

[Transcript] The News Agents / How far will Israel go in response to Hamas terrorism?

This is a Global Player original podcast.

Kirsten emerged from his conference speech, pretty triumphant, yesterday afternoon.

I saw him in the lobby shortly afterwards where he said...

But he's still glistening.

He said, I think I look better with glitter.

But just 12, 15 hours later, he was on the radio doing the rounds and he got asked this question by our colleague, Nick Ferrari on LBC.

I'm very clear, Israel must have that, does have that right to defend herself and Hamas bears responsibility.

A siege is appropriate, cutting off power, cutting off water, secure.

I think that Israel does have that right, it is an ongoing situation.

Obviously everything should be done within international law, but I don't want to step away from the sort of core principles that Israel has a right to defend herself and Hamas bears responsibility.

And in that clip, you hear the conundrum of policy makers, not just in Britain, but around the world.

How far can Israel go to defend itself?

How much will Western democracies tolerate?

But the moment Israel stands, wounded after the most hideous terrorist attack, but is there a military solution to a problem like Hamas?

Welcome to the News Agents.

The News Agents.

It's John.

It's Emily.

And we are back from the Labour Party conference, probably a bit run out, not just because it's exhausting at the Labour Party conference, but actually the events of the past few days and what's been happening in Israel just can't help but play upon your mind in a major way.

The latest news coming out as we sit here recording this at quarter to two on Wednesday afternoon is that the only power station left working in Gaza has gone offline as a result of Israel cutting off fuel supplies and energy supplies to that strip of land.

We've learned more about the horrific appalling scenes of carnage that were found in that kibbutz.

We know that politics is trying to come to terms with it and figuring out what on earth happens next and where this nightmare could get even worse for everyone.

Yeah.

I mean, on the Israeli side, we know that those numbers are now over a thousand.

And as John's just said, the people of Gaza are now without mains electricity supplies and the shortage of fuel could then further a humanitarian catastrophe on top of the bombing and they can't use operating theatres and they can't find antiseptic and they can't look after their wounded.

So you have and I think this is where it gets sort of really important and we should perhaps say that we're going very cautiously here because as you will have heard, this is just about civilian catastrophe.

Take the politics out of this for a moment and just say this is absolute catastrophe

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for every civilian involved because terrorists have enacted such a bloodbath upon Israel that Israel is now retaliating.

It seems without any guardrails.

I think what happens in this awful cycle of violence that we have seen and I was in Gaza for the first Intifada 35 years ago.

I remember the helicopter gunships and the burning tires, but as nothing compared to what Hamas have unleashed over the weekend, Israel thinking it has to take action.

It has got an enemy on its border that is determined to destroy the state of Israel.

And as Golda Meir said back in the 1960s when she was Israel's prime minister, if the Palestinians lay down their arms, there's peace and if the Israelis lay down their arms, there's no state of Israel.

And I think that Israel sees itself in an existential battle.

But even if, even if it goes in with land forces into Gaza, can you just beat Hamas and say, that's it.

But if they do nothing, then Hamas comes again and again.

And Hamas might be the head, but Hezbollah north of the Israel border in Lebanon might be the body and Iran to the east, right, might be the solidifying major financial power that carries on this terrorist attack.

And so I guess when people talk about an existential fear, and it is an often overused word, but we should try and maybe just disentangle that a bit, it's that Israel feels right now that it is surrounded by enemies that are unifying against it, that even if they manage to stop Hamas and obviously the stopping of Hamas involves thousands of awful unnecessary

deaths of the people in Gaza, even if they manage to find those terrorists, what happens then to the terrorist networks, the supporters of Hamas around the Middle East?

You know, when I went to Gaza, and it must have been in 1988, I'm kind of figuring out, which was the time of the first Intifada, it was the first time I'd been sent on a foreign send.

And I didn't know what to expect when I drove into Gaza.

And you saw these kids in beautiful school uniforms going to neatly organized schools, because that was going to be the way out for Palestinians.

It was through education, it was through self-improvement, it was then becoming professionals and that

they would then be the leaders of the next generation of Palestinians.

These people that I saw going to school then are probably now in their late 30s, early 40s.

But that dream, that hope that has sometimes gathered pace, that there will be a two-state solution for Israel, and then falls short.

And then you see hopelessness and the right-wing populist governments that have been led by Netanyahu over the past few years.

Many years.

Many years.

