



**FARAGE UNDER PRESSURE TO SACK DEPUTY TICE OVER TAX ALLEGATIONS**



**Lydia Spencer-Elliott** How to part ways with your talented but very toxic boss



**Blow for Putin as Hungary's Orban concedes defeat after 16 years**

Far-right Trump and Russia ally Viktor Orban congratulates the opposition after losing yesterday's election

# Trump says US will blockade Hormuz after peace talks fail

As Vance flies out of US-Iran summit with no deal, leaving two-week ceasefire in doubt, president says his military is 'locked and loaded' to prevent any ships from using the vital strait – and claims Britain will help

**ALEX CROFT**

Donald Trump has declared the US will blockade the Strait of Hormuz after the rapid collapse of peace talks with Iran. The president resumed his bombastic threats just

hours after negotiations in Islamabad failed, warning that the US military was "locked and loaded to finish Iran". He also claimed that Nato allies, whom he has criticised for failing to back the war, wanted to help with the operation in

the Strait. "We have minesweepers there," Mr Trump said. "And I understand the UK and a couple of other countries are sending minesweepers." But last night it appeared Britain would not be involved in the operation.



## Editorials

# The Iran war is a failure on all fronts for Trump

A war that has lasted six weeks and was 47 years in the making was never going to be ended with anything like a comprehensive sustainable settlement over a weekend, and in fact what turned out to be only 21 hours of intense talks. No one seriously expected it would, but the chances of an early breakthrough were made infinitely worse by Donald Trump's decision to despatch to the talks with Iran two proven failures in such exercises – Steve Witkoff, an over-optimistic real-estate guy, and Jared Kushner, whose sole qualification is that he happens to be the president's son-in-law.

Not for the first time, the US state department and secretary of state Marco Rubio have been marginalised in their core role of running America's foreign policy – and to no great advantage. To have the US delegation headed by the vice-president JD Vance instead was also a serious misjudgement. Mr Vance could, in principle, as a possible future president, and with his own "base", have added some considerable political authority to the discussions with the Iranians in Islamabad; but he has no personal vested interest in helping Mr Trump out of a mess of his own making, and one that Mr Vance warned him was going to happen. Even though the vice-presidency of the United States is a famously light-duties role, it would hardly have been practical for Mr Vance to spend weeks in Pakistan trying to broker peace.

It may also have occurred to him that Mr Trump might have been lining him up to take the blame for the near-inevitable failure of the talks. That may be reading too much into recent developments, but there is no doubt that domestic political pressures and bitter machinations within the Republican party and the Maga movement have complicated the situation. Sooner or later, a sceptical Congress will have to decide whether to grant Mr Trump "war powers" to press on with the conflict, and some potentially disastrous elections in November are looming large. This is discombobulating an already chaotic administration.

The putative two-week ceasefire may not now even last that long, with dreadful consequences for the civilians in the region and for the world economy. As it is, the Israelis are doing their best to blow up any peace efforts.

In any case, seemingly without much effort at compromise, Mr Vance has summarily declared the talks over and gone home.

More fundamentally, the motivation on the part of the Americans to seek a peace deal is weak because their negotiating position is weak. Agreement means compromise and concessions, and Mr Trump and his proud colleagues cannot bring themselves to admit what looks very much like defeat.

As Mr Trump might put it, if he were being candid for a change, Tehran now has most of the cards in this game, and that is because Washington has played its own hand badly. After all, before Mr Trump was persuaded by Benjamin Netanyahu and some reckless Republican sycophants in Congress to launch this war, the Strait of Hormuz was free to international maritime traffic, the Gulf states were dedicating themselves to peace, prosperity and the pursuit of happiness, and Lebanon was not under virtual Israeli occupation, creating another intractable problem for another set of negotiators over in Washington. More to the point, the Islamic Republic of Iran has survived, and still has somewhere a well-hidden stockpile of partially enriched uranium from which to develop a nuclear weapon. That qualifies as victory.

Mr Trump says of the talks that “regardless what happens we win...Let’s see what happens – maybe they make a deal maybe they don’t. It doesn’t matter. From the standpoint of America, we win.” That is precisely and diametrically wrong. Whatever happens now, America has lost this war, whether it ends with some kind of deal or whether Mr Trump decides to escalate the military effort. In an asymmetric conflict such as this, with Iran holding the global economy hostage and able to terrorise its neighbours, America cannot “win” on any conceivable basis, even if – especially if – it deploys ground forces or attempts to force the heavily mined Strait of Hormuz open.

For much the same reasons, it will sooner or later have to agree to rather humbling conditions laid down by Tehran, or else just withdraw all the forces and leave the problems behind for the rest of the world – Europe, China, the Gulf rulers – to try to settle. It would be at least as great a humiliation for America as the evacuation of Saigon in 1975 or the retreat from Kabul in 2021, albeit more orderly.

One of the many great tragedies in all of this is that America under President Trump has unilaterally abandoned two peaceful, diplomatic agreements that would have achieved most, if not all, of the American strategic objectives that are now out of reach. The original Iran Nuclear Deal of a decade ago, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, to which the UK, France, China, Russia and Germany were also signatories, severely restricted Iran’s nuclear programme and subjected it to close and regular international supervision. During its time Iran did not develop a nuclear missile. Mr Trump, predictably, tore that up during his first term in a fit of envy because it had been negotiated by “Barack Hussein Obama”. A more recent agreement between Iran and the US, in which Iran agreed not to build nuclear stockpiles, had been brokered by the Omanis and was ready to be signed just when Mr Trump decided in late February that force was a better option. It wasn’t then and it isn’t now. It is

time for Mr Trump to recall the famous words of his hero Sir Winston Churchill that “jaw-jaw is better than war-war”.

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# Trump threatens to ‘finish’ Iran after peace talks fail



Donald Trump was at a UFC event in Miami when news came through that talks had ended (AFP/Getty)

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## ALEX CROFT

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Donald Trump has declared the US will blockade the Strait of Hormuz after the collapse of peace talks with Iran.

The president resumed his bombastic threats just hours after negotiations in Islamabad failed, warning that the US military was “locked and loaded to finish Iran”.

Delegations from Washington and Tehran – including vice-president JD Vance and Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi – had been locked in crucial negotiations that insiders said were marred by mood swings and tense exchanges.

But Mr Vance announced the talks, which aimed to bring an end to six weeks of costly warfare and to find a solution to Iran’s closure of the shipping lane, had failed after just 21 hours.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards have warned that any US warships approaching the Strait to carry out a blockade will be considered in breach of the ceasefire and be dealt with “strongly”, prompting fears that the conflict could reignite just days after a two-week ceasefire was agreed.



Trump attended UFC 327 in Miami while JD Vance was in Islamabad (Imagn Images)

Mr Trump wrote on Truth Social: “Effective immediately, the United States Navy, the Finest in the World, will begin the process of BLOCKADING any and all Ships trying to enter, or leave, the Strait of Hormuz.”

He later told Fox News that Nato allies, whom he has criticised for failing to back the war, wanted to help with the operation in the Strait. “We have minesweepers there,” Mr Trump said. “And I understand the UK and a couple of other countries are sending minesweepers.”

It was not immediately clear what he was referring to. Earlier, former defence secretary Ben Wallace told *The Independent* that sending British warships to police the Strait of Hormuz is “a fantasy” because UK armed forces are already so depleted.

In his Truth Social rant, the president said that “any Iranian who fires at us, or at peaceful vessels, will be BLOWN TO HELL!”

He added: “Iran will not be allowed to profit off this Illegal Act of EXTORTION. They want money and, more importantly, they want Nuclear. Additionally and, at an appropriate moment, we are fully ‘LOCKED AND LOADED’, and our Military will finish up the little that is left of Iran!”

Addressing Saturday’s failed talks, the president said the meeting had gone “well” but that no agreement could be found on the “most important issue”, Iran’s nuclear programme.



JD Vance attributed the failed peace talks to Iran’s unwillingness to end its nuclear programme (Getty)

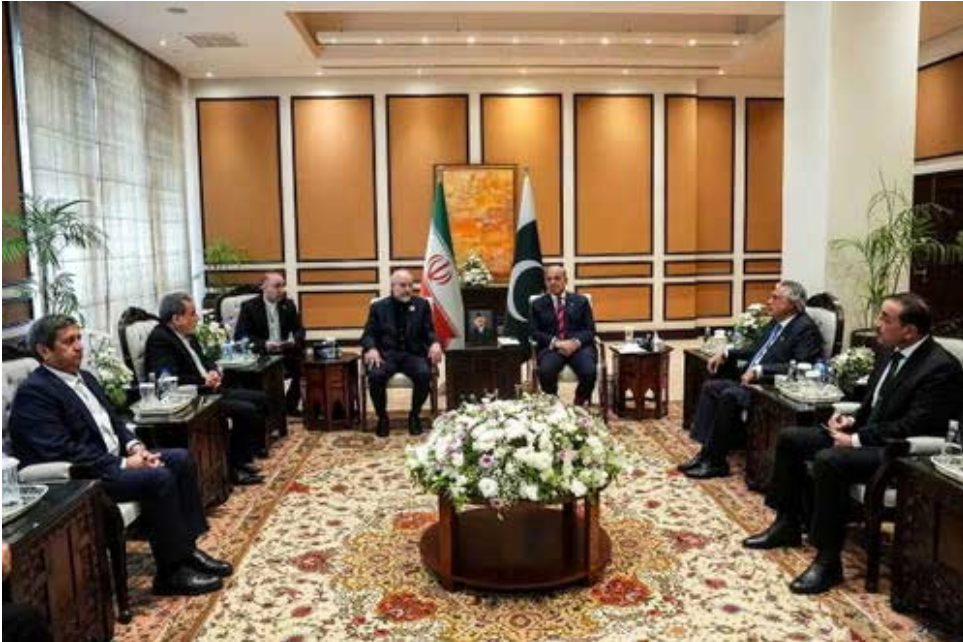
Iran also said the talks had seen some progress but had failed due to “two important issues”, namely the management of the Strait of Hormuz and Iran’s nuclear programme.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards responded to Mr Trump’s latest barrage by stating “all traffic... is under the full control of the armed forces”.

In an interview with *The New York Times*, an Iranian analyst close to the government said the talks had crumbled due to US demands for zero enrichment and the removal of nearly 900lb of stockpiled uranium, as well as the Hormuz issue. While the talks were ongoing, Iranian state media had accused the US of making “excessive demands”.

A foreign ministry spokesperson said the negotiations took place in an “atmosphere of mistrust”, adding that a deal was always unlikely in the first round of talks, although they confirmed there are currently no plans in place for talks to be resumed.

Sir Keir Starmer, who discussed the negotiations with the Sultan of Oman, Sultan Haitham bin Tarik al Said, urged “both sides to find a way through”, a Downing Street spokesperson said.



Officials from Pakistan and Iran hold discussions in Islamabad (WANA)

But the US president does not appear to be in a hurry to force through a quick peace deal, stating while talks were ongoing that it “makes no difference” to him whether or not a deal is reached. As the peace talks collapsed, the US president was enjoying a night at the UFC alongside secretary of state Marco Rubio.

Mr Trump faced further criticism regarding his rhetoric when health secretary Wes Streeting accused the president of using “incendiary, provocative, outrageous” language.

“I think we’ve all come to learn that you judge President Trump through what he does, not just what he says,” Mr Streeting added.

He was also critical of the way the US president has focused very personal attacks on the prime minister, such as comparing him to Neville Chamberlain and saying, “he is no Winston Churchill”.



Wes Streeting said ministers have learned to draw a distinction between what Trump ‘says and what he does’ (BBC)

Sir Keir and the Sultan of Oman also discussed efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the closure of which has sent energy prices soaring over the past six weeks.

Despite the differences in Islamabad, three supertankers fully laden with oil passed through the Strait on Saturday, shipping data showed, in what appeared to be the first vessels to exit the Gulf since the ceasefire deal.

But consumer fury has continued to ripple worldwide as high fuel prices filter down to customers. In Ireland, police cleared trucks that had been blocking traffic in central Dublin for five days in a protest.

Angered by a more than 20 per cent rise in diesel prices since the outbreak of the war, protesters this week used tractors and

trucks to block an oil refinery, two ports, a fuel terminal and a number of roads around the country.

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# ‘Farmers warn of protests’ as diesel soars to £2 a litre



Protesters on O'Connell Street in Dublin (Photos PA)

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**REBECCA THOMAS**

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Farmers are planning fuel protests in England after the Iran war sent fuel prices soaring to £2 per litre, it has been reported.

Ireland has already faced nationwide fuel protests from farming organisations over soaring petrol and diesel prices, which have caused significant disruption and threats to critical supplies throughout the country.

Now farming organisations in the UK are set to meet to discuss nationwide demonstrations in Britain, according to reports in *The Telegraph*.

A source told the paper: “We’ve hit the £2 mark on a litre of diesel. That’s a scary place to be. It will be a matter of time before people in this country start to go out and protest.

“Farmers are the last people who want to go out and protest. You have to remember this is a very busy time of the year for us. But with the inheritance tax protests, you’ve got the groups that have been set up. The infrastructure is there to mobilise.”

“Discussions have been had, and there will be a few people coming together at the beginning of next week to see what can be done.”



**Petrol prices have soared due to the war in the Middle East**

The National Farmers Union told *The Independent* it had not heard from the farming community about plans for protests similar to those in Ireland.

An NFU spokesperson said: “The war in Iran is deeply concerning, particularly for those across the Middle East. The resulting disruption to global oil and gas markets is putting a significant strain on farmers and growers, who are already under immense economic pressure and can’t absorb additional increases in costs.

“While we are working hard to support our members and have been in constant contact with Defra [The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs] and wider government on things it can do to support the farming sector at this critical time, we don’t support protests that have the potential to inconvenience the public and further disrupt supply chains.

“Farming has strong public support, for which we are extremely grateful, and it is important that nothing undermines that.”

Fuel prices have been soaring since the onset of the US, Israel and Iran war, which resulted in the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial oil shipping lane.

The average price of diesel in the UK has now surpassed 190p a litre, hitting the record high seen in 2022.

On Saturday, peace talks between the US and Iran failed to produce a deal, meaning the Strait of Hormuz is still closed, which could drive fuel prices even higher.

The protests in Ireland, largely led by hauliers, farmers, and agricultural workers, targeted major motorways with slow-moving convoys but also the country’s sole oil refinery and key depots. The escalating police response has seen public order units deployed in Cork, Galway, and Dublin, resulting in several arrests.

Yesterday, Ireland’s government called an emergency Cabinet meeting as it prepared to sign off on measures it hopes will bring protests over fuel costs to an end.

On Friday, Northern Ireland’s political leaders urged the prime minister Sir Keir Starmer, to act “decisively and without delay” to help people suffering due to rising fuel costs in the region. Defra was approached for comment.

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# Farage urged to sack Tice over claim he broke tax law

Reform MP calls allegations over property trust a ‘smear’



Reform leader Nigel Farage with his deputy, Richard Tice (Photos Getty)

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**DAVID MADDIX**  
POLITICAL EDITOR

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Reform UK leader Nigel Farage is coming under increasing pressure to sack his deputy leader Richard Tice amid fury over his tax affairs.

Mr Tice, who is the party's business spokesperson and jointly owns it with Mr Farage, has been accused of failing to pay tens of thousands of pounds in tax on dividends that were paid to him and his offshore trust.

Allegations in *The Sunday Times* suggested that he received "at least £91,000 in excess payments" as a result of the failure.

Labour Treasury minister Torsten Bell said: "We already knew Richard Tice aggressively avoided tax. Now we're told his company just plain failed to pay tax that was legally due. For someone supposedly in public service he goes to extreme lengths to avoid paying his fair share towards public services."

Tax expert Dan Neidle said that Mr Tice's "company broke the law". He went on: "There was no ability to choose for different people to pay tax, months later than it should be paid. The law is the law. It's not optional."

