

# TO BHMA

International edition

SUNDAY,  
MARCH 22, 2026

Featured articles licensed from **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

## Iranians Feel Betrayed Over Regime Change Promises

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Sune Engel Rasmussen and Margherita Stancati

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

At the start of the war on Iran, Israel and the U.S. said they were paving the way for Iranians to rise up and topple their government. Many Iranians cheered on the offensive as a last resort to overthrow rulers who killed thousands of protesters in January.

Now, they are grappling with the possibility that the war will end with them living under the same authoritarian rule and crushing international sanctions, but in devastated cities with an aggrieved government that has vowed to take an even harder line against dissent.

Please turn to Page 2

## What Entertainment Might Look Like in 20 Years

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Andrew Blackman

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

*"USA250: The Story of the World's Greatest Economy"* is a yearlong WSJ series examining America's first 250 years. Read more about it from Editor in Chief Emma Tucker.

Twenty years ago, the must-have entertainment accessory was the iPod, and Netflix customers had to wait for DVDs to arrive in the mail. Smartphones and streaming have since revolutionized home entertainment, while clouding the future of movie theaters and leading to the virtual extinction of the physical video-rental shops that used to be a staple of American towns.

Please turn to Page 4



Families in a public bomb shelter in Ramat Gan, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv.

AMIT ELKAYAM FOR WSJ

# For Israelis, War Becomes a Way of Life

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Feliz Solomon and Zvi Smith

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

TEL AVIV—When Shira Oze heard air-raid sirens signaling that Israel had attacked

Iran, her response was almost automatic: Throw some clothes in a bag and get the family in a taxi to Jerusalem before Tehran strikes back.

If this was anything like last time, she thought, they could wait out the worst of the

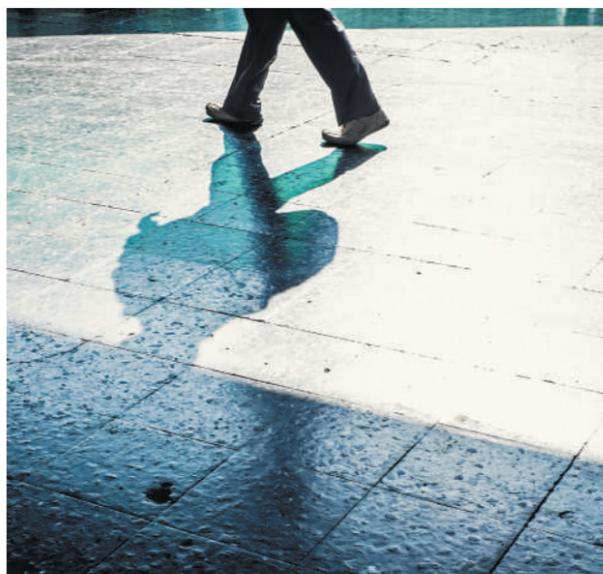
attacks there, since Jerusalem usually isn't a target. When the missile barrages slow to just a few each day, it should be OK to go home.

Like many in Israel, Oze, a 43-year-old mother of two, can't pinpoint exactly when this way of life started to feel

normal. After the Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7, 2023, Israel took on a proactive security posture, bringing the fight to its enemies one by one. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has likened Israel to a Sparta of the Middle East—a reference to the

long-gone warrior nation. That effectively meant entering into a grinding, nonstop war, first against militant groups Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, and ultimately with their sponsor, Iran.

Please turn to Page 2



TO BHMA International edition

## Scars Beneath the Surface: Greece's Struggle with Youth Self-Injury

By Maria Katopodi

"I cut myself to punish my body," says Elena T., a young university undergraduate from Athens. The phenomenon known as self-injury (SI), or non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI), refers to the intentional destruction of body tissue without suicidal intent. Self-injurious behav-

ior among young people has been increasing alarmingly in recent years.

### Hidden pain: why young people self-harm

Renowned Greek psychiatrist Professor Antonios Dakanalas notes that, internationally, 14–25% of adolescents and young adults up to the age of 24

are estimated to have self-harmed at least once. In Greece, the rate rises to around 25% among adolescents, positioning the country at the upper end of the global spectrum. "Of particular concern is the overrepresentation of girls aged 13–15, among whom 33.5% have self-harmed," Dakanalas says.

