impact statement ahead of Weinstein’s sentencing.

The disgraced mogul now faces up to 18 additional years in prison. He avoided a sentence of up to 24 years after the Los Angeles jury failed to

reach a consensus on whether Weinstein qualified for additional prison time based on exacerbating factors of the case.

Because Weinstein is appealing his New York conviction, and the state's highest court has agreed to hear the case, some of the dozens of women who have spoken out against him said his sentencing in Los Angeles was critical. The California conviction will ensure Weinstein stays in prison, even if, like Bill Cosby, his earlier high-profile conviction is overturned.

While the Los Angeles trial further cemented the Hollywood power broker's downfall, it was also defined by aggressive defense tactics that saw Weinstein's lawyers attack the credibility of his accusers, including [labeling Siebel Newsom](#) a "bimbo". Legal observers said the blatant misogyny of the defense was striking and seemed like a flashback to the tactics of the 1980s.

After weeks of graphic, emotional testimony from four women who accused Weinstein of raping or assaulting them in hotels around Los Angeles, as well as testimony from four additional women who testified to a similar pattern of alleged rapes and sexual assaults in other cities across the world, the Los Angeles jury remained divided on several of the criminal charges Weinstein faced.

Prosecutors in Los Angeles have not yet decided whether to retry Weinstein on the mistrial counts.

"Throughout the trial, Weinstein's lawyers used sexism, misogyny, and bullying tactics to intimidate, demean, and ridicule us survivors," Siebel Newsom said in a statement after the verdict. "This trial was a stark reminder that we as a society have work to do."

*The Associated Press contributed reporting*

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## Suez canal

# Ukraine grain ship refloated after running aground in Suez canal

Egyptian authority says vessel was towed away for repairs after briefly disrupting traffic in vital waterway

- Read more: [‘A race against time’: how shipwrecks hold clues to humanity’s future](#)



The M/V Glory ran aground on Monday while joining a southbound convoy. Photograph: Oleksandr Gimanolv/AFP/Getty

*Agence France-Presse in Ismailia*

Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.33 ESTLast modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 07.06 EST

A cargo vessel carrying Ukrainian grain briefly ran aground in the [Suez canal](#) before being refloated and towed away, according to the Egyptian authority running the vital waterway.

The incident involving the 225-metre Marshall Islands-registered M/V Glory had sparked fears of a repeat of a [blockage in 2021](#), when the large container ship Ever Given became diagonally wedged in the canal.

That week-long closure of the human-made waterway linking Asia and Europe cost billions of dollars through shipping delays. An employee of the Suez Canal Authority (SCA) died while attempting to free the mega-ship.

The SCA chief, Osama Rabie, gave the all-clear on Monday, adding that traffic was moving normally on the Suez canal after the authority had mobilised four tugboats to tow the ship, allowing it to resume its journey.

“The canal is on track to register 51 vessels passing in both directions on Monday,” he said.

Smooth traffic through the canal is crucial for [Egypt](#), which has been battered by an economic crisis during which its currency has lost 75% of its value in less than a year.

The waterway, used for about 10% of the world’s maritime trade, is one of the country’s main sources of foreign currency revenue, bringing in more than \$7bn a year.

The Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, approved a project last year to widen and deepen the southern section of the canal where the Ever Given got stuck.

The ship became wedged across the waterway when visibility was sharply reduced during a sandstorm, disrupting trade flows for nearly a week.

According to the SCA, Egypt lost \$12m-\$15m every day of the closure, while insurers estimated that global maritime trade lost billions in revenue daily.

Fears of a similarly costly blockage were triggered by Monday’s incident.

The Glory was passing through the canal on its route from Turkey to China when it experienced a technical failure, according to the SCA.



The ship was carrying a shipment of corn from [Ukraine](#), according to the Black Sea grain initiative, an agreement involving Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the UN.

The blockage was first reported on Twitter by the Norwegian company Leth, a shipping agency for many vessels in the Suez canal.

“M/V Glory grounded while joining a southbound convoy near to al-Qantara,” it tweeted. “Suez Canal Authority tugs are trying to refloat the vessel.”

Leth later reported that the ship had been refloated and 21 southbound vessels would commence or resume their transits with only minor delays expected.

In September, a brief blockage involving the oil tanker Affinity V was caused by technical damage to the rudder, according to the authorities.

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## Global development

# Hopes rise for press freedom in Tanzania as number of censured journalists falls

Media council reports progress under progressive stance of President Suluhu following years of repression by former regime



News on the street in Tanzania's capital Dar es Salaam, where journalists are demanding an end to violations of press freedom. Photograph: Ericky Boniphace/AFP/Getty Images

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[Caroline Kimeu](#) in Dar es Salaam

Mon 9 Jan 2023 04.35 EST Last modified on Mon 9 Jan 2023 05.49 EST

The number of journalists being censured for their work in [Tanzania](#) has fallen slightly, raising hopes that press freedom is improving in the country.

Last year, 17 “press violations”, which include threats, arrests, denial of access to information and equipment seizures, were reported in the east African nation, the Media Council of Tanzania told the Guardian. This compares with 25 in 2021 and 41 in 2020.

The country’s previous president John Magufuli, who [died in March 2021](#), was considered [“hostile” to the media](#). During his term, Tanzania tumbled down the world press freedom index, from 71 in 2016 to [124 in 2021](#), out of 180 countries. The new president, Samia Suluhu, has adopted a more progressive stance. In her first month in office, [she announced](#) she did not want Tanzania to continue being infamous for violations of press freedom, and instructed the minister of information to lift some media bans imposed during Magufuli’s tenure.

Four newspapers known for being critical of the government and “offering alternative views” had their licences reinstated after [years-long](#) bans.

“We are going through interesting times,” said Kajubi Mukajanga, head of Tanzania’s media council, describing the state of press freedom in Tanzania as one of both “hope” and “distress”. State actors [commit](#) most press freedom violations in sub-Saharan Africa and the new administration’s stance is significant, he said.

The ministry of information is re-engaging after years of chilly relations, he added, but journalists still routinely face difficulties and excessive scrutiny.

A Zanzibar journalist was apprehended by authorities in June last year on suspicion of making a video in which someone from the ruling party criticised the Tanzanian island’s president, Hussein Ali Mwinyi. He was interrogated, without being informed of the reasons for his arrest, and is required to report to a police station each month.

In May, authorities ordered journalists to submit their CVs, parents’ and spouses’ details, and tribal identities to receive licences to practise. Authorities [fine outlets or suspend](#) media licences on a whim. The government is a key media advertiser – [40 to 80%](#) of outlets’ income comes from state advertising – which can lead to self-censorship.

The journalist Thobias Mwanakatwe said he faced challenges covering the [state evictions](#) of Maasai pastoralists from their ancestral land, which [unfolded](#) throughout 2022. He and other journalists from independent media outlets were barred from covering the evictions and were [interrogated by guards](#) of the state-run Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority. State outlets were given full access.

“There’s more media freedom now but where the government doesn’t want certain issues to be known about, you will face challenges. You have to be smart about how you report,” said Mwanakatwe.

Between 2019 and 2021, three out of five journalists experienced some form of infringement, according to the media council. Stories critical of the

government, giving visibility to the opposition, or on human rights issues generated the most pushback.

International reporters face difficulties accessing permits. Ruud Elmendorp, a Dutch journalist, found himself on an immigration blacklist a year after doing a 2020 series of satirical vlogs, aired on a US news channel, on the lack of Covid restrictions in Tanzania.

Elmendorp had been stranded in Tanzania after Covid prompted border closures, and says he tried multiple times to get a reporting permit while there, but received no response. After finally managing to leave then trying to return, Elmendorp says border officials told him they didn't know the reason for the ban, and he believes the ban was due to his work.

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“I was carrying a visa but my name was blocked in the system,” said Elmendorp. “That was a red flag.”

Tanzanian law sustains the repressive media environment, giving the government significant power, with high penalties for defamation and sedition. The regulations were found not to meet basic democratic principles in a [ruling](#) by the east African court of justice in 2019.

Absalom Kibanda, a former chair of the Tanzania Editors Forum, said journalism is “at the weakest in the country’s history”.

“People stopped buying newspapers,” said Kibanda. “They knew that the laws limited journalists from writing freely, so they became irrelevant.”

Media leaders believe the country may now have taken a step in the right direction, but Mukajanga said: “So far, the laws haven’t been changed. All this change is based only on the goodwill of the president, so we are insisting that this should be rooted in law.”

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## Headlines thursday 12 january 2023

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## Metropolitan police

# Met police chief: it's crazy I can't sack 'toxic' officers who broke the law

Mark Rowley admits vetting procedures inadequate and says other bodies reinstated officers sacked by force



Police officers on patrol in London. Photograph: Marcin Rogozinski/Alamy

[Matthew Weaver](#)

Thu 12 Jan 2023 04.02 EST Last modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 05.52 EST

The head of the UK's biggest police force has said it is "crazy" that he cannot sack "toxic" officers who have broken the law.

Responding to a disclosure in the Guardian that [150 officers are under investigation](#) over allegations of sexual misconduct or racism, the Metropolitan police commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, admitted that the force's vetting procedures were inadequate.

Challenged about the figures, Rowley said: “We have some very worrying cases with officers who’ve committed criminality whilst police officers and yet I’m not allowed to sack them. It’s sort of, it’s crazy.”

Speaking to Radio 4’s Today programme about the 150 cases he added: “The investigation needs to take place – not all of those cases will have a case to answer, but many of them will.”

He added: “We’ve got some officers who we sacked, but other legal bodies, who have a power to reinstate them, did. So I’ve got officers who we determined shouldn’t be police officers and yet I have to keep them. It sounds bizarre – I’m the commissioner, yet I can’t decide who my own workforce is.”



Metropolitan police commissioner, Mark Rowley: ‘I’m the commissioner, yet I can’t decide who my own workforce is.’ Photograph: Kirsty O’Connor/PA

Rowley said he had the backing of the government to rapidly change the police recruitment system. “The home secretary and the prime minister have been very helpful in ordering a review that I hope will change the rules to make it easy to move the toxic people.”

Campaigners have questioned how rogue officers were recruited. Rowley said: “There were cases where there were warning signs and our vetting wasn’t good enough. That’s why we’re beefing that up.”

Rowley also expressed alarm about falling levels of police pay that were forcing some officers to rely on food banks.

He said: “I’m concerned about the cumulative effect of challenging pay over many, many years. Frontline officers have lost about 14% in real terms over over a decade.”

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He added: “They have no desire to strike; it’s not allowed but they are frustrated. I’ve seen data about police officers using using food banks, which is really concerning.”

Rowley also said he wanted more flexibility on the type of people who were recruited to policing.

He said: “There will be people out there who have got really specialist skills who would make a great detective in the fraud or cyber world, that probably wouldn’t be great at confronting a drunk on a Friday night. At the moment, all of our officers have to have the same core set of skills and I will need some flexibility about that.”

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## [Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

# Teaching union fails to meet vote threshold for strike despite ‘overwhelming’ support – as it happened

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## [European Union](#)

# Support for leaving EU has fallen significantly across bloc since Brexit

People less likely to vote leave in every EU member state for which data was available than in 2016-17, survey finds



Helsinki, in Finland, where the proportion of people who said they would vote leave has fallen by 13.2 percentage points since 2016-17.<sup>e</sup> Photograph: Nonglak Bunkoet/Legrand/Alamy

[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*  
[@jonhenley](#)

Thu 12 Jan 2023 06.35 EST First published on Thu 12 Jan 2023 04.22 EST

Support for leaving the EU has dropped significantly, and sometimes dramatically, in member states across the bloc in the wake of the UK's Brexit referendum, according to data from a major pan-European survey.

The [European Social Survey \(ESS\)](#), led by City, University of London and conducted in 30 European nations every two years since 2001, found respondents were less likely to vote leave in every EU member state for which data was available.

The largest decline in leave support was in Finland, where 28.6% of respondents who declared which way they would vote in a Brexit-style referendum answered leave in 2016-2017, against only 15.4% in 2020-2022.

Similarly stark falls between 2016 and 2022 were recorded in the Netherlands (from 23% to 13.5%), Portugal (15.7% to 6.6%), Austria (26% to 16.1%) and France (24.3% to 16%), with smaller but still statistically significant falls in Hungary (16% to 10.2%), Spain (9.3% to 4.7%) Sweden (23.9% to 19.3%), and Germany (13.6% to 11%).

Support for leave in the survey's most recent round was highest in the Czech Republic (29.2%), Italy (20.1%) and Sweden (19.3%), but even in those countries it had declined by 4.5 percentage points, 9.1 points and 4.6 points respectively since 2016-2017, the survey showed. Leave was least popular in Spain (4.7%).

The period covers Britain's long and fraught negotiations to leave the EU, but also the country's ensuing political turmoil – five prime ministers in six years – and its current social and economic woes, all of which have been heavily reported on the continent and are widely interpreted as being caused at least partly by Brexit.

### [Graph](#)

They also coincide with the Covid pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which experts suggest have prompted many EU citizens to view membership more favourably, and decisions by many anti-EU parties, including in France and Italy, to abandon Frexit or Italexit policies in favour of reforming the EU from within.



Mathieu Gallard, research director of the leading French polling firm Ipsos, which regularly conducts surveys of European opinion, said the ESS numbers reflected a “veritable collapse” in support for leaving the EU in several countries.

Gallard said the fall in support for a leave vote most likely stemmed from “a cumulative effect combining the EU’s attitude towards the various crises of recent years, the radical right’s moderation on the subject [of leaving the EU], and the many vicissitudes of Brexit”.

The ESS survey also found that respondents’ emotional attachment to Europe had increased between 2016 and 2022 in most member states. Asked to rate how attached they felt to the bloc on a scale of zero to 10, 54.9% of Portuguese respondents gave responses between seven and 10 in 2020-2022, against 41.5% in 2016-2017.

Strong emotional attachment to Europe in Finland rose to 58.7% from 46% over the period, while in Hungary – engaged in an increasingly bitter rule-of-law dispute with Brussels – it increased from 60% to 70.3%. In Italy the corresponding figures were 37.2% and 44.3%, and in France 44% and 48.8%. Germany and Spain were stable.

A [Pew Research Center survey](#) of 10 EU member states conducted in spring last year also found large majorities in nearly every country surveyed held a broadly favourable opinion of the bloc, with a median of 72% viewing it in a favourable light compared with 26% who had a broadly unfavourable opinion.

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The ESS data also showed that support for staying in the EU – again excluding those who said they could not or would not vote, did not know which way they would vote, or would not cast a complete or valid ballot – increased in every member state for which comparable data was available, with remain support in 2020-2022 ranging from a low of 70.8% in the Czech Republic to a high of 95.3% in Spain.

The ESS survey is normally conducted through face-to-face interviews, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, respondents in six countries – including Austria, Germany, Poland, Sweden and Spain – were asked to complete questionnaires themselves in 2020-2022.

In those countries, the percentage of respondents who said they would not cast a vote was generally higher. Tim Hanson, a senior ESS research fellow, said this was most likely because the questionnaire presented them with that option, whereas interviewers asked people to choose between leave and remain.

The overall effect was to depress the “remain” vote in the “self-complete” countries rather than to increase the “leave” vote, Hanson said. Nonetheless, the difference in survey method meant excluding “no votes” provided a more reliable comparison between the two survey rounds.

*Additional reporting by Pamela Duncan*

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## China

# Chinese warned not to visit elderly relatives as Covid spreads from cities

People urged ‘don’t go home’ during lunar new year holiday if older family members not yet infected



People wait for trains at Guangzhou South station in Guangdong province as they head to their home towns for lunar new year. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[\*Helen Davidson\*](#) in Taipei  
[@heldavidson](#)

Thu 12 Jan 2023 04.04 ESTLast modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 05.52 EST

People in [China](#) have been warned against travelling to visit their elderly relatives during the lunar new year holiday, as Covid spreads rapidly through cities and into regional and poorer areas.

Prof Guo Jianwen, a member of the state council's pandemic prevention team, urged people "don't go home to visit them" if elderly relatives had not yet been infected.

"You have all kinds of ways to show you care for them, you don't necessarily have to bring the virus to their home," Guo said on Thursday.

The holiday period, which begins on 21 January, was supposed to be [a return to festivities and travel](#) after the lifting of most restrictions in December, but instead it is coinciding with a wave of infections.

Health authorities said this week the peak of infections had passed in several big provinces and cities including Beijing and Shanghai. But there are serious concerns for regional areas where health resources are more limited and older people are more likely to be unvaccinated.

"The situation in rural China is very murky," said Dr Chen Xi, an assistant professor specialising in ageing and public health at Yale University. "We have strong reasons to believe rural China will get much worse as the spring festival approaches."

The Guardian has heard reports from people in rural areas across China of mass infections, deaths, and healthcare woes, including areas where authorities say infections are yet to peak. One woman in Shandong said her parents had not been vaccinated because they did not trust Chinese vaccines, and now feared going outside as the virus spread through their village. Villagers in Guangdong province reported shortages of medication and oxygen supplies. In Shaanxi a musician who played at funerals reported being busier than ever, while a woman returning to her small Hunan village decried at least six new customary funeral sheds – temporary structures built for people to mourn an individual.

One person in Henan said last week that their father was a rural doctor who was "busy from morning until night", adding: "There are quite a lot of people with fever in the village, several households have them, but it is hard to get fever-reducing medicines."



Passengers wait for their train at Hongqiao railway station in Shanghai.  
Photograph: Héctor Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

As well as urging people not to travel, regional authorities have been ordered to ensure the supply of pandemic materials, including at least two weeks' worth of medication. The Global Times also said communities were advised to arrange village teams of drivers to transport patients “when ambulances from medical institutions cannot arrive in time”.

China's outbreak has probably been worsened by the low vaccination rates among elderly people and the more limited health resources outside top-tier cities. Online community groups have crowdsourced over-the-counter medication for hard-hit villages. [Protracted government negotiations](#) with pharmaceutical companies have also made it difficult for people to get antiviral medications.

“It's been a total mess,” [a doctor in Anhui province told Agence France-Presse](#) after a wave of infections hit in December. “Things were better when the government kept us all locked down.”

Dr James Wood, a professor of infectious disease dynamics and interventions at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, said the



virus was spreading quickly and he expected no more than two to four weeks between peaks in major cities and “the most remote locations”.

“China is a vast country but it is still highly connected and once significant numbers of cases occurred in the major centres that would have quickly have seeded infections in all smaller cities and towns,” he said.

Health experts have criticised China’s management of the virus after [abruptly ending its zero-Covid policy](#) last month, saying it did not appear to have prepared for the expected increase in cases. Hospitals and crematoriums in big cities were quickly overwhelmed, with widespread reports of staff and medication shortages.

Officially, fewer than 40 people have died of Covid in the last month, but external analysis suggests the true figure is far higher, with predictions of as many as 1 million deaths by the end of the year.

The disconnection between the government’s claims and the reality on the ground has caused frustration and confusion. In response to Guo’s advice to stay home for the holidays, one popular response on social media said: “To be honest, it is one of the few useful suggestions put forward during this period.”

“Do you know how many elderly people around you have been taken away by the coronavirus?” said another. “Don’t you think it’s too late to say this now?”

The Chinese government stopped publishing most infection data since the sharp rise began, and holds an extremely limited definition of Covid-related deaths, counting it only if the patient died of respiratory failure.

The World Health Organization last week criticised the new definition as too narrow and underrepresenting the true impact of the outbreak. But Chinese authorities responded that it was not necessary to attribute every death.

“The key task during the pandemic should be treatment,” a senior government health official, Liang Wannian, said on Wednesday.

Despite global and domestic criticism, Beijing's propaganda machine is pushing a narrative of success against the virus.

“Contrary to speculation by some western media and politicians who labelled the recent policy shift as ‘a U-turn’, the latest optimisation was a result of China’s scientific assessment of the current pandemic and based on prudent planning, as well as a timely response to the yearnings of the people,” the official news outlet Xinhua said on Thursday.

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## 2023.01.12 - Spotlight

- Svante Pääbo 'It's maybe time to rethink our idea of Neanderthals'
- 'I was alone. Abandoned. With only a hundred million in the bank' Spare, digested by John Crace
- 'If you win the popular imagination, you change the game' Why we need new stories on climate
- Energy House 2.0 The new-build 'homes' where energy scientists play God with the weather

## [Genetics](#)

### [Interview](#)

# **Svante Pääbo: ‘It’s maybe time to rethink our idea of Neanderthals’**

[Kate Connolly](#) in Leipzig

The Swedish geneticist on winning the Nobel prize, his laureate father and early man’s sensitive side



Svante Pääbo says becoming a Nobel laureate has been ‘a burden ... but a pleasant burden’. Photograph: Jens Schlueter/Getty Images



Thu 12 Jan 2023 00.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 07.14 EST

A greyish neanderthal skeleton stands at the door of Svante Pääbo's office, acting like a doorman to check up on his visitors, who have grown considerably in number since it was announced he was to receive a Nobel prize. It clutches a white party balloon in its left hand and is missing its right lower arm.

"Unfortunately my son broke it off once," says Pääbo with a chuckle, patting the skeleton's head.