And you just think there is hopelessness and that there is never going to be any real progress towards any kind of settlement.

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Probably because, and it was a point you made earlier in the week, that the path to peace is a threat to those who actually want to see unrest.

And if you have an enemy, you don't want to see your enemy making friends with your friends. You actually want that destroyed.

And I think the path to peace is not something that terrorists ever want, actually.

They don't want that.

It doesn't help their course.

It undercuts them.

Right.

It undercuts their course.

It's the last thing they want or need.

So just as it seemed that Saudi Arabia was about to recognize the state of Israel, which would have been an enormous event in the region, Hamas does this and how can Saudi Arabia possibly

go ahead and recognize the state of Israel now?

Because it's going to inflame opinions amongst its own people and potentially create unrest in the kingdom.

Real disclosure, we've, I guess, as a group, sort of been thinking about this a lot, struggling with this a lot.

I found that when I got sort of out of the bubble, out of the conference bubble, a lot of people were sort of saying to me, how are you?

How are you doing?

And I couldn't work out whether that was because I was Jewish or because they knew that I had relatives, friends in Israel or because they thought I was a journalist and I'd miss the whole story by being in Liverpool.

But it made me start reflecting a little bit on this slightly weird relationship that Jewish people in the diaspora that is out of Israel are meant to have with the state of Israel.

And we thought we'd use today to explore a little bit where that sense of loyalty or unease or connectedness or fear actually comes from.

And we're looking at our own sort of cultural identities in the middle of a major turn of events like this.

Yeah.

I mean, full disclosure, Woody Allen was once asked, are you a Jew?

And he said, no, but I'm Jewish.

And I would describe myself in that category.

I'm not a practicing Jew.

I haven't been to a synagogue for years.

I worked on a kibbutz when I was 18 in Israel.

Interesting experience.

But I didn't come back thinking, oh my God, I want to make my home in Israel.

I thought there were all sorts of problems and wouldn't describe myself as a Zionist.

But I was really struck by something that Margaret Hodge, the Labour MP, said, that she'd never really considered herself or defined herself by Jewishness.

But when Corbyn took over the Labour Party and there was this kind of tide of anti-Semitism

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that was so clearly felt by so many Jewish members that she suddenly became aware of her Jewish identity, someone put on Twitter, which I thought was really smart.

Heads up guys, the little bloke who runs the butcher's shop is not responsible for Israeli foreign policy.

I thought, spot on.

You cannot hold Jews responsible just in the same way that I found it egregious and grotesque that after 9-11, there were mosques that were being fire bombed because people didn't like Muslims because of what al-Qaeda terrorists had done after being trained in Afghanistan. It was nothing to do with Muslims.

And I think that there needs to be that separation now in saying emphatically that Jews living wherever in France or here or US, they're not responsible for what government has done and they're certainly not responsible.

And you can't blame them for what Hamas has done and you can't blame them for being incensed and unsettled and destabilized by the loss of so many Jews last Saturday in southern Israel.

I mean, David Bedeel, the writer, comedian, put it pretty well in his book, Jews Don't Count.

And I remember thinking at the time, oh yeah, he spelled that out.

He basically said, just because I'm Jewish, don't hold me responsible for the Netanyahu government or for any Israeli government or for any Israeli policy, I'm Jewish, I'm not Israeli.

Right?

And I always thought, yeah, that's a really good separation of identities here.

You're British, you're Jewish, you don't get a vote in Israel, you're not part of that democracy or you're not part of that series of foreign policy choices at all.

And yet, when something like this happens, I guess you have to be honest that there is a sort of atavistic pull.

There is something that says Israel is still sort of tied to your identity in a way that you don't necessarily understand in sort of factual or sort of citizenship terms.

Either it's because you have family there or it's because you did your year off when you worked on a kibbutz there or it's because you grew up combining, I mean, I'm speaking personally and I can see your face and maybe you don't agree, but you learn the language of prayers in Hebrew.

And so there is something about hearing mourning in Hebrew that actually takes me back to my childhood and my family and my parents and I suppose that if I'm honest, it does kind of reconnect you to that place even though it's nothing to do with you politically.

I just, I guess I'm trying to accept and register that.

Yeah, for me, it's not quite that.

I mean, for me, it is that sense of history that after the Holocaust, I mean, and this has been the worst loss of life for Jews since the Holocaust, after the Holocaust, the Jews wanted somewhere to go.