Please turn to Page 8

**YOU HAVE THE BUSINESS  
WE HAVE THE ENERGY**

**Integrated energy solutions for your business.**  
Find the products that suit your needs, at dei.gr



One with the future

# Israelis Learn to Live With War

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Allamon dreads the coming indictments in Georgia. “For the country I think they should just let it go,” she said. “It’s getting ridiculous.”

*Continued from Page One*

After more than two years of war, Oze says her family has grown accustomed to, and exhausted by, life in this modern-day Sparta. They keep go-bags by the door and sleep in bunkers, hoping each fight will be the last, but knowing that it probably won’t.

“These waves of conflict started to bleed into one another,” Oze said. “And there’s always this question of who we’ll have to fight next.”

Israeli society is paying a high price. Its largely reservist army is worn out from redeployments. Each time a new front rips open, as it did on Feb. 28 when Israel and the U.S. attacked Iran, Israeli civilians brace for another wave of retaliatory strikes.

In Tel Aviv, which bears the brunt of Iranian drone and missile fire, fatigue is visible on the faces of people woken several times each night by air-raid sirens. Many who don’t have a special reinforced room in their home, called in Hebrew a mamad, choose to camp in communal bunkers instead of scrambling



Shira Oze and her family in a safe room.

to safety every time an alert goes off.

Some have turned into little underground villages,

with families living in tents and children’s toys strewn about.

Still, an overwhelming

majority of Israelis support the current war against Iran, seeing the Islamic Republic as an existential threat to the

Jewish state that has to be dealt with sooner rather than later. A new poll by the Israel Democracy Institute found

that 12 days into the operation, 81% of those surveyed were still in favor of the war.

“It definitely wears you down,” said Jenny Kohn, 38, who has been living in a public shelter since the war began just over two weeks ago, “but I’m also pretty grateful that I live in a country where there’s all this infrastructure to protect us.”

Wartime protocols are so well practiced in Israel that they are part of daily life. As though it were a regular household chore, people time themselves picking up their pets and children and scurrying into shelters. Virtually everyone with a smartphone has installed an app run by the military’s Home Front Command, which overrides silent mode to blast out early warnings.

Above ground, Israel’s cities still have the appearance of normalcy. At Tel Aviv’s Dizengoff Square, cafes are crowded with customers, ready on a moment’s notice to put down their coffee cups and file calmly toward the nearest bunker in the event of an air incursion.

Four minutes away, and four floors below ground, a parking garage that doubles as a bomb shelter has turned into a tent city, where people set up air mattresses and tables with food, coffee and activities for children almost as soon as the war broke out. They stock up on groceries at the Carrefour supermarket in the shopping mall just upstairs.

Jeffrey Lubotta, 52, camped out there with his wife and two children. He said his family felt safer and more comfortable than in a

## They Were Promised Regime Change. Now Many Iranians Feel Betrayed.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

In Tehran and beyond, residents worry they will be left with a devastated country and the same autocratic rulers as before the war began

*Continued from Page One*

One Tehran-based civil-society activist and former political prisoner said Iranians were truly hopeful two weeks ago as the war began. Now, the person said, they feel betrayed. An English-language teacher living in Tehran who is opposed to the government but also the war was more blunt. “We were f—ed over,” the teacher said, saying they were turned into an excuse to launch a devastating war. “It’s like we have gone back a hundred years in time.”



Emergency personnel carry a casualty at the site of a strike on a residential building, amid U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran in Tehran, March 16, 2026.

The disappointment was triggered by a U-turn by Israeli and U.S. officials, who now are suggesting the time isn’t ripe for regime change.

President Trump has hinted the war could end soon, saying American forces have already struck all the targets that could be hit. On Friday, he told Fox News Radio that he thinks it is unlikely that Iranians will rise up soon against a regime that remains dangerous.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has taken on a similar tone, saying in a speech Thursday that

Iranians might not be able to bring down the regime, just days after he exhorted them to be ready for the coming moment to strike.

“The penny has dropped for a lot of people that this may be much more about state collapse than regime change,” said Ellie Geranmayeh, an Iran expert at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

The war is shaping up to be the second time this year that Iranians have seen the U.S. retreat on promises of regime change.

In early January, Trump encouraged Iranian protesters to overthrow their government, posting on social media that the U.S. was “locked and loaded” and that “HELP IS ON ITS WAY.” Days later, he decided against an attack after advisers convinced him the U.S. didn’t have the necessary forces in place. Critics at the time feared for the future of protesters who had been

emboldened by Trump’s call to action.