He noted: "Mr Tice, owns a property company, Quidnet Reit [real estate investment trust]. From 2020 to 2022, it paid Tice and his trust £600k in dividends. Quidnet should have paid £120k of tax on those dividends. It didn't. Reits and their investors don't get to choose how and when tax is paid. The law required that the Reit pay tax on its dividends immediately, rather than waiting up to 21 months until its shareholders file and pay tax. The tax is still due."



Tice is facing allegations over dividends from a property company

The allegations have echoes of the scandal which forced Angela Rayner to quit as deputy prime minister over failing to pay around £30,000 in stamp duty on a new flat in Brighton because of confusion over her son's trust.

The row led to a very public spat with Lib Dem leader Sir Ed Davey, who said on X that Mr Tice's actions were "morally completely indefensible". He added: "Farage should sack Richard Tice immediately."

But Mr Tice claimed that the allegations were "a smear" and highlighted how Sir Ed had been the post office minister who had allowed postmasters to be wrongly prosecuted and subsequently took £275,000 from the legal firm which pushed for their wrongful imprisonment.

The Reform leadership continued to stand by Mr Tice with the party's homes affairs spokesperson Zia Yusuf defending him on the Sunday broadcast round.

Mr Yusuf claimed the allegations on avoiding tax were "a non-story". He added: "Richard Tice has not committed tax evasion nor tax avoidance, that would be the first point I make. And the second point I would make is that what's also seems clear to me, and I'm obviously not a tax lawyer, but it is clear to me that any tax that would have not been paid or underpaid by the company paying the dividend in this case would have been overpaid by Richard himself in the form of income tax."

Asked about another controversy around a Reform competition to pay people's energy bills, which is being reviewed by the police, he said: "I think the people making such a report should be embarrassed, look it was only a few weeks ago, remember, during the Gorton and Denton parliamentary by-election that, you know, people reported Reform to the police for some imprint on a leaflet.

"And, you know, the police looked at it and said, this is nonsense, threw it out."





# Home Office expected to close down another 11 asylum hotels

The move is part of an attempt to end asylum hotel accommodation altogether



Police presence outside the Bell Hotel in Epping, Essex (Lucy North/PA) (PA Archive)

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**DAVID MADDUX**  
POLITICAL EDITOR

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The government is expected to close down 11 more so-called “asylum hotels” next week as it tries to move faster on tackling illegal immigration.

The closure of the controversial hotels is part of the government’s plan to end hotel accommodation for irregular migrants altogether and linked to a meeting this week on the new contract for asylum accommodation.

The hotels have become a magnet for rightwing anti-migrant protesters and centred around claims of attacks by asylum seekers on women and girls.

Notably, the Bell in Epping became a focus of far right demonstrations with the local Tory-led council unsuccessfully blocking its use as a holding place for asylum seekers waiting for their applications to be administered.



Police presence outside the Bell Hotel in Epping, Essex (Lucy North/PA) (PA Archive)

Latest government statistics show there are around 200 hotels in use, accommodating about 30,000 asylum seekers. More than 70,000 other asylum seekers live in other types of accommodation such as shared housing or military barracks.

According to *The Guardian*, the Home Office is due to hold a private event this week, described as an “industry day” for potential future providers of asylum accommodation.

The department has not disclosed details of the time and venue and it is reported that those attending have to sign a non disclosure agreement (NDA).

The meeting is understood to relate to the re-tendering of asylum contracts from 1 September 2029 until 31 August 2036, with a possible option to extend to 31 August 2039. The new contract, known as Future Asylum Contracts Accommodation, has been valued at approximately £10bn and will enact the government aim of moving away from reliance on hotel accommodation.

Controversially, the Home Office uses part of the already reduced overseas aid budget to fund asylum accommodation in a practice known as “in donor refugee costs”.

These costs amounted to around £2.8bn in 2024 to £2.4bn in 2025.

The Home Office has been asked to comment on the claims but not responded.

A Home Office spokesperson told *The Guardian*: “This government is removing the incentives drawing illegal migrants to Britain and ramping up removals of those with no right to be here. That is why we are closing every asylum hotel and moving asylum seekers into basic accommodation including ex-military sites.

“The population in asylum hotels has fallen by nearly 20 per cent in the last year and by 45 per cent since the peak under the previous government, cutting costs by nearly £1bn.”

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# Once again, power is the SNP's to lose at Holyrood

Labour and Conservative failures are setting the nationalists on course for a fifth consecutive term in Scotland



John Swinney with candidates at the launch of the SNP campaign (Photos PA)

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## SEAN O'GRADY

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Of all the many and varied contests on 7 May, the biggest single set of elections is also the easiest to call: Scotland.

If the polls and the turnout at the previous contest in 2021 is anything to go by, something like 5.4 million Scots will turn out to cast a ballot, and enough of them will vote to return an SNP, or certainly an SNP-led government.

It will be the fifth consecutive term in office for the party since they displaced Labour at Holyrood back in 2007. John Swinney, SNP leader since the departure of Humza Yousaf in 2024, will be first minister once again.

Aside from the long era of Unionist hegemony in the old Northern Ireland parliament, if the SNP lasts until the expiry of the parliament in 2031, it will be the second longest period of electoral dominance across the UK for well over a century. (Welsh Labour, ruling their nation from 1999 to 2026 just pips them).



**Nigel Farage and Malcolm Offord; at least one poll has suggested Reform could come second to the SNP**

Indeed, the peculiarities of the Scottish electoral system – mostly first-past-the-post like Westminster, partly proportional representation – may mean that Swinney will likely either command a small majority or be close enough to having one in the 129 seat assembly that he can get his legislative programme through without too much compromise.

Such is the extreme fragmentation of the SNP's many opponents, with Labour and Reform UK scrapping for second

place, and the Greens, Conservatives, and Liberal Democrats all still strong enough to win some seats, that the basic outcome is beyond doubt. The SNP will divide and rule. The Unionist or anti-SNP vote will be substantial, but such a kaleidoscope that even tactical voting becomes difficult.

Double drams all round? Well, not quite. On current polling, the support for the SNP will probably be somewhere between 35 and 40 per cent of the vote. It will be sufficiently high and well distributed, and its' opponents support low and inefficiently so, that it should get about 60 constituency seats, plus maybe a few more to get over the "threshold" of a majority of 65.

But it will hardly mark a vote of huge confidence in the party and its long record, and will actually be lower than it was when Nicola Sturgeon led them to victory last time round, in 2021.

One fact is plain. The 2026 vote will certainly not represent much of a mandate for the SNP seriously to campaign for a second independence referendum. The last one, in 2014, was based on a larger SNP vote, a clearer parliamentary majority and greater support for separation than is likely this time; and it won't be strong enough for Sir Keir Starmer to feel compelled to accede to the performative request.

Besides, Swinney knows he needs to see polling support for independence at 60 per cent plus to avoid a second ruinous defeat.

While the SNP may feel that that they've survived the scandals and leadership traumas of the Alex Salmond, Sturgeon and Yousaf years, the collapse of the SNP-Green coalition, and dissatisfaction on issues such as education and taxation, the reason they will win is simply that they're lucky – they're not strong or loved, but all their opponents are even less so.



Anas Sarwar is the most high-profile Labour politician to call for Starmer to resign, but his own future is also uncertain

Labour, not long ago, seemed certain to take power at Holyrood as complement to the 2024 landslide at Westminster. No more. Labour's travails at the UK level have also crushed its support in Scotland.

No matter how much Scottish leader Anas Sarwar distances himself from London Labour – including his call last month for Starmer to quit – he cannot escape the contamination. It's also fair to say that he's not produced a distinctive enough agenda of his own to enhance his own prospects.

Although there is no such formal position at Holyrood, he will probably be fortunate enough to become de facto leader of the opposition to Swinney's government. But who knows?

If it's a very bad night for Labour and they slip into third place again (the Tories went ahead and beat them to second in 2021), Starmer might well outlast Sarwar as a party leader.

Which brings us to Reform UK, whose rise in Scotland – as the most sceptical party on devolution, let alone independence or the EU – has been stunning.

Like Labour, they're around the 15 per cent mark in the polls, which is significantly lower than they score in Wales or England, but a few years ago it would have been unimaginable that they

would have pretensions to being the main opposition to the SNP. Immigration and disillusion with the Tories are the main reasons, as down South.

As elsewhere in Britain, Nigel Farage's followers have cannibalised a significant portion of the Tory vote while also peeling away some working class Labour support, particularly in the Central Belt.

But the Conservatives should be able to mobilise and hang on to many of their well-established strongholds in the Borders and North East Scotland to retain some parliamentary representation, and with it the hope of future revival.

They, led by Russell Findlay, are basically still paying the price of the failures of the Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak administrations, plus, in "Remain" Scotland, the continuing effects of the Brexit vote.

Similarly the Liberal Democrats, led by Alex Cole-Hamilton, and also on about 10 per cent, should win a handful of seats in Edinburgh and the Highlands and Islands: the Greens will do the same based on a more substantial level support in the proportional part of the voting.

Both parties have been in coalition administrations in the past - the Liberal Democrats with Labour in 1999-2007. The Scottish Greens, a pro-independent group formally supported the first SNP in 2007, the first referendum on independence and served in government from 2021 to 2024 under the Bute House "power sharing" agreement. They'd be unlikely to gang up with the others to try and turf Swinney out.

It is thus odd but essential to say, by way of an addendum, that while superficially the result of the 2026 Scottish parliament will look solid and decisive, it will have an air of impermanence, of "unfinished business" about it.

It cannot realistically be taken as any expression of approval in the SNP's record; it will be a grudging victory; it will not settle the independence debate; and the mood for change that does exist in Scotland will remain unconsummated.

For the next five years, power once again will be the SNP's to lose. But to whom?

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# Thousands of unpaid carers' debts to be cut or cancelled



People being penalised for going over their earnings limit for carer's allowance has been branded a 'scandal' by campaigners (Alamy/PA)

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## PRESS ASSOCIATION REPORTERS

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Tens of thousands of unpaid carers are to have their debts cut or cancelled in a sweeping government review of historic overpayments.

Some 200,000 people who were left owing money as a result of "confusing" earnings guidance will have their cases looked at

again, the Department for Work and Pensions said.

The government estimates that of these, about 25,000 carers will have their debts cancelled or reduced, or receive refunds where they have already repaid money.

The issue of people being penalised for going over their earnings limit for carer's allowance, even by as little as a few pence per week, has been branded a "scandal" by campaigners.

An independent review led by former charity boss Liz Sayce concluded last November that many carers felt they were "treated as criminals, with resulting feelings of fear and shame".

Ministers accepted 38 out of 40 recommendations in the report, which found that between 2015 and summer 2025, carer's allowance guidance was "ill-defined" and "systemic flaws" prevented many from properly reporting their earnings.

The government says about half of the promised changes have already been made, with further reforms underway to modernise the benefit and prevent similar problems in future.

Historic overpayments led to many carers – who had to earn £151 a week or less to qualify for the allowance – unwittingly racking up unmanageable levels of debt, and some quit their jobs as a result.

The earnings threshold rose to £196 a week last April, and again to £204 net per week for 2026/27. Carer's allowance, which is £86.45 a week, is paid to someone who spends at least 35 hours a week regularly caring for someone with an illness or disability.

The review said the so-called "cliff edge", which meant someone earning just a penny over the limit led to them losing the entire allowance, had a "severe" impact on carers and acted as a disincentive to take on paid work.



Carers UK says hundreds of carers have suffered 'severe financial strain and emotional distress' as a result of the overpayments (Getty/iStock)

Officials say that DWP has all the information it needs to carry out the reassessment in most cases, and that carers do not need to contact the department themselves. The department will contact people if any further details are needed, they said.

Work and pensions secretary Pat McFadden said: "We inherited a system that left unpaid carers building up debt through no fault of their own, something we're determined to put right. Carers are vital to our communities and we are committed to taking action to rebuild their trust."

Carers UK chief executive Helen Walker said hundreds of carers had suffered "severe financial strain and emotional distress" as a result of the overpayments and that further reform was "sorely needed".

"We are pleased to see this government taking decisive action to start putting right the failings of the past and provide carers with the redress they deserve. The reassessment process marks an important step in tackling these systemic failures.

"As we mark the 50th anniversary of carer's allowance this week, it is encouraging to hear that the government is also exploring further options for reform.

"This is sorely needed to ensure that it properly supports and recognises the contribution of unpaid carers, while protecting

them from financial hardship.”

Carers Trust chief executive Kirsty McHugh said the reassessment would have a “huge impact” on carers “who were penalised for no fault of their own”.

“It has been reassuring to see the government accept the vast majority of the recommendations of the Sayce Review, whilst the £75m allocated by last year’s budget is further evidence the government is serious about righting these wrongs,” she said.

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# ‘I almost died after hiding my heart disease symptoms to stop my wife worrying’

Almost one in five adults won't tell partners about illness



Joanne Seymour said she was ‘angry’ and ‘scared’ when her husband, Paul, finally told her about his diagnosis (Tom Wren/SWNS)

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**HARRIETTE BOUCHER**

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Paul Seymour, like many of us, didn't want his loved ones to worry about him. So when he started to notice some unusual changes in his health, he decided to keep them a secret.

When he would struggle to walk up the stairs, he would kneel and pretend to tie his shoelaces. If he started having chest pains when they were out, he would find an excuse for them to stop.

But after seven months of hiding his symptoms, Mr Seymour, then 40, collapsed while running to catch a train in southeast London and woke up to a crowd of people surrounding him. He was taken to hospital, where he found out that the pains he had been hiding were angina attacks caused by coronary artery disease, a condition in which fatty substances narrow the arteries.

After being told he was “lucky not to have had a full-blown heart attack”, Mr Seymour went home that night and told his wife about his diagnosis.

Now an NHS clinical systems manager, the 66-year-old told *The Independent*: “I remember she wasn't very happy. We have a great relationship, we're the best of friends. We never really have arguments, but I could see I'd let her down.

“Once it dawned on her what could have happened, and what was happening, she was extremely worried, and that's the thing I really wanted to avoid.



**Seymour's mother died after keeping her health issues secret (Tom Wren/SWNS)**

“Not opening up about my symptoms is something I regret – it was done for the wrong reasons. I thought I was protecting my wife, but in reality, I was not really protecting myself.”

New research has found that 19 per cent of adults who have a health issue kept their condition a secret from a partner at some point. A fifth of those people will never tell their partner about their diagnosis.

Mr Seymour's own mother had also avoided telling her family about health problems she was facing and died suddenly after going into a diabetic coma. “Because of what happened with my mother, I should have been more open, but I guess it turned me the other way at the time,” he said.

New research commissioned by health insurance agency AXA Health found that more than a quarter of people who chose not to talk about their health issues feared that their partner might leave them, while around 20 per cent felt unsure about how to bring it up. Some 28 per cent of people said they did not want to worry their partner.

Paul's wife, Joanne, said: “When I found out, it was a mixture of being angry because he hadn't told me and being scared. I was so frightened of losing him for something that could have been prevented.”

She said she may have missed some clues that her husband was unwell. “I remember he didn't want to go for walks, but I just put this down to him being anti-social.



More than a quarter of people keeping symptoms a secret said they did not want to worry their partner (Alamy/PA)

“One time we were walking to the train station and had only gone about 30 metres when he became sweaty and was an awful grey colour.”

After spending nearly a year regaining his fitness, Mr Seymour had surgery to insert stents and promised his wife he wouldn't keep quiet about his health again. He said his advice for anyone scared to address their symptoms is to speak up and seek help.

Heather Smith, the chief executive of AXA Health, which commissioned the research as part of its Cover That Cares campaign, said: “Paul's story highlights why it's so important to open up to family and friends about health concerns, even when it comes to difficult or embarrassing topics.

“Undoubtedly, it would have been a frightening experience for Paul, and keeping his symptoms and worries to himself meant he wasn't able to receive the care and support from his loved ones.

“It's completely understandable why people can be reluctant to discuss their health, especially when it comes to serious conditions like Paul's, which could cause worry or distress to their loved ones.

“But as our research shows, 88 per cent of people believe it’s important to be honest about health issues and for those who did open up, the majority felt it positively impacted their relationship.”