On the day the Guardian visits, the Swedish geneticist is still reeling from the shock of having been chosen as Nobel laureate for Medicine or physiology (the prize straddles both fields) in October. A bottle of champagne stands on his desk along with messages of congratulations from friends and colleagues. Over coffee and shortbread in a rare interview, he admits: "It's a bit of a burden, to be honest, all the attention I've been getting. But it's a pleasant burden, and one for which I know I can't expect much sympathy."



Svante Pääbo with the neanderthal skeleton in his office. Photograph: Kate Connolly/The Guardian

At the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in the eastern German city of Leipzig, founded by the Swedish scientist 25 years ago, where he has installed a climbing wall in the foyer and a sauna on the roof, his co-workers did their best to stop the award from going to his head.

“They gave me champagne and then they threw me in the pond outside – it’s something of a tradition here – it was rather cold, but they were very nice and removed my glasses and took my phone away beforehand.”

To be fair to them, he says, “they were in a euphoric mood. This is as much their prize as mine and is really the first time something in our field has ever been awarded a Nobel prize.”

Pääbo is credited with rewriting the story of humanity by accomplishing what was once deemed impossible – sequencing the genome of the Neanderthal through the extraction of ancient DNA. He spawned the scientific field of paleogenetics, and has revolutionised our understanding of the past with his discovery of a previously unknown hominin (the term refers to modern and extinct humans, as well as our immediate ancestors),

Denisova, and establishing that gene transfer between Neanderthals and Homo sapiens had taken place about 70,000 years ago.

One of the first of many surprises in his research was to find out that the genetic differences between Neanderthals and all modern humans (amounting to about 30,000) are far less than the differences between two random human beings alive today – around 3 million. “Our job is to find out which of those 30,000 are most important, because they tell us what makes us uniquely human,” he says.

At least half of the Neanderthal genome – probably as much as 60 to 70% of it, Pääbo believes – is to be found in living humans. “Which means that in effect Neanderthals are not really extinct at all, they are in us.”

His obsession started as something of a hobby, Pääbo explains. “As a kid I’d wanted to be an archaeologist, and Egyptologist. I made secret private excavations in the forests in [Sweden](#) where I lived.” A trip to Egypt with his mother, who had a huge influence on his life, proved crucial. But when he started studying Egyptology he realised he had a “far too romantic idea of it”. So he switched to medicine and later did a PhD in molecular biology.

“I realised there were methods emerging whereby you could take DNA from an organism, multiply the bacteria and study it. It seemed to me not so far away from being able to do this with Egyptian mummies.”

He secretly started experiments at weekends, scared to share what he thought might be considered rather loony ambitions with his thesis adviser, but who, when Pääbo came up with results, ended up being very encouraging.

“It turned out it was possible to extract DNA from ancient samples, but they were massively contaminated, including with microorganisms and other sources of DNA.” So he turned his efforts to developing more sophisticated extraction methods, leading after years of trial and error, to being able to tease the DNA out of Neanderthals, Denisovans and other hominins.

Behind the scientific success story is also one of considerable personal challenge. “My father had two families and we were the undisclosed one,

the other was the official one. My father would show up on Saturdays, have coffee or lunch with me and my mum and then disappear again.”

His mother, Karin, who died in 2013, would have been “proud and thrilled” about his prize, he says. She came to Sweden from Estonia in 1944, escaping the Soviet invasion, and overcame linguistic and financial barriers to become a chemist.

The fact that his father, Sune Bergström, a biochemist, was himself awarded the Nobel prize (also for physiology or medicine) in 1982 for his work on prostaglandins, had little influence on Pääbo’s own scientific path he says. “Only to the extent that my mother met him through her work. It was rather *her* great fascination with science that was transmitted to me. She hugely encouraged my curiosity and supported me when I changed from medicine to natural sciences. She was by far the greater influence.”

When his father received the award in Stockholm, he was a graduate student in Uppsala and followed the ceremony on television.

“I had a different surname to him and only very few people even knew we were related,” he says. It wasn’t so much having to keep his famous father secret from his colleagues that was painful to him, “rather that his other, ‘official’ son knew nothing about us. We had several intense rows about it. I even threatened to seek out his family and explain it to them. So my father said he would tell them, but it never came to that,” he recalls.

In 2014 he [told the Observer](#) his father’s other family found out when Bergström died in 2005. “It was only then my half-brother learned about me. Fortunately he adjusted and we get on all right,” Pääbo said.

Pääbo says the strongest force guiding him is his own curiosity, comparing his research to that of an archaeologist, “only that our excavations are in genomes.”

The information he and his team has retrieved gives us a whole new reference point for understanding our evolution, which potentially has a multitude of benefits “including enabling a greater understanding as to what

makes us uniquely human and how evolution influences our biology today,” he says.

It was a shock, Pääbo stresses, to discover that people who have inherited a certain Neanderthal chromosome variant, were twice as likely to die of Covid if infected.

“Based on the official coronavirus mortality statistics and the prevalence of the risk variant, we can estimate that this Neanderthal variant is responsible for 1.1 million extra coronavirus deaths,” he says. The variant is most commonly found in southern Asia.

Another surprising discovery relates to pain perception. Using data from the UK’s biobank – the world’s largest biomedical database which contains the genetic information of around half a million of the country’s citizens – Pääbo was able to establish that people with a specific Neanderthal variant are more likely to feel pain and to therefore age quicker. “It’s maybe time to rethink our idea of Neanderthals as brutish individuals,” Pääbo quips. “Maybe they were actually quite sensitive.”

Other extensive research projects involve everything from HIV susceptibility to progesterone receptors and their influence on pre-term babies and miscarriages. Here, possessing a Neanderthal variant has been shown to protect against miscarriage.

“Today in the public domain there are three high quality Neanderthal genomes, and I can tell you that there are more on the way,” the 67-year-old says, adding he has, for now, shelved his plans for retirement.



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**‘I was alone. Abandoned. With only a hundred million in the bank’ – Spare, digested by John Crace**



Illustration: Ben Jennings/The Guardian

Prince Harry's memoir is the UK's fastest-selling nonfiction book ever. Too busy to read it? All the love, rancour, drugs and petty fights are here



[John Crace](#)

[@JohnJCrace](#)

Thu 12 Jan 2023 01.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 11.04 EST

The sentences were short.

Crisp. Like his shirt.

Spare. Propulsive.

See what I did there?

*Italics. Random. Italics. And. Punctuation.*

Why was my heart beating so fast? Was this what Meg really wanted? Why hadn't I brought a coat? Why at Grandpa's funeral? Why so many questions?

Relax, I told myself. I'm in the hands of a pro. One of the world's best ghosts. This is how to appear likable. Credible.

Time to focus. I was waiting. *Waiting. Waiting.* To meet my nemesis. *My brother.* The most important meeting in modern history. Meg always said she admired my humility. If only Willy was so self-aware.

I thought of Mummy. Up there. Somewhere. Of course she would want what I would want. We were as one. *How could Willy and Pa not see that?*

They appeared from round a corner. In lockstep. The game was up. They would never understand me. I was alone. *Abandoned.* With only a couple of houses and a hundred million in the bank.

Cut to another world. A prehistory. One where Mummy was alive and Willy and I played on jet skis in the Med and the sentences were longer. Then Balmoral. My darling boy, Pa said. Your mother ... I couldn't cry. I looked at the paparazzi. And gave them what they wanted. *Emotion. Drama. Pain.*

Life resumed. As normal as it could be. I was the [Spare](#). A nullity. *A piece of the furniture to be moved around.* Pa did his best. I suppose. He wasn't really cut out for parenthood. More interested in his teddy. And Shakespeare and Nelson Mandela. *To be or not to be. Not to be.* Willy and I begged him not to marry Camilla. *Be with her, if you must. Just don't marry her.* Camilla just nodded and phoned the press. Playing the long game. I was just a commodity.

In 1998 I went to Eton. I was outmatched. The teachers said I was thick. That was because they just asked the wrong questions. Willy ignored me. I begged him to help me. He just said I was too needy and should see a shrink. I said that I didn't understand my lessons. That they felt like people were speaking in foreign languages. *That's your French class, Harold.* I started smoking dope. *Anything to numb the pain of reading this book.*



'I was the Spare. A nullity. *A piece of the furniture to be moved around*' ... Prince Harry's autobiography went on sale on 10 January. Photograph: Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

Africa was where I felt most alive. Lesotho. Botswana. Out in the bush. Looking at the stars. Kissing Chelsy. *No paps. No Pa.* One night out in the Okavango a leopard entered the compound. The others were terrified. I embraced it. *Hello Mummy, I said. I knew you were waiting for me.* The leopard hugged me and left. I felt a connection to something ancient. I must have Africa for my good works. *You can't, Harold. Africa is mine. I'm the Heir. You can have Australia.* Off you go.

Back home the paps and the press were everywhere. Stalking me. Hunting me. The Lies. I came to hate one I called Rehabber Kooks. An anagram. Work it out. May she die unpleasantly. I went to the tunnel where Mummy had died. It was too short. The driver couldn't have crashed, however drunk. It must have been the paps. Or MI5. Not Grandpa. Surely not him.

Pa and Camilla got married. Of course they did. *I was the Spare. So what did my feelings count?* I wanted him to be happy. Sure. But not with her. Camilla flicked me a V-sign. Moments later she lit a cigarette and phoned the tabloids to tell them I'd been doing cocaine and magic mushrooms.

*Yeah? Of course I had. Wouldn't you?* Anything to numb the pain. But try proving it.

It was time to move on. And not just girlfriends. But what to do? Not easy when you're the Spare. I asked Granny for a house and she found me a flat in Kensington Palace. *A shit-hole. Then what did you expect?* My family have always been tight. Pa told me not to complain as he leaked another story about me. University was out, dear boy. The army it was. Shame I'd already won all the medals.

*Losing, losing, losing.* Lost. Exposed. Naked. No, wait. That came a bit later when I got pissed in Las Vegas. *Falling, falling, falling.* Into a Nazi uniform. Willy said it would be a laugh. There was plenty of clobber lying around in Gan-Gan's brother-in-law's old room. *Sorry, got to go, Harold. Just got to tip off the press. See you at the party.*

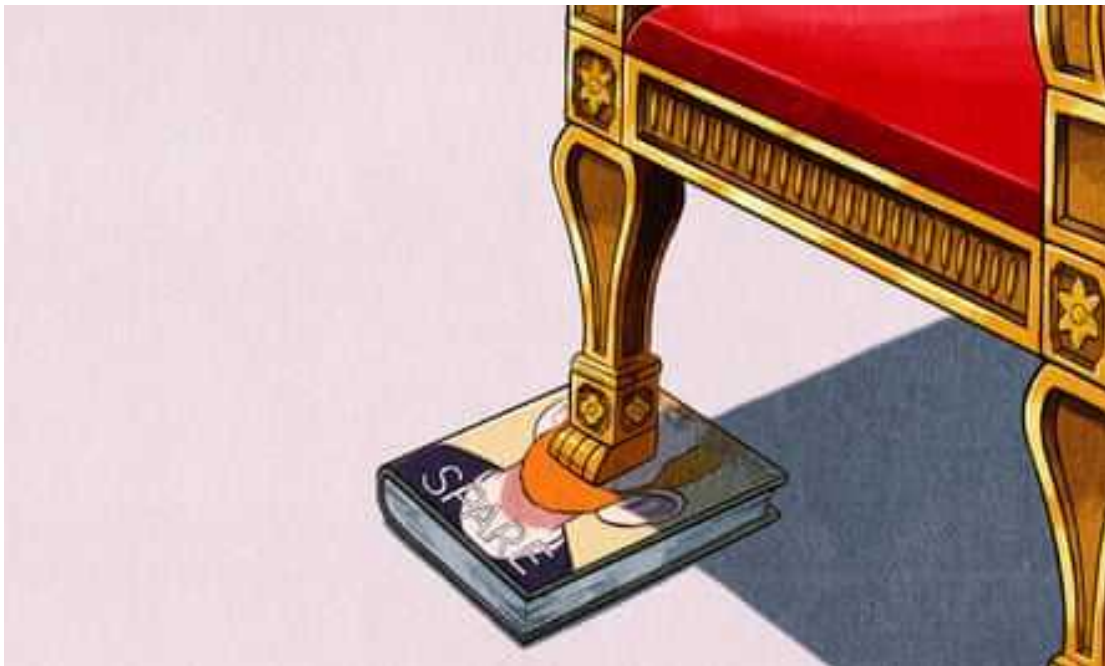


Illustration: Ben Jennings/The Guardian

My basic training was at Sandhurst. A breeze after dealing with the tabloids. They tried to break me. But they couldn't. *You can't break something that's already broken.* Pa visited me once but didn't say much. Willy gave me the cold shoulder. At passing out, Granny told me I could go



awf to Afghanistan as it didn't matter if I died. Willy was the one they cared about.

Afghanistan. Heat. Desert. Taliban. Foreigners. Though I had never really met any. I didn't understand unconscious bias back then. Most of my family still don't. Some men didn't make it back. I guess I was one of the unlucky ones who did. Four years of training to fly Apaches. *So who's thick now, Willy? Suck on that.* Pressing my finger on the trigger of the cannons. *Rebeka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-kah.* Not seeing Taliban. But the paps. Why not? Sure I killed. [Twenty-five was my number](#). It's what I was there for. I have no guilt. Besides I was the real victim.

Back home I drifted. Lost. Spare. Girls came and went. They couldn't stand the pressure. I didn't blame them. Willy got married to Kate. I wished them well. *The vanilla couple. Stuck in a gilded cage.* Mummy would have laughed. He didn't want me as his best man. Couldn't risk the truth. *Granny won't let me use the same dressing-up box as you for the wedding, Harold.* Get over it. You beat me, man. I'm living in a hovel, smoking dope. Shopping at TK Maxx. You get the castle.

Africa. Therapy. The north pole. Antarctica. I tried them all. But even the paps disguised themselves as penguins. Willy was just leaking stories about how shit I was. As was Pa. And Camilla. Then I met Meg and everything changed. I became whole. My stigmata healed. My compassion saturated. You complete me, Meg. You complete me, Haz.

Willy was furious. Hated the fact that Granny let me keep my beard. *You've got to shave it off. I'm the Heir. Do it.* No, we were getting married on my terms. A guaranteed income for being pap fodder, a dukedom and a better house from Granny. It was a fairytale. Almost as if Mummy was alive again. *I love you, Meg. I love you, Haz.*

The family played rough. The keeper of the royal tiaras refused to let Meg have a nice one. Kate complained about the bridesmaid dresses and made Meg cry. They leaked lies to the press. *But we had something inside so strong.* I wasn't going to let them break my wounded butterfly. They weren't going to do to Meg what they had to Mummy.

Soon Meg was pregnant and I was in the hospital at the laughing gas. I could feel Meg's pain. Soon we were three. *Our family. Not theirs.* Even though our house was decorated by Dunelm and theirs was festooned with old masters, still the poisonous leaks continued. There had to be a showdown. Willy came into the kitchen, broke my Hakuna Matata necklace and pushed me on the dog bowl. Meg rushed me to A&E to have the small scratch treated.

I phoned Elton John. Chris Martin came round to play an acoustic set. I talked to my therapist. It was time for my Truth. For too long I'd played to Willy and Pa's tune. *To protect my privacy I was going to have to invade theirs. It would heal them. Kumbaybloodya.* I was the shaman. Reclaiming my identity. Soon we would all be together again. In time, they would appreciate what twats they had been. And how right and how damaged I had been.

Or not. Things moved fast. Granny offered me another house. But she couldn't promise to have the Sun, the Daily Mail, the Times and the Telegraph shut down. Nor could she offer me a round-the-clock armed guard and a choice of whatever gigs I fancied. And Willy still dug his heels in over Africa. *Mummy would have sobbed at history repeating itself.*

Meg and I left for Canada. And then for Montecito. Still the press came for us. Though God knows what we would do if no one bothered us. How would we know that we are alive? Scary. There will be no reconciliation with Willy and Pa. *Not until they say sorry for forcing me to tell my story.* That much I learned from Granny's death. They wouldn't even allow me on the plane to see her before she died. So I had to buy my own. And they denied a 96-year-old woman the closure of saying goodbye to the only man who truly loved her.

I sit in the garden with Meg, Archie and Lili. I hold a hummingbird in my hand. *Is that you, Mummy? Fly away. You're free at last.* Don't go.

**Digested read, digested:** I want my mummy.



*Spare by Prince Harry is published by Bantam (£28). To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply*

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# ‘If you win the popular imagination, you change the game’: why we need new stories on climate

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## Energy efficiency.

# The new-build ‘homes’ where energy scientists play God with the weather

Researchers hope £16m temperature-controlled chamber can stress test green tech to help make houses energy efficient



Detached homes at Energy House 2.0, the research facility at the University of Salford Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian



[Zoe Wood](#)

[@zoewoodguardian](#)

Thu 12 Jan 2023 03.11 ESTFirst published on Thu 12 Jan 2023 01.00 EST

The temperature is almost -6C and despite the snow, workers are frantically putting the finishing touches to a pair of detached houses that look ready to move into. But all is not as it seems in the energy industry equivalent of The Truman Show.

The new builds are nestled inside [Energy House 2.0](#), a £16m temperature-controlled chamber at the University of Salford being unveiled on Thursday. It is hoped the research facility will play an important role in testing the technologies that will make our homes greener and cheaper to run, at a time when households are being crippled by sky-high [energy bills](#).

Inside the chamber, scientists can play God, sending the temperature plummeting to -20C or to the [shock high of 40C](#) experienced for the first time in the UK last summer. They can also batter the houses with gale force winds or, courtesy of a snow machine, manufacture a blizzard to test its energy performance.



Researches can create gale force winds or snow to manufacture a blizzard to test the homes. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Richard Fitton, a professor in building performance at the University of Salford, says the initial research project – a partnership with UK housebuilders [Bellway](#) and [Barratt Developments](#) and the construction product manufacturer Saint-Gobain – would help to answer “difficult questions about how we reach zero carbon target in future housing”.

It comes as the industry gears up for government standards that require a significant [reduction in carbon emissions for new-build homes from 2025](#).

“The facility will help us to stress test these buildings under extreme hot and cold climates to provide data on energy efficiency and overheating in homes,” says Fitton. “The buildings are in there for an initial period of two years but we will keep them for as long as they are useful. It goes against sustainability to knock buildings down.”

The chamber is housed within a “super-insulated” steel frame, plumbed with £6m of heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment. Usually it takes months or years to collect the data needed to evaluate the performance

of a new design or technology, but because researchers can precisely control the environment, they can gather that data in a few weeks.



Energy House 2.0 new research facility at the University of Salford.  
Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Experiments scheduled for the coming months include having people “living” Big Brother-style inside them with access to facilities including flushable loos, showers, broadband and even Sky TV.

“This research will give me the answer to what are the best systems to put in new houses, including what happens when we put people inside ... because that’s when it could all go a little bit off,” adds Fitton.

Unusually, perhaps, the small development features houses built side-by-side by rival builders, with Bellway and Barratt agreeing to share their findings at the end of the year-long project.

The eHome2 is a concept house devised by Barratt and Saint-Gobain. Next door, Bellway’s house, called the Future Home, is a three-bed detached property based on its Coppersmith model.



Radiators are built into the skirting boards of a Barratt test home at Energy House 2.0. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

All UK properties on the market require a certificate outlining the energy performance, from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient). At the moment, the Coppersmith house has a B rating and running costs of £761 a year for heating, hot water, lighting, pumps and fans. By comparison, the Future Home is rated A, with running annual costs reduced to £11 thanks to the solar panels.

Compared with the bitter temperature outside, the Bellway home gives you a warm hug as you step inside, although it feels a bit topsy turvy as ultra-slim infrared radiators are perched on the ceiling rather than the wall and an [air source heat pump](#) has been stowed in the loft in what is a UK first. The windows are triple-glazed and upstairs there is a prototype shower that recovers heat from the wastewater.

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Jamie Bursnell, Bellway's group innovation and technical manager, says it is "treading on new ground here", with the firm trying to "find the balance between lowering carbon emissions and keeping running costs as low as possible".



One of the temperature-controlled chambers that contain the houses. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

The main difference between the two houses is that, while the Bellway house is built from "real" bricks, the Barratt one is a timber frame made of 36cm-thick insulation-filled panels covered in a thin cladding that mimics a brick finish.

The timber-frame house would secure a coveted A rating on an [energy performance certificate](#), and Oliver Novakovic, Barratt's technical and innovation director, says if you wanted to get the same energy efficiency in a traditional build the walls would need to be 55cm thick.



The detached houses withstand a variety of weather conditions, with temperatures ranging between -20C to +40C. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Two competing heating systems are being tested inside: an electric-based system utilising infrared panels, some of which are disguised as ceiling coving, as well as a water-based system that uses heated skirting boards combined with an air source heat pump.

“As we put these really warm coats on to our homes, we don’t need as much energy to heat them,” says Novakovic. “So the big question we’re asking is, do we do it with heat pumps and hot water or with electricity?” Experts will examine how houses can work in tandem with the electric car parked outside, for example storing energy produced by solar panels in the vehicle’s battery.