They didn't feel safe staying in Poland or Russia or wherever it happens to be.

Where were they going to go?

The doors were not being opened to huge numbers in America and the UK.

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And so they wanted a homeland and that was what the UN decided upon should happen.
And I believe that Israel should be able to exist within its borders in safety.
There are Palestinian Israelis that live there.
And I understand as well the feeling of Muslims, I would imagine, who feel reawakened when they see what's happening in Gaza and feel that sense of horror as well.
And it awakens bits of personal identity that we all have that are a kind of crystallizes.
And it was funny, I was asked, I think when I was in North America, to do an interview with the Jewish Chronicle and they wanted to talk to me about how my being Jewish affected the way I did my job or whatever.
And I said, no, I'm not going to do an interview that because I just doesn't.
It's not a part of my identity.
It's not a part of my reporting.
It was just seemed such an irrelevant question to my life.
But it lurks in the background and every religion has got its own stories.
But the Jewish story, you know, you go back to the celebration of Passover.
It is the Jews fleeing from the Egyptians slavery, slavery and all the rest of it.
And that has been a story that has been repeated down the generations in different versions, ultimately leading to the Holocaust in the Second World War and the desire for Jews to live in peace within a homeland that they can feel safe.
And of course, at the moment, what lurks deep embedded in an awful lot of Jewish people is an insecurity that they might have to leg it one more time.
And you get something like that and it brings home to you that sense of insecurity and anxiety.
Yeah. And I guess as soon as you mentioned the word homeland, you have to be really cognizant that that's what, you know, the Palestinians have been talking about.
And we both, you know, believe passionately in a two state.
We believe actually that's the only way to peace for anyone.
And so I guess that is where it's complicated because homeland means a homeland for the Palestinians and a homeland for all those who've tried to make Israel place of security and salvation.
I think it's about us trying to recognize.
It was said brilliantly yesterday.
You cannot have a military solution to something where there is no political hope emerging.
Yeah. It was really interesting.
You know, over the course of my career, I've been to Israel a number of times, you know, the Israel-Lebanon war I was on the front line of.
And I went with Blair after he'd been prime minister and he was head of this group called the Quartet.
And I did a film about him trying to do his job and we went to the West Bank and all the rest of it.
And Blair is really interesting on it.
I mean, he's an endlessly optimistic guy who believes that there is a peace solution to be found, but it needs the stars to be in a certain alignment.
You need to have politicians who are brave, who are prepared to take risks, who are prepared to face down their population, just in the way that you had in Northern Ireland when you got priests in Northern Ireland.

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Imperfect though it is, my God, it is better than when I was growing up and bombs were going off in London and Belfast and Manchester and wherever else it was.

You need the politicians to be able to take the risk for peace.

And at the moment, you've never had the stars in alignment because 85% of what the two state solution is is obvious.

It's just the last 15% to get across the line.

And you need a fudge.

Every one needs a fudge.

You need a fudge and you need a climb down on both sides and you need someone who has got, I mean, Ariel Sharon, who was in some ways a monstrous Israeli prime minister, ex-general, who was responsible for the kind of ill-fated invasion of Lebanon in the 1980s and indirectly responsible for the terrible slaughter that took place at Sabra and Shatila.

He then later in life became this kind of peacenik who wanted to do a deal.

Unfortunately, he had a stroke and died at a time where maybe progress could have been made and you just think, you know, the stars will not align.

Israel and Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

I think we should mention Joe Biden because yesterday on the US episode of the news agents, we were kind of waiting for something a bit more full-throated to come out of the White House, the administration.

And to be fair, it did.

Late last night, we heard from Biden who has really condemned the act of Hamas as pure and adulterated evil and backed that up with a promise to replenish the iron dome that Israel runs and send more ammunition.

And I think this was the moment that even if some of his own party weren't looking forward to hearing the words, much of the country and maybe the wider world needed to hear the force of his words.

I just got off the phone with a third call with Prime Minister Netanyahu and I told him, the United States experience with Israel experiencing our response to be swift, decisive and overwhelming.

We also discussed how democracies like Israel and the United States are stronger and more secure when we act according to the rule of law.

Terrorist, purposely target civilians, kill them.

We uphold the laws of war, the law of war.

It matters, there's a difference.

Today Americans across the country are praying for all those families that have been ripped apart.

A lot of us know how it feels, it leaves a black hole in your chest when you lose family.