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# Pictures of the Day



## Let us spray

Residents of Prey Popel village are doused with holy water from Buddhist monks, in a ritual believed to bring good fortune, during Khmer New Year celebrations on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. *AP*



### **Lost property**

Children's shoes laid out on Dam Square during a protest organised by the Plant an Olive Tree group for child victims in Gaza, in Amsterdam. *AFP/Getty*



### **Small blessings**

People carry baskets containing cakes and other food to have them blessed after an Orthodox Easter service in Kyiv, Ukraine,

during a ceasefire in the country's war with Russia. *Reuters*



### **Safe choice**

A soldier patrols at a primary school serving as a polling station in Cotonou, Benin. *AFP/Getty*



### **Early voting?**

A young boy at a polling station set up at a London hotel for people to cast their ballots in the Hungarian election .

*AFP/Getty*

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# Home news in brief



Dan Walker and his former Channel 5 News co-anchor Claudia-Liza Vanderpuije (Getty)

## **Walker accused of bullying by former Channel 5 co-anchor**

Dan Walker is due to appear at an employment tribunal over accusations of bullying from his former Channel 5 co-anchor, reports claim. The broadcaster, 49, will face Claudia-Liza Vanderpuije, 47, at a hearing in London that is expected to last four days, beginning from 20 April.

A spokesperson for ITN, the production company behind news for ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, told *The Independent*: “This claim, which is denied in full, will be addressed through the tribunal process.”

A source told *The Mail on Sunday* that the *Strictly Come Dancing* star and ex-*BBC Breakfast* host “absolutely denies any sexism, misogyny, racism or bullying. It has been hanging over him for some years now.”

Ms Vanderpuije, who left Channel 5 in 2023 after five years, spent only her final year presenting alongside Walker who joined the evening news at Channel 5 in 2022 after leaving his post at *BBC Breakfast*. *The Independent* contacted representatives of Walker and Vanderpuije for comment.

### **Man charged with murder after fatal Primrose Hill stabbing**

A man has been charged with murder after a 21-year-old was fatally stabbed in north London. Finbar Sullivan died on Tuesday after the attack in Primrose Hill.

Oliuwadamilola Ogunyankinnu was charged with murder yesterday. A spokesperson for Metropolitan Police said the 27-year-old, who was arrested on Friday, will appear at Stratford magistrates’ court today. A 25-year-old man arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender has been released with no further action, police said.

Mr Sullivan was a filmmaking student at the London Screen Academy and produced music videos for drill rap artists under the name Sully Shot It, according to reports.

Speaking to the *Daily Mail*, his father Christopher Sullivan said his son “can never be replaced”. “I’m so broken-hearted, I can’t believe it,” he said. “He was the most beautiful, lovely, outgoing, loving boy. He was just a really lovely person.”

### **Holmes’ son shares health update after TV veteran suffers stroke**

GB News presenter Eamonn Holmes is “doing OK given the circumstances” after suffering a stroke, his eldest son Declan has confirmed. Declan Holmes added that his father’s medical issue “came as a real shock”, and he thanked those who have sent messages of support, saying: “It means a lot to us as a family.”

GB News announced on Saturday that Holmes, 66, had suffered a stroke last week and was recovering in hospital. In a statement yesterday, his son said: “For now, we’re focused on him and keeping things steady around him. We’d really value a bit of privacy as we navigate it, and what lies ahead, but thank you again for the support as it means so much to Dad and the rest of the family.”

In a statement on Saturday, a GB News spokesperson said Holmes “was taken ill last week and it was later confirmed he had suffered a stroke”. The statement added: “He is currently responding well to treatment. Eamonn has asked for privacy as he focuses on getting better.” Alex Armstrong will present in his absence this week, the broadcaster added.

Former *This Morning* host Holmes, who presents *GB News Breakfast* with Ellie Costello, is Britain’s longest-serving breakfast news presenter, with a career spanning more than 40 years.

### **Murder arrest after body found in garden**

Police have arrested a man on suspicion of murder after a body was found at the rear of a garden. Emergency services were called to a property in Filton, near Bristol, in the early hours of Thursday morning after a man in his twenties was found with significant injuries. He was subsequently pronounced dead at the scene.

Another man, who is also in his twenties, was arrested on suspicion of murder yesterday morning. Detective Chief Inspector Lucy Edgeworth, of Avon and Somerset Police, said: “The victim’s family are aware of the arrest and our thoughts are with them following their devastating loss.” She said the formal identification process was yet to be completed.

A spokesperson for Avon and Somerset Police said a forensic post-mortem examination has indicated the man died after sustaining a “number of stab wounds”.

The force is appealing for anyone who witnessed what happened or has CCTV or dashcam footage covering Cleve Road, or any other streets nearby, from 3pm on Wednesday 8 April to 3am on Thursday 9 April to call 101 quoting reference number 5226096397. The independent charity Crimestoppers can also be contacted anonymously on 0800 555 111 or via its website.

### **Woman raped by ‘several men’ after leaving nightclub**

A police investigation has been launched after a woman was raped by several men outside a church after leaving a nightclub. The victim, in her twenties, said she was followed after leaving Labyrinth Epsom nightclub and then attacked, Surrey Police said in a social media post.

The attack is believed to have occurred between 2am and 4am in the early hours of Saturday outside Epsom Methodist Church on Ashley Road. The force added that it currently does not have “full descriptions of the suspects” and is “working hard” on this.

Detective Inspector Aine Matthews said in a statement: “We understand this is an extremely distressing incident and the victim is being supported by specialist officers. Our investigation is in its early stages and a team of officers have been conducting extensive inquiries today to identify and locate the suspects.”

Witnesses or anyone with dashcam footage from the area at the time have been urged to contact Surrey Police quoting reference number PR/45260041426. Information can also be provided anonymously through independent charity Crimestoppers by calling 0800 555 111 or online form.

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# Hungary's Orban concedes defeat after 16 years as PM



Viktor Orban concedes defeat in Budapest after polls close (AP)

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**NICOLE WOOTTON-CANE**  
**HOLLY EVANS**

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Opposition candidate Peter Magyar has claimed a historic victory in Hungary's elections, ousting Viktor Orbán after 16 years in power.

The country took to the polls on Sunday in what Mr Magyar's Tisza party called a “now or never” moment to topple Europe's

longest-serving leader.

Just two hours after polls closed, Mr Magyar posted on Facebook that Mr Orbán had “congratulated me on the phone on our victory”, with 45.7 per cent of the count predicting Tisza were projected to win 135 mandates in the 199-seat parliament.

Speaking to supporters in Budapest, Mr Orbán said the result was “painful” and vowed: “We are going to serve the Hungarian nation and our homeland from opposition as well.”

Pollsters predicted a record voter turnout, with Hungarian television showing long queues outside some voting stations in Budapest.



(Viktor Orbán has conceded defeat after 16 years in power )

Mr Orbán, who has been in power for 16 years, is known as a conservative anti-globalist whose ties to Russia’s Vladimir Putin and the Trump administration have seen become a global figure in far-right politics.

His opponent Mr Magyar, a former Orbán loyalist, has quickly gained popularity through campaigning on frustrations over altering public health care and transportation sectors and what he describes as rampant government corruption.

Queues of voters were pictured outside polling stations across the country as record numbers of Hungarians cast their ballots.

An end to Mr Orbán's period in government has significant implications not only for Hungary, but for the European Union, Ukraine and beyond.

It would likely spell an end to Hungary's adversarial role inside the EU, possibly opening the way for a 90 billion euro (\$105 billion) loan to war-battered Ukraine blocked by Mr Orbán.

Defeat for Mr Orbán could also mean the eventual release of EU funds to Hungary that the bloc had suspended due to what Brussels said was Orbán's erosion of democratic standards.



Orbán salutes his supporters as his 16-year tenure comes to an end (REUTERS)

Mr Orbán's exit would also deprive Russian President Vladimir Putin of his main ally in the EU and send shockwaves through Western right-wing circles, including the White House.

In Hungary, a Tisza victory could open the way for reforms that the party says would aim to combat corruption and restore the independence of the judiciary and other institutions.

Mr Orbán, a eurosceptic, carved out a model of an "illiberal democracy" seen as a blueprint by Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement and its admirers in Europe.

But many Hungarians have grown increasingly weary of Mr Orbán, 62, after three years of economic stagnation and soaring living costs as well as reports of oligarchs close to the government amassing more wealth.

Tisza's leader Magyar appears to have successfully tapped into this frustration.

Casting his vote for Tisza in the Hungarian capital, Mihaly Bacsi, 27, said the country needed change.

"We need an improvement in public mood, there is too much tension in many areas and the current government only fuels these sentiments," he said., a eurosceptic, carved out a model of an "illiberal democracy" seen as a blueprint by Trump's Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement and its admirers in Europe.

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"We need an improvement in public mood, there is too much tension in many areas and the current government only fuels these sentiments," he said.

Ahead of the vote, opinion polls showed Mr Orbán's Fidesz party trailing Mr Magyar's upstart centre-right opposition Tisza party by 7-9 percentage points, with Tisza at around 38-41 per cent. Pollsters predicted record voter turnout of well over 70 per cent.

*More follows on this breaking news story....*



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# ‘China and India must start to provide real foreign aid’

Jan Egeland, head of the Norwegian Refugee Council, asks how India can explore space but not provide aid for Sudan



Egeland during a recent trip to the West Bank (Ed Prior/Norwegian Refugee Council)

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**NICK FERRIS**

IN OSLO

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Too much focus is being given to the impact of US aid cuts and not enough to the fact that countries like China and India continue to provide very little foreign aid, the head of the

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), one of the world's largest humanitarian groups, has told *The Independent*.

In a wide-ranging interview held at the NGO's headquarters in Oslo, Jan Egeland, NRC secretary general, also warned that not enough attention was being given to the climate crisis, and suggested that current plans to boost Nato military spending to five per cent of GDP at the expense of foreign aid would be "a major strategic mistake" that countries will live to regret.

Mr Egeland – who formerly served as the UN's humanitarian aid chief in the 2000s, and as state secretary in the Norwegian foreign ministry in the 1990s – said that the NRC had been seriously impacted by President Trump's gutting of US foreign aid programmes, with the NGO's global headcount shrinking from 15,000 to 14,000 as a result.

"Until last year, the US was our largest donor, followed by the Norwegian government. Then the US funding was frozen overnight," he said. The months that followed were extremely chaotic, Mr Egeland added, with US government stop and restart orders often being received several times over for the same programmes.

Despite the US more recently once again signalling support for foreign aid after a year of global upheaval, Mr Egeland said that there remains a "huge question mark" over the level of funding the NRC will receive from the US in the future.

Major humanitarian projects, including one providing cash transfers for thousands of victims of the war in Ukraine and another providing free flour to 500 bakeries in Sudan so that they can produce subsidised bread, have now been permanently cut for 2026, after receiving several stop- and restart orders over the course of 2025.



Children play near a war-damaged school in Aleppo, Syria (AP)

But while US actions have caused mayhem for NGOs like the NRC, Mr Egeland believes there should equally be criticism of industrialised Asian countries that – beyond Japan and South Korea – currently provide minimal foreign aid.

“There has to be a much more aggressive calling out not just of the US, but also other countries like China and the nations of Southeast Asia,” he said. “I think we can be far too obsessed with what Trump has been doing over the past few hours, and we can ignore the bigger picture.

“How can it be that India can carry out a moon landing on the dark side of the moon, but not provide aid for our operations in Sudan,” he continued. “Russia has hundreds of billions to wage a senseless war in Ukraine, but no money for our relief efforts.”

Norway, Mr Egeland added, is a country of just 5.5 million people, with no seat on the UN Security Council nor G20 membership, yet it has become the world’s ninth biggest national donor of humanitarian aid, as a result of its continued commitment to provide foreign aid worth one per cent of its gross national income (GNI). The country might have made a fortune from oil in recent decades, but other equally wealthy countries are contributing significantly less.

The UN target for foreign assistance is for wealthy countries to provide aid worth 0.7 per cent of GNI. The UK, by contrast, is set to provide only 0.3 per cent of GNI, following cuts that were announced last year.

Still often classified as “developing countries” in some UN frameworks, China and India are not formally obligated under agreements such as the 1992 climate convention to provide foreign aid to poorer countries, even though their economies have grown substantially since those classifications were made.

### Norway paid far more towards humanitarian response plans last year than China

Value of public aid contribution to UN-coordinated humanitarian response plans, 2025 (\$m)

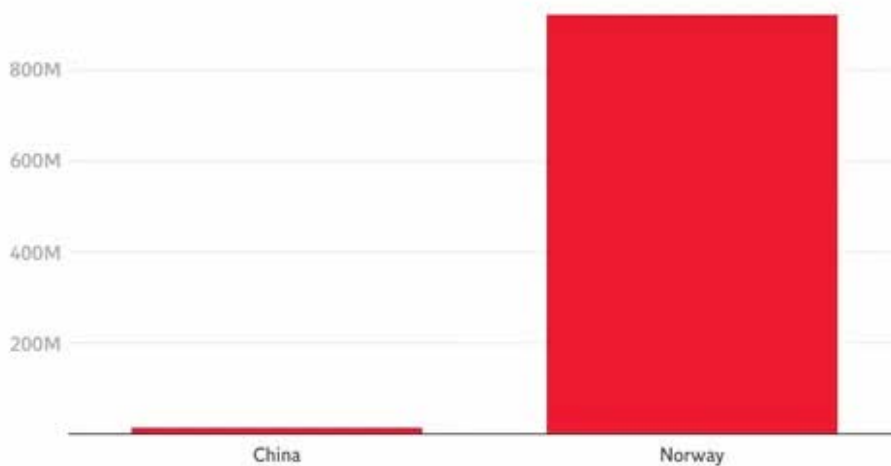


Chart: Nick Ferris • Source: UN OCHA

INDEPENDENT

Last year, China made a \$16m (£12m) contribution to humanitarian aid plans coordinated by the UN, while India contributed nothing. Norway and the UK contributed \$921m and \$1.9bn (£1.4bn) respectively.

### ‘We will live to regret aid cuts’

Mr Egeland also warned that the strategy adopted by countries including the UK, Germany and France of slashing foreign aid to significantly boost military spending will not achieve its intended aims of stabilising Europe’s security situation.

“I understand that countries feel threatened by what Russia is doing in Ukraine, but if we forget about what is needed to bring

stability to other parts of the world, we will live to regret it,” he said.

The would-be target that Nato countries have agreed with Donald Trump of spending five per cent of GDP on defence was described as both “astronomic” and “unprecedented” by Mr Egeland.

“You have to go back to previous world wars to see spending anything like that,” he said. “We are seeking stability in Europe, but really we are just becoming more introverted and nationalistic.”

Maintaining foreign aid should very much be seen as in the interests of wealthy nations, and not simply selflessness, he continued.

During the European migration crisis of 2015, sparked in part by Syria’s civil war, many Western politicians looked forward to a time when the war would be over, and Syrians could return home, Mr Egeland said. But now that the war is over, there has so far been little money pledged to help rebuild Syria, and so Syrians have had to remain in Europe.



**If we want to avoid unchecked epidemics coming from displaced people in least developed countries, then we need to provide more support**

*Jan Egeland*



Equally, Mr Egeland described a recent visit to a refugee camp in Eastern Chad, where Sudanese refugees described their

intention to cross into Europe on small boats due to the total absence of economic opportunity where they were, and despite the risks that the trip would involve.

“We are scraping together enough money to make the journey across to the Mediterranean’, they told me. This was despite the fact that they had followed on social media 20 friends who had attempted to make that the journey the previous year, of whom 19 had drowned,” Mr Egeland said.

“I told them that these deaths were clearly a signal that they should not go,” Mr Egeland continued. “But they told me: ‘We have been waiting for so long here for something to happen, but nothing has happened. Yes, the trip might be dangerous, but there is a glimmer of hope, while here there is nothing.’”

On the subject of the climate crisis, Mr Egeland also called out the hypocrisy of politicians who are continuing to call for climate action in public, while cutting aid for climate programmes overseas.