The university is also home to the original [Energy House project](#), which [built an early 20th-century two-up, two-down terrace house](#) inside an environmental chamber to test retrofit technologies.

Prof Will Swan, the director of [Energy](#) House Labs at the University of Salford, described Energy House 2.0 as a “critical” piece of new research infrastructure.

“The growing challenges of climate change and the cost of living crisis mean we need to consider how we build and operate our homes,” says Swan. “As the cost of gas and electricity keeps going up and up this work is even more important to create a sustainable and economically viable future for this country and the world.”

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## 2023.01.12 - Opinion

- The Tories' anti-strike bill will only lead to even greater industrial upheaval
- Poor Harry: even Americans are getting bored with his tell-all tour
- George Pell's death symbolises the demise of a church out of touch and out of time
- Not a lot of people know that: I can't help dropping juicy facts into conversations

[Opinion](#)**Industrial action**

# The Tories' anti-strike bill will only lead to even greater industrial upheaval

[Martin Kettle](#)



This proposed legislation will do nothing to end the current disputes. Instead, its vagueness will give ministers dangerous new powers



Business secretary Grant Shapps introducing the strikes (minimum service levels) bill in Commons on Tuesday. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Thu 12 Jan 2023 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 11.24 EST

The political goals of the government's new strikes (minimum service levels) [bill](#), unveiled [this week](#) by Grant Shapps, the business secretary, are transparent. The bill picks an entirely avoidable fight with the trade unions. It does so for two main reasons, and neither has much to do with the need to bring the current industrial disputes to either a fair or an early end.

The first reason is to rally a still fractious Tory party more firmly behind the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, through an act of explicitly Thatcherite homage. The second is the hope that the unions will overreact and that Labour – which was 21 points ahead in the polls at the start of 2023 – will be drawn in and damaged by association with an upsurge of militancy, thus slowing Keir Starmer's march towards Downing Street.

The first of these reasons has a greater chance of success than the second. With too few exceptions, most Tory MPs still think of trade unions as enemies within. Too often they believe the 2020s are still the 1980s, that Mick Lynch is today's Arthur Scargill, and that bashing the unions brings

assured electoral rewards. With this bill, Sunak reassures the Tory right that he is their man. He keeps the party together at a time when Boris Johnson is out there teasing it with thoughts of a comeback.

It can't be ruled out that there may be something going for the second reason, too. A majority of public opinion is currently [sympathetic to the striking nurses](#), in particular, and perhaps to other striking workforces too. But the approval is not as solid as optimists pretend. In general, strikes are unpopular, not the reverse, and if the costs and inconveniences drag on, things could begin to turn. The government's short-term problem is that this isn't happening yet, and voters think ministers could sort out the disputes if they tried.

But the new bill is not simply a provocation and a distraction, even though it is both these things. Even with good parliamentary progress, it will unquestionably find itself tested in the courts before key provisions can take effect, just as is happening over deportations to Rwanda. So it does nothing to solve urgent disputes such as this week's ambulance strike. It is not really intended to.

It is nevertheless a dangerous piece of law-making. This is not just because it is another attack on the so-called [right to strike](#). Like many such rights, this one is already heavily circumscribed by law. The bill tightens this further by allowing employers to sack workers who defy a "work notice" by striking. In effect, the new bill compels someone to work.

Yet the larger problem is that the bill is drafted in imprecise and sweeping terms. These would effectively allow ministers to rule industrial relations by decree, and not only in what are currently regarded as essential services. There is very little detail in the bill about the criteria that ministers would have to apply. This is a potential minefield. It risks creating many more problems than it purports to solve.

Rail union leaders tell MPs resolution over strikes further away than ever – video



The bill describes itself as a piece of legislation “to make provision about minimum service levels in connection with the taking by trade unions of strike action relating to certain services”. But what do some of these words mean in law? Look in more detail at the full draft and it is not clear, for instance, where “provision” begins and ends, what “minimum levels” actually mean in individual cases, whether “strike action” includes other forms of industrial action, or where the boundaries of “certain services” are drawn.

Two of these issues, in particular, run through the whole bill as published. Both need far more thought than the bill shows any sign of embodying. The first is about the services that would be covered. The bill lists six: health services, fire and rescue, education services, transport services, radioactive waste and border security.

These are broad categories covering many activities. Not all are provided by the state, so hundreds of private firms will be directly affected by ministerial decisions. In some sectors, “life and limb” cover is required by law already. Yet strikes in education, for example, place the public at less direct risk than strikes in the fire service could do. Other industries, such as fuel or even banking, could be regarded as essential services but are not covered in the bill.

The second trap is how to define a minimum level of service. It is the minister’s job under the new bill to specify what this means, sector by sector, depending on the dispute. The bill grants enormous scope. The legal commentator [Joshua Rozenberg](#) describes one clause, allowing ministers to “amend, repeal or revoke” other laws, even before they come into force, as “a supercharged Henry VIII clause”.

The International Labour Organisation, of which the UK is a founding member, has rules and conventions [about minimum service levels](#). You would hardly know this from the bill. Instead, the bill gives ministers sweeping new powers, which they could use wisely and narrowly, or recklessly and across the board. It will all depend on the good sense and competence of the government in question. Not a happy thought.

In the real world of now, the Sunak government has a strategic choice. It can try to resolve the existing disputes in a practical but inevitably messy way. Or it can press ahead with a showboating bill that offers nothing except a bottomless pit of potential conflicts for thousands of workplaces. It tells us a lot about the government that it seems to prefer the latter to the former.

Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#) Prince Harry.

## Poor Harry: even Americans are getting bored with his tell-all tour

[Emma Brockes](#)



Watching Harry do the rounds of US chat shows, I felt a sense of pity for the man who will never be more than a sideshow here



Prince Harry's book, *Spare*, on display at a Barnes & Noble bookstore, New York, 10 January 2023. Photograph: Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 12 Jan 2023 03.00 EST Last modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 06.51 EST

It is ill-advised to form judgments based on the behaviour of a talkshow audience, a group whose sympathies – stoked by hours of anticipation and the sunken cost of a day off work – would rally for any guest above the level of a pot plant. Still, after a week of intense media coverage in the US, Prince Harry [stepping out](#) before a studio audience on *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert on Tuesday night was the first sight we had of him interacting with something approximating the American public.

For days, American news outlets had [speculated](#) that the rollout around *Spare* was becoming overblown. But that night in New York, the audience heaved to its feet and gave the 38-year-old “husband, father, military veteran and activist”, per Colbert’s introduction, a warm standing ovation. Harry smiled sheepishly. It was, for British observers, deeply, unsettlingly odd.

Full confession: having avoided the Netflix series and feeling reluctant to read the book, I’ve still hoovered up every last scrap of Harry publicity this

week, traded countless texts speculating on the credibility of his accusations and put in solid bitching time behind the caveat “this is unsisterly, but ...”.

Among my social group in New York, there is a marked difference between the attitude towards Spare of English and Australian friends – obsessive, feverish, genuinely shocked that Harry has been tempted quite so far out on to the ledge – and the uninterested and mildly baffled response of Americans. Most of them, in my experience, have gone on a journey from a near-universal “good for you” when Harry and Meghan moved out here, to a taken-aback “wow, this guy is really going for it”, to something, this week, closer resembling boredom. Meanwhile, Brits are snapping back and forth with “the man’s literally gone mad”.

This assessment is less a function of what Harry has said than the number and range of venues in which he has said it. On Colbert, his nervousness appeared in the form of currying favour with the audience – “I think there are some veterans in the house tonight?!” he said, looking out across the crowd. He got a big cheer for “America is a great place to live!” The New York Times summarised Colbert’s approach as “[probing but respectful](#)” and also [rallied some voices](#), including ex-reality stars, to pour scorn on Harry’s oversharing.

'Dangerous lie': Prince Harry says Afghanistan claims 'taken out of context' – video

As a former royal, Harry is the last person on earth with an intuitive sense of where to draw the line between healthy honesty and inadequate boundaries, and as the show unfolded it was hard not to cringe. He did a brief skit with Tom Hanks, mugged with some extras dressed up in royal livery, and looked uncomfortable as Colbert segued into a question about grief over his mother. Watching, I settled on what feels like the only adequate response to all this: poor bugger.

This sense of pity for the man was particularly acute given the fact that no one really cares about Harry in the US, where he will never be more than a sideshow. The revelations spilled in Spare this week fell somewhere in the American news list between the floods in California, the chaos over the election of the new House speaker and the Golden Globes.

And while the book-buying audience in the US is much bigger than in the UK, there was a sense that Harry's performance was, of course, put on largely for the hated audience back home – right down to the up-yours of his slightly laboured transatlantic accent. (Harry has been in the US for a few years, enough time, in my experience, for an English person to give way on “tomato”, or at a pinch “water”, but nothing like the solid decade needed to erode “route” – “root” in British English – to the American “rowt”, as Harry pronounced it in his interview with Anderson Cooper.)

As Harry would say, the “narrative” of his escape from tradition and stultifying protocol is an admirable one, but let's face it, it has been traded for another, almost equally rigid set of protocols. On Tuesday night, he talked about the need to “give space” to his “experiences without any shame”. He talked about his “mental health journey” and the “power in sharing”. He won a round of applause when Colbert mentioned “removing yourself from a toxic situation”.

English friends with American spouses saw in this performance the fruits of a regular complaint from their other halves – namely, that they “talk it out” with their English families, bring things up, put things on the table, confront difficulties, and the irritation they sometimes feel at having to explain and defend the use in English family life of structural silence. It's mostly damaging, one understands that. But occasionally it's a useful and effective diplomacy that isn't merely a case of avoidance.

To see in Harry's good-natured self-parody something vaguely shocking and undignified is probably a result of my own unhealthy conditioning. Ditto the amount of tutting I've done over his desire to have his cake – retaining the “Duke of Sussex” branding – and eat it, by poking fun at the whole shebang. But while his assertion that the Queen had had an “amazing career” made me smile on Tuesday night, watching him this week has been mostly a sad affair. The audience chanted “Harry! Harry!” and half ruefully, Harry smiled. Poor bugger.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
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## [Opinion](#)George Pell

# George Pell's death symbolises the demise of a church out of touch and out of time

[Francis Sullivan](#)

Pell was an ideological warrior that resisted the changes of liberal society and its tolerance for diversity and individualism

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‘Cardinal George Pell’s style of leadership was “old school” – authoritarian and uncompromising.’ Photograph: Jane Dempster/AAP

Wed 11 Jan 2023 23.43 EST Last modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 08.31 EST

Cardinal [George Pell](#) died as he lived, a fierce defender of the Catholic church and of conservative Catholicism. He had an agenda and knew how to achieve it. Striding from the backblocks of Ballarat to the marbled floors of the Vatican, Pell demonstrated a sure-footedness many of his episcopal brothers envied. He was a political operative of the highest order. Little wonder present and past prime ministers have lauded his career. They know a political asset when they see one.

Pell's style of leadership was "old school" – authoritarian and uncompromising. It portrayed an absolutist and unflinching approach of the church to modern life. He was an ideological and cultural warrior within the church that resisted the changes of liberal society and its tolerance for diversity and individualism. His brand of Catholicism has proved to be unpopular and alienating to most Australians. His public persona became a lightning rod for discontent on many social issues, particularly those related to child sexual abuse. By his own design he was perceived as the head of the church in Australia and he bore the brunt of any anti-Catholic sentiment, justified or not.

But try as he might, the fortunes of the church defied his best efforts. These days most Catholics do not attend regular mass, nor do they subscribe to conventional Catholic sexual and social ethics. The public regard for and trust in the church has declined. The revelations of episcopal mismanagement of the clerical sexual abuse crisis has accelerated the church's irrelevance in Australian society. Pell, like other bishops of his time, has had to preside over a diminished church and, in many ways, his death symbolises the demise of a church out of touch and out of time.

The future of Catholicism in Australia is and has always been bigger than Pell. Even in his latter years, Pell could not turn around the inclusive and consultative approach of Pope Francis. He tried to knock it off but to no effect. The Pope has set the church on a course of inclusive discernment and decision-making, called synodality, that would have been unheard of under a Pell administration. Now lay women and men are at the decision-making tables alongside clergy, religious leaders and bishops. Now ordinary Catholics are being consulted about the state of and future direction for

their church. Now the very principles of a liberal and democratic society are being given due regard.

### [Discover the Australia Weekend app embed](#)

For Australian Catholics, their church needs to reflect the realities of their lives. It needs to mirror the diversity of lifestyles that constitute our local communities and family situations. It needs to be authentic enough to speak with integrity to the daily challenges of living decent and fulfilling lives, establishing sustainable livelihoods and building healthy and supportive communities. It needs to worry less about personal sexual ethics and busy itself more with the structural causes of injustice, poverty and exclusion. It needs to be “women friendly” and cease any covert discrimination against same-sex attracted and non-binary people. And that doesn’t come from clinging to an institution where medieval hierarchical power is exercised and male clerical dominance is perpetuated.

Pope Francis is prising open the staid mindset of those elements of the church that reacted to the Enlightenment and has held a vice-like grip on Catholic imagination ever since. He is daring to let lay people speak and even be heard. He calls for an engaged, energised church, shed of its sense of entitlement and importance. A church that instinctively identifies with marginalised people and addresses the limits of human tolerance and forgiveness. A church of, for and by the people.

So, with that said, the powerful grip of Pell and others is slipping. His loss will be felt.

- Francis Sullivan is the former chief executive of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council and is chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn



## [Opinion](#)American food and drink

# Not a lot of people know that: I can't help dropping juicy facts into conversations

[Adrian Chiles](#)



As my father's son, I have discovered the pleasures of sharing random bits of interesting information with people – regardless of what we're talking about



Know which nation doesn't eat many of these? ... I do. Photograph: Andrea Edwards/Getty Images/EyeEm

Thu 12 Jan 2023 02.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 12.54 EST

Just before Christmas I stumbled on a random but interesting fact about something. I felt certain that said fact wasn't widely known, and so everybody – apart from the cleverest of clever dicks – would find it diverting. I was in a hurry to share; such a hurry, in fact, that I found it frustrating to conform to conversational norms. You know, finding a way of steering the subject matter into the right area so you can lob in your fact-bomb all casual-like.

I resolved instead to just drop it in, apropos of nothing at all, whenever it suited me. My inspiration for this was my dad, who is only too happy to come out with random stuff completely out of the blue. For example: “Did you know that UHT milk is much improved? It now tastes like normal milk, so there's no point buying normal milk any more.” At first I found this kind of thing from him amusing, then annoying. But ultimately I felt envious. How liberating just to be able to come right out with it.

Oh yes, my fact: [Americans eat](#) hardly any [lamb](#). Who knew? Not a lot of people, I can tell you. Apart from Americans, obviously. Being new to the

art of just coming out with random stuff, it took a while to get the hang of it. Just wanging it in there, in the middle of an unrelated conversation about, say, West Brom's ownership or the traffic on the M6, really didn't work. I've found the best way is to wait for a lull in the conversation and then strike. "Here's a thing," I'll say – a little phrase like that helps. "Did you know that Americans hardly eat any lamb?" OK, there was the odd "Eh?" or "So what?" But in general this new approach works like a dream. I feel so free.

- Adrian Chiles is a writer, broadcaster and Guardian columnist

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## 2023.01.12 - Around the world

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## [Rights and freedom](#)[Human rights](#)

# Cracks in authoritarian regimes offer hope in a dark year, says Human Rights Watch

Watchdog praises protests in China and Iran and international response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in annual report on the state of human rights



The street protests in China against 'zero Covid' lockdown measures were cited by HRW's Tirana Hassan as a positive sign regarding human rights. Photograph: Thomas Peter/Reuters

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Cracks in the armour of authoritarian states in the past year should give the world hope that brutal regimes can be called to account, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its annual analysis of the state of human rights globally.

The world report 2023 from HRW chronicles the litany of human rights crises that affected millions of people in the past 12 months, most dramatically in [Afghanistan](#), where the Taliban have “walked back women’s rights continuously since they took over” and in China, where the [mass detention of an estimated one million Uyghurs](#) and other Turkic Muslims, stands out for its “gravity, scale and cruelty”.

But fault lines have emerged in seemingly impenetrable countries, the acting executive director of HRW, Tirana Hassan, said. Hassan cited street protests in Chinese cities against strict “zero Covid” lockdown measures and in Iran, where the [death of Mahsa Amini](#), 22, in the custody of police

for not wearing her hijab properly [unleashed the biggest street protests in the country in years.](#)

“What 2022 has shown us is there are cracks in the authoritarian armour,” said Hassan. “There has been a rising up of the people who have expressed their commitment, their desire and their demand to have human rights realised.” But for change to happen, states around the world need to support them, she said.

“We cannot take for granted, just because there’s a tension right now and people are on the streets in Iran, for example, that this will last into 2023,” said Hassan.

HRW also praised the international response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine to protect refugees, investigate crimes and impose sanctions, as a positive note in a year of dramatic roll-backs in human rights across the world.

As the organisation launched its [global assessment of 2022](#), Hassan said that, for the first time in decades, nations have come together to ensure “justice and accountability” for war crimes and to protect refugees.

“We’ve seen what is possible when the international community comes together to prioritise the safety and protection of people fleeing war,” Hassan said. Within weeks of the invasion, the international community had established criminal investigations, evidence-gathering mechanisms and mobilised the international court, she said. “We’ve seen what is possible when it mobilises to ensure there’s justice and accountability for the most egregious crimes committed, including war crimes. The bar has moved for the first time in decades and it hasn’t gone down, it’s gone up.”

Hassan suggested that governments should reflect on the potential outcome had they had acted earlier, at the onset of the war in eastern Ukraine, in 2014, or when Russian aircraft bombed civilian areas [in Syria in 2016](#). “What would have happened if the international community had held Putin to account for these other crimes or even held Russia to account for the initial invasion into Ukraine?” she asked.

“If autocrats and human rights abusers are not held to account, it emboldens them,” said Hassan, and she challenged governments to provide a similar response to human rights violations outside Europe.

“We could expect the same type of response for serious violations in Israel and Palestine, in Afghanistan and across the world. This is about how seriously the world takes its obligations. It is replicable. Twenty-twenty three provides the opportunity for states to demonstrate that this is not just about what happened in Europe.”

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The [armed conflict in Ethiopia](#), she said, had received only a “tiny fraction” of the global attention focused on Ukraine, despite two years of atrocities, including a number of massacres by warring parties.

“We cannot underestimate the ripple effect of giving a free pass to some of the world’s most serious crimes,” said Hassan, and reflected that 2022 was a “very challenging year” for women’s rights – particularly in Afghanistan, which provides the “starkest picture of what the total erosion of women’s rights looks like”.

“In Afghanistan, our job is to stay committed to human rights, to fortify them any way we can and to make sure that the Taliban are under pressure to reverse their thinking. We often fall into line of thinking the Taliban are untouchable. They are not.

“What I would say, is in the face of this incredibly dark time, we’ve seen some exceptional counter-movements, to protect women’s rights around the world.”

In a year where the [US supreme court struck down 50 years of federal protection](#) for abortion rights, Latin America has seen a so-called “[green wave](#)” of [women-led abortion rights expansion](#), including in Mexico, Argentina and Colombia, which provides a “roadmap” for other countries, Hassan said.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/jan/12/cracks-in-authoritarian-regimes-offer-hope-in-a-dark-year-says-human-rights-watch>

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## [Jeff Beck](#)

# Legendary rock guitarist Jeff Beck dies aged 78

Beck rose to fame with the Yardbirds before fronting the Jeff Beck Group and making forays into the jazz-fusion sound he pioneered

A look back at the life of legendary guitarist Jeff Beck – video obituary

[Shaad D'Souza](#)  
[@shaaddsouza](#)

Wed 11 Jan 2023 17.01 EST Last modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 19.23 EST

Jeff Beck, the celebrated guitarist who played with the Yardbirds and led the [Jeff Beck](#) Group, has died aged 78, his representative has confirmed.

Beck died on Tuesday after “suddenly contracting bacterial meningitis”, the representative confirmed. “His family ask for privacy while they process this tremendous loss,” they added.

Often described as one of the greatest guitarists of all time, Beck – whose fingers and thumbs were famously insured for £7m – was known as a keen innovator. He pioneered jazz-rock, experimented with fuzz and distortion effects and paved the way for heavier subgenres such as psych rock and heavy metal over the course of his career. He was an eight-time Grammy winner, recipient of the Ivor Novello for outstanding contribution to British music and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame both as a solo artist and as a member of the Yardbirds.

Musicians and longtime friends began paying tribute minutes after the news broke. On Twitter, [Jimmy Page wrote](#), “The six stringed Warrior is no longer here for us to admire the spell he could weave around our mortal emotions. Jeff could channel music from the ethereal. His technique unique.



His imaginations apparently limitless. Jeff I will miss you along with your millions of fans.”

“With the death of Jeff Beck we have lost a wonderful man and one of the greatest guitar players in the world,” [Mick Jagger wrote](#). “We will all miss him so much.”

