

Morning showers 79/66 • Tomorrow: Rain 71/62 C8

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2024 • \$5

Nasrallah's killing staggers Lebanon

U.S. — kept in the dark again by Israel — braces for Iran's retaliation

BY YASMEEN ABUTALEB,
SHANE HARRIS,
JOHN HUDSON
AND ELLEN NAKASHIMA

U.S. officials were scrambling Saturday after an Israeli strike that killed Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah, as they braced for a range of potential retaliatory actions by Iran to an attack that caught some by surprise.

In a statement on Saturday, President Joe Biden said Nasrallah and Hezbollah, a U.S.-designated terrorist group, were responsible for "killing hundreds of Americans over a four-decade reign of terror." Biden added: "His death from an Israeli airstrike is a

measure of justice for his many victims, including thousands of Americans, Israelis, and Lebanese civilians."

But the latest strike raised more questions about communications between the United States and its close ally, Israel. U.S. officials said they did not know Israel was going to launch an airstrike to try to kill Nasrallah, and that they were also caught off guard by an Israeli operation earlier this month in which they detonated pagers and handheld radios used by members of Hezbollah.

In recent days, Israeli and U.S. officials appear to have been talking past each other, with senior

SEE RESPONSE ON A18



Wael Hamzeh/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

A woman cries as Beirut residents flee their homes and take to the streets amid Israel's continuing attacks on the city Saturday.

Ground war: Israel weighs lessons from past invasions. **A16**

Obituary: A divisive figure in the Middle East and beyond. **C5**

Hezbollah tries to show continuity; Israel casts death as decisive blow

BY KAREEM FAHIM,
SUSANNAH GEORGE,
MOHAMAD EL CHAMAA
AND ABBIE CHEESEMAN

BEIRUT — Israel's assassination of Hasan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's longtime leader, left a shaken Lebanon on Saturday, a void the militant group might struggle to fill, and its battle with Israel on an uncertain and possibly more violent path.

Hezbollah announced the death in a statement Saturday, confirming Nasrallah was killed in a massive Israeli strike in Beirut's southern suburbs that flattened residential buildings a day earlier. He had "joined his great,



Hezbollah on Saturday confirmed the death of its longtime leader, Hasan Nasrallah.

immortal martyr comrades whose path he led for nearly 30 years," it said.

Hezbollah tried to project continuity of leadership and mission Saturday — saying it would continue "confronting the enemy" — as Iran's supreme leader called on followers to support the Lebanese militant group, the linchpin of

SEE ISRAEL ON A15

A far-right influencer's sway tested in Austria

Martin Sellner's migrant deportation rhetoric weighs on today's vote

BY ANTHONY FAIOLA
AND SOUAD MEKHENNET

SCHNELLRODA, GERMANY — In a food hall adorned with pastoral scenes of rural German life, Martin Sellner, self-proclaimed champion of mass migrant deportations, fielded questions from a rapt audience. An ash-blond young mother raised her hand. She remarked on the importance of improving Germanic gene pools, then asked whether a people of such "progress and innovation" should honestly see themselves as run-of-the-mill humans.

"Good question," Sellner said, responding with an answer that touched on biology, population trends and extraterrestrial invasions.

When asked directly, Sellner, 35, a far-right Austrian provocateur, will say he is no racist — but argues that each race would be happier in its own geographic corner. His Generation Identity movement, he says, adheres to nonviolent activism to protect ethno-European culture, citing Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Arab Spring as inspiration.

European intelligence officials, however, call him "dangerous" — the leading figure of a right-wing extremist group that they say is radicalizing a generation of White and angry Europeans.

With studious glasses, philo-

SEE AUSTRIA ON A22



JULIA WALL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A bridge in North Cove, N.C., lies in ruins Saturday after flooding on the Catawba River, isolating residents from limited resources.