“In most parts of the world, there is the same positive rhetoric around climate change, but in fact, when it comes to the people most impacted by the climate crisis, rather than receiving more money to help them survive, they are in fact receiving less,” he said.

His comments came just before the UK announced that it would cut its climate aid to £6bn over the next three years – down from £2.3bn annually under the previous five-year arrangement – in a move that was described as a “huge betrayal”.

Mr Egeland continued: “If we want to avoid uncontrolled migration fueled by conflict and the climate crisis, and if we want to avoid unchecked epidemics coming from displaced people in least developed countries, then we need to provide more support.”

Looking ahead, he warned that expected further cuts meant that there was a risk that the world could return to the “dark days of the 1980s”, when the world experienced “Biblical famines” that killed many thousands.

“At the moment, we are dropping very hungry people to prioritise those on the brink of famine. We are having to drop so many vulnerable communities, and I am very concerned about what the consequences of all of this might end up being.”

*This article has been produced as part of The Independent’s Rethinking Global Aid project*

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# Spain becomes ‘Europe’s conscience’ over Trump

PM Sanchez has opposed US-Israeli action in Middle East



The relationship between Pedro Sanchez and Donald Trump, pictured last October, has deteriorated rapidly (Getty)

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**MAIRA BUTT**

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“Europe’s challenge is not only to rearm itself to address its security and defence problems, but to also rearm itself morally, so that it can contribute to stable and peaceful development throughout the world.”

That was the message from Spain's socialist prime minister Pedro Sanchez, speaking at a European forum this week, with comments that show why his country has been dubbed by some as "Europe's conscience".

From Gaza to Lebanon, Trump to Netanyahu, Spain has stood as something of an outlier in Western Europe for unequivocally taking a stand while other nations have tended to temper their criticism.

When the US and Israel launched their joint strikes on Iran at the end of February, Mr Sanchez clearly condemned the conflict as an "unjustified and dangerous military intervention that is outside international law", later branding it "absurd, cruel and illegal".

He was also quick to deny American forces permission to use jointly operated bases to launch attacks against the Islamic Republic.

"We don't authorise either the use of military bases or the use of airspace for actions related to the war in Iran," Spain's defence minister Margarita Robles said last month. "I think everyone knows Spain's position. It's very clear."



Spain has condemned Israel's war on Lebanon (Getty)

And, this week, Spain became the first Western country to reopen its embassy in Tehran after a fragile US-Iran ceasefire

took hold

Mr Sanchez appeared unimpressed by the fragile agreement, brokered by Pakistan hours after President Trump threatened to wipe Iranian civilisation off the map, writing: “The government of Spain will not applaud those who set the world on fire just because they show up with a bucket.”

Mr Sanchez’s approach has unsurprisingly earned him the ire of both the US and Israel’s leaders. Mr Trump called Spain “terrible” and threatened to cut off all trade over the refusal to use bases in its fight with Iran.

And on Friday, Mr Netanyahu announced he would be ousting Spain from a US-led Gaza military strategy centre in the Israeli city of Kiryat Gat for its “hypocrisy and hostility” and for having “chosen repeatedly to stand against Israel”.

“Spain has defamed our heroes... the soldiers of the most moral army in the world,” Mr Netanyahu said in a video address posted to X on Friday. “I do not intend to allow any country to wage a diplomatic war against us without paying an immediate price.”

Spain has also condemned Israel’s attacks on Lebanon, accusing the country of trying to “inflict the same level of damage and destruction” it has done in Gaza.



Benjamin Netanyahu has accused Spain of ‘defaming Israel’s heroes’ (AFP/Getty)

“There must be no impunity for these criminal acts,” the prime minister said after the latest wave of strikes, before calling for the EU to suspend trade with Israel in a speech on Friday.

The latest clashes follow Madrid permanently withdrawing its ambassador to Tel Aviv in March after years of disagreements and tensions.

Iran appears to have returned the gestures of support, dubbing Spain a “non-hostile” country. Tehran even suggested it may let its ships pass through its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

While other Western European countries have tried to balance criticism of Mr Trump with the need to keep the US on side, Mr Sanchez’s unambiguous approach reflects anti-American sentiment in Spain.

A majority of Spanish people (51 per cent) believe that Washington poses a threat to Europe, according to a new Politico European Pulse survey released on Thursday – the largest proportion of respondents from all countries surveyed.

Forty-three per cent of Spaniards oppose the US-Israeli war on Iran, while 22 per cent remain neutral. A huge 94 per cent of respondents said that Europe needs to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on other major powers.



Demonstrators march in support of Palestinians in Barcelona (AP)

Tensions have been bubbling for years, with Spain joining Ireland to become Israel's staunchest critics of the country's war in Gaza after October 2023.

Mr Sanchez openly accused the Israeli government of genocide, claims which Israel has previously dismissed as antisemitic. Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and the United Nations have all agreed with the conclusion.

The country also became one of the first European nations to recognise the state of Palestine.

"Spain originally condemned attacks by Hamas and acknowledged Israel's right to self-defence," said Vuk Vuksanović, an associate at LSE Ideas and a lecturer in foreign policy at King's College London.

"Madrid views Israeli actions as a disproportionate response with severe humanitarian consequences for the Palestinians and as a main generator of regional instability.

"Since then, Spain has been somewhat at the forefront of condemning both Israeli actions in Gaza and its strikes against Iran."



Sanchez, right, showing his support for Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky (AP)

Mr Vuksanović said that Ireland, Slovenia and Norway had taken similar stances to Spain, providing the country with a

“reputational boost” as a result.

“These are not geopolitical heavyweights, and they are not game-changers in terms of Europe’s overall posturing, as Europe, on one hand, avoids the risk of being dragged into an ill-conceived war in Iran,” he said.

“On the other hand, with the exception of Spain and a few other countries, it avoids being vocal in criticism of the US and Israel.”

With the Strait of Hormuz still closed, the reluctance of Nato to intervene has led to Mr Trump making several statements attacking the alliance and complaining of a lack of support.

But Spain’s cultural history, and geographical position near North Africa, mean that it is particularly mindful of instability in the Middle East, experts say.

“In that context, one should remember the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004, Spain’s deadliest terrorist attack and one of the deadliest in Europe’s history. It was widely interpreted domestically as being linked to Spain’s involvement in Iraq,” said Mr Vuksanović.

“What came after the attack was the electoral change of government and Madrid pulling its troops from Iraq.”

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# World news in brief



Asha Bhosle's career encompassed over 12,000 songs in over 20 languages (AFP/Getty)

## **Legendary Bollywood singer Bhosle dies aged 92**

Asha Bhosle, a legendary singer who lent her voice to a generation of Bollywood movies and earned an unrivalled status in the playback industry, has died aged 92.

She died in Mumbai yesterday following multiple organ failure after being admitted to Breach Candy Hospital a day earlier. Bhosle and her elder sister Lata Mangeshkar were the dominant female voices in the Hindi film industry spanning eight decades. Mangeshkar died in 2022, also at the age of 92.

The news has been met with an outpouring of emotion in India, where Bhosle was a household name and cultural icon. Indian prime minister Narendra Modi offered his condolences to the family, calling Bhosle “one of the most iconic and versatile voices India has ever known”.

Bhosle’s career encompassed over 12,000 songs in more than 20 languages, which saw her awarded the Guinness World Record in 2011 as the most recorded artist in music history. Her work spanned genres and included international collaborations with Boy George, Michael Stipe and even Australian cricketer Brett Lee. She continued to work into her nineties, and featured on the track “The Shadowy Light” from the Gorillaz album *The Mountain*, released earlier this year.

### **Russia and Ukraine accuse each other of violating ceasefire**

Russia and Ukraine yesterday accused each other of violating a Kremlin-declared Easter ceasefire, as Orthodox Christians gathered to celebrate the holiday despite Moscow’s four-year war against its neighbour.

Russian president Vladimir Putin on Thursday declared a 32-hour ceasefire over the Easter weekend, ordering Russian forces to halt hostilities from 4pm on Saturday until the end of Sunday. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky promised to abide by the ceasefire, but warned there would be a swift military response to any violations.

The general staff of Ukraine’s armed forces said in a statement yesterday that it had recorded 2,299 ceasefire violations by 7am, including assaults, shelling and small drone launches. It said that the use of long-range drones, missiles or guided bombs had not been reported.

A Ukrainian military officer told the Associated Press on Saturday that Russian forces had continued to attack their positions. Russia’s Defence Ministry also said yesterday it had recorded 1,971 ceasefire violations by Ukrainian forces, including drone strikes.

## **Gaza aid flotilla seeks to break Israeli blockade**

A second flotilla carrying humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza was due to set sail from Barcelona yesterday to try to break the Israeli blockade.

Around 30 boats planned to leave the Mediterranean port city laden with medical aid and other supplies on the Global Sumud Flotilla, with more vessels expected to join along the route towards Palestine.

The Israeli military halted roughly 40 boats assembled by the same organisation last October as they attempted to reach blockaded Gaza, arresting Swedish activist Greta Thunberg and more than 450 other participants.

Israel, which controls all access to the Gaza Strip, denies withholding supplies for its more than 2 million residents. Palestinians and international aid bodies say supplies reaching the territory are still insufficient, despite a ceasefire reached in October which included guarantees of increased aid.

## **Hundreds feared dead after Nigerian military airstrike on market**

More than 200 people are feared dead after Nigerian military jets struck a village market in the country's northeast, according to a local councillor and residents.

The airstrike occurred on Saturday night as the military pursued Islamist militants. The incident took place in a village in Yobe, bordering Borno state, a region long plagued by an insurgency that has claimed thousands of lives and displaced millions.

Nigeria's air force confirmed it had killed Boko Haram militants in the Jilli axis of Borno state, but its statement to Reuters yesterday made no mention of hitting a market. The air force did not respond to subsequent requests for comment.

Lawan Zanna Nur Geidam, a councillor and traditional head for Fuchimeram ward in Yobe's Geidam district, told Reuters that those injured were being transported to hospitals in Yobe and

Borno. “It’s a very devastating incident at Jilli Market. As I’m speaking to you, over 200 people have lost their lives from the airstrike at the market,” he said.

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# *Making America hate again: Trump's rant is end of an era*



Donald Trump's language is bringing to an end a century in which the US was seen as generally benevolent (AFP/Getty)

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**PETER FRANKOPAN**



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The terrible situation in Iran, the Gulf and the Middle East is having global implications. With factories shutting across Asia, governments such as that of the Philippines already declaring national emergencies, and president Lee Jae Myung of South Korea admitting publicly that he cannot sleep at night, the gravity of

what started on 28 February is slowly starting to become clear. The UK's response, Sir Keir Starmer said last week, "will define us for a generation".

Economic shocks deliver body blows unequally. The poorest suffer most, sadly. So too do economies that are reliant on global supply chains – and on circumstances beyond their own control. But countries that are heavily dependent on commodities passing through the Strait of Hormuz, whether liquefied natural gas (LNG), crude oil, petroleum products, fertiliser or aluminium, find themselves exposed to a nightmare scenario of energy outages, lower agricultural yields and a more difficult future than any had contemplated at the start of the year.

It has not been lost on countries in Africa and Asia that the United States will suffer less than other parts of the world – not because of the latter's wealth and its ability to sustain itself through difficult times ahead, but because the US does not depend on the Middle East for oil, gas or much else. In global markets, everyone feels pain; but American business and citizens will feel it less than others.

The decision to attack Iran on 28 February was one based on decisions made in the White House. Six weeks ago, negotiations between the US and Iran, mediated by Oman, were ongoing – and seemed to be progressing. For the US, and its ally Israel, this is a war of choice, not of necessity. That gives them a responsibility to help mitigate the consequences for others who now find themselves facing precarious weeks and months ahead.

That, of course, is not how US negotiators see things. "We're looking forward to the negotiations," said vice-president JD Vance as he made his way to Islamabad for peace talks. The US, he declared, expected Iran to come to the table "in good faith" – and warned that there would be trouble if they "try to play us". That makes it sound like a game. It is anything but for the two-thirds of the world's population that have been exposed to supply shocks.

## **What cannot be argued is that American leaders helped fashion an image of the US around the world that was compelling, attractive, open and generous**



Donald Trump gained a reputation long ago for being gung-ho and for putting his foot in his mouth. But even for a man widely regarded as a PR genius, capable of not just shaping but dominating the news cycle, what he has said in recent days has done serious damage to the view of the US around the world.

“We are going to hit them [Iran] extremely hard over the next two to three weeks,” he said at the end of March. “We’re going to bring them back to the Stone Ages, where they belong” – something that has been interpreted as having not just semi-genocidal overtones but racist ones, categorising Iranians as backward and unsophisticated, rather than heirs of one of the oldest and most brilliant legacies in history.

He went further on Tuesday, posting on social media that “a whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back“.

From Hungary, where he was helping the re-election bid of Viktor Orbán, Vice-President Vance chimed in: “I hope they make the right response.” The Iranians need to know, he added, that “we’ve got tools in our toolkit that we so far haven’t decided to use”.

It was not hard to understand what both men meant: if Iran did not come to terms, the US would use nuclear weapons in combat for the first time since 1945.

The man who made that dreadful decision did so in the hope that it would end a global war that had cost tens of millions of lives, including hundreds of thousands of US servicemen.

Nine months later, Truman gave an address to the nation in which he talked about the “solemn obligation” facing

Americans. It was impossible, he said “to ignore the cry of hungry children. Surely we will not turn our backs on the millions of human beings begging for just a crust of bread ... We would not be Americans if we did not wish to share our comparative plenty with suffering people. I am sure I speak for every American when I say the United States is determined to do everything in its power to relieve the famine of half the world.”

Or there was JFK, whose centre now has Trump’s name chiselled alongside it, who in his inaugural address declared that the US would help “break the bonds of mass misery” for those in the world without food or hope. Americans should do so, he said, not to win votes or gratitude; but “because it is right”.

How well the US achieved this in the 20th century is a question historians enjoy asking – and disputing. But what cannot be argued is that American leaders helped fashion an image of the US around the world that was compelling, attractive, open and generous.

It is too early to guess how the Iran crisis will look in years to come; we should all hope, of course, for a lasting settlement that comes quickly. But this feels like the end of an era, especially when taken alongside Trump’s public and constant denigration of Nato. America First means America Alone. That feels like a definitively different United States from that of the recent past.



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# *Why does the UK look away if Black women go missing?*



A body found in Wraysbury, Berkshire, is believed to be that of Edna Mmbali Ombakho, a missing Kenyan student (Facebook)

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## TABBY KIBUGI

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On 1 February, 31-year-old Edna Mmbali Ombakho, a Kenyan MSc student, was reported missing from Wraysbury in Berkshire. As the search for her began, it unfolded largely through diaspora Facebook pages, Kenyan news outlets and social media appeals from worried kin. Her case barely received any attention from

UK news outlets. There were no daily updates marking how long she had been missing, or televised appeals. Weeks later, police confirmed that a body had been found in water in Wraysbury, believed to be Edna's.

To date, coverage of Edna's case remains limited. Only two UK publications have briefly reported on her story. It was only after growing outrage on social media over the lack of exposure that her case began to receive any attention at all.

When Black women go missing, it is our communities and not the national news cycle that are left raising the alarm. Edna's case sits alongside many others that have raised concerns about the lack of urgency and sustained media attention they receive. In some instances, this is often accompanied by inadequacy of investigations into their deaths.

We all remember back in 2021 when Sarah Everard disappeared. Our timelines were filled with photos of her. Thousands gathered for her vigil and stood for hours demanding justice. While it sparked a necessary conversation about women's safety, it also highlighted how little attention is paid to Black women victims. Amidst these repeated incidents, I keep wondering, where is the same rage and urgency when it comes to Black women's cases?

In September 2020, 21-year-old Blessing Olusegun was found dead on Bexhill beach. Most of us had not heard about her case before coming across news of her death on X. An initial autopsy proved inconclusive before her death was later ruled a drowning. Her family called for further investigation yet police concluded there was no evidence of foul play despite the discovery of her shoes and phone just metres from her body. When Joy Morgan, a university student, disappeared in 2018, it took weeks for her story to gain traction in the media. I remember coming across news of her last whereabouts from a tweet from then *gal-dem* editor, Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff.