With the death of Jeff Beck we have lost a wonderful man and one of the greatest guitar players in the world. We will all miss him so much.  
[pic.twitter.com/u8DYQrLNB7](https://pic.twitter.com/u8DYQrLNB7)

— Mick Jagger (@MickJagger) [January 11, 2023](#)

Rod Stewart, who toured with the Jeff Beck Group in the late 60s, called him “one of the few guitarists that when playing live would actually listen to me sing and respond ... you were the greatest, my man. Thank you for everything.”

1/2

Jeff Beck was on another planet . He took me and Ronnie Wood to the USA in the late 60s in his band the Jeff Beck Group and we haven't looked back since . [pic.twitter.com/uS7bbWsHgW](https://pic.twitter.com/uS7bbWsHgW)

— Sir Rod Stewart (@rodstewart) [January 11, 2023](#)

Gene Simmons [called it](#) “heartbreaking news ... no one played guitar like Jeff. Please get ahold of the first two Jeff Beck Group albums and behold greatness. RIP.”

“Now Jeff has gone, I feel like one of my band of brothers has left this world, and I’m going to dearly miss him,” [Ronnie Wood tweeted](#).

Ozzy Osbourne [tweeted](#), “I can’t express how saddened I am to hear of Jeff Beck’s passing. What a terrible loss for his family, friends & his many fans. It was such an honour to have known Jeff and an incredible honor to have had him play on my most recent album.”

I can't express how saddened I am to hear of [@JeffBeckMusic](#)'s passing. What a terrible loss for his family, friends & his many fans. It was such an honor to have known Jeff & an incredible honor to have had him play on my most recent album, [#PatientNumber9](#).  
Long live [#JeffBeck](#) [pic.twitter.com/hG6O9tzfj](https://pic.twitter.com/hG6O9tzfj)

— Ozzy Osbourne (@OzzyOsbourne) [January 11, 2023](#)

Pink Floyd's [David Gilmour wrote](#), "I am devastated to hear the news of the death of my friend and hero Jeff Beck, whose music has thrilled and inspired me and countless others for so many years ... He will be forever in our hearts."

Johnny Marr [called him](#) "a pioneer and one of the all time greats", while Whitesnake's [David Coverdale wrote](#), "Oh, My Heart ... RIP, Jeff ... I miss you already".

The Kinks' [Dave Davies tweeted](#), "I'm heartbroken he looked in fine shape to me. Playing great he was in great shape. I'm shocked and bewildered ... it don't make sense I don't get it. He was a good friend and a great guitar player."

Many famed guitarists paid tribute to Beck's prowess and influence. ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons described Beck as a "wondrous soul" who "was able to show me how this guitar playing thing should be approached." Living Colour's Vernon Reid said there was "always space for him to grow," while Aerosmith's Joe Perry described him as "the Salvador Dali of guitar."

"Jeff Beck was punk rock before punk existed and one of the most inventive guitar players of all time," wrote U2's The Edge. "He set a very high bar for all of us who followed. His legend will live on."

Queen's Brian May said he was "gutted" to hear the news: "He was the Guv'nor. He was inimitable, irreplaceable - the absolute pinnacle of guitar playing. And a damn fine human being."



The Jeff Beck Group in the late 60s: (L-R) Rod Stewart, Ronnie Wood, Mickey Waller and Jeff Beck. Photograph: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

Beck was born Geoffrey Beck in 1944, in Wallington, south London. As a child, he sang in a church choir, and began playing guitar as a teenager, getting his first instrument after trying to dupe a music store in a hire-purchase scheme. “There was this guy, he wasn’t old enough to be my dad but he offered to be my guarantor. He said, ‘I’ll tell them I’m your stepfather’,” he told the New Statesman in 2016. “Within a month, they’d sussed out he was nothing to do with me whatsoever and they snatched the guitar back. My dad went along and explained that we couldn’t afford it – so they waived the rest of the payments and I got the guitar.”

After briefly attending art school in London, Beck began playing with Screaming Lord Sutch until, after Eric Clapton left the Yardbirds, Jimmy Page recommended Beck as his replacement. Although already successful by that time, the Yardbirds had many of their biggest hits during Beck’s short tenure in the band, including the 1966 album *Yardbirds* and the No 3 single *Shapes of Things*. Beck was only in the Yardbirds for 20 months, leaving the group in 1966 due to inter-band tensions that had arisen during a US tour. (Later, he would say that “every day was a hurricane in the Yardbirds”.)

In 1968, Beck released *Truth*, his debut solo album, which drew on blues and hard rock to form a prototypical version of heavy metal. One year later, he released an album with the Jeff Beck Group, *Beck-Ola* but had his solo career derailed after he suffered a head injury in a car accident.

In 1970, after recovering from his skull fracture, Beck formed a new incarnation of the Jeff Beck Group, and released two records – 1971's *Rough and Ready* and 1972's *Jeff Beck Group* – which displayed his earliest forays into the jazz fusion sound he would become known for.

In the mid-70s, Beck supported John McLaughlin's jazz-rock group Mahavishnu Orchestra on tour, an experience that radically changed how he saw music. "Watching [McLaughlin] and the sax player trading solos, I thought, 'This is me'," he said in 2016.

Inspired, Beck embraced jazz fusion fully on the George Martin-produced *Blow By Blow*. A platinum-selling hit in the US which peaked at No 4, it was Beck's most commercially successful album ever, but he later expressed regret. "I shouldn't have done *Blow By Blow*," he told *Guitar Player* in 1990. "I wish I had stayed with earthy rock'n'roll. When you're surrounded with very musical people like Max Middleton and Clive Chaman, you're in a prison, and you have to play along with that."



Jeff Beck on stage in London in 1972. Photograph: Fin Costello/Redferns

Despite his later feelings about *Blow By Blow*, Beck continued to experiment throughout the 70s, releasing another platinum-selling jazz fusion album, *Wired*, in 1976, and *There and Back*, in 1980.

“He embraced project after project with limitless energy and enthusiasm,” Robert Plant said in a statement. “He cooked up magic through all the passing eras, always up for the next, unknown, unlikely collision.”

Beck’s output slowed dramatically in the 80s, in part due to his suffering from tinnitus. His projects through the decade were sporadic but notable: in 1981, he performed with Clapton, Sting and Phil Collins at Amnesty International’s Secret Policeman’s Other Ball benefit concerts, and returned with his first solo album in five years, *Flash*, in 1985. Produced by Chic’s Nile Rodgers, it presented a dramatic shift for Beck in that it primarily featured vocal-led pop tracks, a change from his largely instrumental 70s output. *People Get Ready*, a collaboration with Rod Stewart, became one of Beck’s rare hit singles under his own name, charting in the US, New Zealand, Sweden, Belgium and Switzerland.

The 1989 album *Jeff Beck’s Guitar Shop* was his last solo album for a decade, but he remained active through the 90s, collaborating with Jon Bon Jovi, Kate Bush and Roger Waters, among others; in 1999, he released *Who Else*, which incorporated techno and electronic elements.

In the 2000s and 2010s, Beck only released a handful of albums, but began to settle into his role as an elder statesman and lauded influence, performing with artists such as Kelly Clarkson and Joss Stone. He lived on an East Sussex estate since 1976, and married his second wife, Sandra Cash, in 2005.

Beck’s most recent project was last year’s *18*, a collaborative album with Johnny Depp that featured original songs penned by Depp and covers of Marvin Gaye, the Velvet Underground and other classic artists. The album was widely panned; in a two-star review, the [Guardian’s Michael Hann described it](#) as a “peculiar and hugely uneven record,” while noting that

“it’s to Beck’s credit that alone among the guitar heroes of the 1960s UK R&B boom, he has not retreated into coffee-table blues.”

Other musicians to pay tribute to Beck included the Beach Boys’ Brian Wilson, who wrote that he was a “genius guitar player.” Billy Idol described him as “sublime”, and said he was “glad I was alive to hear him play.” Stevie Van Zandt called Beck a “major influence” and “an infinite source of joy my entire lifetime.”

Joe Satriani said that Beck was “a genius, a stunning original.” “He was an astounding guitar player with more ways to make you go, ‘WTF was that?’ than anybody else. He was profoundly talented, and never stopped innovating on the instrument.”

This article was amended on 12 January 2023. Sandra Cash was Beck’s second wife, not his sixth as an earlier version said; and Beck-Ola was released in 1969, not 1971.

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## [Japan](#)

# Attack from space would trigger collective defence, say US and Japan, amid China fears

Antony Blinken says China is ‘greatest shared strategic challenge’ in the region as US backs Japan’s biggest military build-up since second world war



US and Japanese defence chiefs said attacks ‘to, from and within’ space would invoke article five of their security treaty. Photograph: UniversalImagesGroup/Universal Images Group/Getty Images

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Wed 11 Jan 2023 23.16 ESTLast modified on Wed 11 Jan 2023 23.22 EST

The US and [Japan](#) have said that an attack in space would trigger their security treaty, as senior officials from both countries warned that [China](#) represents the “greatest strategic challenge” to regional security.



“We agree that [China] is the greatest shared strategic challenge that we, our allies and partners face,” the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said on Thursday after meeting his Japanese counterpart, Yoshimasa Hayashi, in Washington.

US and Japanese defence chiefs agreed that attacks “to, from and within” space could invoke article five of their security treaty, which states that an attack on one of the allies is an attack on both.

The US also strongly endorsed Japan’s plans to significantly strengthen its defences, including the ability to attack enemy bases if it believes an attack is imminent – a move some have criticised as a [violation](#) of the “pacifist” principles set out in its postwar constitution.

“It’s very simple, we heartily welcome the new strategies especially because there is ... a remarkable convergence between our strategy and strategies and Japan’s,” Blinken said.

The Blinken-Hayashi meeting, which also involved the Japanese defence minister, Yasukazu Hamada, and the US secretary of defence, Lloyd Austin, comes weeks after Japan announced its [biggest military buildup since the second world war](#), including plans to acquire the ability to carry out “counterstrikes” against enemy bases.

“The ministers concurred that China’s foreign policy seeks to reshape the international order to its benefit and to employ China’s growing political, economic, military and technological power to that end,” the four said in a joint statement. “This behaviour is of serious concern to the alliance and the entire international community.”

Growing alarm over Chinese military activity near Taiwan, coupled with a flurry of ballistic missile tests by [North Korea](#) over the past year, have prompted a further shift from the strictly defensive posture Japan adopted after its defeat in 1945.

Under updated strategies announced last month, it hopes to double defence spending to 2% of gross domestic product in fiscal 2027 – bringing it into line with Nato countries – including the purchase of hundreds of US-made Tomahawk cruise missiles.

Hayashi said Washington and Tokyo shared “a vision of a modernised alliance to acquire the posture to win in the new era of strategic competition”.

The countries also agreed to create a “more agile” US marine unit based on the southern island of Okinawa that would be better placed to respond to emergencies around Japan’s south-west islands, which are located near [Taiwan](#).

“I think this is going to contribute in a major way in our effort to help defend Japan and also promote a free and open Indo-Pacific,” Austin said, adding that the unit, formed out of a reorganised existing regiment on Okinawa, would be in place by 2025.

Japan hosts 18,000 US marines – the biggest concentration outside US – and most are stationed on the main Okinawan island, part of a chain that stretches along the edge of the East China Sea to within about 100km (62 miles) of Taiwan.

China, which [claims democratic Taiwan as part of its territory](#), drew condemnation last year after carrying out exercises many saw as a test-run for an invasion of the island.

“I won’t second-guess Mr Xi but what I will tell you is that what we are seeing recently is some very provocative behaviour on the part of China’s forces,” Austin said, referring to Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

“We believe that they endeavour to establish a new normal but whether or not that means that an invasion is imminent, you know, I seriously doubt that,” he said.

The four-way talks took place a day before the Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida, was due to meet [Joe Biden](#) to build support for Japan’s

presidency of the G7, whose leaders will [meet in Hiroshima](#) in May.

Earlier this week Kishida and the British prime minister, Rishi Sunak, signed a defence pact that will enable Britain and Japan to deploy forces on each other's soil, in the latest move towards closer security ties.

Sunak described the agreement as “hugely significant” for both countries, adding that it “cements our commitment to the Indo-Pacific”.

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## [Gold Coast](#)

# ‘Just glad he made it’: Queensland man stops traffic to escort koala across busy highway

Will Thornton, 39, was having a coffee on his balcony when he saw the koala heading for the highway and raced down, barefooted, to save the day

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Man stops traffic to guide koala across four-lane Gold Coast highway – video

[\*Mostafa Rachwani\*](#)  
[@Rachwani91](#)

Thu 12 Jan 2023 01.55 ESTLast modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 08.30 EST

A [Queensland](#) man has risked his life to escort a koala safely across a busy four-lane highway.

Will Thornton spotted the koala intent on crossing the highway in Burleigh Heads, on the [Gold Coast](#), on Thursday morning.

“My wife and I were having a coffee on the balcony when we saw a koala coming in from trees just in front of us,” the 39-year-old said.

“He just started making his way towards the Gold Coast Highway. So I bolted down and I wanted to keep my distance because I didn’t want to

spook him too much. He was determined to cross the highway so I thought I better stop traffic and help him across.”

In a video posted by Thornton’s mother-in-law, Katrina Boyle, a barefooted Thornton can be seen stopping traffic as the koala walked across the road, taking a break near the median strip.

Thornton at times raises his arms to stop vehicles and occasionally gestures encouragingly to the koala to keep moving.

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“The people in the cars were pretty understanding, they stopped when I stepped on to the road,” Thornton said.

“He nearly made the full way across the road before but he stopped and had a bit of a rest. The highway was quite busy at the time, so it was kind of lucky that it happened in the daytime when we could help him.

“It was a bit surreal. I had to put my hands up so the drivers wouldn’t think I was some sort of crazy guy. But they could see that there was a koala on the road and they understood. I’m just glad he made it.”

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It is koala mating season which means more marsupials are on the move.

Dave Copeman, a spokesperson for the Queensland Conservation Council, said the video was a reminder koala habitat was shrinking due to land clearing and development.

“South-east Queensland is an area that has been massively impacted by clearing, largely for development and transport,” he said on Thursday.

“We’re at the point where we just can’t have any more clearing going on – we are destroying koala habitats. The really distressing reality is koalas face extinction in the wild if we don’t turn around the current trajectory. The science is clear.”

Copeman said that while there was a perception koalas lazed about in trees, they actually moved a lot during mating season. He advised residents to contact their local conservation group if animals needed assistance and to avoid picking them up.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jan/12/just-glad-he-made-it-queensland-man-stops-traffic-to-escort-koala-across-busy-highway>.

## Libya

# Libyan politicians' pay goes up 40% as election impasse continues

UN special envoys to meet in Washington as figures show Libyan politicians' salaries rose by more than 40% in 2022



Libya's House of Representatives speaker, Aguila Saleh, centre, at the swearing-in ceremony for the country's interim government in 2021. Photograph: Ahmed Al-Hadal/AP

[\*Patrick Wintour\*](#) *Diplomatic editor*

Thu 12 Jan 2023 00.00 EST Last modified on Thu 12 Jan 2023 06.29 EST

Western leaders are losing patience with an entrenched Libyan political elite that has collectively failed to agree on the basis of elections for more than a year but has boosted politicians' salaries by more than 40%, according to official figures.



Special envoys from the US, France, Germany, Italy and the UK are due to meet in Washington on 13 January to discuss their next steps after two rival Libyan factions last week failed to reach a final agreement in Cairo on the constitutional basis for national elections.

The presidential and parliamentary elections were aborted in December 2021. A previous French-led effort to stage elections, in 2018, had also foundered. A series of unelected and competing interim governments have governed Libya for nearly a decade.

Elections planned for 2022 were cancelled due to disputes over the qualifications of candidates to stand, which masked a deeper reluctance by politicians in both the east and west of the country to risk a democratic winner-takes-all process that might see them lose access to state patronage and power.

One exasperated western diplomat said: “They are some making sincere efforts at mediation, but the abiding character of too many Libyan politicians on both sides of the divide is [to] pay lip service to the necessity of elections and then do everything possible to throttle them so they can continue lining their pockets. We may have to stop hoping we can persuade these people to agree to elections and instead find a way to work around them.”

The meeting on 13 January of special envoys convened by the US envoy, Richard Norland, will look at how to stage elections and whether to urge the [new UN special envoy Abdoulaye Bathily](#) to set a deadline for establishing a national Libyan body to agree on elections.

The growth of the Libyan economy is projected to be 17.9% this year, the highest in [Africa](#), but despite this some estimates show that nearly a third of Libyans, especially in the south, live at, or below, the poverty line.

Libya’s political leaders have gone round in circles with competing proposals for the constitutional basis of the elections. Months of talks in Cairo between Libya’s House of Representatives speaker, Aguila Saleh, from the east of the country, and the head of the high council of state,

Khaled al-Meshri, representing the western area, made some progress, but did not resolve whether dual nationals could stand for the presidency, or for how long candidates would have to permanently resign from any existing position if they wished to stand.

Behind these disputes are efforts from either side to bar controversial candidates from standing. Norland has claimed there is no impediment to Meshri and Saleh setting an election date, but the two men have refused to do so.

The reputation of the political class has hardly been enhanced by Central Bank of Libya figures published last week showing total state spending rose last year to 127.9bn Libyan dinars, an increase of 42bn dinars or about \$9bn in 2021.

Figures on how the state is spending money have been unclear for years, with a full UN-commissioned audit of the CBL accounts never published.

Public salaries, including those for politicians, rose 42% to 47bn dinars for 2022, compared with 33bn dinars the previous year. This was the single biggest expenditure item. Fuel subsidies racked up 20bn dinars, and development and projects 17.5bn dinars. The Libyan National Oil Corporation was given 34bn dinars – about \$6bn.

Oil remains the chief source of state revenue, worth 134bn dinars (\$29bn).

The House of Representatives, last elected in 2016, was paid 144m dinars or \$30m. The high council of state, the remnants of an oversight parliament elected in 2012 under the control of the west and led by Meshri, received 49m dinars, or \$10m.

The interim Tripoli-based government, also supported by Turkey and led by the [interim prime minister, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah](#), has also paid out billions in benefits.

Critics say even allowing for the devaluation of the Libyan dinar, the scale of the salaries and disbursements suggest that an unaccountable political class is eager to avoid the verdict of the ballot box.

Tim Eaton, a Libya expert at Chatham House, said: “These central bank figures are still opaque, but clearly spending on salaries is staggeringly high. Given the amount of money that is supposedly being spent on public services, ordinary people in Libya are simply not receiving an adequate level of service.”

The experienced former UN envoy in Libya, Stephanie Williams, recently said: “A transactional ruling class, some of whose network can be traced back to the days of the former regime, uses Libya’s state and sovereign institutions as cash cows in what could be described as a ‘redistributive kleptocracy’, bringing into their circles on a regular basis just enough of their compatriots to sustain the system.” She said some Libyan politicians simply did not see the need for elections.

Popular frustration with the lack of elections exists. In a statement Aref Nayed, chairman of the Ihya Libya movement, said: “There is nothing to prevent elections except for a corrupt political junta that is fighting each other over everything, but it is united in confiscating the right of the Libyan people to determine their own destiny and share their wealth.”

Zahra Langhi, a women’s rights activist, said “political elites including [the] governor and central bank board have long benefited from a culture of impunity. Libya is witnessing a stalemate in the political track as well as division and capture of state institutions that defrauds the Libyan people of their right to elect their representatives”.

The debate among western diplomats is about whether to set a hard deadline for Libya’s political institutions to reach agreement on the basis of elections, and if that deadline is not met, whether to launch a new process.

Libyan political institutions have long lost legitimacy with the House of Representatives, which was elected in June 2014 on a turnout of less than 20%. Saleh, the speaker, was elected with little more than 1,000 votes. The high council of state, broadly the upper house and based in the west with a strong Muslim Brotherhood constituency, was elected in 2016.

In February 2021, Dbeibah was elected head of the interim government by a 75-strong UN appointed body and was charged solely with preparing for the

elections, but before the election date was aborted he had reneged on a pledge not to stand in the elections, contributing to the impasse that led to the elections being called off.

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## Headlines saturday 14 january 2023

- [Alireza Akbari Iran executes British-Iranian national accused of spying](#)
- [Surrey dog attack Woman killed believed to have been walking a number of dogs](#)
- [Italy US-born princess vows to stay in Rome villa despite eviction order](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: explosions in Kyiv; Russia 'deploys 10 vessels from Black Sea Fleet'](#)
- [Prince Harry I left out details as I feared family would not forgive me](#)

## [Iran](#)

# Iran executes British-Iranian national Alireza Akbari accused of spying

UK prime minister Rishi Sunak says execution was a ‘callous and cowardly act, carried out by a barbaric regime’



Alireza Akbari’s execution was reported by Iran’s Mizan news agency.  
Photograph: Khabaronline/EPA

[Patrick Wintour](#) *Diplomatic editor*

Sat 14 Jan 2023 05.01 ESTFirst published on Sat 14 Jan 2023 00.54 EST

Alireza Akbari, a British-Iranian dual national who had previously held a senior position in the Iranian government, was executed on Saturday morning, despite urgent calls for his release by the UK foreign secretary, [James Cleverly](#).

The UK prime minister, [Rishi Sunak](#), called it a “cowardly act, carried out by a barbaric regime with no respect for the human rights of their own

people”.