Feeling like you're being sucked in, the anger, the pain, the sense of hopelessness.

This is what they mean by a human tragedy, an atrocity on an appalling scale.

I mean there is a man who knows what it's like to lose family, lost a son, a wife, a baby daughter.

Probably in that awful way there is nobody more qualified in a position of leadership right now to talk about what that sense of human loss can feel.

If Biden does empathy extremely well, I think he also wanted to show Steeley Resolve that

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the US stands with Israel and that will do him good.

We can talk about the sort of, it almost seems trivial to talk about the political machinations of this because frankly if American hostages start getting executed, actually that could be really politically disastrous for Joe Biden.

But I think those are, you know, let's talk about the bigger picture here.

It is important for Israel and I think he, Biden has gone out on a limb to say, right, we are absolutely four square behind you.

I want to know how four square behind Netanyahu they are and have the Israelis got complete license to do whatever they like because you can be absolutely sure that once, if Israel starts going in with a land invasion into that teeming overcrowded strip of land that is Gaza, civilian casualties will mount fast.

They already are.

Yeah, and they're already high now and people are going to say, whoa, you can't do this.

So I do think that is the big, I mean the really big question now facing our leaders and our putative leaders.

Well earlier we heard that clip of Keir Starmer trying to weave a very, very delicate path through Labour's response to Israel and Labour's response to what Israel might be doing next. I'm very clear Israel must have that, does have that right to defend herself and Hamas bears responsibility.

A siege is appropriate, cutting off power, cutting off water, so Keir.

Well I think that Israel does have that right, it is an ongoing situation, obviously everything should be done within international law but I don't want to step away from the sort of core principles that Israel has a right to defend herself and Hamas bears responsibility for these terrorist attacks.

And I would call on all responsible states, particularly Middle East responsible states, to call this out for what it is and to stand with the world in condemning, utterly condemning these actions by Hamas.

Let me consider that in two parts.

The first part is the internal Labour Party part of it, which is he is absolutely putting his flag beside the Israeli flag right now over what Israel has the latitude to do.

It would be very interesting to see how far, how much blowback there is from Muslim groups within the Labour Party who might feel very uncomfortable about that.

We're already getting it.

I mean I'm reading now that the Labour Muslim Network Executive are very unhappy about him saying that Israel has the right to cut off water and power to guards and civilians and I think this is exactly the place that Keir Starmer didn't want to get into, exactly the place he didn't want to get into, which is, you know, within the speech it was very well contained.

They are terrorists.

We support Israel.

We believe in the two-state solution.

As soon as you try and prod at that, Israel has the right to defend itself, herself.

What does that defence look like?

You're coming down on one side or another.

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You're either telling Netanyahu he's gone too far, it's disproportionate, I mean whatever that means, or else you're saying, I'm not going to step in at a time like this when Israel is in the midst of her worst tragedy for 70 years.

And I think that's where this is going to get really complicated for Labour now.

Exactly.

Let's consider just the macro question that he kind of addressed about moderate, you know, Middle Eastern nations.

The Gulf States is what he's talking about there in particular.

Iran is dedicated to the destruction of the state of Israel.

Syria is so dependent on Iran that it's not going to do anything very different either and it's got its own civil war that it's fighting.

So therefore you're really looking to the Gulf States to be a buttress and to Egypt as well, which of course has signed a peace treaty with Israel as has Jordan.

The worry is that if this inflames further, this doesn't just become about Gaza, as you spoke about Emily earlier, you know, what about Hezbollah in the north?

What about if Israel decides that actually the only way to contain this is to attack Iran?

What does that do to the global economy?

I mean, there are so many questions and yes, we're nowhere near that yet.

But these things can spiral fast and, you know, miscalculations, a wrong move, misinterpretation of signal can lead to things getting out of hand quite quickly.

And I think that is something that in the State Department in Washington, in the Prime Minister's office in Israel, European leaders, other Middle Eastern leaders will be watching with some trepidation because something has been unleashed, a tap has been turned on, turning it off much more tricky.

In a moment, we're going to be speaking about the Savile drama that's now airing on the BBC, on BBC iPlayer.

It's called The Reckoning.

It stars Steve Coogan and we're going to speak to a man who was right at the centre of the original investigation for Newsnight into Jimmy Savile.

This is The Newsagents.

You've probably become aware by now of a new BBC drama.

It's called The Reckoning.

It's about Jimmy Savile.