It was only after people aggressively reposted Brinkhurst-Cuff's tweet that media outlets treated the case with some urgency. Another Black woman from London, Karen Cleary, went

missing while building a home in Jamaica in that same year. Once again, most people only heard that a body had been found and it belonged to her on social media. These are just a few whose cases have slipped from public view.

## **Society's perception of the perfect missing victim is still shaped by race, gender and class**



Around 170,000 people are reported missing in the UK each year. Previous findings showed that people from Black and Asian communities are more likely to be missing for longer, less likely to be found by the police, and less likely to be recorded as being at risk than white people. The statistics were particularly stark for Black children and adults.

Society's perception of the perfect missing victim is still shaped by race, gender and class. The term "missing white woman syndrome", coined by Sheri Parks, reflects how cases involving white women receive disproportionate media attention. Their stories are often framed around their roles as daughters or students, while women of colour are more likely to be portrayed through negative or criminalised narratives, such as abusive boyfriends.

Media coverage plays a crucial role in missing person cases through spreading appeals, mobilising searches, and bringing forward crucial information. Latoya Dennis, of For Black Women UK, an advocacy group for missing Black women, told me that when that visibility is lacking, it not only impacts search efforts but can also lead to harmful speculation online, which has affected cases such as that of Taiwo Balogun.

Even though her death was later ruled as non-suspicious, Taiwo's family had publicly expressed serious concerns about her welfare while she was missing. In the absence of sustained

media coverage and clear updates, speculation began to circulate online, with some questioning whether there had been foul play. This is evidence of how limited visibility can allow assumptions to spread.

But beyond visibility, this is a reminder of how much (or how little) value society has placed on Black women. Our lives are not seen as urgent enough to interrupt the news cycle. Addressing this gap will require more than the momentary outrage most of us experience. Newsrooms should start interrogating how they assign value to missing persons cases and commit to covering Black women with the same consistency, urgency and care afforded to others.

They should also be working more closely with families to amplify appeals faster, especially in those critical early hours. This will also require greater diversity in editorial decision-making because the person in the newsroom ultimately determines which stories are seen as urgent and worthy of attention. Until these changes are taken seriously, far too many missing Black women's stories will continue coming to light only when it's already too late.



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# *Ordinary life being flattened is a grim cycle for Lebanon*



Chris Peilow in Lebanon with his grandfather and grandmother, both in their nineties (Supplied)

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## CHRIS PEILOW

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This week, I cancelled a flight. It wasn't a particularly dramatic act in itself – people cancel flights all the time. A bit gutting, one of those things... With just a few clicks of my smartphone, it was done.

It wasn't for money reasons, or for work. I cancelled it because the world, once again, has decided I should.

I had meant to be going to Lebanon to surprise my grandfather for his 99th birthday – a number that should come with celebration. A number so improbable, it feels almost defiant.

His is a life that has stretched across empires, the birth of a nation, independence, construction, destruction and reconstruction. Invasions. Wars. A life that, at this point, deserves only one thing: peace.

I am acutely aware of the absurdity of sitting in London and writing about a cancelled trip while people are dying and families are being erased. What I feel today is miniscule in comparison.

But this is also what war does. It doesn't just kill – it rearranges the living. It corrodes the ordinary. It takes something as simple, as fundamental, as visiting your family and renders it risky, irresponsible or impossible. By any reasonable measure, I have had a privileged existence. The son of an immigrant mother who left war-torn Beirut with my British father, I was raised in exceptional circumstances in the United Kingdom. My life exists purely because my parents and grandparents endured theirs.

Summer holidays in Lebanon along with my brother and sister feel almost mythical now: manakish for breakfast, days spent splashing in the Mediterranean, minibus trips across the border to Syria to see even more family – cousins, uncles, aunties. Music, parties, dancing. These are not romantic inventions, they are real memories.

But then came the interruptions. Again and again, something always happens in Lebanon.

Armed conflicts – trips cancelled. Attempted invasions – reunions abandoned. Political assassinations – plans up in the air. Always a problem. Always a question mark. A grim, predictable cycle in which ordinary Lebanese life builds itself back up, only to be flattened again by forces that insist on calling themselves necessary.

Last month, Donald Trump laughed as he wondered how people could still live in Lebanon. As if the act of staying in one's home is irrational – or that everyone has a foreign passport tucked conveniently away in a drawer.

For my Teta (grandmother) and Jeddo (grandfather), their lives must feel as though they have moved in reverse. They raised their children in luxury and comfort, only for that to give way to bomb shelters in basements, armed checkpoints, car bombs and tanks on the streets. They are now financially weaker than they have ever been, with less family around them than ever before.

They go to sleep to the sound of gunfire, drones, missiles and explosions. They are in their nineties. They should be going to sleep to the sound of nothing at all.

**Every building has a family inside it. Every explosion has a scream attached to it. These things are easy to forget when you are watching from a distance**



And then on Wednesday, Beirut came under its heaviest assault in years. More than 200 people killed in a matter of hours. The same city that once held my summer memories now feels unpredictable, haphazard – as though anywhere, at any moment, can become the centre of violent chaos.

The balcony I remember from summer holidays – looking out over Beirut and the Mediterranean – has become something else entirely. Now it is a vantage point. A place to watch the smoke rising, the sirens, the screams. The quiet counting of time between explosions. A front-row seat to the destruction of my family's city.

I was told yesterday that “today is good” – not because anything has improved, but because it was quiet. Quiet now meaning

fewer than a hundred airstrikes in 10 minutes. That is what passes for relief.

People here reach out, but kind, well-meaning messages are impossible to answer properly. “Are your family OK?” You stare at it for a while, because what does “OK” even mean in this context? They are not dead. They have not been displaced. So you say “Yes”. Or you say “They’re fine for now”, which is closer to the truth, but still feels like a lie.

I wanted to see them. To sit with them. To hug them. To hear the same stories I have heard a hundred times before and will never hear enough. To mark, however briefly, the fact that a human life has reached 99 years. Instead, I’m left to tackle a more difficult truth – will I ever see them again?

Of course, none of this is accidental. All of the missed visits, the cancelled flights, the quiet severing of ordinary life are not unfortunate by-products of what is going on in the world. They are entirely predictable consequences of decisions made by people who will never have to live with them.

You watch matters unfold and wonder which is worse: that two giddy men in the Oval Office – one of them is reckless, the other calculating – knew exactly what would happen in the wider region when they attacked Iran on 28 February; or that they didn’t care enough to think it through. That the newly announced ceasefire didn’t initially bother getting to the detail of how much, or even if, it included whatever is even going on in Lebanon. The result is always the same: normal lives will always be reduced to collateral.

Every building has a family inside it. Every explosion has a scream attached to it. These are obvious things, but they are easy to forget when you are watching from a distance.

I am angry at the predictability of it. Angry at the language that sanitises it. Security. Stability. Necessary action. Angry at the way things continue, decade after decade, as though this is simply how things are meant to be.

Angry that, in order to see my family, I must first consult the Foreign Office website, my travel insurance policy schedule and make a risk assessment. I must work out to what extent I trust the prime minister of Israel's definitions of the words "ceasefire" and "peace talks".

It is not a complicated request. It is, in fact, the most basic one there is.

Angry, too, at my own position in all of this. At the fact that I have been able to opt out, however reluctantly.

That I can just cancel a flight on my smartphone and remain safe. That I can sit here and write about it.



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# *The mickey-mouse dictator of Myanmar is fooling no one*



Min Aung Hlaing has been sworn in as Myanmar's 'civilian' president (AFP/Getty)

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**CHRISTOPHER GUNNESS**

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In scenes redolent of North Korean political pantomime, Myanmar's mickey-mouse dictator, Min Aung Hlaing, has been sworn in as "civilian" president in the surreally grandiose capital, Naypyidaw (which translates to "Abode of the Kings"), built on a monumental scale by the military for self-glorification. At the

official swearing in, serried ranks of faithful officials gazed adoringly at the self-satisfied diminutive despot.

But no one in the real world, least of all 60 million Burmese people, were remotely fooled by this Lilliputian farce. For the last 15 years, Min Aung Hlaing has served as supreme commander of the armed forces and is personally responsible for what the UN describes as a “reign of terror” perpetrated against the civilian population.

In the last five years, the UN estimates that tens of thousands have been gunned down by Min Aung Hlaing’s army, blown to pieces in indiscriminate airstrikes, forcibly disappeared and tortured to death.

The UN and independent investigators have concluded that the Burmese army has used sexual violence, including rape, widely and systematically as a weapon of war and repression. Under Min Aung Hlaing’s watch, military-backed transnational crime has blossomed, such as scam centres, drugs and people-trafficking, while millions have been forcibly displaced, either internally, or driven across international borders, fuelling Southeast Asia’s burgeoning refugee crisis.

Min Aung Hlaing was also the architect of the so-called “clearance operations” against the Rohingya People in 2017, a genocide ongoing to this day, that drove more than 700,000 people into Bangladesh. Soldiers under his command went on a spree of mass murder, gang rape and arson attacks that saw whole villages burnt down. It is well documented that women were gang-raped in front of their communities; parents looked on as their families were locked in their homes, which were set alight; babies were thrown onto the flames; young boys were beheaded; as defenceless refugees fled, they were fired on.

What brazen disdain for the Burmese people and for the rule of law, that Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar’s genocidal perpetrator of state terrorism, should be sworn in as civilian president with full state honours. And what a mockery of democracy. Min Aung Hlaing’s ascendance to his fake presidency follows sham elections in which his political opponents were banned,

incarcerated and tortured in their droves. His military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, which won just a handful of seats in previous elections, this time “won by a landslide”, according to pro-military state media.

## **I believe we may be seeing the beginning of an exciting new trend: the dawning of the age of universal jurisdiction in Southeast Asia**



Fittingly, as Min Aung Hlaing took office, fresh charges of genocide and crimes against humanity were brought against him, this time in Indonesia. He is already the subject of an arrest warrant from a court in Argentina and faces war crimes and crimes against humanity allegations in the Philippines and East Timor. Additionally, the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court has announced his intention to have him arrested.

The case in Jakarta, which includes evidence gathered by frontline investigators on the ground inside Myanmar, is particularly powerful. Under Indonesia’s new penal code, universal jurisdiction for genocide and crimes against humanity is expressly permitted. Regardless of the nationality of the perpetrator or victims, or where the crime was committed, Indonesia has an obligation to bring those charged to justice. Moreover, Indonesia is the world’s most populous Muslim country, and thus Min Aung Hlaing’s genocide against Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslims is particularly offensive there, not least because it has driven thousands of refugees into Indonesian territory.

My organisation, the Myanmar Accountability Project, worked with a charismatic Rohingya genocide survivor, Yasmin Ullah, along with 10 leading Indonesian public figures, to file a genocide and crimes against humanity complaint with the

prosecutor in Jakarta. Yasmin's testimony at the prosecutor's office about the plight of her community brought tears to the eyes of hardened investigators. Her voice cracked as she told them that "the architect of our extermination and other mass atrocities across Myanmar cannot be allowed to sit comfortably in the presidential palace without facing the consequences of his heinous crimes". The director of human rights in Indonesia's prosecutor's office pledged to do all in his power to take the case forward.

Our filing last Monday has brought unprecedented results. The Indonesian authorities have, for the first time, formally accepted a universal jurisdiction file under the country's new penal code, and Southeast Asia now has its first universal jurisdiction case brought by a Rohingya genocide survivor. Our hope is that an investigation will be initiated as the first step to legal proceedings.

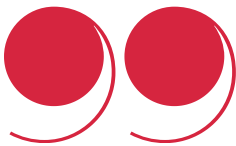
Certainly, accountability for atrocity crimes will be more important than ever moving forward. Myanmar's self-styled "president" has given key posts in his new cabinet to figures linked to some of the most egregious atrocities since the coup. Lieutenant General Tun Aung, the new defence minister, served as air force chief overseeing the campaign of airstrikes in non-junta areas, including air attacks on first responders to the earthquake in March 2025. Lieutenant General Nyunt Win Swe, who becomes home minister, oversaw the brutal suppression of anti-coup protests in Yangon, and has been sanctioned by the European Union, Switzerland and Canada. Given China's role in supplying military equipment, it is noteworthy that Tin Maung Swe, previously ambassador to Beijing, has been named foreign minister.

Latest figures attest to accelerating atrocities. According to the UN Human Rights Office, airstrikes by the Myanmar armed forces in 2025 killed at least 982 civilians – a 53 per cent increase compared with the previous year. The situation has not improved in 2026: more than 400 aerial attacks were reported during the electoral period, between December 2025 and January this year, killing more than 170 civilians. At least 287

children were killed in 2025, making it the deadliest year for children since 2021.

Against this desperate backdrop, the pressures for accountability are building and I believe we may be seeing the beginning of an exciting new trend: the dawning of the age of universal jurisdiction in Southeast Asia. Civil society groups back us, but the jury is out on what governments will do. How they deal with Min Aung Hlaing has become a litmus test of their commitment to the rule of law and of their responsiveness to their own populations.

*Christopher Gunness is director of the Myanmar Accountability Project*



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# THE AGE OF TYRANNY

In fast-moving industries, it's easy to become an underling to a talented but lunatic boss. **Lydia Spencer-Elliott** asks career experts how to leave a job that 'a million girls would kill for'



Jean Smart as abusive Deborah Vance and Hannah Einbinder as her underling in 'Hacks' (Sky)

When I arrived, fresh-faced and naive, to my first job in journalism, my editor made me serve legal papers to a rival publication. When I queried to a colleague whether this fell into the realms of my responsibilities, the reply was eye-widening: "At least he didn't ask you to take a birthday present to his mistress like the last reporter." Months later, the same man

threw a stack of newspapers at my co-worker's head after she dared to ask a question.

Most people have a tale of a horrible boss – some worse than others. If they're a true monster, the answer is (usually) simple: leave. But most megalomaniacs have more nuance than that; glimmers of brilliance, inspiring creativity, industry clout, or innovative ideas that can collectively make working under them – as Emily explains to Andy of her role as Miranda Priestly's receptionist in *The Devil Wears Prada* – a job that “a million girls would kill for”, despite the trials and torment.

Fiction is packed with these toxic but talented leaders: Jon Hamm's Don Draper is dubbed an advertising genius throughout seven seasons of *Mad Men*. But his brilliance allows him to miss meetings, drink on the job and provide minimal career progression for his junior staff with no repercussions until the season six finale. Even then, he bounces back.

This week, cutthroat comedian Deborah Vance returns to our screens to terrorise and inspire her head writer, Ava Daniels, in the fifth and final season of *Hacks*. Deborah is narcissistic, abusive and manipulative to her team. She's also, as a comedy legend, supremely funny, admirably driven and maddeningly charismatic. As such, Ava sticks around.

Studies have shown that this Hollywood trope translates to real life, too. Research has found that employees are less likely to label a supervisor as abusive – and may reinterpret harmful behaviour as “tough love” – when the leader is a high-performer. This reframes toxic traits as acceptable and allows the stars that blind us to go unchecked for longer.



Workers may find it difficult to walk away from their lauded leader (Sky)

”They’ll walk on people to make sure they get to stay where they are and control all the conversations,” says career coach Maureen Adams of this style of supervisor. “They tend to be quite disruptive and a little bit sneaky. The impact day to day is that the person who’s under them thinks they’re going to show them the ropes and they’ll be able to learn fast,” she adds. “But the reality is that they’ll often get closed out of the decision-making meetings and only be allowed to do minor tasks.”

If you do one day manage to fight tooth and nail for a more senior position, the struggles don’t stop there. “Once they’re established, they’ll find that they’ll be demotivated quickly because when they do something well, it won’t get noticed or it’ll be taken away for a different project”, says Adams. “So, it’s hard to feel valued, appreciated or understood.”