Sunak, writing on Twitter, said: “I am appalled by the execution of British-Iranian citizen Alireza Akbari in [Iran](#).

“My thoughts are with Alireza’s friends and family.”

Iran has executed a British national.

This barbaric act deserves condemnation in the strongest possible terms.

This will not stand unchallenged.

My thoughts are with Alireza Akbari’s family.

— James Cleverly  (@JamesCleverly) [January 14, 2023](#)

Cleverly said it would not go unchallenged. “This barbaric act deserves condemnation in the strongest possible terms,” he said. “This will not stand unchallenged.”

In response, Iran summoned the British ambassador to Tehran.

“In response to Britain’s unconventional interventions, including in the national security field of the Islamic Republic of Iran, today Simon Shercliff, the ambassador of this country in Tehran, was summoned,” the ministry said in a statement.

Amnesty International condemned the execution and called for an investigation into allegations that Alireza was tortured before his death.

The French foreign minister, Catherine Colonna, summoned Iran’s chargé d’affaires in Paris over the execution and said Iran’s repeated violations of international law could not go unanswered, particularly with regard to the treatment of foreign nationals.



Akbari had been found guilty of spying for MI6, charges his family deny.

Family members insist a confession was only extracted after torture, more than 3,000 hours of interrogation, the administration of mind-altering drugs and promises that he would be able to see his family.

He was arrested more than three years ago on a state-sanctioned visit to Tehran and sentenced to death in the summer, but it was only in the past few days that the Iranian government let it be known that he was to be executed.

His British-based family, in conjunction with the Foreign Office, had decided to keep the case private in the belief that private pressure, and pleas for clemency were the best route to his release. Right up to the last minute the family had been given false hope by Iranian intelligence that his life would be spared. A final meeting with his Iranian-based family was cancelled. He leaves behind two daughters.

On Friday, Cleverly said [Iran must not follow through with the execution of Akbari](#).

Senior British MPs, including the chair of the foreign affairs select committee, Alicia Kearns, had on Thursday called for the British ambassador to Tehran to be withdrawn if Akbari was executed. The UK is also in the midst of deciding whether to proscribe the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in the UK.

Kearns told BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Saturday: "Parliament wants to see the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps proscribed and this will be a big shift in policy because it will be the first time that we recognise that the state can conduct terrorism."

She also called for the closure of the IRGC outreach office in London, adding that the Foreign Office would have to decide whether to expel the chargé d'affaires and recall the British ambassador to Tehran.

Akbari's wife told the Guardian earlier this week that her husband was "the victim of an internal power struggle" inside Iran.

Akbari had been a deputy in the defence ministry in the reformist government of Mohammad Khatami, who served as the Iranian president from 1997 to 2005. He had been responsible for implementing the UN peace terms after the Iran-Iraq war.

Saeid Dehghan, a Tehran-based human rights lawyer, said the death sentence was political, adding it was “unprecedented” for such an execution in the case of a dual national. He said the timing was deliberate ahead of the IRGC being placed on the UK terror list.

Some claim he was targeted by a branch of the intelligence services in order to undermine the powerful Ali Shamkhani, the secretary since 2013 of the supreme national council, but previously a long-serving defence secretary under Khatami. Shamkhani and Akbari had been close, and attacking Akbari is seen as a way of undermining Shamkhani’s efforts to stay in office.

If so, it would be a further blow to those hoping Iran will not turn its back on the west. A fierce debate is still under way in Iran within the regime over Iran’s refusal to agree terms to relaunch the 2015 deal constraining Iran’s nuclear programme.

Some Iranian diplomats have been warning Iran’s hardline stance means the country is paying a heavy price in sanctions and is increasingly being drawn into the Russian sphere of influence, symbolised by the controversial [supply of Iranian drones for use by Russia in the war in Ukraine](#).

In a sign of the internal ferment, Seyyed Mohammad Sadr, a former general director of Europe and USA, in Iran’s ministry of foreign affairs, gave an interview on Saturday warning Iran was on a dangerous course since it was perceived to have lost its neutrality in the Ukrainian war and had become an accomplice of the Russians.

After the defeat of the reformists, Akbari had worked in thinktanks before deciding to enter private business, travelling to Austria, Spain and the UK, where he settled.

In a lengthy statement justifying Akbari's execution, the Iranian judicial news agency said he had been found guilty of corruption and extensive action against the internal and external security of the country through espionage for the intelligence agency of the British government.

They claimed he had received €1,805,000, £265,000 and \$50,000 from the UK security services using bank accounts in Austria, Spain and the UK.

The Iranian agencies claimed in return for information, he had been provided with British citizenship information training, anti-prosecution training, anti-interrogation training, information cover, information collection training, details on how to establish a cover company abroad from the country in order to mislead Iran's security institutions, as well as special communication tools.

The Iranians claim that after he had retired, he was cultivated by the British intelligence services, as well as by the British ambassador in Tehran, Richard Dalton, meeting agents in Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Italy, Spain and Austria.

Enemy intelligence officers met Akbari on various occasions during his personal trips – including George, Marco, Jessica, Colin, David – all pseudonyms used by MI6 officers, the Iranian state media claimed.

The Iranians claimed “Akbari collected important information of the country on strategic issues in the field of domestic and foreign policy, regional, defence, missile, nuclear negotiations and economic issues related to sanctions and delivered it to British intelligence officers in a fully informed and targeted manner”.

In one of the many unsubstantiated claims, the Iranians alleged he provided information about the Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was assassinated on 27 November 2020, alleging he introduced his name to the intelligence services. At the time of Fakhrizadeh's assassination, Akbari was already under arrest.

The Iranian intelligence services claimed special arrangements were made for the meetings, and on every trip a room was reserved in the hotel where

the foreign officer was also present.

They also claimed British intelligence arranged for him to be given indefinite leave to remain and paid for his accommodation.

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## [UK news](#)

# Surrey dog attack: woman killed believed to have been walking a number of dogs

Police have detained eight animals at the popular walking spot at Gravelly Hill, Caterham



Police at Gravelly Hill in Caterham, Surrey, where a woman was killed in a dog attack. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

*PA*

Fri 13 Jan 2023 22.54 EST

Eight dogs were detained at the scene of an attack that [left a woman dead on Thursday](#), according to Surrey police. Detectives are keeping their owners up to date with the investigation.

Police cordons have been lifted after the death of the 28-year-old woman at Gravelly Hill, Caterham, a popular local beauty spot. The victim is believed to have been walking a number of dogs when she was attacked

Paramedics were unable to save her and she was pronounced dead at the scene. No arrests have been made.

“This is a tragic incident where a young woman has sadly lost her life. Our thoughts remain with her family and friends and the family have asked that their privacy is respected at this difficult time,” said senior investigating officer DI Josephine Horner.

“Specialist teams have been carrying out forensic work at the scene but this has now been completed and the area has reopened to the public.

“I know this incident has caused real concerns locally and officers from the local neighbourhood team will be out in the area to provide reassurance for residents.

“The investigation to establish the circumstances around this incident continue and I urge anyone with information who has not yet spoken to police to contact us.”

Richard Bream, who runs the nearby Mardens Kennels, told the PA news agency he had never heard of a dog attack in the area before.

“That particular area, View Point, is an area where professional dog walkers will turn up in their van and take the dogs out and walk them,” he said.

“I’ve always felt you see some of these dog walkers have five or six, and they shouldn’t be able to do that.”

A man at an address near the scene, who asked not to be named, told PA the beauty spot was very popular with dog walkers.

“The dogs dispersed into different areas of the woods and the police helicopter was out looking for them,” he said.

A postmortem examination will be conducted by the Surrey coroner as part of an inquest into the death.

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## Italy

# US-born princess vows to stay in Rome villa despite eviction order

Saga continues over property housing Caravaggio's only ceiling fresco as fifth auction fails to attract bids



Princess Rita Boncompagni Ludovisi poses below the Caravaggio Fresco in Villa Aurora. Photograph: Victor Sokolowicz

[\*Angela Giuffrida\*](#) in Rome

Sat 14 Jan 2023 00.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 14 Jan 2023 06.22 EST

A princess living in a villa in Rome that contains the only ceiling fresco ever painted by Caravaggio has said she would “vigorously defend” her right to stay in the sprawling property after a judge ordered her eviction.

The US-born Princess Rita Boncompagni Ludovisi, the only occupant of the 16th-century Villa Aurora, has been embroiled in a long-running

inheritance dispute with the three sons of her late husband, Prince Nicolò Boncompagni Ludovisi, who was the property's last owner.

In his will, the prince, who died in 2018, gave his wife the right to stay in the property for the rest of her life and, if sold, the proceeds were to be split between her and his sons. However, the sons disputed this, immediately prompting a legal wrangle.

Both sides eventually agreed to put the home up for sale, but the princess has been told to leave within 60 days just as the villa failed – for the fifth time – to attract any bidders at auction on Thursday.



Caravaggio's Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto fresco was painted on the ceiling of a small room on the first floor. Photograph: Victor Sokolowicz

A judge in Rome ruled the property, where Caravaggio's Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto fresco was painted on the ceiling of a small room tucked away on the first floor, was not being properly maintained after the collapse of a wall that led to the closure of an adjacent street, La Repubblica reported. The judge also accused the princess of organising some unauthorised tours, which she denied.

“I intend to vigorously defend my right of use” said Princess Rita in an interview with the Guardian. “I’m trying not to be bitter, but it’s difficult.”

Villa Aurora, which is hidden by high walls close to Via Veneto in central Rome, was off the radar to the public until 2010, when it opened following a restoration project inspired by the princess after she saw it for the first time in 2003, the year she met Prince Nicolò. Until his death, the villa hosted students of history and small private tour groups. Princess Rita put together a digital archive of 150,000 documents that shed even more light on the history contained within the home, including letters by Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.

“I loved my husband very much, and he loved me,” she said. “I have lived here for 20 years, and dedicated all my time and resources to this villa. It really didn’t have to be this way.”



Villa Aurora is hidden by high walls close to Via Veneto in central Rome. Photograph: Victor Sokolowicz

Villa Aurora was first put up for auction in January last year with an opening bid of €471m (£417m), a price tag mostly due to the undisclosed value of the Caravaggio fresco. The price was dropped to €145m for the latest auction, but still failed to attract any offers.

The princess said there was interest, but people did not “want to step into this mess”.

The next auction is planned for April. Since the site is protected by Italy’s ministry of culture, once a bid has been accepted the state will have the chance to buy the property at the same price.

Vittorio Sgarbi, an undersecretary at the culture ministry, said Princess Rita ought to be allowed to stay in the property as its custodian until the villa was sold.

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## [Ukraine war live](#)[Ukraine](#)

# Russia-Ukraine war live: UK to send tanks to Ukraine as Russian missiles hit multiple cities – as it happened

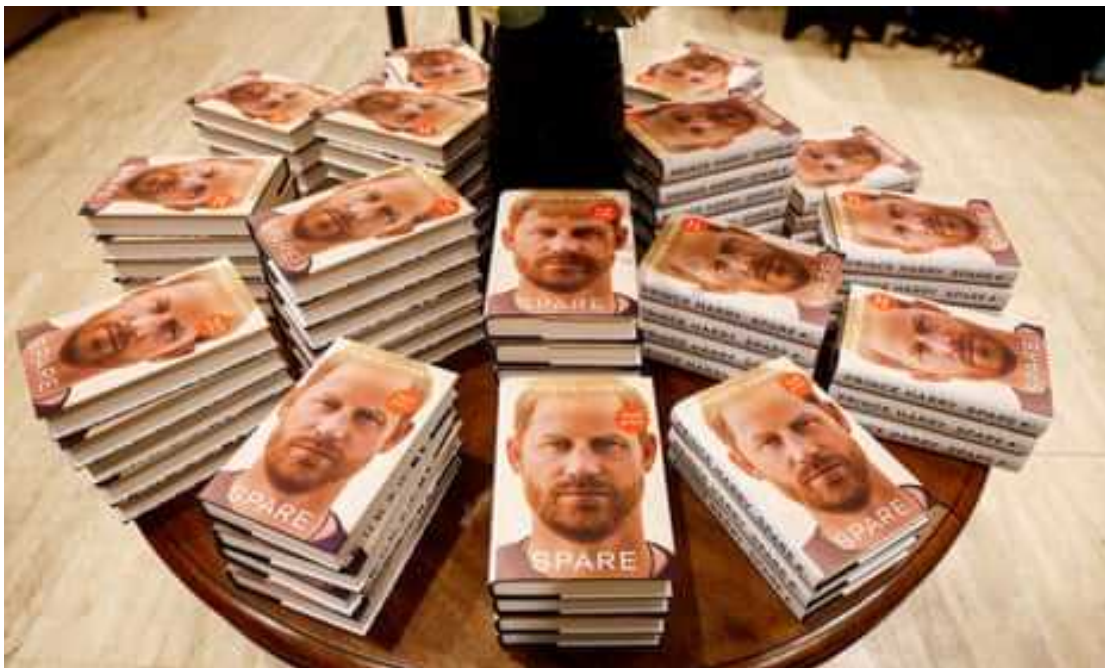
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## [Prince Harry](#)

# Prince Harry: I left out details as I feared family would not forgive me

Duke of Sussex tells Telegraph that he has enough material for another memoir and his original draft was twice as long



Copies of Prince Harry's memoir Spare on sale in the UK Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

[\*Jane Clinton\*](#)

Fri 13 Jan 2023 18.56 EST Last modified on Sat 14 Jan 2023 05.30 EST

Prince Harry says he has enough material to write another memoir and chose not to publish some details as he was concerned his father and brother would never forgive him if they were made public.

In an interview with the Daily Telegraph, the Duke of Sussex also said the initial transcript for Spare was twice the length of the final draft and he had found it difficult to work out what to remove.



A lot of the detail that was eventually edited out, he added, concerned both his father and his brother.

“The first draft was different,” he told interviewer Bryony Gordon. “It was 800 pages, and now it’s down to 400 pages. It could have been two books, put it that way. And the hard bit was taking things out.”

He added: “There are some things that have happened, especially between me and my brother, and to some extent between me and my father, that I just don’t want the world to know. Because I don’t think they would ever forgive me.”

Spare went on sale on Tuesday in the UK but it had already been heavily trailed after copies accidentally went on sale in Spain early.

[The Guardian was the first to reveal details from the memoir](#) including the allegation that Prince William had attacked Harry following a tense discussion over Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex.

Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace have said they will not comment on the contents of the book.

Prince Harry also speaks about what he claims was a lack of support for him and Meghan.

News of surplus material is likely to cause further consternation for the royal family.

In the interview, Harry said he knew he would “get trashed” for including anything about his family but that he could not have written the memoir without including them.

He was also critical of the press and alleged that the media had “a s--t tonne of dirt about my family, I know they have, and they sweep it under the carpet for juicy stories about someone else”.

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The duke reiterated that he was not trying to destroy the monarchy, but instead help reform it.

Referring to Prince William’s children – George, nine, Charlotte, seven and Louis, four – Prince Harry said at least one of his brother’s children will be a “spare” and that this “hurts” and “worries” him.

“This is not about trying to collapse the monarchy – this is about trying to save them from themselves,” he added. “I know that I will get crucified by numerous people saying that.”

He suggested that in time the royal family could thank him for talking so openly about his trauma.

Meanwhile, he admitted that trying to change “an institution” and the media landscape was “no small task” but that he was adopting “long-term, strategic thinking” to see through this “enormous” challenge.

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## 2023.01.14 - Spotlight

- Four dogs, three cats, two snakes, a tortoise What 30 years of pets have taught me about life
- Paul Merson 'I was at the Brit Awards and asked Kylie Minogue out. She said no'
- 'A thief came into our family and took the heart out of it' The killing of Zara Aleena
- Blind date 'I will forever be the woman who denied him a crab bisque'

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## Four dogs, three cats, two snakes, a tortoise: what 30 years of pets have taught me about life



Tim Dowling: ‘At times our house has resembled a menagerie.’  
Photograph: Pål Hansen/The Guardian. Shirt: [Levi's](#). Trousers: [Uniqlo](#)

Here's what you need to know: snakes *will* escape and a tortoise offers only lessons in estate planning ...



[Tim Dowling](#)

[@IAmTimDowling](#)

Sat 14 Jan 2023 04.00 EST

No, I said to my wife, “we should not get a cat.” Every family needs at least one member who is prepared to present the case for not getting a pet. I accepted the post early on. A cat may seem like a good idea, I told my wife, but it would ultimately be an encumbrance, a dragging anchor on our lives. We already have a mortgage for that. Let's just pretend the mortgage is a cat.

“No,” I said a few years later, “we should not get a dog. [Dogs](#) shed hair and chew up your property. And also, we already have a cat.”

My objections went unheeded, and I became a reluctant pet owner many times over. At certain points over the last 30 years our house has resembled a menagerie, with representatives from almost every class of vertebrate: mammals, fish, birds, reptiles.

Of course there are good reasons to keep pets. They're a repository for spare worry. They make fine companions, as long as you don't mind a friend who throws up on your stair carpet a couple of times a month. And if you get a kick out of apologising to strangers, you will never be short of reasons.

It's often suggested that getting a pet will inculcate responsibility in your children, which is like saying that getting a vacuum cleaner will teach your kids cleanliness. All the lessons of pet ownership will be learned by you, all of them the hard way.

Once you have pets, life without them seems unimaginable. And then they die. And then you can't imagine replacing them, because life without a pet is so carefree. But you do replace them. And then those ones die. It's the Circle of Life, on fast forward.

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My earliest memory of a pet is probably my earliest memory, no more than a blur, glimpsed through the bars of my crib: an enormous black dog runs into my bedroom, eats the magnetic letters off my easel and runs out again.

My father first encountered this dog, a stray, while it was foraging for shellfish along the edge of the salt marsh behind our house. The dog was cracking mussels open in its jaws, which my father thought demonstrated remarkable intelligence. He figured a smart dog would be a good dog. He was wrong.

The dog was uncontrollable, and he also bit people. This inevitably led to an incident that resulted in him having to be put down. My father would never talk about that day, not even years later. There were no photos to remember our first dog by, just the toothmarks on my magnetic alphabet.

His main legacy was my mother's strong objection to the idea of another dog. She did consent to a pair of ducklings one Easter, only to insist they be set free on a pond once they got big. We visited them sometimes, but we could never tell which ones were ours.

It was five years before my father brought home another dog, a starving mongrel that jumped into his car as he was leaving his dental practice. My mother said it could stay for one night. It stayed for 16 years.

The early 1970s was a very good time to be a dog. Daphne got let out in the morning and often would not return until late afternoon, perhaps dragging the rotting head of a large tuna collected from the boatyards at low tide. She was a good dog, with bad breath.

Towards the end Daphne was blind, deaf and unable to climb stairs. But even then she went out on winter mornings to walk clockwise around the house.

"She likes to pace," my father would say, carrying her out and depositing her into the groove she'd worn in the snow.

I was away at college when my parents finally had Daphne put down, and was unprepared for the flood of sadness that accompanied the news. I figured my one significant relationship with an animal had been and gone. I wasn't going to go through that again.

## **The tortoise**

In 1998, on the day of my wife's mother's funeral, my father-in-law arrived with a cardboard box under his arm. My wife thought it might be some heirloom – a memento from the time when her parents were still married – but when she looked in the box there was only a sleeping tortoise inside.

"I can't keep him," my father-in-law said. "He's destroying my garden."

This tortoise was originally given to my wife when she was eight years old. He subsequently escaped and was found in a field – a mile away and a year later – by a local farmer who had narrowly missed him with his combine

harvester. By mutual agreement the tortoise lived with the farmer's sheepdogs for 20 years, but the farm had recently been sold and the tortoise returned. At that point my wife and I had been married for six years, and no one had ever said a word to me about a fucking tortoise.

Pet ownership rose sharply over lockdown, but as pandemic gave way to recession, lots of people started worrying that their new pets would be too expensive to keep – the Dogs Trust has seen record inquiries about rehoming animals. And pets are expensive – the average annual spend for dog owners is around £2,000, about 7% of the average UK salary.



‘I made it a condition of snake-having that I would never feed them dead mice.’ Photograph: Pål Hansen/The Guardian

But a 50-year-old tortoise is virtually free to run. In the summer he lives outside, and he spends most of the winter in a corner of the kitchen mostly not moving. He eats grass, weeds, salad and a bit of fruit. He's been to the vet once, for a checkup. It turns out he's female.

Among other things, pets are meant to educate your children about death, but a tortoise only offers lessons in estate planning. They can easily live for over a century, so you have to make arrangements for their care, post-you. I suspect the main cause of death for tortoises in the wild is going upside



down while nobody is around. I've found ours on his back half a dozen times in the 25 years he's been my responsibility. I turn him over and he goes on his way. As long as there is someone around to do this for him, he may never die.

## Cats

I consider myself a dog person rather than a cat person. To me a cat is only notionally a domesticated animal, while dogs are possibly more domesticated than humans. My dog gets impatient with me if I don't go to bed on time. A cat's idea of a domestic routine is murdering something and leaving it on your pillow.

But the arrival of the tortoise weakened my resolve. When my wife suggested we get a cat a year later, I didn't object. She procured one and named it Lupin.

