

Middle East violence, the cost of the crown and strange podcasts

Over recent months, on various battlegrounds across the Middle East, Israel has faced off against the Iran-backed Shia Muslim organisation Hezbollah. But for several hours last week, fears were high of a broader conflict after a round of violence sparked by an Israeli police raid on Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam.

As Martin Chulov reports this week from southern Lebanon, retaliatory attacks may have failed to provoke all-out war - but it now seems only a matter of time before that outcome materialises. And Bethan McKernan considers how multiple crises are threatening Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's grip on power.

The big story *Page 10* →

The Good Friday agreement 25 years ago may have marked the end of Northern Ireland's Troubles

but, in many places, the province remains divided and dysfunctional, as characterised by the continued presence of so-called peace walls in some communities. Rory Carroll reports from Belfast, where suspicion and sectarianism linger.

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With the coronation of King Charles III coming up, don't miss our special report into the cost of the crown, the lavish public funding of Britain's royal family and why the monarchy is so reluctant to talk about its finances.

The cost of the crown *Page 34* →

Culture ponders the difficulties of writing theatre shows based on the acting world's most famous names. We also probe the rise of UFO-themed podcasts, as Nell Frizzell asks whether the ideas explored by some of them are really as outlandish as they first seem.

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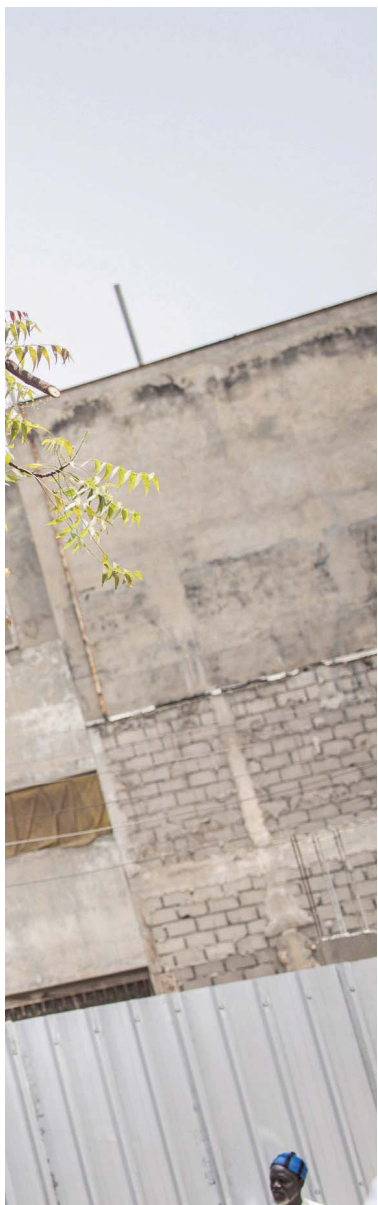
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On the cover

The silhouette of an Israeli soldier is outlined in the sky by a flare fired to search for a rocket that landed near Kibbutz Meitsar in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. Rockets were fired last Saturday night from Syria towards Israel, the Israeli army said, following earlier fire from Lebanon blamed on Palestinian militants.

Photograph: Jalaa Marey/AFP/Getty