If you’re wondering at this point whether this might be your boss, Adams says there are a few telltale signs: “Often you can’t predict what’s coming next in your job because you’ll be doing one task and then a toxic manager will suddenly throw something quickly at you,” she says. “Typical phrases are ‘don’t come to me with problems, come to me with solutions’ or ‘I don’t care how you do it, just do it.’ When it goes wrong, they’ll be accused of behaving like a bull in a china shop. So, it’s gaslighting.”



Andy and Miranda Priestly in 'The Devil Wears Prada' (DreamWorks)

This leaves you unable to finish anything, unable to ever truly log off and unable to ever get visibility in the boardroom. Essentially, you're a backing singer, smiling and clicking, behind the lead artist. "They're always just the supporting act for the toxic boss," says Adams. "That's how I would describe them ... These toxic relationships can last for years."

Adams says this phenomenon is similar to the so-called "golden handcuffs" of a high-paying position. "If they're in a prestigious company or in a role that, to the outside world, looks wonderful to everyone else, then leaving can feel like giving up," she says. "But sometimes it's important to recognise that you've done the best you can in that position."

It can be hard to know when to call it quits, particularly if your boss is a superstar. One minute, Deborah is hurling abuse at Ava, the next, they've landed a string of high-profile gigs in Las Vegas. Much like a toxic romance, the breadcrumbs of praise can keep you going back for more.

"Extreme highs and lows are not especially healthy," says career change and job search coach Hannah Salton. "There can be natural ups and downs, but if the lows are impacting your productivity, wellbeing or mental health, for me, that's when

alarm bells should start ringing, and you need to start thinking about what other options might be out there.”



Dysfunctional: Peggy Olson, played by Elisabeth Moss, and Jon Hamm's advertising genius, Don Draper, in 'Mad Men' (Lionsgate/AMC)

When you do build up the resolve to finally start considering an exit strategy, Adams says it's important not to make it obvious in any way. "For the majority of people, it's better to find another job first," she says. "But you need to avoid emotional leakage. Lots of people decide they'll look for another job and immediately give up at work. Colleagues pick up quickly that you've lost enthusiasm, and word gets around. So, best to keep quiet."

One way to do this is to set yourself private goals to achieve before you walk out the door. "I tell people to put a timeline on things," says Adams. "You decide that by a certain date you'll have achieved particular goals for your CV, so that you know you've got something out of the role, and can end the arrangement on a good basis."

But, even if you leave, without theatrics, knowing you've done well, realising your dream job is not so great after all can be a harrowing process, admit both experts. "It's quite hard to come to terms with," says Salton. "There is a kind of grief involved in realising that it wasn't right."



Hannah leaves her job in 'Girls', calling it 'sweat shop for words' (HBO)

Adams says this grief can be healed by focusing on the interesting projects you worked on to offset the resentment. And you need to do it fast, otherwise interviewers will be able to tell from your body language that you're harbouring disgruntlement. "They've got to reframe it in their own mind first: that didn't work out, but you know what, the next one will," Adams says. "Leave the grief behind and heal a bit along the way."

At one point in both the corporate and creative worlds, there was a bit of a cycle of abuse. While employees would leave a toxic boss behind physically, they would carry them with them mentally, inflicting the same bizarre treatment onto their underlings because "it's what I went through when I started out". Thankfully, Adams says this hazing is now old hat.

"I don't often find that people learn it and take it with them any more," she says. "I think they did in the Seventies, Eighties and Nineties when there was leadership based on power and control. But it's much less visible now. It's much more about collaboration and emotional intelligence."



Brian Cox as Logan Roy in 'Succession' (HBO)

Ultimately, it doesn't matter how talented or respected someone is; you don't want to work under them if they can't be a kind, considerate human being. That is, fundamentally, the bare minimum in the workplace.

“Being a manager is a massive responsibility and a lot of people don't get formal training, but I don't think that's an excuse,” says Salton. “No matter how intelligent, successful, or brilliantly talented someone is, being an effective manager – and a reasonable person – is just as important.”

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**Section 2/ Ask Simon Calder**

# Should we risk a three-day stopover in Abu Dhabi?



The Foreign Office has warned against 'all but essential travel' to Abu Dhabi (Simon Calder)

**Q** We are at the tail end of trip to Japan and Korea. We are booked to fly home via Abu Dhabi with a three-day stopover and chill before landing in Manchester. Some sunshine and relaxation is just what we need after a busy trip with mixed weather. No other potential options seem feasible. I am prepared to tolerate some risk, as you seem to be. What is your view?

**Cathy McC**

**A** The Foreign Office warns against “all but essential travel” to Abu Dhabi and the rest of the United Arab Emirates, as it does to other Gulf nations, because of fears of Iranian attacks. The warnings look incompatible with relaxation: “Limit your movements to essential journeys only. When travel is unavoidable, aim to move during daylight hours and avoid crowded venues. If you are away from your home or hotel, and an attack occurs or you receive an alert from the official UAE warning system, seek shelter in the closest building immediately.”

The FCDO says it is too dangerous to change planes at Abu Dhabi or Dubai airport, though thousands of British travellers are doing just that every day.

In March I also had a three-day stopover booked in Abu Dhabi, between Jakarta and London. Etihad, the airline, canceled – leaving me with just a two-hour flight connection. Standard travel insurance is invalid while in the UAE for any events related to the conflict.

I took the decision to go against the Foreign Office advice because the alternatives were either impractical or super-expensive, or both. And because it seemed to me that the airline and its crew would not fly if they felt there was significant danger. Looking at air fares and availability, transiting via the Gulf is around half the price of other options. The best alternative deal from east Asia appears to be on Indigo from Bangkok via Mumbai to Manchester. I love the Indian city, but “chilled” is not how I would describe it.

Let me know what you decide to do.

*Email your question to [s@hols.tv](mailto:s@hols.tv) or tweet [@SimonCalder](https://twitter.com/SimonCalder)*

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# Five experts pick their best ISA funds for this tax year

**Simon English** gets an informed view of the most promising options for anyone investing in stocks and shares saving pots



Those investors who pick a stocks and shares ISA will almost certainly do better than those who play it safe with a cash equivalent (Getty/iStock)

Stock markets are as turbulent as they have ever been. Those not used to seeing their wealth jump and plunge from day to day might well be wary of trying them out for the first time.

But by investing for the longer term, investors who pick a stocks and shares ISA will almost certainly do better than those who

play it safe by holding savings in cash – and they will never pay tax on any earnings.

The average stocks and shares ISA account is worth over £65,000, significantly higher than the typical cash ISA, which holds less than £13,500.

“With UK inflation elevated at around 3 per cent over the past year, it’s not a great time to be sitting on cash, especially given that over the past 12 months, the average stocks and shares ISA grew around 11 per cent, compared to an average return of 3.48 per cent for cash ISAs,” explained Dan Moczulski, eToro UK’s managing director.

With the new tax year’s allowance now in effect – worth £20,000 per person – we asked five experts to pick one fund they would be willing to buy into themselves.

While not recommendations for everybody, they offer food for thought, as well as better diversification and lower risk than buying individual company shares.

## **Scottish Mortgage FTSE 100**

### **Annabel Brodie-Smith, communications director of the Association of Investment Companies (AIC)**

Brodie-Smith is going for the Scottish Mortgage FTSE 100 investment trust managed by Baillie Gifford.

This company invests around the world in exciting private companies like SpaceX and Revolut, as well as public-listed companies like Meta, Nvidia and ASML.

They are aiming to invest in the companies shaping the future – a mix of technology, healthcare, consumer services and more. The trust currently trades on a 5 per cent discount and has low charges of 0.31 per cent. This is an investment trust for long-term investors with a high appetite for risk.

This fund went up 27 per cent in the last year and is up 68 per cent over five years.



The Scottish Mortgage FTSE 100 trust invests in global names including SpaceX (AFP/Getty)

## **iShares Over 15 Years Gilts Index Fund (UK)**

**Alan Miller, CIO at SCM Direct**

This fund tracks the FTSE Actuaries UK Conventional Gilts Over 15 Years Index and is therefore a fund investing solely in sterling-denominated UK government bonds, with a minimum remaining maturity of 15 years. It holds 27 gilts, has net assets of £2.95bn, and carries a Morningstar Gold medal.

There are no performance fees and a charge of just 0.1 per cent a year.

Miller says: “One of the most compelling opportunities in the market is hiding in plain sight: UK government bonds.

“Here’s the number that stops people in their tracks: 4.95 per cent compounded over 10 years is a 62 per cent return before charges, backed entirely by the UK government and sheltered from tax inside an ISA.”

Gilt yields are close to multi-decade highs. Locking in a yield to maturity of nearly 5 per cent inside an ISA wrapper, where all income and gains are tax-free, is exceptional by historical standards, and at an ongoing charge of just 0.1 per cent per annum, virtually nothing is lost to fees.

He adds: “Boring has rarely looked this good. It’s the kind of deal most active fund managers can only dream of offering.”

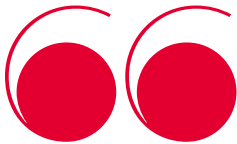
This fund is basically flat over the last year and up 9 per cent over five years. That’s because interest rates have been very low – as they are now higher, it should fare better from here.

## **Man Income**

### **Paul Agnell, head of investment research, AJ Bell**

Of the Man Income fund, Agnell says: “The fund’s pragmatic and analytical managers, Henry Dixon and Jack Barrat, invest in undervalued UK companies across the market cap spectrum, which are paying a yield at least in line with the market. In order to avoid value traps, the managers also look at a firm’s cashflow and assets.”

So, the team seek out undervalued and unloved companies, of which the UK market continues to present opportunities.



**Investors should note this is a high-risk investment and should form part of a diversified portfolio**



Their investment process centres on identifying two types of stocks: those trading below their replacement cost (what it would cost today to replace a company’s assets and operations) that are also cash generative, and those where the market appears to be undervaluing profit streams.

The fund has made an excellent start to 2026, up over 10 per cent in the first two months alone and was up 28 per cent over

2025. Banks were a key contributor over 2025, led by Lloyds, but with strong contributions also coming from Barclays and Standard Chartered.

The charge on the Man Income fund is 0.9 per cent.

## **Murray International**

### **Philippa Maffioli, Blyth-Richmond Investment Managers**

Murray International aims to blend global diversification with a solid income stream. The yield is around 3.5 per cent.

Maffioli says: “I like Murray International’s focus on dependable cashflows and sensible valuations, rather than chasing the highest yield. It also isn’t tied to the UK market, so you’re spreading risk across regions and currencies.”

Day-to-day decisions now sit with Martin Connaghan and Samantha Fitzpatrick, but the approach remains consistent: sustainable income with long-term growth potential. If you reinvest the dividends, it can be a strong compounding option over time.

It charges fees of 0.5 per cent. It is up 36 per cent in the last year and up 60 per cent over five years.

## **Pantheon Infrastructure Plc**

### **Jonathan Moyes, head of investment research, Wealth Club**

Pantheon Infrastructure Plc aims to provide investors with some diversification away from global stock markets while providing the potential for attractive equity-like returns over the longer term.

The FTSE 250 trust co-invests alongside some of the world’s leading infrastructure managers. Its portfolio includes large-scale data centres, gas distribution networks, US renewable energy and storage developers, as well as one of Europe’s leading temperature-controlled logistics and transport businesses.

Moyes says: “These assets are prized for their mission-critical nature and long-term contracted revenue streams. Nonetheless, shares in Pantheon Infrastructure change hands at an attractive 13 per cent discount to net asset value.”

That means the shares in the fund are valued more highly than the actual fund, which means easy wins – *if* that discount narrows. Trusts’ valuations do not always do so, while others might trade at a premium – in other words, more than the sum of their parts.

Investors should note this is a high-risk investment and should form part of a diversified portfolio. The trust has total ongoing charges of 1.29 per cent. The fund is up 30 per cent in the last year, but is too new for a five-year view.

Depending on which investment platform you use, and like any other fund, there may also be share dealing costs, so look to minimise those where you can so they don’t eat into your long-term returns.

*When investing, your capital is at risk and you may get back less than invested. Past performance doesn’t guarantee future results.*

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Section 2



# ON THIS DAY



Sidney Poitier became the first Black man to win an Oscar for best actor, on this day in 1964 (Getty)

**1668:** John Dryden was appointed the first poet laureate.

**1732:** Birth of Frederick, Lord North, who as prime minister levied the tax on tea that incensed the American colonists and provoked the Boston Tea Party.

**1742:** The first public performance of Handel's *Messiah* took place in Dublin.

**1852:** Frank Winfield Woolworth, merchant and founder of the chain store, was born in New York.

**1882:** The Anti-Semitic League was founded in Prussia.

**1912:** The Royal Flying Corps was instituted by royal charter.

**1936:** Joe Payne scored 10 goals for Luton Town against Bristol Rovers on his debut as centre-forward – a record for one man in one game.

**1964:** Sidney Poitier became the first Black man to win an Oscar for best actor, for *Lilies Of The Field*.

**1980:** Four days after his 23rd birthday, Severiano Ballesteros won the US Masters, the event's youngest winner.

**1990:** The Soviet Union admitted the massacre of up to 15,000 Polish officers at Katyn in the Soviet Union in 1940.

**On this day last year:** Rory McIlroy won the US Masters golf tournament, becoming just the sixth person to complete the career grand slam.

## **Birthdays**

**Edward Fox**, actor, 89; **Marjorie Yates**, actor, 85; **Al Green**, soul singer, 80; **Peabo Bryson**, singer, 75; **Peter Davison**, actor, 75; **Stephen Byers**, former Labour MP, 73; **Garry Kasparov**, former chess champion, 63; **Ricky Schroder**, actor, 56; **Lou Bega**, singer, 51.

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Section 2



# This Week in History

## Tizane Navea-Rogers delves into The Independent's archive to see which world events made the front page of our paper

### Our chaos strategy is working, says IRA

**David McKittrick, James Connolly and Esther Lynch**

The IRA has managed to maintain its tactics of mass disruption after a significant period of relative stability that the various organisations between the groups is "working".

Two explosive and a series of coded messages related to it when throughout the Midlands and north of England yesterday. The IRA again targeted bus and subway links, in effect cutting off the South from the West for several hours.

Two divers, equipped as divers and Lark, but the one was Ripart. The railway stations and city centres of

London, Birmingham and

London, Birmingham and

### Major's position on



### AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

**THE KILLER**  
THE VIOLENT SONER BEHIND WORST CAMPUS SHOOTING IN US HISTORY PAGE 4

**THE GIRL**  
FIRST VICTIM THOUGHT TO BE HIS TEENAGE FORMER GIRLFRIEND PAGE 9

### Moscow admits guilt for Katyn massacre of Polish officers

After 60 years of denial, the Soviet Union has admitted that its army police units were responsible for the massacre of nearly 21,000 Polish officers during the German Soviet War, including those killed in the Katyn forest in Byelorussia, writes Giles Whittell.

The admission, which came as the Polish President, Lech Kaczyński, laid out his demands for a full investigation into the massacre, which was the way for a settlement of the Katyn massacre. The Russian government will pay a fine to the Katyn victims.

The first news that the Soviet Union had admitted to the Katyn massacre was in 1990, when the Soviet Union admitted to the massacre. The admission was made by the Soviet government, which was the way for a settlement of the Katyn massacre. The Russian government will pay a fine to the Katyn victims.

### KATYN 1940

SUMIENI SWIATA WOLA O SWIADKACH TWO PRAWIZI

IN REMEMBRANCE

Destruction and deception dominate this week's news. The world grieves the loss of 32 lives in the Virginia Tech massacre and watches in horror as flames engulf the iconic Notre-Dame Cathedral. Meanwhile, political leaders are forced to face reckonings of their own. From the Soviet Union finally admitting to the Katyn massacre of nearly 15,000 Poles after half a century of denial, to Boris Johnson becoming the first sitting



page features a striking visual of people in Malaga donning centuries-old robes and tall, pointed hats for a traditional Easter procession.



# THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

No 117 19 APRIL 1993

Published in London 80p (incl. postage)

## Sellafield nuclear waste site 'is unsafe'

By Tom Wilson  
Science Editor

THE Sellafield nuclear plant to hold £2.5 billion worth of radioactive waste deep under the ground in Cumbria appears to be at danger of collapse.