Lupin was a joy, but Lupin died. He'd been missing for three days when he was found at the foot of next door's garden steps, stiff as a salt cod and flat on the underside, the breeze lifting his fur as my wife held him up. He'd clearly been hit by a car and was trying to make his way home.

Something in me snapped that day. I decided we shouldn't get any more pets. I, for one, didn't need further lessons about death from the animal kingdom.

Everyone loved James, even me. When, after two years, he went missing, I thought my heart would break

No one listened to me. After Lupin we got Kipper, who wasn't a joy – he was disagreeable, and he bit. Kipper came inside to eat, and to claw at our toddler children, but the rest of the time he kept himself to himself. At the time I sort of liked the idea of a cat you couldn't really get attached to.

When Kipper got hit by a car, he made it back home. Twice. Each time he recovered, but these experiences did nothing for his temperament. When he

went missing for a third time, I'm ashamed to say I sort of hoped he'd never come back. He never did.

After waiting long enough – a year, maybe – to exclude the possibility of Kipper's dramatic return, we adopted a grey kitten called James.

James had no tail. When people asked about his deformity, my wife said, "I told them I didn't want the tail." But really he was the last of a litter, and a breech birth. He had to be pulled out by the tail, which promptly fell off.

Unlike Kipper, James was extremely patient; you could carry him around like a draught excluder. He was also timid, which kept him from exploring the surrounding roads. In spite of the unappealing stub he had in place of a tail, everyone loved James, even me. Then after two years James went missing, and I thought my heart would break.

I went to the park and put up posters designed by a 10-year-old, with rainbow letters that cast a deep retreating shadow. They said: "LOST – James the small grey cat with NO tail is missing [sad face]". Against my advice, he also put the word REWARD in huge capitals.



'I remember Ray (this isn't him) as a drop of golden sun.' Photograph: Pål Hansen/The Guardian

When you put up missing pet posters with the word REWARD on them, you are frequently interrupted in your work by strangers who claim to have seen your cat not half an hour ago. Either that or they just want to give you a hard time for sticking a drawing pin into a tree. None of the sightings panned out. It was time, I told myself, to move on.

Then, 12 days after he went missing, my wife took a call from a mysterious number. “We have James, the small grey cat with no tail,” a voice said. It sounded like the start of a ransom demand, but it turned out James had spent all 12 days trapped in a half-built basement extension two doors down. Stupid cat.

## **Dogs**

In 1999 my wife let it be known that she had been visiting dog shelters. At that point we had three children under five and Kipper and the tortoise, so I let it be known that I wasn’t remotely lonely.

Twenty years ago there were only about 6m dogs in the UK, compared with 13m today. Dog owners were just as entitled then as they are now, but the world was much less accommodating. These days you can take your dog to the cinema; back then, they were hardly allowed anywhere. I feared a dog would cramp my style.

A week later my wife took me to an animal shelter to see a skinny puppy – white with brown spots – called Big Mac. All my objections evaporated; once seen, this dog was impossible to leave behind. We took her home and changed her name to Bridey.

I could send my sons with the dog to play football in the park, knowing she’d be as vigilant as I was, and better in goal

For the next 10 years I walked a full circuit of the local park twice a day, every day. Between walks the dog would sit directly behind my desk chair, staring at my back, waiting for the next outing.

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I have never seen the point of paying someone to walk your dog for you; it's like paying someone to ride your bicycle around. I understand that people are busy, but surely walking the dog is largely the point of having the dog. Having said that, whenever I encountered a dog walker leading six dogs on a rainy December morning, I would think: he's getting £100 for this, and I'm just getting wet. Who is the real idiot here?

From the beginning Bridey was eerily obedient, and fiercely protective. Instead of taking my three sons to the park to play football, I could send them off with the dog in my place, knowing she would be at least as vigilant as I was, and much better in goal. I had all the dog I needed in my life.

In 2010 my wife started hatching plans to get a second dog.

“We already have a dog,” I said.

“It's for him, really,” she said, pointing to our youngest child, who was 10.

“It would basically be my dog,” he said.

“Why can't we just make that dog his dog?” I said, pointing to the dog.

I was really worried that walking two dogs would make me look like some kind of enthusiast. But there was a bigger problem: the new dog – a jack russell cross – did not take to me the way the old dog had. It seemed to sense my resentment; it obeyed my commands in front of people, and ignored them when we were alone. It left turds in my shoes. When my wife

went away for a week, the new dog grew listless and developed a skin complaint.

The idea that the new dog was allergic to me gained some currency in the park, where my sudden elevation to double dog owner attracted new levels of scrutiny, just as I had feared it would.



‘We’ve had our share of furry things.’ Photograph: Pål Hansen/The Guardian. Styling: Bemi Shaw. Grooming: Carol Sullivan at Arlington Artists. Jumper: [AllSaints](#)

“She’s probably stressed from being left alone with you,” another dog owner said, while the dog scratched.

“But I’m fun to be with,” I told her. The woman stared at me.

“I don’t think you’re supposed to say that sort of thing about yourself,” she said.

As a result of this dynamic, I was gradually relieved of my dog-walking duties. My wife took over, and became popular in the park, where I was merely tolerated. That was 10 years ago, and I still find it galling.

Over time, however, the new dog and I reached an accommodation. I came to understand its neuroses, and even to admire its bald duplicity. As I write this I am looking across the garden from my office into the kitchen, where the dog is standing on the table licking the butter. I've decided not to say anything, and just use different butter.

## **The birds**

I don't enjoy sharing indoor spaces with birds, accidentally or on purpose, but Ray the budgie was an exception. He liked being with people, and made eye contact in a rakish, raised-eyebrow kind of way.

My wife loved Ray. He sat on her shoulder as she typed at her desk and sang softly in her ear. But Ray died of unknown causes after about a year – he was just lying at the bottom of his cage one morning, feet in the air – and we decided there could never be another. I remember him as Ray, a drop of golden sun, but my wife insists he was blue.

## **Snakes**

Chances are, at some point in your life, a child will talk you into getting an exotic pet, something cold-eyed and difficult to cuddle – a giant spider, or a knobbly lizard, or an emotionally inaccessible snake. Resistance is probably futile, but definitely worth a try.

A snake – even a small corn snake – requires a lot of expensive kit. It will need a tank, a heating pad and wood shavings to hide under. You have to feed them a steady supply of small, dead, defrosted mice. I made it a condition of snake-having that I would never have to perform this duty, but I ended up doing it regularly. Sometimes, to tempt the snake, you have to scissor the mouse in half first. Good times.

Here's what you need to know about snakes: they will escape. You spend a small fortune providing them with an ideal environment, and they reward you by leaving it to live in your walls or among your folded towels. Long after you've given them up for dead, they turn up.

Mr Rogers the snake was found at the bottom of the big Lego box, and later inside a stereo speaker. His erstwhile companion Mrs Hammerstein (originally a house guest left with us by another family, although the name suggested they always meant for us to adopt it) disappeared for three weeks and was discovered, by me, lying beneath the loose stair runner I was repairing. My heart briefly stopped.

## **Small mammals and fish**

Over the years we've also had our share of furry things in cages; shy desert rodents with fat cheeks and a resting heart rate of 600 beats per minute. I do not understand the attraction, but if you really want to teach small children about death, any of these will do the job. Hamsters in particular succumb regularly, with an average lifespan of 18 to 36 months.

We've had goldfish that lived longer than that, including an improbably sturdy example who used to leap out of his tank and land on the kitchen floor on a regular basis. It was hard to tell how long he'd been lying there when you came across him, but if you popped him back into the water he quickly revived – until the time he landed in the gap between two sofa cushions, and wasn't found for a month. RIP, Bluey Fin.

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Just before Christmas 2015 Bridey had some kind of fit and collapsed in the park. I carried her back home, and although she got better over the next few hours, she got steadily worse over the next two weeks. During that period I talked to other dog owners about the end-of-life decisions they'd made. Some claimed any dog with an appetite was a happy dog, but most people said that, in hindsight, they'd left it too late.

In early January we took Bridey to the vet and held her while the injection was administered. It was a peaceful end, but when I walked out of that room leaving her there on the floor, I understood my dad's silence when we put down our first pet, all those years ago.

I have shed a few quiet tears while writing this and remembering all the dead pets; not so much for Pepper the hamster, but certainly for James the



cat, who died a little over a year ago, aged 16. He spent much of his later life following me around the house, making increasingly tortured noises, as if in a bid to guess my name, the better to hold me accountable for his needs.

“Bren,” he would say.

“I’m not Bren,” I would say.

“Roald,” he would say. “Muiread.”

“No and no,” I would say.

When my wife talked about getting a new cat after James, I made my case against it. It’s too soon, I said. We need time to experience all the hidden advantages of not having a cat, and that could take a year, because some of those advantages might be seasonal.

I knew that she would get one anyway, and she knew that, deep down, I was fine with that.

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## Paul Merson: ‘I was at the Brit Awards and asked Kylie Minogue out. She said no’



Paul Merson: 'My greatest fear? Going back to addiction.' Photograph: Andy Hall/The Guardian

The football pundit on his very expensive suit, fighting addiction and why he owes Walsall fans an apology

[Rosanna Greenstreet](#)

Sat 14 Jan 2023 04.30 EST Last modified on Sat 14 Jan 2023 15.27 EST

Born in London, Paul Merson, 54, started his career at Arsenal as an apprentice. He spent 11 seasons with the club, winning the League Championship twice, the FA Cup, the League Cup and the European Cup Winners' Cup; he went on to play for Middlesbrough, Aston Villa and Portsmouth. He was capped 21 times for England, playing in the 1992 European Championship and the 1998 World Cup. Now a Sky Sports pundit, he is also an ambassador for [Recoverlution](#), an online platform for people in recovery. Married for the third time, he has eight children and lives in London.

**When were you happiest?**

On holiday in Orlando with my wife, Kate, and kids just before lockdown. I wasn't drinking or gambling. I was so happy, so at peace with myself – I'd been searching for that for many a year.

**What is your greatest fear?**

Going back to addiction.

**What is your earliest memory?**

Going to my nan's in Dollis Hill on Christmas Day age five. Every Christmas we used to go: I loved that and remember it like it was yesterday.

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

Impatience.

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?**

Bad manners.

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**

When you jump out of addiction and look back, things like drink-driving and sitting in crack houses are not good.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

Today.

**Aside from a property, what's the most expensive thing you've bought?**

Thirty-odd years ago I bought a black pinstripe suit which I thought was £900. But when I went to pay that was just the jacket – the trousers and waistcoat were extra. I didn't have the balls to put anything back. I dread to think how much it cost me in the end.

**Describe yourself in three words**

Funny, caring, loving. When I'm not drinking and gambling, I'm that person.

**What do you most dislike about your appearance?**

My nose, it's quite big.

**Who is your celebrity crush?**

Years ago, I was at the Brit awards and asked Kylie Minogue out. She said no.

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**

Ben & Jerry's – the whole tub; that's the addict in me.

**To whom would you most like to say sorry, and why?**

Walsall fans. I wanted to be a good manager but I was really bad with drink and gambling at the time. I should have done better.

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**What does love feel like?**

For me, love is working through things when it's not going well.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**

Boring people get bored.

**If not yourself, who would you most like to be?**

All my life I've wanted to be someone else and today I don't want to be anybody but me.

**What single thing would improve the quality of your life?**

Nothing, because it's up to me how I feel. I've been a millionaire three times and I still wanted to kill myself.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

Getting well.

**What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**

That materialistic things will not make you happy.

**Tell us a secret**

As they say in AA and GA meetings, secrets will kill you. So I don't have any.

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## **‘A thief came into our family and took the heart out of it’: the killing of Zara Aleena**



Zara Aleena's aunts Smaira (standing) and Farah Naz (seated), her uncle, Kasim Ali, and friends Chantelle Cole and Sanjay and Sherit Nair. Photograph: Alice Zoo/The Guardian

Last year the bright, kind law graduate was brutally murdered as she walked home after a night out. Now her friends and family are striving to create meaning from the tragedy

[Samira Shackle](#)  
[@samirashackle](#)

Sat 14 Jan 2023 02.00 EST

Five weeks before she was murdered, 35-year-old Zara Aleena started work at the Royal Courts of Justice. On her first day, she sent a brightly smiling selfie to her friends and family, saying she couldn't believe she was actually there. It was an administrative role that took her one step closer to her lifelong dream of being a lawyer; something she had pursued doggedly even as her studies were interrupted by caring responsibilities and financial concerns. After passing the solicitors' exams with distinction and landing this new job, Aleena felt a new stage of her life was beginning. Her aunt Farah Naz told her: "Soon, Zara, you are going to be a formidable force."

On the evening of 26 June 2022, Aleena met a friend at a local pub, the Great Spoon of Ilford. They had dinner and a drink there before moving on to a bar, where Aleena drank water. Around 2am, they left. The friend got in a cab, but Aleena walked; she was close to home and it was a warm evening. When her other aunt, Smaira Naz, imagines her walking that night, she thinks of how Aleena always had a spring in her step. "She had this bounce when she walked – it was lovely, so much energy," she says. "Walking made her feel free."

Ilford is a bustling, diverse area on the eastern edge of London. Aleena was on Cranbrook Road, a well-lit residential street about 10 minutes' walk from her home, when she crossed paths with a 29-year-old man called Jordan McSweeney, who had recently been released from prison. By coincidence, he had also been in the Great Spoon of Ilford earlier in the



evening, but was ejected after harassing a female bartender. Before encountering Aleena, CCTV footage shows him staggering around the streets of Ilford, following different women. One woman, noticing he was trailing her, dived into a supermarket to hide. He marched up and down the aisles looking for her, before waiting outside. After leaving the shop, she broke into a desperate run when she saw he was still there. Later, McSweeney went into a chicken shop, staring at a female customer with his hands down his trousers, before following her, too. She lost him. He followed a third woman along the street. Two men across the road appeared to notice what he was doing, but did not intervene, and the woman went out of their line of vision when she turned off the road with McSweeney close behind her. When she noticed him, he overtook her, pretending to enter a house but in fact hiding in a driveway, lying in wait. Fortunately, the woman went into her house before she reached him. Wandering back on to Cranbrook Road, McSweeney spotted Aleena and began to follow her. As the prosecution lawyer later said: “She did not stand a chance of survival.”

If it had been me who was murdered, right now it would be Zara sitting in front of you. She always fought for justice

Before Aleena noticed him, he grabbed her from behind with one arm over her mouth and the other round her neck. He dragged her into a driveway and sexually assaulted her, before stamping on her several times – with, in the words of the prosecution, “almost unimaginable force” – and leaving her for dead. The entire brutal assault took nine minutes. Soon afterwards, Aleena was found by members of the public, who attempted to administer first aid as they waited for an ambulance. Emergency services arrived at about 2.45am, but it was too late to save her. She died in hospital at 9.58am on Sunday.

Around 11am, police officers knocked on the door of Aleena’s grandmother, a short distance from Cranbrook Road. Aleena was a carer for her mother and grandmother, and had a bedroom in each house, walking the half-hour between the two addresses several times a day. The police asked her grandmother, Rashda Parveen, to identify Aleena from a still from the pub’s CCTV. When Parveen confirmed it was her, police explained what had happened. Aleena’s uncle, Kasim Ali, called the rest of the family.

Farah Naz was at home in Portugal when she heard. In a blur, she broke the news to her own children before flying back to London. “We were all in shock, numb, disbelieving,” she says.

The family is close-knit and interconnected. Aleena’s grandparents migrated to Britain from Pakistan in 1968 and eventually had five children. Aleena was their first grandchild; her mother had become a single parent at 22. The family raised Aleena together. “We didn’t have much, growing up, but we always valued education and we just thought: Zara is going to have it all,” Farah Naz remembers. “And so she had it all – museums, galleries, travel. She was the family darling.” The horror of her death is difficult to reconcile: “It’s as if a thief came into our family home and took the heart of it.”



Zara Aleena (on left) with her mother, aunt Smaira and cousins in Portugal in 2017. Photograph: courtesy of Farah Naz

Everyone was reeling; struggling to eat, sleep or talk about the murder, yet unable to think of anything else. But there was so much to do. Naz, a therapist who has worked in women’s organisations, dealt with the media and met with police. Even through their shock and grief, the family knew they wanted to control the narrative and protect Aleena from victim-blaming. Just three days after her death, they put out a remarkable

statement. “She was fierce: she didn’t just survive, she thrived. She walked everywhere. She put her party shoes in a bag and donned her trainers. She walked. Zara believed that a woman should be able to walk home.”

A week after Aleena’s death, hundreds of people gathered on Cranbrook Road, dressed in white. They were there to walk Aleena home. Addressing the crowd, Anjum Mouj, chair of the London Black Women’s Project, said: “It’s 2 July, nearly 60 women have died this year. Shame on our society, shame on our political leaders.” Carrying roses, the crowd silently walked the short distance to Aleena’s house. “We needed to do something before we became paralysed with grief,” Naz says. “I’m not going to get closure, but the community held us in their arms that day as if to remind us not to give up on humanity.”

Mouj, who helped organise the vigil, has known the family for more than 30 years. When I speak with her in November, she is tearful. “There is no degree of separation, no sense that one thing is my work and one thing is my life. It sounds trite, but Zara cannot have died without something profound changing.”

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Two weeks after Aleena’s death, I sit down with Farah Naz to talk for the first time. She is in her 50s and bears a striking resemblance to her niece. “I feel like a ghost, like I’m not really here,” she tells me. “It’s like being stuck in a horror film.” She is remarkably composed, but explains that this is because she is in a state of trauma and dissociation. Despite this, she feels an urgent need to speak out; an obligation to Aleena and an urge to create meaning from this senseless tragedy. For years, Aleena had been the family organiser – the person who stepped in during a crisis, who made a formal complaint when a postman shouted at her grandmother, who cleaned up the house when her aunt Smaira was burgled. “If it had been me who was murdered, right now it would be Zara sitting in front of you,” Naz says. “She was a lioness. She was protective of women’s rights, and she always wanted to fight for justice. Zara would be screaming from the rooftops.”

Why are two women a week being murdered in the UK? This is about power, control, misogyny. Zara had a right to be safe

Ever since [the murder of Sarah Everard](#) by police officer Wayne Couzens in March 2021, there has been a particular media focus on women killed by strangers. The outpouring of public rage and grief that followed the Everard killing changed the national conversation and appeared to be a genuine moment of reckoning. “It put a spotlight on women’s safety in public spaces,” says Andrea Simon, director of the End Violence Against Woman campaign. “There always seems to be a misplaced responsibility on women not to be attacked, even though we’re doing this invisible safety work – keys in hand, sharing locations – all the time.” (A WhatsApp message on Aleena’s phone, sent by her friend after she left the bar read, “Are you home hon?”) While this type of crime is actually quite rare – it is far more common for [a woman to be murdered](#) by a current or ex-partner – these cases have become symbolic of broader despair about women’s safety and a political and policing culture that does not appear to take it seriously. “Why are there [two women a week being murdered](#) in the UK?” Naz asks. “This is about power, control and misogyny. Zara had a right to be safe.”

In July 2021, after the outcry over Everard’s murder, Priti Patel, then home secretary, said that “there must be a change”, adding that she was speaking “not just as home secretary, but as a woman”. The government pledged a legal review into gaps in existing law and how a specific offence of public sexual harassment could address those ([a bill criminalising street harassment](#) is making its way through the Commons); an information campaign targeting perpetrators of violence against women; a £5m “safety of women and night fund”; more street lighting and more CCTV. Campaigners argue that these solutions merely scratch the surface. “This approach doesn’t address the root problem: the unacceptable attitudes and behaviours that underpin women’s inequality,” Simon says. There has been little investment in the kind of long-term, major public education campaign that could create a wholesale shift in attitudes to women. And when it comes to the criminal justice system, the problems are deeply ingrained. “New laws could have a useful effect on behaviour, but we already have a whole raft of laws which are just not being implemented at all,” says Harriet Wistrich, director of the Centre for Women’s Justice. Rape convictions are so low that the victims’ commissioner said in 2020 that the offence is effectively “decriminalised”. (In 2021, just [1.6% of reported rape cases](#) led to a charge.) Disturbing reports of misogyny in the police force

proliferate. In 2021, the [inspectorate of probation](#) found that checks on sexual offenders and domestic violence perpetrators going back into the community were “nowhere near effective enough”. All the while, the list of women murdered by violent men grows. “The tragedy is that the only time you see a really good, effective investigation is when there’s a murder, and then police put in the resources and do a good job,” Wistrich says. “But on the lesser offences that often lead to an escalation, they’re failing.”



With (from left) her mother, grandmother and aunts on Christmas Day 2021. Photograph: courtesy of Farah Naz

Aleena often discussed these issues with her friend Kareece Peters. The two met in secondary school and as adults were still in and out of each other’s houses, speaking on the phone most days. They sent each other links to news articles and got heated on the subject of women’s safety and victim-blaming. “We both said the same thing – it’s such shit that you can take all these precautions and they’ll still find another thing to say you did wrong,” Peters says. When another tragic case of a woman’s death hit the news, they’d text each other in weary anger: “Here we go again.” Aleena was keenly aware of the forces stacked against women, Peters remembers: “Zara would say, ‘When are we going to address the people who feel entitled to our time and space? It feels like we’re going backwards.’”

