

A fragile ceasefire, the rise of the far right and single-minded women

The ceasefire between Israel and Hamas may have been weeks in the making – as detailed this week by Julian Borger and Ruth Michaelson – and led to the release of dozens of hostages on either side, but behind the scenes there was little expectation that it would lead to a longer-term end to hostilities. In a special report, almost two months after the deadliest attack on Israel in its 75-year history and as the world focuses on its retaliatory bombardment of Gaza killing around 14,000 people, Jonathan Freedland finds a country still convulsed with rage and sorrow, unable to see the pain of its Palestinian neighbours as it faces an uncertain future.

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The far-right politician Geert Wilders stunned onlookers with his Dutch election victory last week, but race riots in Ireland, a country previously thought immune to such extremism, were equally shocking. Rory Carroll, Lisa O'Carroll and Jon Henley report on contrasting manifestations of the rise of the far right across Europe.

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Elsewhere there's a look at the lives of single women across the generations, as eight writers from their 20s to 90s celebrate single life as a destination of its own. And there's a moving picture essay by chief culture writer Charlotte Higgins, with the photographer Marta Syrko, on how Ukraine is coming to terms with its growing number of war amputees.

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Culture goes behind the scenes at London's National Theatre as it brings Roald Dahl's *The Witches* to the stage. And there's a look at the previously unseen paintings of the late Australian entertainer Barry Humphries.

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On the cover

Jonathan Freedland's visit to Israel for our cover story this week reveals a nation still struggling to come to terms with the events of 7 October and its brutal retaliation against Gaza and Hamas. As one senior Israeli military figure remarked: "It's not yet post-traumatic stress disorder. We're still in it."

Illustration: Guardian Design