It's about the monster that was Jimmy Savile and it asks questions about how he got away with so much for so long when it seemed that so many people around him were probably more aware of his character than they ever fully let on.

It's a four-part drama and we're going to be talking now to somebody who has been right at the centre of the uncovering of Savile the monster and that is Myrian Jones.

He's an old colleague of mine.

We worked together at Newsnight and it was Myrian along with Liz McKean who first brought to light the whole question of what Savile was really like.

That is a story all of itself of how their investigation never came to light on Newsnight, on the BBC and we can touch on that.

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But I guess Myrian, we just want to start by talking about what this drama does.

You've seen all four parts.

Were you involved at all?

No.

Not involved at all.

I think it deals with the victims very well, presents them in the right way, it's respectful to them.

I think Kogan is very good.

Steve Kogan who takes on this extraordinary personality persona of Savile.

It works really well with an impersonator because when you met Savile in real life there was a sort of screen in front of him, there were the catchphrases.

You never felt that you knew what was going on behind it, so an impersonator like Kogan is absolutely perfect to play that part.

So long as, and he can do this when they have to switch persona and become that menacing evil character that they can do that and he definitely does that.

Does it tell us anything that we didn't know?

In the sense, is this just entertainment about something that really isn't entertaining or is it taking us into ground that has not been explored by successive documentaries and articles and books written?

I don't think it tells us anything new, but I don't think there's any harm in reminding people about how Savile manipulated not just the BBC, but the Royal Family, the Prime Minister and used the entire high reaches of society plus charities, etc. to manipulate them and to give himself the position from which he had the power to get away with what he got away with.

It sets up, I mean it's called The Reckoning and it's framed within a book that Savile is supposedly dictating about his life to a journalist who is trying to make a book of Savile's life and it's how close he manages to get to the truth.

Do you know whether those conversations took place?

I know Dan.

So Dan Davis, who's the author and is a very good journalist, he got in touch with me when about two months after the news night investigation was dropped, we can get to that later, and about eight months before it was all came out on exposure and there'd been a small article in the oldie about it.

He got in touch with me and we went down to a pub in Shepherd's Bush and I told him what I knew and he told me what he knew and he'd been gone on cruise trips with Jimmy Savile.

He'd been a fan who gradually got more and more engrossed and interested and wondering what was going on in the background.

But yeah, sure, it's a drama, so they over dramatized that last exchange and so on.

The exchange where we think that Savile would have revealed his true story, I mean you don't ever think that was going to happen.

No, I don't think that was ever going to happen.

I mean his whole game was the in-plane site, that's why it's a great title of the book, it's a good book to read by the way.

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The great thing about that is it all was in-plane site.

Well let's play a clip now from episode two and it's an investigation that's taking place with Savile and BBC lawyers after a girl who'd been at the screening of Top of the Pops had taken her own life.

If I had a pound for every pretty girl who stood next to me in the studio.

Look again at where your right hand is.

It's on her back.

Her back or her bottom?

A lower back.

You've an odd idea of human anatomy, Mr Savile.

Perhaps that's all that of the public school you went to, they didn't mind.

The investigation, can't find any wrongdoing, clears Savile, but you get a sense in that exchange that he is not trusted by many of the senior figures within the BBC, even those sort of trying to take on the investigation.

Do you think that was right, Marion?

Do you think that there were many people who had their suspicions about Savile but just kept on enjoying his success, his commercial success?

I think that senior figures at the BBC, there's evidence that they knew from 1973, right the way up to 2010, 2011.

So in 1973, the head of radio, Ian Trithowan, who then becomes director general, is notified of concerns about Savile.

They do two lines of investigation.

They send the chief press officer around the tabloids to say, are they going to run a story saying that Savile has been abusing underage kids in his mobile home?

The papers say no, they're not.

He's a big charity figure, they've heard the rumours but they're not investigating.

Then the other allegation, which is obviously much more seriously sourced because they pull Savile in, is that he is regularly having underage kids coming round to his flat in London.

Plainly whatever evidence they have is too strong for him to deny it.

So he says, yes, that does happen.

And the reason it happens is to protect them from dirty old men on the streets of London if they were left out there.

He says they sleep in a separate room, it was a one room bed set.

They are again worried, is this going to come out in the papers?

He assures them that it's not and that nothing untoward is going on.

They don't even say to him, stop having underage girls round to your apartment overnight.

They just say, well, what can you do?