The day after the murder, police arrested McSweeney at the caravan where he was staying with a friend, in a funfair at Valentines Park, just off Cranbrook Road. They had identified him from the bloody fingerprints he left near the site of the attack and then traced his location using CCTV. He was known to police: he had 28 convictions for 69 previous offences, including assaults on police and civilians, theft and racially aggravated harassment. He had been released from prison on 17 June, nine days before the murder. By the time he targeted Aleena, he should not have been free: he'd been recalled to prison two days earlier after failing to show up for meetings with probation officers, but police had failed to track him down. (This is the subject of a probation inspectorate inquiry, expected to publish results this month.) "What I feel with Zara's case really keenly is those missed opportunities," Simon says. "There were so many state failings, so many missed points, where police or other agencies could have responded better to this dangerous man."

The criminal justice system has been decimated in recent years: legal aid has been cut to the point where it is barely functional, courts are plagued by delays, prisons are over-full and targeted rehabilitative services almost nonexistent. All of this has an effect. "The criminal justice system isn't really functioning," Wistrich says. "And agencies exist in a culture of misogyny. We have police officers who carry those views, or don't understand the dynamics of male violence towards women. We have probation officers who don't understand what behaviour represents danger towards women, and a prison and parole system not effectively identifying risk."

Farah Naz speaks with quiet fury about this. "Where are the targeted early-intervention programmes for offenders? Why aren't potentially violent men identified early?" She goes over and over McSweeney's movements on the night of the murder. Why had no one stepped in? She worries about the loss of trust in police and wonders how bystanders could be encouraged to intervene if they see concerning behaviour. "Women have a right not to be hurt. But they think it's a norm they have to accept."

The what-ifs are a torment. What if one of the many people who saw McSweeney harassing women that night had called the police? What if

someone in one of the houses had responded to Aleena's screams and intervened? What if the passersby who found her struggling to breathe had turned on to the road earlier? Would she still be here?

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Aleena laughed easily and often. Her aunt Smaira Naz lived nearby and Aleena visited several times a week. When she was revising for her solicitors' exams, she asked her aunt to help her practise role-plays, but they always ended up collapsing into giggles. "Zara could talk for England," Peters says. For years Aleena worked in the local Tie Rack and Peters would pop in to see her for 20 minutes and end up staying hours as Aleena chattered away, serving customers at the same time. She knew everyone in the area, from teenagers to octogenarians, always friendly and offering to help her neighbours out. Her friend Sherit Nair lives between her mother and grandmother's homes, so Aleena often stopped off on the way. Sometimes he wouldn't see her for the first hour as she caught up with his mum and sisters. "She could talk for hours, but she was a great listener, too," he says. "Zara was so vibrant and distinctive. People remembered her even if they met her briefly. She just stood out." She was a cat lover, sometimes spending her own money to take strays to the vet. She looked after some of these at home, or convinced neighbours to take them in. "The word I'd use to describe her is 'radiant'," her friend Sanjay Nair says. "She was so positive, it rubbed off on you. If you had a bad day, you knew talking to Zara would pick you up. She just made you feel happy."





A young Zara Aleena on a family road trip in Europe ...



... and with her grandfather at a wedding in 2004. Photographs: courtesy of Farah Naz

Today, the streets are a physical geography of loss for her friends. Leaving her house, Peters sees the spot where she'd meet Aleena to walk to the tube together; the corner where Aleena would turn off to walk home. Sherit Nair is a tube driver and had promised Aleena that if he ever spotted her on the



platform coming home from work, she could hop into the driver's carriage. He still instinctively looks for her.

"She was just such a darling," Smaira Naz says. She worried her niece was taking on too much; for years she worked in retail alongside her studies, and even after starting at the Royal Courts of Justice carried on volunteering as a caseworker to resettle refugees in the UK. Alongside this, she cared for her mother and grandmother, making sure they had food, medications and company. "She never felt it was a burden," Nair says. "She took great pride in it and was always trying to think of ways to brighten their days." If a friend needed a babysitter, a shoulder to cry on or a listening ear, they called Aleena. "She lived life to the absolute max," Sanjay Nair says. "I'm not saying it because she's gone, but she was the kindest person I ever met." She was straight-talking, too; the friend you could always rely on to be honest. "She was fierce, and she didn't take any shit from anyone," Farah Naz says.

Aleena made people feel seen. Peters works as a jewellery designer and was surprised when Aleena gave her a mug with a lid attached to it, so she could drink tea in her studio without it getting dusty. "She was like that – you'd forgotten you'd said something, then she'd respond." Even now, her grandmother is still finding gifts Aleena had bought for her friends and relatives, wrapped ready for far-off birthdays or Christmases.

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In the aftermath of her death, everyone in the family shut down in one way or another. Farah Naz struggled when people said they were sorry for her loss. “I don’t want anyone to feel sorry for me, because I’m not going through what she went through,” she says. “She’s lost everything she worked for, everything she was, everything she was yet to be. It just got taken away.”

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On 28 August, two months after Aleena’s death, around 100 people gather outside Ilford town hall for a protest march in her memory organised by a local campaign group called [Walk It Out](#). It is a disparate group: friends and family of Aleena, campaigners, local councillors and members of the public. Farah Naz is here, too, looking tired. It is a sunny day, and cardboard placards are propped up against the steps of the town hall bearing the names of women – Zara Aleena; [Sabina Nessa](#), who was murdered by a stranger as she walked through a park to meet a friend; Everard – and slogans such as “enough is enough”.

The march goes down Ilford high street, past the station, Indian takeaways, estate agents and pound shops. Organisers hold a megaphone at the front, shouting repeatedly: “Say her name.” The marchers call back: “Zara Aleena”. I walk with Peters and Nonny, another school friend of Aleena’s. They’re wearing T-shirts printed with a photo of them on a night out with her. Neither has attended a protest before. “It’s really difficult to keep saying her name,” Nonny says, quietly.

We reach Cranbrook Road and stop opposite the driveway where Aleena was killed. A laminated photograph of her and a few bunches of flowers still sit on the pavement. It is a wide road with large houses, dotted with lamp-posts, with buses and cars going up and down. I can see how it would feel like a safe road to walk on at night. In a matter-of-fact tone, Farah Naz points out the driveway and the residential CCTV camera directly above the spot where Aleena was attacked. The entire incident was recorded. Naz says it was a hot night and windows would have been open, so people must have heard her screaming. Later, she tells me it is important for her to directly confront this horror. “I have to bear witness to what she went through.”

Afterwards Peters tells me that she did not have an easy day. Strangers used their T-shirts as an opening, sharing details they'd read about McSweeney and the murder. This information was difficult to hear. "I wished that hadn't been unloaded to us," she says. "People forget they're talking about a real person. She had a life, she had a family, she had friends."



'How do we continue to believe in a society that breeds such violence towards women?': Farah Naz with her sister Smaira (right) and Chantelle Cole. Photograph: Alice Zoo/The Guardian

As the months passed and police built their case, the family grappled with their grief. Farah Naz tried to think about how to bring good out of this tragedy and create a legacy for Aleena. She held a dizzying array of meetings – with women's rights groups, the London mayor's office, the victims' commissioner and others. "I've been learning a hell of a lot about the judicial system, and how to be a victim," she tells me in October. She has been surprised at how Eurocentric some services are; only Aleena's mother qualified for victim support, and Naz felt she constantly had to explain her closeness to her niece, although these close relationships are commonplace in south Asian families. She sought private therapeutic treatment for her own trauma.

But every now and then, in a meeting with an official or a campaigner, Naz caught someone giving her a look of concern and wondered: am I coming across more traumatised than I think I am? When this happened at one meeting in late November, Naz's professional expertise as a therapist kicked in. "I suddenly realised that, somewhere in my brain, I thought this was still happening. I'm talking to people with this urgency, and the subtext is: 'Can you go and save her? Can you stop this right now? Please, can you stop this?' I was coming from a place of trauma, and I thought I was out of it."

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For weeks, McSweeney refused to leave his cell to enter a plea. When I say how stressful that must be, Naz shrugs. "It's not like we're ever out of suffering. I am thinking about Zara all the time." In late November, McSweeney finally pleads guilty. This means the family is spared the protracted process of a trial. The evidence is overwhelming: CCTV footage not only of the sexual assault and murder, but of McSweeney pursuing other women; bloody clothes and shoes found near his caravan; his fingerprint in blood on the wall where she was killed.

[The sentencing hearing](#) takes place on 14 December at the Old Bailey. It is an icy, cold day, but women's groups and friends are gathered outside with placards. The public gallery is full of loved ones, the press gallery packed with the national media. Aleena's mother, who has been struggling in the aftermath of her daughter's death, could not make it. But Farah and Smaira Naz walk in with their brother, Kasim Ali, and Aleena's grandmother. Only one spot in the room remains empty: the dock. McSweeney has refused to attend. His barrister tells the court that he did not want to see the CCTV footage and "relive that night". ("Why does he have that right?" Naz asks me the next day. "We wanted to watch him watch the video, look at him when we gave our impact statements. He should have been made to look at us.")

The prosecution gives a detailed account of McSweeney's movements in the hours before the murder. Perhaps the most chilling thing about the CCTV footage of him pursuing women is how familiar it is; most women have experienced the cold fear of realising someone is staring or walking too close behind. Many will have stepped into a shop to lose someone, or asked a group of strangers if they can walk with them because a man is

behaving threateningly. No one stepped in to help the women who were being followed that night, and none of the women or the witnesses reported it to the police. Sitting in the public gallery, Sherit Nair is tense, watching the repeated failures to intervene. “Men are the problem here and need to be the solution in calling out bad behaviour,” he tells me afterwards.



In Trafalgar Square, London, during a family day out in 1994. Photograph: courtesy of Farah Naz

Aleena’s family leaves the room as CCTV footage of the attack is played, but Farah Naz returns, determined to bear witness. There is absolute silence in the courtroom as the prosecutor describes the brutal violence of the assault. Sanjay Nair sits in the public gallery and weeps. “I wish I could take that pain myself, so she didn’t have to,” he says. Every day since the murder, he says, he has been unable to stop replaying it in his head. The footage shows that after stamping on Aleena and leaving her for dead, McSweeney returned and took her phone, throwing it over a wall, presumably to prevent her calling for help. When he was arrested and questioned about the murder, he yawned loudly and told police that they were boring him.

In the courtroom that afternoon, Naz appears in the witness stand to deliver her victim impact statement. “We are trapped in a constant loop of torturous images, nightmares. We are stuck in time – sometimes we die with her, sometimes we are murdered and sometimes we are trying to save her with our hands tied,” she says. Her voice trembles with emotion, but she carries on: “How do we continue to believe in a society that breeds such violence towards women, how do we continue to have faith in systems that failed to protect her, to live in a community that didn’t respond to her screams?”

When Naz finishes, Aleena’s grandmother speaks. Her voice shakes as she tearfully describes how Aleena was the light of her life. She concludes by quoting from an Urdu poem: “Thief of my peace, may you never know peace. May God never give you peace.” Her broken sobs echo around the silent courtroom as she walks slowly back to her seat.

The judge sentences McSweeney to life in prison, with a minimum term of 38 years. He is not present for her sentencing remarks; once again, he refuses to leave his cell. The judge describes Aleena as “talented, intelligent, spirited and kind”, someone who “was simply living her life in what most Londoners think of as the best city in the world. She did nothing wrong.” This echoed the concluding remarks of the prosecuting barrister (“Zara Aleena had every right to walk home. She had every right to expect to do so safely”) and earlier comments of the senior investigating officer (“She had every right to be there”).

The substantial minimum sentence was a relief for Aleena’s family, but nothing can provide comfort. “The only way for us to survive is to campaign for Zara’s name to live on through change in society,” Naz says. She has stopped trying to find the solutions for ending violence against women and instead wants to use her family’s story to ask questions: how can the criminal justice system work better to identify killers and sexual offenders? What practical steps can be taken to end misogyny? “This cannot be seen as an unavoidable inevitability,” she says.

Aleena would have turned 36 on 9 December, five days before the sentencing. A small group of her family and friends gathered at a local park to plant a cherry tree and place a plaque on a bench in her memory. It reads:

“An angel put on Earth. She touched the hearts of everyone around her.  
Gone too soon.”

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## Blind date: 'I will for ever be the woman who denied him a crab bisque'



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Composite: Adrian Sherratt



Katharine, 34, an accountant, meets Stephen, 41, a nurse

Sat 14 Jan 2023 01.00 EST



## **Katharine on Stephen**

### **What were you hoping for?**

To meet someone new without preconceptions, and a fun evening.

### **First impressions?**

I was just relieved he was there. He'd brought me flowers, which was lovely, and was reading a book – a nice change from looking at your phone.

### **What did you talk about?**

Christmas. Family. The World Cup. Films. Music. Hobbies. Politics.

### **Most awkward moment?**

When I got a bit bossy on the ordering. I'll for ever be the woman who denied him a crab bisque – sorry, Stephen!

**Good table manners?**

Yes.

**Best thing about Stephen?**

That he seemed really comfortable in himself.

**Would you introduce Stephen to your friends?**

We talked about how much we enjoy sport – him, football; me, netball. He'd get on well with my netball team.

**Describe Stephen in three words.**

Tall, thoughtful, self-assured.

**What do you think he made of you?**

That I'm a complete chatterbox and didn't give him a chance to get a word in edgeways. Other than that, hopefully that I was good company.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

No, we went our separate ways.

**And ... did you kiss?**

No.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**

How my head felt the next day, after the second bottle of wine.

**Marks out of 10?**

A strong 7.

**Would you meet again?**

I'd meet for a drink as friends.

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Katharine and Stephen on their date  
Q&A

### **Want to be in Blind date?**

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

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## **Stephen on Katharine**

### **What were you hoping for?**

A nice meal and pleasant conversation.

### **First impressions?**

Confident, chatty, very friendly – I knew immediately it would be fun.

### **What did you talk about?**

Top five films. Music and playlists. The novelty of a blind date. Family, kids and plans. Christmas presents.

### **Most awkward moment?**

I don't think there was one but, if I had to choose, going to the loo three times because I drank so much water.

### **Good table manners?**

Impeccable. She chatted with our fellow diners, which was nice.

### **Best thing about Katharine?**

She's quite assertive, which was refreshing. I was clueless about a lot of the

food, and the wine selection. I was pleased she took the lead there.

**Would you introduce Katharine to your friends?**

Without question.

**Describe Katharine in three words.**

Logical, pretty, fun.

**What do you think she made of you?**

“Has this guy got a UTI?” Joking. I hope she thought that I was equally friendly and chatty.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

Unfortunately not.

**And ... did you kiss?**

Only pecks on the cheek.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**

Chicken over rabbit leg – the leg was amazing, but it’s just so much effort.

**Marks out of 10?**

11 – the extra mark is because Katharine went above and beyond.

**Would you meet again?**

I’d like to ... four hours just flew by.

*Katharine and Stephen ate at [Bianchis, Bristol](#). Fancy a blind date? Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

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## 2023.01.14 - Opinion

- [Why are female clergy cheering for a bishop who doesn't believe in female priests?](#)
- [Cartoon Martin Rowson on Sunak's deal to set up two free ports in Scotland](#)
- [Our European neighbours now look at post-Brexit Britain and say simply: nein, danke](#)
- [Why hasn't Harry given up his ridiculous title yet?](#)

## [OpinionReligion](#)

# Why are female clergy cheering for a bishop who doesn't believe in female priests?

[Martine Osborne](#)



The ordination of the C of E's first diocesan bishop since 2014 who refuses to ordain women is nothing to celebrate

- Martine Osborne is a vicar in west London and chair of Women and the Church





‘It is likely that many female clergy members will struggle with having a bishop who does not ordain women.’ Female clergy at St Paul's Cathedral, London, 2014. Photograph: Mary Turner/Getty Images

Sat 14 Jan 2023 04.00 EST Last modified on Sat 14 Jan 2023 05.29 EST

It was with “great joy” that the senior Church of England cleric the Rev Dr Jill Duff, the bishop of Lancaster, announced [Philip North’s appointment](#) as the next bishop of Blackburn this week. “Thrilled by this news,” she wrote – the ostensive message that the appointment is good news for women in the church. But this may seem curious to those who know the backstory.

North is one of a number of clergy in the C of E who do not believe that women should be [ordained as priests](#), let alone bishops. Moves to promote him in 2012 and 2017 were quashed after protests by female church members. Those who hold his theological position do not receive bread and wine consecrated by female clergy or by a man or woman ordained by a female bishop. Duff isn’t the only female clergy member to welcome North’s nomination – many no doubt know of his gifts and, despite not fully recognising their orders, how he has been supportive of female clergy in the past.

But the C of E's commitment to "mutual flourishing", where both those who accept the ordination of women and those who don't are supposed to happily coexist, is wreaking damage on the church. This commitment runs so deep that you cannot go forward for ordination, let alone hope to be appointed to the episcopate or to a senior role in the church, if you don't go along with affirming [two contradictory principles](#): that, one, women are fully accepted as priests; and, two, that it is all right to believe they are not.

But why does this matter, given that we already have nine bishops who don't fully accept the ministry of women, out of a total of more than 100? Isn't North just more of the same?

The difference is that North will be the head of the diocese, and will be the first diocesan bishop who does not ordain women to be appointed since women were [permitted to be bishops](#) in 2014. As a diocesan, North will oversee both male and female clergy, and there are no opt-outs for those who don't share his theological views on women's ministry, as there are for churches that are still able to reject women's ordination.

It is likely that many female clergy members will struggle with having a bishop who does not ordain women. These women, and the men who do fully accept women's ordination, tend to keep silent about this and the undermining effect it has on women's authority in the church. The mantra about mutual flourishing is becoming such an imperative that it seems no one in the church hierarchy wants to hear about how it is not working.

But research by Dr Gabrielle Thomas in 2019 shed light on some of the [difficulties women face](#) when they work in churches. "While women are permitted to orders of bishop, priest and deacon, the focus groups [in my research project] have brought to light how painful it can be when women are not recognised as 'real priests' and how it can lead to ... 'bullying'," she writes. "This is powerful testimony, more powerful because it was not asked about explicitly, to the continuing feeling among women that mutual flourishing expects graciousness from women all the time, even when their identity as a priest and thus as a person, is being questioned."

She describes mutual flourishing as an “open wound” in the church. And sadly, that wound will not heal if we continue to appoint men to senior roles who don’t fully accept women’s ordination.

At a Christmas party this year, I chatted with a charming man who self-identified as “a traditionalist” in the C of E, and who thought that only men should be priests. He could give no theological rationale for his views, only that he was “old-fashioned”. But, being aware of my clerical collar – it was Christmas Eve, and I was about to return to church to lead midnight communion – he said: “Don’t worry – dinosaurs like me will die out soon and everything will be fine.” Under mutual flourishing, that doesn’t seem likely.

It’s now more than 30 years since women were permitted to be priests in the C of E, but the church still relies on its exemptions under the Equality Act 2010 to go on [discriminating against women](#). And this discrimination legitimises sexism, bullying and the silencing of women.

The church has never officially defined what mutual flourishing means. For women, it seems to mean being grateful that we have finally been admitted into the clergy club, even if some members still don’t believe we are fully priests. For those who don’t accept women’s ordination, it now seems to mean that they can aspire to being diocesan bishops overseeing women they don’t fully recognise as priests.

A bishop who does not ordain women (not North) visited me just before Christmas to reassure me of how much he supported my ministry. We had a nice chat over coffee and mince pies, but I told him that the best way he could support me and other female clergy was simply by recognising our orders and seeing us as priests in the same way that he saw himself as a priest. Is that really too much to ask for?

- Martine Osborne is a vicar in west London and chair of [Women](#) and the Church (Watch), a group that works for equality for women in the Church of England

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# Martin Rowson on Sunak's deal to set up two free ports in Scotland – cartoon

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## OpinionBrexit

# **Our European neighbours now look at post-Brexit Britain and say simply: nein, danke**

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



From political dysfunction to economic turmoil, the evidence of Brexit as a great problem-creator is all around. No wonder European support for leaving the EU has tanked since 2016



‘The evidence of Brexit as a problem-creator is all around.’ A beach next to Felixtowe port, Suffolk. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

Fri 13 Jan 2023 10.44 ESTLast modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 13.33 EST

We’re good Europeans at last. Nearly seven years after we voted to leave, Britons are finally doing their bit for the [European Union](#). Diligently and with dogged devotion to duty, we are strengthening the ties that bind the 27 remaining nations of the EU – though not quite in the way anyone would have wanted.

Take a look at [the Europe-wide survey](#), published yesterday , which showed that support for leaving the EU has tanked everywhere since 2016. In every EU member state where data was available, from Finland to the Netherlands, Portugal to Hungary, pro-leave sentiment has fallen through the floor. Even Europe’s most hardcore anti-EU parties have abandoned the goal of actually leaving the EU – no more talk of [Frexit](#) or Italexit – aiming instead merely to reform the union from within.