A report by the water disposal company, UK Nirex, says the rock foundation on which the plant sits is crumbling and could cause the site to sink into the sea. The report also says that the site is unsafe because of the damage and spread of which contaminated air flows through the area.

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Easter processions in Malaga take part in their annual Easter processions, a tradition dating back centuries. The costumes assure the correct and precise to equal success. Photograph by Timothy Blue

## Lockerbie: the secret witnesses

By Phil Davies and Leonard Davis in New York

A FORMER Libyan government official is one of two witnesses to being asked United States government (prosecutors) to give evidence at the Lockerbie hearing. It is being held in a government building in New York. The witness is a former head of the CIA's counterterrorism unit, William Crowther, who has spoken out on the issue that the Libyans were involved in the Lockerbie bombing. "I was there when it happened," he says. "I was there when it happened."

By Phil Davies and Leonard Davis in New York

Several witnesses have given evidence at the trial of the two men accused of the Lockerbie bombing. The witnesses are former CIA counterterrorism unit head William Crowther and former CIA counterterrorism unit head William Crowther. "I was there when it happened," he says. "I was there when it happened."

By Phil Davies and Leonard Davis in New York

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## Murder hunt as 5 die in blaze

By Mary Bond and James Beckett

A MURDERER is being sought after five people died in a blaze in a flat in London. The blaze broke out in a flat in a block of flats in London. The blaze broke out in a flat in a block of flats in London. The blaze broke out in a flat in a block of flats in London.

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## London top in survey of Euro crime capitals

LONDONERS suffer more crimes in total than the residents of any other EU capital. The survey shows that London is the most crime-ridden city in Europe. The survey shows that London is the most crime-ridden city in Europe.

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**18 April 1993 – Serbs defy world with Srebrenica assault**

As Bosnian Serb forces launch a devastating assault on Srebrenica, shelling the town from all sides and engaging in hand-to-hand combat, the UN Security Council convenes an emergency session. With the humanitarian situation rapidly deteriorating, pressure mounts on Western leaders to authorise retaliatory airstrikes to halt the brutal advance.



A Serb sniper aims his rifle to continue the bombardment of Srebrenica. The town is crowded with up to 10,000 Muslim refugees who fear a massacre

Two guilty in Rodney King beating case

ONE OF the two defendants in the history of the United States... Rodney King beating. The... Two men were acquitted... The... Rodney King beating case...

Serbs defy the world

UN Security Council holds emergency session Hand-to-hand fighting in Srebrenica Pressure grows for air strikes by West

BOGNER Serbs have been... Serbs defy the world... UN Security Council holds emergency session... Hand-to-hand fighting in Srebrenica... Pressure grows for air strikes by West...

By Tony Barber, East Europe Editor

From the English... Serbs defy the world... UN Security Council holds emergency session... Hand-to-hand fighting in Srebrenica... Pressure grows for air strikes by West...

Further reports... Serbs defy the world... UN Security Council holds emergency session... Hand-to-hand fighting in Srebrenica... Pressure grows for air strikes by West...



The battle for Srebrenica

Sunday newspaper of the year

THE Independent in London has been voted the... Sunday newspaper of the year... The award was determined by a panel of 50 editors...

FOR THE SECOND YEAR ABBEY NATIONAL HAS BEEN VOTED BEST OVERALL LENDER. We have set again been voted 'Best Overall Lender' and 'Best First Time Buyer'...

19 April 1997 - IRA claims 'chaos strategy' is working
A series of explosions and coded bomb warnings by the IRA causes massive travel disruption across the Midlands and north of England, effectively severing key rail and motorway links between the North and South for several hours. Amid the widespread paralysis, a republican source reveals the organisation intends to continue these tactics, declaring that its strategy of mass disruption is "working".



**HALF PRICE (FULL VALUE) TODAY** **30p**

Naomi Wolf, Stella McCartney, Kim Novak, Gary Churchill, Alan Hansen, Laraine...

## Our chaos strategy is working, says IRA

David McKittrick, James Donnelly and Esther Leach

The IRA reported a continuation of its chaos strategy after a significant victory in a recent election. The IRA says it is working to bring about a new political order in Ireland. The IRA says it is working to bring about a new political order in Ireland. The IRA says it is working to bring about a new political order in Ireland.

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## Major's position on Europe



Anthony Davies Political Editor

The portrait of Tony Blair as the British champion of the cause of the Common Market, Europe, has been recently redefined by Blair, Labour and the Commission. Blair, Labour and the Commission have recently redefined Blair, Labour and the Commission. Blair, Labour and the Commission have recently redefined Blair, Labour and the Commission.

The Prime Minister said that Britain had won a strategic victory for the Common Market. Blair, Labour and the Commission have recently redefined Blair, Labour and the Commission. Blair, Labour and the Commission have recently redefined Blair, Labour and the Commission.

**THE INDEPENDENT**  
Financial Journal of the Year

## 16 April 2003 – Unanswered questions as the Iraq War concludes

As the initial combat phase of the US-led invasion draws to a close, *The Independent* dedicates its front page to a list of urgent, unanswered questions left in the conflict's wake. Demanding accountability, the paper questions everything from the whereabouts of Saddam Hussein and the alleged weapons of mass destruction to the true civilian death toll and the underlying geopolitical motives for the war.



## The war is over. Now these questions must be answered

Where are the weapons of mass destruction? Where is Saddam? *What about the alleged links to al-Qa'ida?* **How many Iraqi soldiers were killed and injured?** How many civilians were killed and injured? *How many Allied casualties?* **Did the Allies stick to the Geneva Conventions?** Why did Saddam's forces crumble? *Was the war illegal?* **What side deals were made?** Who is in the 'coalition' and what did they do? *Where is the anti-war alliance now?* **Is the UN relevant any more?** Do Iraqis feel liberated? *Why did so many journalists die?* **Who was really responsible for the two marketplace bombings?** Is there a humanitarian crisis? *Are the contracts to rebuild Iraq all going to White House cronies?* **Is this the first step to reordering the Middle East?** What about North Korea? *What happened to the human shields?* **Has public opinion changed since the war began?** Is Ahmed Chalabi just a crooked US stooge? *What are the chances of an Iranian-style Shia revolution?* **How long will American troops stay in Iraq?** Has the Rumsfeld doctrine been vindicated? *Was it really all about Israel?* **Or was it about oil?** Or was it about the 2004 presidential election? **Is the world a safer place?**

Independent writers make sense of the Iraq conflict, pages 2, 3 and 4



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**Months in jail 'ouster'**  
Prison terms of less than a year to end help individual offenders, the Lord Chief Justice Lord Woolf has warned in an attack on sentencing. *News, page 8*

**Nurses back pay deal**  
Nurses and midwives have voted for a huge majority for a 10.5% pay rise over three years, subject to the biggest strike-up of 5000 pay in a decade. *News, page 12*

**Portuguese killer jailed**  
The killer of the Dutch politician Theo van Gogh was sentenced to 18 years in jail yesterday. Prosecutors had demanded he be given a life term. *Europe, page 12*

**Apartheid victims' cash**  
South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki is awarding 30,000 rand (22,000 to each of thousands of apartheid victims identified by the truth commission. *World, page 12*

**IN THE CITY**  
The Bank Exchange is expected to announce a takeover of Standard Chartered before news of a possible merger with Citigroup. *Business, page 17*

**TODAY'S WEATHER**  
Dry, sunny and warm across most of England and Wales, with mild coastal breezes. Some rain in Northern Ireland. *News, page 18*

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### 18 April 2007- The Virginia Tech massacre

Following the Virginia Tech massacre, *The Independent* investigates the harrowing human stories behind the tragedy, profiling the "violent loner" responsible, his first victim, the defensive gun dealer, and a heroic Holocaust survivor professor

who died saving his students. With the loss of 32 lives, it remains the deadliest school shooting in US history.



## 16 April 2019 – Devastating fire engulfs Notre-Dame

As the world watches in horror, a catastrophic fire rips through the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, collapsing its iconic spire and destroying its historic oak roof in just 63 minutes. *The Independent* captures the heartbreak of seeing nine centuries of history go up in flames, an event that sparked a monumental global fundraising and restoration effort to rebuild the beloved Parisian landmark.



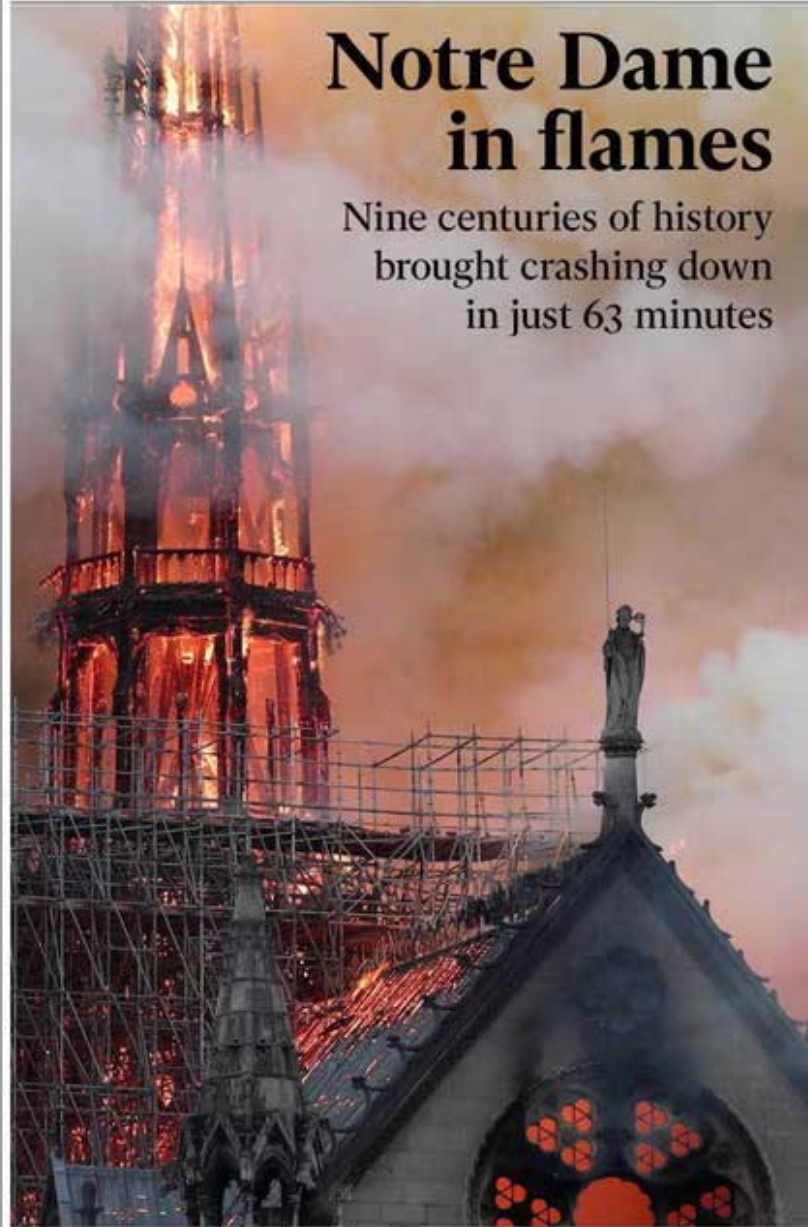
The  
**INDEPENDENT**

TUESDAY 16 APRIL 2019

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# Notre Dame in flames

Nine centuries of history  
brought crashing down  
in just 63 minutes



## 13 April 2022 – Partygate scandal

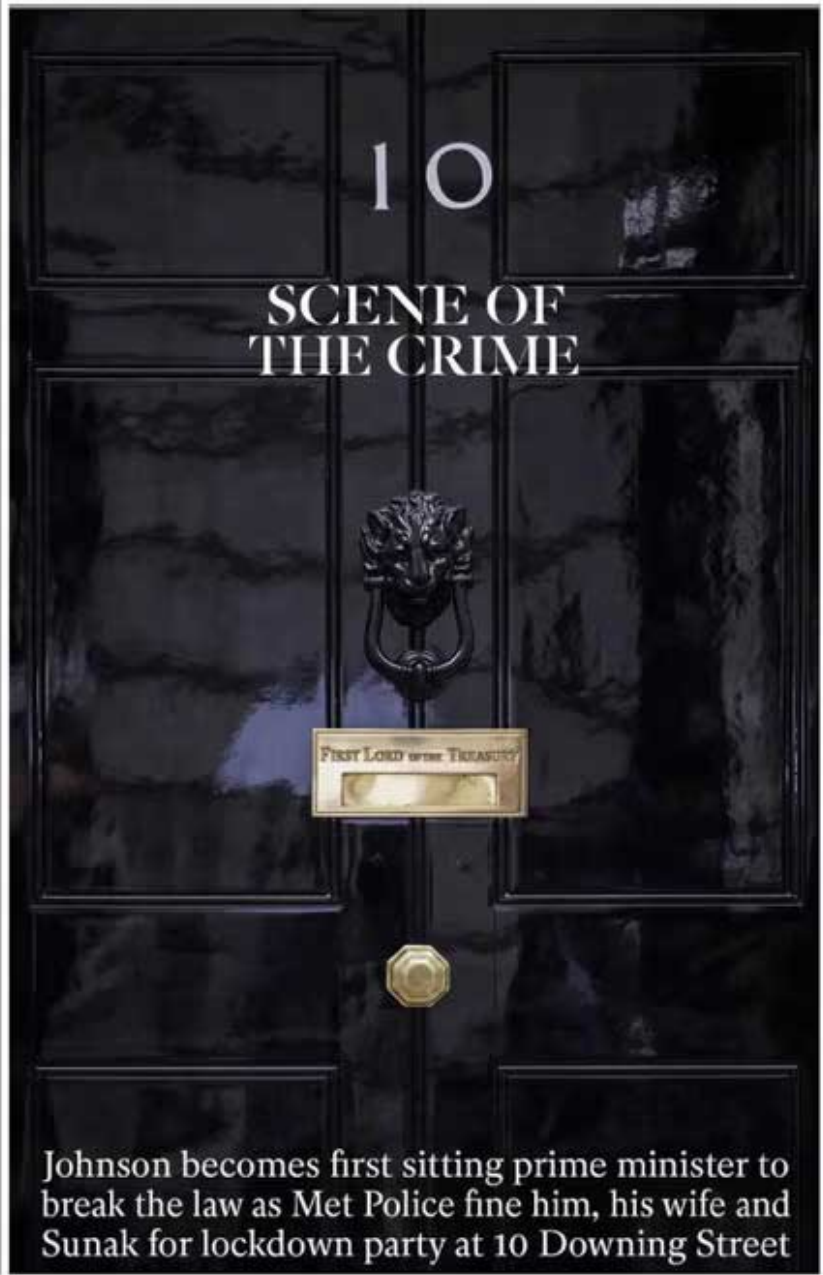
Boris Johnson becomes the first sitting prime minister to be found to have broken the law after the Metropolitan Police fine him, his wife Carrie, and chancellor Rishi Sunak for attending a lockdown-breaching gathering at 10 Downing Street. The explosive Partygate scandal irreparably damages his political authority, ultimately triggering a mass cabinet revolt that forces his resignation just three months later.



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10  
**SCENE OF  
THE CRIME**

Johnson becomes first sitting prime minister to break the law as Met Police fine him, his wife and Sunak for lockdown party at 10 Downing Street

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# A mindset that could prove difference in title race

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Chelsea	0
Manchester City	3

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Marc Guehi (left) celebrates his goal with Man City teammate Antoine Semenyo (AP)

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**MIGUEL DELANEY**  
AT STAMFORD BRIDGE

---

By comprehensively disassembling a dismal Chelsea, Manchester City have set the stage for next Sunday.

They know that if they beat Arsenal at home they will have definitively swung the title race, and that a win over Burnley can put them back on top. Mikel Arteta's side are equally aware that even a draw still keeps the trophy in their hands.

You could say it's the best possible setting, except this is not a meeting of two challengers both going in on their best form. It's only one.