It's interesting that what the drama doesn't look at is the bit where you were very closely involved, which is the News Night investigation, which never sees the light of day.

And all the work that you and Liz, who I knew very well and who tragically died of a stroke far too young, was kind of blocked.

Is it a failing of the drama and do you understand now better what happened at the BBC and why?

So I think the dramatist has to decide what period they want to cover and they decided to cover the period of his life and that's a perfectly reasonable thing to do.

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I do think, though, that what did happen, they showed the scene with the last rights about a year before he died, when it looked like he was dying.

Well, actually, we know what happened inside the BBC then.

They had to have a panic consultation about, do we do an obituary or not?

And they decide not to do an obituary because one of the senior figures says, you know, I worked with him for 10 years.

I saw the dark side.

We cannot make an honest obituary about this man.

And the decision is made not to make an obituary because of the dark side.

So, you know, we can see that knowledge going right the way from 1973, right the way through to 2010.

That, I think, should have been in there.

He stopped working at the BBC when?

I mean, he was fired, right?

I think it was sort of eased out, really.

You know, they closed down, Jim will fix it in 1994, I think it was.

But then he kept appearing in guest appearances even down to the last top of the pops, which they show in the drama.

And, Myrin, your own investigation, when you look back now, you could have been, you and Liz could have been the ones that brought this to light, I think, within weeks of his death. It was an investigation that you'd started while he was alive.

Yes.

I've been looking at him since 1990.

But...

You might as well just tell us, remind us, that you were on to him because of your connection through your aunt to a home that he visited.

Yes.

So, in the drama, they changed the name of the children's home.

But that was based on my aunt's institution, which was called Duncroft, which was very, very weird.

It was like a cross between a finishing school and a prison.

And there were very vulnerable girls there.

I would go there to visit my aunt, and more particularly my grandmother, who lived there.

And we would often see Savile there.

And there were a lot of celebrities and minor roles and so on that turned up there for, you know, garden parties and things to raise money.

But Savile was always there.

And you just thought, what is he doing there?

Now, as a teenager, I wasn't suspicious.

I thought he's hiding something.

I didn't think he was evil.

But then in 1990, Limbaba wrote a piece where she said every Fleet Street editor thinks he's a pedophile.

And at that point, I thought, what was he doing?

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Taking 14-year-olds out in his Rolls Royce on his own?

What was really going on there?

And so that was when I became suspicious.

And it speaks to the age that people didn't think there was anything wrong with that.

That people kind of, what, allowed him to take a girl off in a car or to show a girl the beach or the sights or whatever.

Yeah, no, my parents were teachers.

And they would say to my aunt, you can't do this.

You know, this is just not something that you can do.

Even in those days, it was very clear that this was not something that should be happening.

That a 50-year-old guy who isn't a teacher just takes off girls in his Rolls Royce with no member of staff.

But my aunt, like so many other people, you know, from Charles Downe, was taken in by him and, you know, said, well, he's a friend of the school.

It's so interesting what you're saying, Marion, because, you know, the three of us have worked in the media for a very long time.

Do you think there is a culture in organisations where, just like the phrase that was used about the banks,

some stars are too big to fail because they make so much money for you.

They are such part of the brand that you kind of close your eyes and shut off your ears and pretend you're not seeing what's in front of you.

I absolutely think that.

You know, I think people, very senior people in the BBC knew Daniel was going on with Saville.

Their worry was that it would come out in their papers.

They didn't think at all about the girls.

What they thought about was 20 million ratings on a Saturday night.

You know, that almost justified anything.

And do you think that was the reason why your investigation was shut down?

Or do you think that was just a fear that they didn't have the investigative evidence lockdown?

Because, I mean, that is that is a real fear.

And we should, you know, say in any editorial organisation, it's got to stand up.

It's got to pass the test.

So what do you do as editor?

You look at the evidence.

Very definitely the editor never looked at the evidence.

He didn't look at the interviews.

He didn't look at anything.

I think you might do that because you don't want to see the evidence.

The evidence was too strong, not too weak.

There was an inquiry into all this afterwards, the BBC inquiry.

And it found that this program should have gone out.

The Pollard Inquiry.

But it also said there must have been a good reason for the BBC to drop it.

It couldn't come up with one.

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Ten years later, nobody has found a good reason for the BBC to drop that. You know, what we were told was that Saville being pedophile isn't a story. But ten years later, we're still talking about it.