Hmmm, I wonder what could possibly explain such an unmistakable shift in European opinion. Some might like to think it’s the war in Ukraine or the Covid pandemic, both of which served as reminders of the value of international solidarity. But the explanation that leaps out is the obvious

one. Europeans have taken one look at Britain since the Brexit referendum and thought: *Nein, danke*.

They see our political dysfunction, with five prime ministers in six years. They see the way Brexit divided the nation down the middle, injecting acrimony and toxicity into our national life. They see our economic malaise, with Britain lagging behind, facing the same pressures of post-Covid recovery and inflation as our neighbours but suffering more, with a [5.2% shrinkage in GDP](#) and a 13.7% fall in investment in the last quarter of 2021, compared with the projected numbers had we not left the EU – all attributable specifically to Brexit, rather than, say, the pandemic.

The Office for Budget Responsibility stated it baldly enough in November: “[Brexit has had a significant adverse impact on UK trade](#),” it said, noting a decline in “trade intensity” of 15%. Europeans see all that and think, there but for the grace of God. This is our great contribution to the European project: to act as a cautionary tale.

“Great Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a role,” was the much-quoted verdict of the postwar US secretary of state Dean Acheson. Well, we’ve found a role now. We are the salutary lesson in what not to do. If ever the nations of Europe feel frustrated by the EU, they need only glance across the Channel – and pause.

Recall that a central, repeated argument of the Brexiters was the cutting of red tape. More than a decade ago, Nigel Farage was raging against David Cameron having the gall to speak about deregulation to help entrepreneurs: “[How can he talk about cutting red tape but not the EU regs which cause it?](#)”

According to Farage, it was being in the EU that was causing British businesses to be snarled up in bureaucracy. And yet, now that we’re out, what is the loudest, most plaintive complaint you hear from British traders hoping to sell their goods into their nearest markets, across the Channel? It’s the [endless hours spent dealing with red tape](#) – customs forms, delays, double-charged VAT imposed on customers at the other end – caused not by being in the EU, as Farage insisted, but by being outside it.



Small wonder that 57% of Britons now say that Brexit has created more problems than it has solved, with a meagre 10% reckoning the reverse is true, according to [a survey by Best for Britain](#). Even among Conservative voters, more take the dim view of Brexit than the sunny one.

The evidence of Brexit as a problem-creator is all around. Consider the government's plan to make a bonfire of the 4,000 or so bits of EU law that remain on UK statute books, incinerating them all by the end of the year. Peers [warned last week](#) that a mass deletion of laws is procedurally near-impossible and substantively dangerous. If the laws are simply scrapped, that will remove a vast range of essential, even life-saving, measures, whether on electrical safety, food standards or water purity. If they are simply copy-and-pasted into new legislation, untainted by association with the dreaded EU, it would be the most monumental waste of parliamentary time. If the laws are altered with no time for proper parliamentary scrutiny, then, as the senior Tory peer Robin Hodgson puts it, "That is not what most people understood by 'taking back control'." In other words, scrapping EU laws sounds easy as a slogan, but is a nightmare in practice – just like Brexit itself.

Nowhere is the gap between Brexit rhetoric and reality clearer than in [Northern Ireland](#). The leavers breezily waved aside concerns over what appeared to the reality-based community as an insuperable problem: given that there would always have to be a border between the EU and a UK that had chosen to leave the customs union, where would such a border lie? It couldn't be between Northern Ireland and the republic without jeopardising the Good Friday agreement. It couldn't be down the Irish Sea without angering unionists, who want there to be no distinction between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. So where?

The supposed solution was a protocol that angered unionists for making the very distinction they loathed. To placate them, the government [proposed a bill](#) that would override parts of the internationally agreed protocol, almost certainly illegally – and now there's talk of dispatching that bill to the same oblivion inhabited by its original author, Liz Truss. Meanwhile, [legislation is coming](#) that will see the construction of border posts at Northern Irish ports: as [one commentator puts it](#), "the UK is building and operating an

international trade border within its own country”, a border that didn’t used to be there. Yet another problem that Brexit created rather than solved.

All of this is in plain sight. Which is why the London mayor, [Sadiq Khan](#), is surely right to call, as he did this week, for the Westminster omertà on Brexit to be lifted and for us to start talking about it openly and honestly.

Labour’s official position is that the subject is closed, that there cannot even be Khan’s “[pragmatic debate](#)” about the merits of rejoining the single market and customs union. The political logic is simple enough: leave voters resent being told they were wrong, and Labour should do nothing that might fracture its electoral coalition. But a counter-logic is growing stronger every day. When there is a force in our national life causing clear and present economic and political harm, a party of opposition – let alone government – has to talk about it. Our neighbours can see it plainly enough. They have observed the damage Brexit is doing and have drawn the obvious conclusion. It’s about time we did the same.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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## OpinionPrince Harry.

# Why hasn't Harry given up his ridiculous title yet?

Arwa Mahdawi



I don't think anyone should be going around calling themselves Duke or Duchess in 2023. Unless they are a stripper or a dog



‘Hereditary titles – and the aristocracy in general – have no place in the modern world.’ Photograph: Scott Olson/Getty Images

Fri 13 Jan 2023 06.15 EST Last modified on Sat 14 Jan 2023 04.59 EST

I’m afraid it’s the law now, OK? I’ve valiantly resisted for as long as I could, but the time has come: I simply have to write about Harry and Meghan. It is basically illegal not to have at least one opinion about the royals who apparently hate being royals but are still milking their royal connections for all they’re worth. And don’t roll your eyes, you’re a glutton for this stuff too. Everyone loves to see obscenely privileged people airing their dirty laundry. There is a reason that Harry’s memoir has become the [UK’s fastest-selling nonfiction book](#) and that reason is not the quality of the writing.

Don’t worry, I’m not going to pull a Piers Morgan or Jeremy Clarkson here and start seething with unhinged rage about Harry and Meghan. I’m not the Sussexes’ biggest fan but the only royal I can muster up enough energy to get really outraged about is Prince Andrew. You remember him? He hasn’t been in the news very much lately since Harry’s been hogging all the headlines but he’s the guy that got stripped of royal duties over his [relationship with the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein](#). He’s the guy that Ghislaine Maxwell recently called her “[dear friend](#)”. He’s a nasty piece

of work and yet Britain is now so caught up in Harry hatred that a recent YouGov poll has found that Brits over the age of 65 dislike the Sussexes [more than disgraced Prince Andrew](#).

Having said all that, I do have one bit of beef with Harry and Meghan. Namely: why haven't they given up their ridiculous titles? *The Duke and Duchess of Sussex*. Most people are given cooking pots at their weddings; Harry and Meghan were given hereditary titles. The title of Duke of Sussex actually became extinct in 1843 after its former owner, Prince Augustus Frederick, died, by the way. However, Queen Elizabeth II revived it from the dead and gave it to her grandson when he got married in 2018 because that is the sort of thing queens can do.

Frankly I don't think anyone should be going around calling themselves *duke* or *duchess* in 2023. Unless, of course, they are a stripper or a dog. Duke and Duchess are both good names for a dog.

But hereditary titles – and the aristocracy in general – have no place in the modern world. A few people in America had a similar idea about this nearly 250 years ago. I'm no expert in American history but I'm pretty sure an entire war was fought over insufferable British people parading around with stupid titles. And yet, here we are in 2023, and Americans are happily referring to Harry and Megs as *duke* and *duchess*.

I'm not the only person who is a bit miffed that Harry and Meghan seem to want to have their royal cake and eat it too. According to a YouGov survey conducted in December 2022 [nearly half of the British public](#) reckon Prince Harry should have his title removed. Anderson Cooper brought up the issue in Harry's [recent interview on CBS's 60 Minutes](#). “[C]ritics say the duke and duchess are cashing in on their royal titles while they still can,” Cooper said. “Why not renounce your titles as duke and duchess?”

Harry didn't have a particularly eloquent answer. “And what difference would that make?” he replied.

It would make a lot of difference, Harry! You can't complain about an antiquated institution while insisting that people call you duke. Well, I

mean, technically you can. Technically that's exactly what Harry and Meghan are doing. But it makes you look just a little bit like a hypocrite. It makes it seem like the only real problem you have with hereditary privilege is that you didn't get as much as you'd have liked.

It would also have been a smart move for Harry to renounce his titles before the royal family unceremoniously did it for him. That's looking more and more likely. A royal source recently told Us Weekly that stripping Harry and Meghan of their titles is a "[very real possibility](#)". Why not get ahead of it, Harry? Drop all the duke palaver and I might start taking you a bit more seriously. Although, after all the details about the frost-bitten "todger" that may be a bit of a reach.

- Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist and the author of Strong Female Lead

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

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## 2023.01.14 - Around the world

- [Brazil Jair Bolsonaro to be investigated as part of inquiry into riot](#)
- [Jair Bolsonaro Spending records shows love of high living and ... ice-cream](#)
- [Janet Yellen Treasury secretary warns US to reach debt ceiling on Thursday](#)
- ['Masterpieces' Van Gogh the one-eared rescue dog paints his way to a new home](#)

## Brazil



# Jair Bolsonaro to be investigated as part of inquiry into far-right Brazil riot

Former president shared a video questioning last year's election result after his supporters stormed Brasília's democratic institutions



Brazil's supreme court accepted a request to include former president Jair Bolsonaro in an inquiry into the events on Sunday in Brasília. Photograph: Evaristo Sa/AFP/Getty Images

*[Tom Phillips](#) in Brasília*

Sat 14 Jan 2023 06.56 EST First published on Fri 13 Jan 2023 21.44 EST

Brazil's former president [Jair Bolsonaro](#) will be investigated as part of an inquiry into an alleged attempt to topple the country's new government, the supreme court has announced.

Thousands of radical followers of the far-right populist [marauded through Brazil's three most important democratic institutions](#) last Sunday, apparently convinced by a tsunami of fake news that last October's presidential election – which Bolsonaro lost – was rigged.

Following those attacks in Brasília, Bolsonaro shared a video on social media which used false information to question the victory of his leftist adversary, [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#), who was sworn in as president on 1 January.

Late on Friday, the supreme court judge Alexandre de Moraes accepted a request from the attorney general's office that the ex-president be included in the investigation as a result of that post, which Bolsonaro later deleted.

The television network Globo said the investigation would examine whether Bolsonaro was one of the “intellectual authors” of the 8 January attacks, in which extremists armed with metal bars and slingshots [ransacked Brazil's congress, supreme court and presidential palace](#).

During his four-year term Bolsonaro, a former paratrooper notorious for his authoritarian tendencies, relentlessly worked to undermine Brazil's electronic voting system. The Donald Trump-supporting radical, who [flew to the US on the eve of Lula's inauguration](#), has refused to publicly concede defeat in the election – something many hardcore supporters have taken as tacit support for their ongoing crusade to overturn the result.

Inside Brazil's failed coup: 'This is not patriotism, this is vandalism' – video

In a statement Bolsonaro's lawyer, Frederick Wassef, said the former president had “always repudiated every kind of illegal and criminal act” and been a “defender of democracy”. Wassef denied Bolsonaro had played any role in Sunday's violence, which, without evidence, he blamed on “infiltrators”.

Earlier on Friday, Brazil's foreign minister, Mauro Vieira, denounced what he called last Sunday's “utterly reprehensible” attack on his country's young democracy, which was re-established in 1985 after more than two decades of military dictatorship.

Speaking to a small group of foreign correspondents in Brasília, Vieira said he believed the forceful response of Lula's government would deter further attacks. More than 1,000 alleged insurrectionists have so far been arrested,

among them military officials, while federal police are pursuing those who bankrolled the violence.

“The impression I have is that the manner in which the government reacted will discourage any kind of new adventure because the punishments will be increasingly severe,” Vieira said.

The foreign minister added: “I hope that everyone has realised that the government is not messing around with this and that strong and firm measures have and will be taken in accordance with the law if there is any other kind of initiative.”

There is as yet no evidence that Bolsonaro was directly involved in planning Sunday’s far-right rebellion, which was [condemned by world leaders](#) including Rishi Sunak, Emmanuel Macron and Joe Biden.

However, suspicions that Bolsonaro may have been involved grew this week after the issuing of [a warrant for the arrest of his former justice minister, Anderson Torres](#), for potential acts of omission. During a search of Torres’s home in Brasília, federal police officers reportedly found a draft decree that sought to authorise an emergency intervention in Brazil’s electoral court designed to overturn the election result.

Torres, who has denied wrongdoing, was arrested at Brasília airport on Saturday morning after flying back from the US where he was purportedly on holiday at the time of the attacks.

Political commentators described the supreme court decision as dire news for the former president.

“Bolsonaro has become a toxic character,” the journalist Eliane Cantanhêde told the GloboNews television network.

“But radical extremist Bolsonaristas boast a network of fake news and online brainwashing”, that would not disappear in the case of Bolsonaro’s political demise, Cantanhêde added.

Speaking to journalists on Thursday, Lula said he [suspected the rightwing rebels had inside help](#) in storming his presidential offices.

“Many people were complicit in this ... Many people in the military police were complicit. There were many people in the armed forces here inside [the palace] who were complicit,” Lula said.

“I am convinced that the door to the Planalto palace was opened so these people could get in because I didn’t see the front door had been broken down. And that means that somebody facilitated their entry here.”

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## Jair Bolsonaro

# Release of Bolsonaro spending records shows love of high living and ... ice-cream

Brazilian government overturns former president's 100-year ban to publish credit card records



Jair Bolsonaro drinking coffee at a ceremony last year. Photograph: Evaristo Sa/AFP/Getty Images

[Andrew Downie](#)

Fri 13 Jan 2023 15.07 ESTLast modified on Fri 13 Jan 2023 16.17 EST

Brazil's new government has released the personal spending accounts of the former president [Jair Bolsonaro](#), revealing the far-right leader's apparent penchant for expensive hotels, big meals out – and ice-cream.

Bolsonaro, who [lost his re-election bid in October](#), once boasted he did not withdraw “a single penny” from the corporate credit cards given to him and his closest advisers.

Although he slapped a 100-year ban on publishing his spending records, the new government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Thursday revealed the records of the last four presidencies dating back to 2003.

The spending was broken down by date, amount, name of where the money was spent, and the category of the company being paid. The vast majority of spending was on hotels and food.

Nine of the 10 biggest outlays made during Bolsonaro’s presidency were at a hotel in Guarujá, where the former army captain liked to spend weekends off. The corporate cards were also used in a pet shop, pharmacies, restaurants and dozens of trips to ice-cream parlours. (Around £1,300 was spent on ice cream.)

The list is dotted with oddities, with O Globo reporting Bolsonaro and his team spent a fortune on one single day buying 659 takeaway meals and 2,964 sandwiches at a restaurant in Roraima state.

More than 12,000 reais (almost £2,000) was spent in one sitting at a steak restaurant; 25,000 reais was put on the tab at a hamburger restaurant in the northern state of Ceará; and more than 50,000 reais was handed over at a Rio de Janeiro bakery the day before Bolsonaro took part in a motorcycle rally there, according to breakdowns in the Brazilian media.

The corporate cards are supposed to be used for travel expenses and small or urgent purchases, but money was also spent on hunting and fishing, sports equipment, sheets and bedding, and bottled gas.

Although Bolsonaro’s spending has come under scrutiny, his total outlay of 32 million reais, when adjusted for inflation, is less than Lula’s in both his first two terms between 2003 and 2011, and less than his successor Dilma Rousseff.

The Publica agency said one possible reason for the discrepancy was that some of Bolsonaro's spending remained hidden behind secrecy rules and had not yet been published.

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[Janet Yellen](#)

## Treasury secretary: US to reach debt ceiling on Thursday

Janet Yellen told Congress that ‘extraordinary measures’ would be taken to avoid default until legislation is passed to raise ceiling



Janet Yellen, the US treasury secretary, has notified Congress that the US is projected to reach its debt limit on 19 January. Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

*Agencies*

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Janet Yellen, the US treasury secretary, has notified Congress that the US is projected to reach its debt limit on Thursday, 19 January, and will then resort to [“extraordinary measures”](#) to avoid default.



In a letter to House and Senate leaders on Friday, Yellen said her actions will buy time until Congress can pass legislation that will either raise the nation's \$31.4tn borrowing authority or suspend it again for a period of time.

She urged lawmakers to act quickly to raise the debt ceiling to “protect the full faith and credit of the United States”.

“Failure to meet the government's obligations would cause irreparable harm to the [US economy](#), the livelihoods of all Americans and global financial stability,” she said.

Republicans now in control of the House have threatened to [use the debt ceiling as leverage](#) to demand spending cuts from Democrats and the Biden administration. This has raised concerns in Washington and on [Wall Street](#) about a bruising fight over the debt ceiling this year that could be at least as disruptive as the protracted battle of 2011, which prompted the brief downgrade of the US credit rating and years of forced domestic and military spending cuts.

The Washington Post [reported](#) late on Friday that House Republicans had prepared an emergency plan for breaching the debt limit. The proposal, which was in the preliminary stages of being drafted, would direct the treasury department to prioritize certain payments if the US hits the debt ceiling, according to the newspaper.

The White House said on Friday after Yellen's letter that it will not negotiate over raising the debt ceiling.

“This should be done without conditions,” White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters. “There's going to be no negotiation over it.”

The new House speaker, Kevin McCarthy, told reporters in his first press conference that he had a “very good conversation” with Biden about the coming debt ceiling debate. “We don't want to put any fiscal problems to

our economy and we won't, but fiscal problems would be continuing to do business as usual," he said.

"We've got to change the way we are spending money."

The proposal from House Republicans reported by the Washington Post would call on the Biden administration to make only the most critical federal payments if the treasury department comes up against the statutory limit on what it can legally borrow. The plan will call on the department to keep making interest payments on the debt, the newspaper reported, citing sources.

House Republicans' payment prioritization plan may also stipulate that the treasury department should continue making payments on social security, Medicare and veterans benefits, as well as funding the military, the newspaper added.

Yellen said that while the treasury can't estimate how long the extraordinary measures will allow the US to continue to pay the government's obligations, "it is unlikely that cash and extraordinary measures will be exhausted before early June."

The treasury department first used extraordinary measures in 1985 and at least 16 times since, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a fiscal watchdog. Those measures include divesting some payments, such as contributions to federal employees' retirement plans, in order to provide some headroom to make other payments that are deemed essential.

Past forecasts suggest a default could instantly bury the country in a deep recession, right at a moment of slowing global growth as the US and much of the world face high inflation because of the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The financial markets could crash and several million workers could be laid off, and the aftershocks would be felt for years.

Shai Akabas, director of economic policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center, told reporters Friday: "This is not the time for panic, but it's certainly a time for policymakers to begin negotiations in earnest."

“Most policymakers agree that we have a major fiscal challenge as a country, our debt is unsustainable,” he said. “There’s no reason why we couldn’t agree on measures to improve our fiscal outcome, and also ensure that we are paying all of our bills in full and on time.”

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## Dogs

# Van Gogh the one-eared rescue dog paints his way to a new home

A seven-year-old boxer mix saved from a dog-fighting ring became an in-demand celebrity after online auction of his ‘masterpieces’



Van Gogh the dog, assisted by a viral TikTok video sold all his artworks in an online auction. Photograph: Courtesy Happily Furever After Rescue

[Richard Luscombe](#)

[@richlusc](#)

Sat 14 Jan 2023 03.00 EST

When a Connecticut animal shelter struggled to find a home for Van Gogh the one-eared rescue dog, they knew just what to do: break out the canvas and paint.

The seven-year-old, 70lb boxer mix saved from a dog-fighting ring has now been adopted following a highly successful online auction of his “masterpieces”, created by Van Gogh licking peanut butter and liverwurst from a plastic bag and smearing the paint on the canvas below.

The [Happily Furever After rescue center](#) of Bethel, having crafted an artistic new way of attracting publicity, is planning another exhibition next month to try to find homes for its remaining gallery of animals.

“It’s a beautiful thing because [people] are not only supporting the rescue, but they are supporting the dog,” Jaclyn Gartner, founder of the organization and art show curator, [told Fox News digital](#).

“For him, [painting] is enrichment and a treat. He enjoys doing it.”

Gartner said there was little interest in Van Gogh after he arrived last summer from a shelter in North Carolina. A suspected bait dog for a fighting ring, he was found abandoned, injured and bleeding in a drainage pipe, leading to the amputation of his left ear.

His first in-person “art show” at the shelter was poorly attended, leading Gartner to place his paintings for sale online. Assisted by a [viral TikTok video](#) that attracted 300,000 views, Van Gogh’s artwork sold out immediately, and he even picked up some private commissions.

After seven months with a foster family, Van Gogh also earned an adoption application from his new owner, Jessica Starowitz, who had promised to allow him to continue painting his post-impressionist pieces.

Like his 19th-century Dutch [namesake](#), one of the world’s most famous artists who created about 900 oil paintings in his lifetime, including Sunflowers and The Starry Night, the canine Van Gogh is prolific, Gartner said. He has recently completed his 140th work.

Starowitz told Fox that Van Gogh had experienced a lot of trauma, and was currently “working on his manners” and learning to be more comfortable around other dogs.

Gartner also said that unlike the real Van Gogh, whose recognition came only after his death in 1890, the dog gets to enjoy the fruits of his labors. “He is properly compensated for his work in toys and treats,” she said in the video.

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