While Arsenal endure a long week of the soul at the worst possible time, City are coming together in a confidently exuberant manner. You could feel it among the fans, one of them captured drinking from an Arsenal bottle. You could feel it all around the stadium, amidst the anger of Chelsea fans, and - eventually - the many empty seats.



Manchester City cut the gap to six points on leaders Arsenal after beating Chelsea (John Walton/PA) (PA Wire)

City supporters were singing like they were champions in waiting, for the first time in some time, and it was entirely justified.

They even made up some of the goal difference, winning 3-0. Arsenal can lament that Bournemouth were a much sterner

challenge than Chelsea at this stage of the season, but that's their own problem.

City meanwhile just added to Liam Rosenior's problems, too.

Having initially come up with quite an effective gameplan, the young Chelsea coach had no response to Pep Guardiola's half-time adjustments. It is yet another big game that the Catalan has swung through his own tactical insight, and an admittedly burgeoning squad.

They don't really look "in transition" now.

Guardiola, for his part, pointedly said "it is the mindset, not the tactics".

Nico O'Reilly has quickly matured into one of the best performing players in the league, and one of the most decisive.

His goals against Arsenal ensured he has already secured one trophy for City, and the crucial opener here - another towering header - may well have sent them on the way to the most important they can yet win.

It also caps a spell that is comprehensively impressive in another way.



Nico O'Reilly (left) broke the deadlock for Man City (AFP via Getty Images)

While Arsenal have struggled against Southampton and Bournemouth, having looking so tepid in that Carabao Cup final, City have in the same sequence beaten: the current league leaders; the reigning English champions and the reigning world champions.

All of Liverpool, Chelsea and Arsenal have been dispatched in three different competitions with a record of nine goals scored and none conceded, to put Guardiola's team in the best possible mindset for next Sunday and maybe the most important win of all.

Within that, though, there might also be a genuine football lesson.

Wider debates can be made about the advantages that come with the nature of the City project, and there will of course be references to the ongoing Premier League case - the club insist on their innocence. Taking the current situation as it is with Arsenal still six points clear after a game more played, though, only one side looks to actually be looking to maximise what they can do.

City are pushing out the margins of their play, expressing themselves, while Arteta's team are playing within the margins, constraining themselves.



Man City are pushing out the margins of their play while Arsenal look to be constraining themselves (Action Images via Reuters)

That may well be crucial, especially if this does come down to goal difference, as is highly possible.

Just look at the contrast from the closing stages of both of this weekend's key title games.

Outside a frustrated and harried Eberechi Eze, Arsenal couldn't really get on the ball. They couldn't even sustain a wave of pressure, their attackers so frustrated, while the whole team struggled to just... play.

Against that, Rayan Cherki was in full flow. He was again loving it, just using another pitch as a canvas.



Rayan Cherki was exceptional again for City (REUTERS)

There was the artful ball to O'Reilly for the opener and then the incisive run and through ball to set up Marc Guehi.

It is remarkable to think that this was actually City's first league win since 28 February, even if it is just two games.

That is how much has transformed over the recent cup interlude.

Jeremy Doku finally thundered in the third to just reflect a team playing without any doubt or hesitation.

They'd hit three in 17 minutes. It barely mattered that Erling Haaland again didn't score.



Erling Haaland didn't score again but it barely mattered for City (REUTERS)

The difference with Arsenal on Saturday couldn't be more apparent, as the City fans asked whether they were watching over in north London.

“You have to play to win,” Guardiola said, while making a pointed comment about how going out of the Champions League has actually helped keep his side fresh.

Arsenal have now seen City ramp up in April a lot. When asked about a near-perfect record in this month during his time at the club, Guardiola laughed “it's the sun”.

He was so relaxed afterwards he was imparting life lessons about “doing your best”.



Pep Guardiola celebrates with his players at full-time (Action Images via Reuters)

By City's third goal, a lot of Chelsea fans weren't watching. Stamford Bridge had started to empty long before the end.

A malaise has engulfed the place. By that point, Enzo Fernandez's punishment barely seemed relevant. Rosenior said the midfielder is now "in the clear" and he's now "looking forward" to having him back. Are Chelsea's fans really looking forward to anything, though?

The only teams they have beaten since 4 March are Wrexham and Port Vale.

Some allowances can be made for Rosenior in a situation that was complicated even before he came in - and he here pointed to Marc Cucurella's disallowed goal - but was he ever ready for this?



Liam Rosenior has entered dire straits as Chelsea boss (AFP via Getty Images)

It was abject. Even his substitutions seemed too late.

City are meanwhile coming to form at exactly the right time.

Far from a first Arsenal title since 2004, this is currently looking like it's set up for a repeat of 2023.

As the manager himself said, it's the mindset.

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# Tears for Tottenham as De Zerbi struggles to halt pain

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<b>Sunderland</b> Mukiele (61)	1
<b>Tottenham Hotspur</b>	0

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Spurs are two points adrift in the drop zone with six games to play (Photos PA)

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REBECCA JOHNSON

---

Roberto De Zerbi's first game in charge of Tottenham ended in a disheartening defeat after they were beaten 1-0 by Sunderland at the Stadium of Light.

After the Italian took over from Igor Tudor, who left north London last month, Spurs entered yesterday's Premier League contest in the relegation zone after West Ham beat Wolves on Friday.

An open first half saw Spurs have a penalty decision overturned in the 21st minute and both teams enjoy opportunities, with Brian Brobbey, Richarlison and Dominic Solanke all going close.

However, Sunderland took the lead 11 minutes into the second half through Nordi Mukiele's deflected strike, which proved to be enough as Regis Le Bris' side clinched back-to-back league wins.

Defeat leaves Spurs languishing two points adrift in the drop zone with six games left to play, still searching for their first Premier League win of 2026.



Nordi Mukiele's deflected strike condemned Spurs to defeat in their first match under Roberto De Zerbi

De Zerbi gave a start to goalkeeper Antonin Kinsky, who had not appeared since his 17-minute nightmare in the Champions League defeat to Atletico Madrid last month.

It was one of five changes the former Brighton boss made from Spurs' last outing against Nottingham Forest, but he was not able to oversee an instant improvement.

Pedro Porro's early effort was saved by Robin Roefs and Spurs threatened again when Randal Kolo Muani played Richarlison in, but the forward had his meek shot held by the Sunderland goalkeeper.

At the other end, Cristian Romero had to make an important intervention from a Sunderland attack and Granit Xhaka's inswinging delivery was tipped over the crossbar by Kinsky from the resulting corner.

Kinsky made a brave stop to deny Brobbey after he had been found by Enzo Le Fee and the Netherlands striker nodded over from his next opportunity.



Sunderland were furious at the decision to award Tottenham a penalty before it was overturned by VAR

Spurs were awarded a penalty in the 21st minute when Kolo Muani was ruled to have been fouled in the area, but following a VAR consultation, referee Rob Jones overturned his original decision as Omar Alderete clearly won the ball.

The chances continued to come as Solanke's attempt was taken by Roefs before Mukiele nodded wide from a Le Fee free-kick

and Xhaka's vicious strike from the edge of the area whistled past the post.

In first half stoppage-time, Brobbey – who Spurs felt should have seen a red card instead of a yellow for catching Porro with an elbow – was denied again by a solid save from Kinsky, while Roefs made a crucial stop at the opposite end from Solanke.

Luke O'Nien made an important intervention to deny Richarlison early in the second half and the Spurs forward then had a low effort held by Roefs.



Cristian Romero and Antonin Kinsky were involved in a nasty collision in a disheartening defeat for the visitors

But Sunderland opened the scoring in the 61st minute when Mukiele weaved from the right flank towards the outside of the box and his strike deflected off Micky van de Ven's foot to leave the wrong-footed Kinsky with no chance.

De Zerbi made a triple substitution with Mathys Tel, Joao Palhinha and Pape Matar Sarr introduced just before a worrying moment saw Romero and Kinsky collide after the former appeared to be pushed by Brobbey.

Following a lengthy stoppage, the Spurs goalkeeper had a bandage wrapped around his head and was able to continue, but a tearful Romero was replaced by Kevin Danso.

Spurs had 11 minutes of added time to salvage a point, but despite Porro being denied twice by Roefs – having both a free-kick and another strike pushed over the bar – Spurs could not avoid a 16th league loss.

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# How England's clash with Ireland divided a household

The Moloney-MacDonalds survived what is believed to be the first meeting of a married couple on the Six Nations stage



Clodhna and Claudia Moloney-MacDonald at Twickenham (Action Images via Reuters)

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**HARRY LATHAM-COYLE**

RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

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There are not many circumstances in which striking one's spouse could be chuckled away just an hour later, but the Moloney-MacDonalds are no ordinary couple.

On Saturday afternoon, England's Claudia and Ireland's Cliodhna ran out at Twickenham on opposite sides of a Women's Six Nations clash for the first time – and survived with their marriage, just about, intact.

“I think it was a kick in the head,” Red Roses wing Claudia recalls of a mid-match ruck run-in with her other half. “She said she had no idea, but I said, ‘You kicked me then rolled over the top of me!’ It’s fine, we’re over it.”

Cross-country relationships are relatively common within the sport, particularly within Premiership Women's Rugby (PWR), the cosmopolitan English top-flight that draws from just about every top nation around the world. Claudia and Cliodhna met while at Wasps and have since been key figures down at Exeter Chiefs; international stalwarts for much of the last decade, the timing had never quite worked out for each to be fit, firing and in the frame when England faced Ireland at this stage of the year.



Claudia Moloney-MacDonald claimed to have been kicked in the head by her wife in Saturday afternoon's match (Action Images via Reuters)

Until now, and what is believed to be the first meeting of a married couple on the Six Nations stage. “We’ve been part of squads that have played against each other for a few years now,” the English half of this rugby union continues. “It’s always an interesting week because you have to steer clear of any rugby

chat whatsoever. It can lead to a few silences, when you're trying not to give the game away, or just exit a conversation. It's been fine. It's quite natural.

“We're both fiercely competitive, we both love our teams we play for and we're both really committed. It weirdly felt quite natural to play against each other because we value the shirt so much.”

There is not quite a finishing of one another's sentences but Cliodhna picks up thereafter. “The strange part for me was probably when I came off. When I was in the game, I was so focused on it. When I came off, it was an unusual situation to watch.”



Red Roses wing Claudia was part of England's win on an emotional day for the couple in front of a record crowd (Getty Images)

Ticketing issues at the Allianz Stadium divided the family, with the Moloneys and MacDonalds sat separately as they watched England beat Ireland in front of a record crowd. A shared Spotify account caused a few issues – “I kept on getting intermittent Irish songs playing through my ears and I had to turn it off” – while a few pre-match WhatsApps made clear where loyalties lied. “My grandma messaged saying, ‘If Cli does hit you hard you can tell her you’ll have me chasing after her,’” Claudia jokes.

There was every reason for this to be an emotional day. These two share not just a household but stories of international

careers in doubt; for each, there was reason to believe this sort of encounter would never come. For Claudia, two separate neck injuries put her rugby career in doubt and left her virtually housebound before making a remarkable return to the Six Nations last year; for Cliodhna, two years were spent in exile after being dropped by a previous Irish regime seemingly for critical comments made on social media. On Saturday, Claudia could peer out of the tunnel as her wife belatedly reached an international half-century.

“It’s great to be back fit and healthy on the pitch and experiencing an atmosphere that we’ll never forget,” Cliodhna admits, clutching a bottle of champagne and that 50th cap. “For years, we both had different turns of watching each other, so it’s great to be both busy and in camp, hopefully getting selected every week.”



England opened the Women’s Six Nations with a scratchy win, as Ireland showed they’re making sizeable strides forward (Getty Images)

Claudia adds: “It was quite special watching Cli run out for her 50th. All the Irish girls were clapping and all the English girls were clapping her out as well. So it felt natural that I could applaud that situation as well. [I felt] a lot of pride. Then when the whistle goes, it was surprisingly natural, just to get your head stuck in. I didn’t really think too much about who’s on the opposition, let alone if it’s your wife.”

There was reason for optimism for each at the conclusion, but a fair bit of frustration, too. For a victorious England, an error-ridden display was compounded by two tournament-ending injuries to Morwenna Talling and Natasha Hunt, the second of which forced Claudia Moloney-MacDonald into an unexpected return to scrum half, where she began her Test career. For Ireland, meanwhile, a 12-12 scoreline after half-time showed the sizeable strides made since the 88-10 thrashing two years ago – and what might have been.

“From our perspective, we let ourselves down in the first half,” Cliodhna reflected. “We lacked the ability to build momentum, but the second half was a lot more competitive and we got stuck in a lot more. Maybe we’ll get over the line sometime soon...”

“Hopefully not!” her wife quickly interjected to make sure it was she who had the final word.

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# Sports news in brief



Wout van Aert celebrates after crossing the finish line to win the 2026 Paris-Roubaix (Reuters)

## Van Aert beats jinx to win Paris-Roubaix

Wout van Aert shattered a decade-old jinx yesterday to win Paris-Roubaix, outduelling world champion Tadej Pogacar in a brutal classic race across the cobbles.

The 31-year-old suffered a puncture as did Pogacar and their great rival Mathieu van der Poel, who had two mechanicals and could not contest the final sprint, which went in Van Aert's favour for his second title in one of the five Monument classics after his Milan-San Remo victory in 2020.

Van Aert, who had been plagued by bad luck in the Queen of the Classics, thwarted Pogacar's attacks on the cobbles and wrapped it up with a trademark burst of speed in the final straight on the Roubaix Velodrome.

He said of his victory: "It's everything to me, it's been a goal since I first did this race. I stopped believing a lot of times, but I would start believing again the next day."

### **Union Berlin appoint first female manager of Bundesliga team**

Marie-Louise Eta has made history by becoming the first woman to take charge of a men's team in one of Europe's top five football leagues, after being appointed head coach of Union Berlin until the end of the season.

The appointment follows the dismissal of Steffen Baumgart on Saturday, after his side suffered a 3-1 defeat to Bundesliga strugglers Heidenheim.

Eta, 34, a Women's Champions League winner with Turbine Potsdam in 2010, has been serving as Union Berlin's under-19s coach this season. Her previous experience includes working as an assistant to former men's head coach Nenad Bjelica. Her immediate task is to revitalise a struggling Union Berlin side, who have secured just two wins from their last 14 league matches, leaving them seven points clear of the relegation play-off position.

She told the club's website: "Given the points gap in the lower half of the table, our place in the Bundesliga is not yet secure. I am delighted that the club has entrusted me with this challenging task. One of Union's strengths has always been, and remains, the ability to pull together in such situations. And, of course, I am convinced that we will secure the crucial points with the team." *PA*

### **Trainer hopeful Mr Vango will recover from National fall**

Mr Vango remained in equine hospital yesterday, but trainer Sara Bradstock is hopeful her stable star will “make a full recovery” following his fall in the Radox Grand National at Aintree.

The popular gelding was one of three of the 34-strong National field to undergo veterinary assessment in the racecourse stables, having departed the race at the sixth fence.

He was taken to Leahurst Equine Hospital on Saturday evening, where he will stay until given a clean bill of health, but his Handler issued a positive update on the 10-year-old, keen to stress he is receiving the best care and attention.

Bradstock told the Press Association: “We’re still at the equine hospital, he does have a small avulsion fracture in neck, but it is nowhere near the vertebrae of his neck. We have to thank God and hopefully, with a bit of a following wind, he will make a full recovery.” *PA*

### **UFC’s Hokit wins spot on White House card**

The UFC has added another fight to its upcoming White House event at the request of Donald Trump, who was won over by one particular fighter on Saturday.

President Trump sat ringside for UFC 327 at Miami’s Kaseya Centre, and saw Josh Hokit score a points win Curtis Blaydes.

The fight was non-stop action for 15 minutes, with both men bloodied and badly hurt on numerous occasions. Still, neither fighter would go down, with fans and commentators lauding the bout as one of the best that the heavyweight division has ever produced

Hokit’s performance has earned him a spot on the White House card on 14 June. He will take on Derrick Lewis – one of Mr Trump’s favourite fighters.