'Biblical devastation' in N.C. towns

BY BRADY DENNIS,
ALLISON SALERNO,
KARIN BRULLIARD
AND ISAAC STANLEY-BECKER

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Beverly and Baxter Eller had lived in the same house in the North Carolina hamlet of Swannanoa for 37 years, and never once had it flooded. That changed just before dawn on Friday, as Hurricane Helene tore through the region.

The water from the raging

No rest for rescuers as Helene's fury reshapes communities overnight

Swannanoa River rose fast, then faster, until it reached their yard. The couple fled not a moment too soon to huddle with neighbors inside a Baptist church up the hill. On Saturday afternoon, they returned and found their

home utterly destroyed.

"We haven't cried yet," said Beverly Eller, 68, sitting with her husband and dog in the Toyota that is now their temporary home. Their other car, a Chevrolet SUV, had been swept away. "We are just in survival mode."

Towns throughout western North Carolina, including Swannanoa, were transformed overnight by the massive storm. Muddy floodwaters lifted homes from their foundations. Landslides and overflowing rivers

severed the only way in and out of small mountain communities. Rescuers said they were struggling to respond to the high number of emergency calls. Anxious relatives took to Facebook to search for loved ones they hadn't heard from.

"This is looking to be Buncombe County's own Hurricane Katrina," said Avril Pinder, the

SEE HELENE ON A9

Tampa Bay: Region emerges as Florida's death toll epicenter. **A8**



CINDY KARP FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Florida and other states have passed nearly identical bans on trans girls in sports since Jessica Norton let Elizabeth play volleyball.

A trans volleyballer and her mother's peril

Florida woman faced becoming one of the first penalized after flurry of bans

BY CASEY PARKS
IN COCONUT CREEK, FLA.

Jessica Norton eased her minivan out of the driveway, and she told herself she'd done what any mother would. Her daughter Elizabeth had wanted to play high school volleyball, and Norton had let her. Norton had written female on the permission slips. She'd run practice drills in the yard, and she'd driven this minivan to matches all across their suburban Florida county.

A bumper sticker on the back said "mom." A rainbow pin tacked inside read "safe with me." Norton and Elizabeth had spent hours laughing and singing in this extended cab chariot. But this time, Norton had decided to leave her daughter at home.

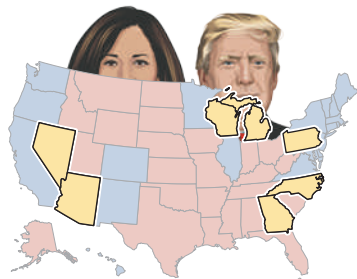
"Good luck!" the teenager called. "Don't get fired!"

Until recently, Norton had worked at the high school Elizabeth attended. But last fall, an armed officer with the Broward County Public Schools Police had

told Norton she was under investigation for allowing Elizabeth to play girls sports. District leaders banned Norton from the building. They discussed the investigation on the local news, and soon, everyone in Coconut Creek seemed to know Elizabeth is transgender. (Norton asked The Washington Post to use the child's middle name to protect her privacy.)

In the nine months since, school officials had talked about

SEE VOLLEYBALLER ON A10



The paths to 270 in the electoral college

A look at five likely scenarios based on the candidates' current standing in the polls and three less likely scenarios, including a tie in the electoral college. **Inside, A20-21**

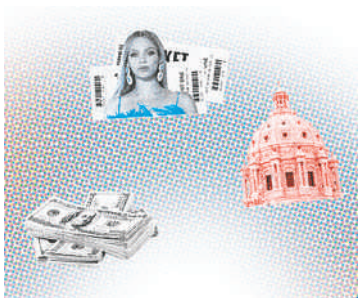
METRO
Opioid overdose deaths in D.C. are declining, in a "promising" trend.

POST OPINIONS
How a country collects, interprets data shows a lot about what it values.



ARTS & STYLE
The rabid fans of this "Macbeth" retelling mourn its (eventual) end.

BOOK WORLD
Two takes into how the Latino bloc is changing — and altering politics.



BUSINESS
How rich each candidate is compared with the average American.

TRAVEL
Sicily's less-familiar southern coast is full of overlooked gems.

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