

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

THE WEATHER

Today, mostly sunny, dry and cool, high 46. Tonight, cloudy, a dry New Year's Eve with a flurry possible. Tomorrow, a morning flurry, cloudy, high 44. Weather map, Page 18.

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Prices in Canada may be higher

\$6.00



The family of Gal Abdush, an Israeli whose burned, partly naked body was found after Oct. 7. Her husband, Nagi, was also killed.

Stuck at Front, Ukraine Turns To Saboteurs

By MARC SANTORA

KYIV, Ukraine — The saboteurs managed to place four explosives on a Russian freight train carrying diesel and jet fuel, roughly 3,000 miles from the Ukrainian border. But more important than the destruction of the train, Ukrainian intelligence officials said, was the timing of the blast.

They needed it to blow up as the 50 rail cars were traveling through the nine-mile-long tunnel through the Severomuysky mountains, the longest train tunnel in Russia.

The Ukrainians were hoping to compromise a vital conduit for weapons being shipped to Russia from North Korea, at a moment when Ukrainian forces on the front are struggling to stave off relentless Russian assaults. Trains can be replaced and tracks quickly repaired. But serious damage to this tunnel, which took decades to build, might not be so easy to fix.

Guerrilla tactics — including sabotage, commando raids, targeted assassinations and attempts to blow up ammunition depots, oil pipelines and railways — have been a part of the war since its first days. But as both sides fail to make substantial advances on the front, they have taken on added importance.

So at 5:20 p.m. on Nov. 29, a fire ripped through the tunnel, Russian Railways reported. Russian media broadcast footage of flames around the tunnel entrance, and officials said the explosion was caused by “the detonation of an unidentified explosive device.”

The extent of the damage is unclear. Each side gave diverging assessments of the explosion’s impact. But a second explosion on an alternate train route nearby followed.

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WEAPONS AID Europe is stepping up munitions production for Kyiv to counter Moscow. PAGE 9

LETHAL BLOW A Ukrainian attack on Belgorod, Russia, killed 20 people, Moscow said. PAGE 9

An Industry Paid to Find Child Laborers, Doesn’t

By HANNAH DREIER

One morning in 2019, an auditor arrived at a meatpacking plant in rural Minnesota. He was there on behalf of the national drugstore chain Walgreens to ensure that the factory, which made the company’s house brand of beef jerky, was safe and free of labor abuses.

He ran through a checklist of hundreds of possible problems, like locked emergency exits, sexual harassment and child labor. By the afternoon, he had concluded that the factory had no major violations. It could keep making jerky, and Walgreens customers could shop with a clear conscience.

When night fell, another 150 workers showed up at the plant. Among them were migrant children who had come to the United States by themselves looking for work. Children as young as 15 were operating heavy machinery capable of amputating fingers and crushing bones.

Migrant children would work at the Monogram Meat Snacks plant in Chandler, Minn., for almost four

Auditors Move Quickly and Leave Early

more years, until the Department of Labor visited this spring and found such severe child labor violations that it temporarily banned the shipment of any more jerky.

In the past two decades, private audits have become the solution to a host of public relations headaches for corporations. When scandal erupts over labor practices, or shareholders worry about legal risks, or advocacy groups demand a boycott, companies point to these inspections as evidence that they have eliminated abuses in their supply chains. Known as social compliance audits, they have grown into

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Ukraine’s Stolen Children

Thousands of the war’s most vulnerable victims were ripped from their families. SPECIAL SECTION



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANIEL BEREHULAK/THE NEW YORK TIMES

‘Screams Without Words’: Sexual Violence on Oct. 7

Hamas Subjected Israeli Women to Horrors Before Killing Them, Evidence Shows

This article is by Jeffrey Gettleman, Anat Schwartz and Adam Sella.

TEL AVIV — At first, she was known simply as “the woman in the black dress.”

In a grainy video, you can see her, lying on her back, dress torn, legs spread, vagina exposed. Her face is burned beyond recognition, and her right hand covers her eyes.

The video was shot in the early hours of Oct. 8 by a woman searching for a missing friend at the site of the rave in southern Israel where, the day before, Hamas terrorists massacred hundreds of young Israelis.

The video went viral, with thousands of people responding, desperate to know if the woman in the black dress was their missing friend, sister or daughter.

One family knew exactly who she was — Gal Abdush, mother of two from a working-class town in central Israel, who disappeared from the rave that night with her husband.

As the terrorists closed in on her, trapped on a highway in a line of cars of people trying to flee the party, she sent one final WhatsApp message to her family: “You don’t understand.”

Based largely on the video evidence — which was verified by The New York Times — Israeli police officials said they believed that Ms. Abdush was raped, and she has become a symbol of the horrors visited upon Israeli women and girls during the Oct. 7 attacks.