And do you think this drama is a kind of catharsis to that whole period?

Well, I think I think the catharsis would be if they did look at who knew what and why the news night was canned and how when the exposure came out ten months later, where it was finally all revealed, the BBC then lied and said there had been no news night investigation, just a couple of calls by a work experience girl.

The whole thing really, if you want catharsis, you have to look at all that.

You know, I said the dramatist has to decide what period they want to cover.

And that's perfectly appropriate.

But I don't think the BBC has ever really got to grips with what happened over that last couple of years, the last year of his life and then what happened the year after.

Without any spoilers, because I'm sure a lot of our listeners will want to go and find the drama, we're going to take you to a clip from the last episode, from episode four.

And I think it's important to say they are very cautious not to show him abusing, but clearly to work with survivors who we now know are the stories within that film that they tell.

I mean, it has that Schindler's List quality where you're meeting people that were both there and are with us now.

But let's just hear that clip from the end.

Hello, sweetheart.

You want a little dandelion, Jimmy's knee?

Not allowed.

Mum's saying I'm supposed to have some strangers' knees.

Ah, not a stranger.

I'm Jimmy Savile.

Hold it.

Come on.

I've got to go.

Hurry up and be 16.

Is the I'm Jimmy Savile thing that tells you so much what you were talking about that they're too big to fail?

I mean, it's interesting that we've just seen that dispatcher's documentary allegations about Russell Brand, we should say he denies all the allegations.

So if I asked you that slightly trite journalistic question, which is, oh, could it all happen again?

I mean, I guess your answer is it is still happening.

It is it is ongoing.

Absolutely.

I mean, obviously, this is media land we're talking about.

Do you think that if you go into the world of insurance, banking, shipping or whatever happens to be, you're going to find the same?

[Transcript] The News Agents / How far will Israel go in response to Hamas terrorism?

Or is there a particular toxicity around the whole idea of celebrity?

I think celebrity, there is a toxicity around that.

And, you know, we've all seen that.

We've all seen that stars are treated in a different way.

You see that around you.

And yeah, I think it's deeply ingrained in the culture of our industry.

I'm not one who can really speak about banking or whatever and they've really done it, but certainly in our industry, it's totally ingrained.

You sound calm, but I would say with a residual anger in your voice.

Is that fair? Yeah, that's exactly right.

I'm kind of asking how you are, I guess, because

Liz, as John said, is no longer with us.

And I'm I'm guessing this kind of still sits really heavily with you.

It does sit heavily with me.

And no, it never goes away.

You're right, because every time anything like this happens,

like the Savile documentary, the reckoning going out

or the Russell Brand story, a couple of weeks, but people get in touch with me.

It happens every time there is another sort of peak of publicity and so on.

Marion, thank you so much for being with us. Thanks.

Thank you.

This is The News Agents.

This has been an unapologetically serious somber episode of The News Agents.

But before we go, last night, I was at Lime Street Station in Liverpool

and we had been stopped a number of times.

I think it's fair to say, make this for selfies and all the rest of it.

We love the fact that you feel you know us as friends.

Yeah. So this bloke comes out, but he wants to have a bit of a go

because he'd missed the top of Monday's episode

where we issued a warning saying this isn't going to be our 30 minute episode.

This is going to be a really long episode

because of the problems in the Middle East

and also wanting to do justice to the Labour Party conference.

And so he told me this story.

I was used to a half hour slot, News Agents.

I had two guineases.

Well, I was listening to it by myself in the local pub.

And then an hour came past, I'm four guineases down,

I've got the taste of it and now I'm out for the night.

So the News Agents are to blame for your hangover.

News Agents are to blame for a boy being out in Liverpool by himself all night in the hangover today.

I'm really sorry. You should be.

I love your apology.

[Transcript] The News Agents / How far will Israel go in response to Hamas terrorism?

It was a real wrap on the knuckles.

We should also point out you don't normally record the conversations you're having with members of the public.

I mean, you did ask to do that, right?

Yeah. Well, no, no.

What happened was he told me the story.

I thought it was priceless.

I've got to get this down on tape.

Well, on my iPhone.

So I think we owe him Alka Selzer at the very least.

Maybe a pint of orange juice.

We'll see you tomorrow. Bye. Bye.

The News Agents with Emily Maitlis, John Sopel and Lewis Goodall.

This has been a global player, original podcast and a Persephoneka production.