When launching the war on Feb. 28, Trump and Netanyahu again called Iranians into the streets. But Iranian security forces had prepared for the war with plans to disperse decision-making and a widespread crackdown ahead of the fighting.

Once the airstrikes began, Iranian authorities warned civilians through text messages and television broadcasts that any protester would be punished harshly for siding with the enemy. A commander with the paramilitary Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, speaking on state television, said a shoot-to-kill order was in place.

Iranian authorities have detained at least 195 people during the war on accusations ranging from espionage to sending content to foreign media outlets, according to data compiled by Human Rights

# as the New Normal

smaller public shelter nearer to their home, and sleeping there meant they wouldn't have to get up and move in the middle of the night if there were an incoming barrage.

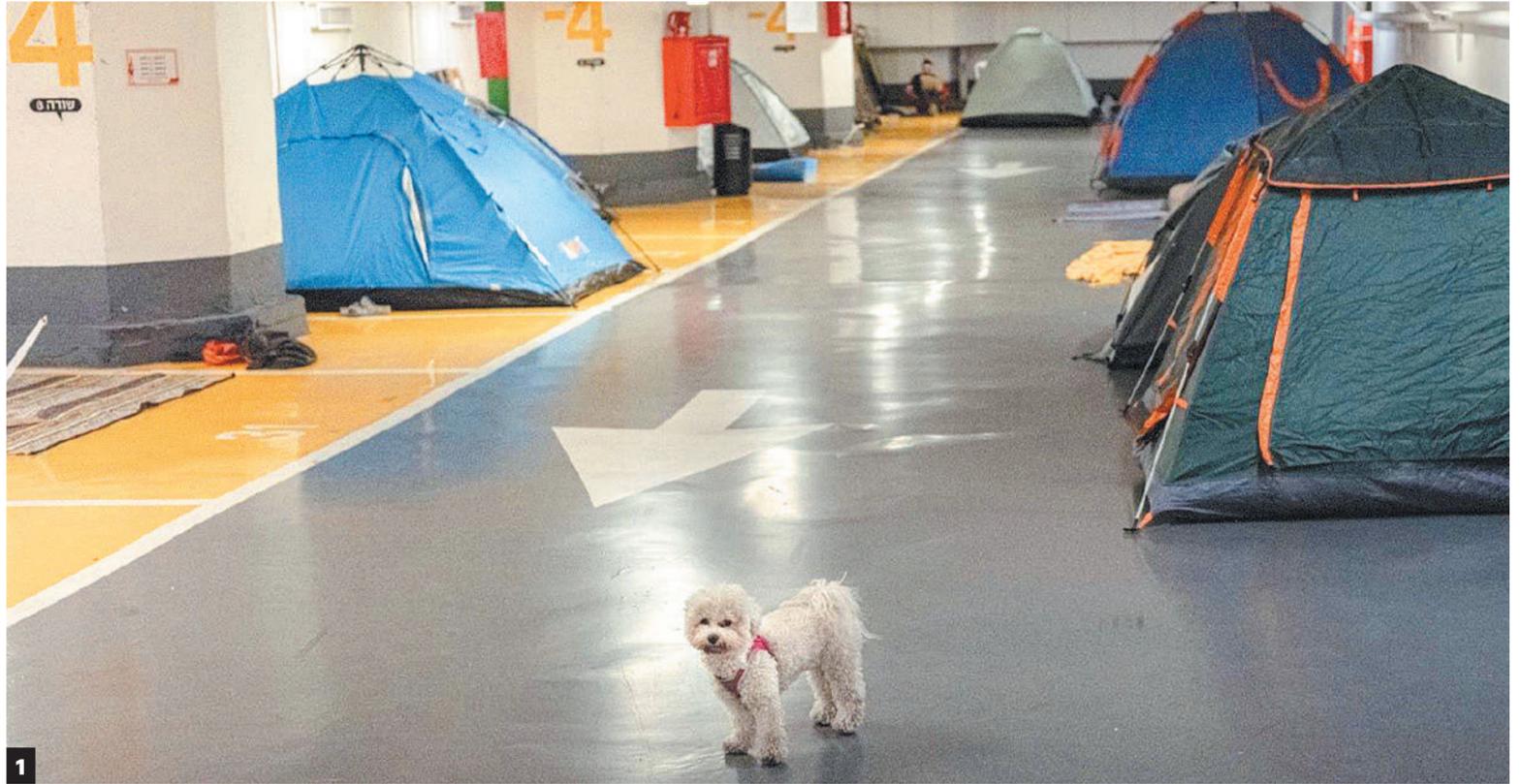
Some have found enjoyment and humor in the situation. A couple even got married there early in the war, not wanting to postpone their wedding. To many Israelis, scenes like this have become the norm, a feature of life in their country, rather than a bug.