Israeli officials say that everywhere Hamas terrorists struck — the rave, the military bases along the Gaza border, and the kibbutzim — they brutalized women.

A two-month investigation by The Times uncovered painful new details, establishing that the attacks against women were not isolated events but part of a broader pattern of gender-based violence on Oct. 7.

Relying on video footage, photographs, GPS data from mobile phones and interviews with more than 150 people, including witnesses, medical personnel, soldiers and rape counselors, The Times identified at least seven locations where Israeli women and girls appear to have been sexually assaulted or mutilated.

Four witnesses described in graphic detail seeing women raped and killed at two different places along Route 232, the same highway where Ms. Abdush’s half-naked body was found sprawled on the road at a third location.

And The Times interviewed several soldiers and volunteer medics who together described finding more than 30 bodies of women and girls in and around the rave site and in two kibbutzim in a similar state as Ms. Abdush’s — legs spread, clothes torn off, signs of abuse in their genital areas.

Many of the accounts are difficult to bear, and the visual evidence is disturbing to see.

The Times viewed photographs of one woman’s corpse that emergency responders discovered in the rubble of a besieged kibbutz with dozens of nails driven into her thighs and groin.

The Times also viewed a video, provided by the Israeli military, showing two dead Israeli soldiers at a base near Gaza who appeared to have been shot directly in their vaginas.

Hamas has denied Israel’s accusations of sexual violence. Israeli activists have been outraged that

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TOLL RISES Gazan officials said 165 people were killed in one day as fighting intensified. PAGE 12

Seeing Threat to Democracy, With Trump on Ballot or Not

This article is by Jack Healy, Anna Betts, Mike Baker and Jill Cowan.

As the top elections official in Washington State, Steve Hobbs says he is troubled by the threat former President Donald J. Trump poses to democracy and fears the prospect of his return to power. But he also worries that recent decisions in Maine and Colorado to bar Mr. Trump from presidential primary ballots there could backfire, further eroding Americans’ fraying faith in U.S. elections.

“Removing him from the ballot would, on its face value, seem very anti-democratic,” said Mr. Hobbs, a Democrat who is in his first term as secretary of state. Then he added a critical caveat: “But so is trying to overthrow your country.”

Mr. Hobbs’s misgivings reflect deep divisions and unease among elected officials, democracy experts and voters over how to handle Mr. Trump’s campaign to reclaim the presidency four years after he went to extraordinary lengths in an attempt to overturn the 2020 election. While some, like Mr. Hobbs, think it best that voters settle the matter, others say that Mr. Trump’s efforts require accountability and should be legally disqualifying.

Challenges to Mr. Trump’s candidacy have been filed in at least 32 states, though many of those challenges have gained little or no traction, and some have languished on court dockets for months.

The decisions happening right now come amid a collapse of faith in the American electoral system, said Nate Persily, a Stanford Law School professor who specializes in election law and democracy.

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The Unusual Reach of ‘That Octopus Book’ Took Even Its Publisher by Surprise

By ALEXANDRA ALTER

Last year during the holiday sales rush, Beth Seuffer Buss started getting an unusual request from customers at Bookmarks, the independent bookstore where she works in Winston-Salem, N.C.

“It was always, ‘Do you have the book with the octopus?’” she said.

She knew exactly which book they meant: Shelby Van Pelt’s “Remarkably Bright Creatures,” a novel that features a cranky, mischievous octopus.

The surge in demand was unexpected, because the novel had come out months earlier, in the spring of 2022. Even more surprising, sales continued to accelerate after the holidays, into the winter and spring of 2023, and have

never died down. “The book with the octopus” was Bookmarks’s top selling novel of 2023, and requests for it have spiked again this holiday season.

“I don’t think it’s going to drop off, because everybody who reads it wants other people to read it,” said Seuffer Buss, who is giving the novel to two of her aunts for Christmas. “This is a universal recommendation. No matter what you’re in the mood for or what you’re going through, I can put this book in your hands.”

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SUNDAY BUSINESS

Is Your Car Spying on You?

Apps that remotely track and control automobiles can be used in unintended ways, including allowing abusive partners to stalk their victims. PAGE 5

SUNDAY STYLES

Braids, Beard and Bandanna

The Texas troubadour Willie Nelson, going strong at 90, found success long ago when he decided to just be himself, in his music and his look. PAGE 3

METROPOLITAN

Casting a Line for Fortune

From New York’s waterways, a fisherman using magnets has pulled out grenades, bikes and guns. But fame would be his prize catch. PAGE 1

ARTS & LEISURE

The Year in Review

Our critics’ reflections on the culturally vibrant 2023, highlighting standouts in the realms of theater, film, dance, music and the visual arts.

SUNDAY OPINION

Thomas L. Friedman PAGE 3



Happy New Year!

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