"Let's be honest, it's not that inconvenient," said Mani Abitbol, a 37-year-old electrical engineer who stays in a tent with his girlfriend and his dog. "For us, it's just like camping," he said.

Others, often dual nationals who didn't grow up in Israel, see the situation as almost comically absurd. Adeena Sussman, an American-Israeli chef who lives in Tel Aviv, calls her apartment the "War BNB" because she takes in guests whose homes don't have shelters. A few nights ago, while sitting on her balcony, she caught herself marveling at the sight of "a beautiful golden missile" streaming through the sky.

"Absolutely nothing about this is normal," Sussman said. "Israelis are very adaptable, everyone's just doing what they can within the reaches of their own sanity."

Underneath a shopping center in Ramat Gan, on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, the sound of air-raid sirens was drowned out by a karaoke machine blasting the K-pop hit "Gangnam Style" to a gaggle of squealing children on a recent afternoon.



1



2



3

1. Tents provide shelter in a parking garage below Tel Aviv.  
2. Jenny Kohn at the shelter in Ramat Gan.  
3. Below Tel Aviv's Dizengoff Square, food is available.

Dana Mizrahi, 37, a single mother of five, also sheltered here during Israel's last war with Iran, in June. The

place has been a magnet for families like hers with small children.

Ordinarily used as a

community center, it was already outfitted with furniture and toys. It is deafeningly loud, but parents said

they are willing to sacrifice privacy and quiet so their children won't feel afraid and isolated.

"Most children hear the sirens and they cry," Mizrahi said. "Not ours. Our children are different."



A woman gives a flower to a security personnel as Iranians take part in a protest on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, amid the U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Tehran, March 13, 2026.

Activists in Iran, a U.S.-based group that monitors the country. Residents say people have been arrested for taking pictures or videos of strike sites.

Many Iranians expect the authorities to turn their force against them through mass arrests, lengthy prison sentences and violence once the fighting ends. In the 1980s, amid an eight-year war with Iraq, the Islamic Republic consolidated

its power by executing thousands of political prisoners.

The realization that regime change isn't immediately in the cards has also changed the calculus of Kurdish armed groups based in the border area between Iraq and Iran. After weighing an uprising in the Kurdish-majority areas of western Iran, the Kurds put their plans on hold, deterred by the government's strength and the lack of foreign military commitment to push for change, according to representatives of several Iranian Kurdish groups, which are mostly based in neighboring Iraq and border areas.

Iranian forces have repeatedly struck positions of Iranian Kurds in Iraq in recent days.

"In Kurdistan, until people are sure that real and serious changes are actually happening, I don't think any major change will take place," said Zagros Enderiyari, an of-

ficial with the Kurdistan Freedom Life Party, also known as PJAK, an Iranian Kurdish armed group.

There were always limits to what an air war alone could accomplish. When foreign airstrikes have helped topple autocratic regimes in the region, they were supplemented with U.S. troops on the ground, as in Iraq or Afghanistan, or coordinated with local armed militias, as in Libya. Neither option applies in Iran.

Regime change also requires regime fragmentation, which doesn't appear to be happening in Iran. Despite punishing attacks on internal security organizations, including bases and command centers of the Revolutionary Guard and the plainclothes Basij militias, there has been no indication of serious defections or division. Residents say Iranian security forces are present and active to a degree

that is keeping opponents of the regime in hiding.

Tehran residents say the destruction and death caused by the bombing is also turning more people strongly against the war, including many opponents of the Islamic Republic. More than 1,270 Iranian civilians have been confirmed killed so far, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran. U.S. military investigators think American forces likely were responsible for a strike that killed dozens of children at a girls' elementary school in Iran.

The fear is that a government emboldened by its survival and aggrieved by the punishing airstrikes will become a fiercer oppressor.

"This regime will become stronger, crueller, more monstrous even than before," said a Tehran resident who supported the war. "People don't have the weapons to fight back."



# What Entertainment Might Look Like in 20 Years

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Among the predictions: Hollywood-quality movies you can make at home for very little money

Continued from Page One

What kinds of disruptive changes will the next two decades bring? We asked five entertainment experts to predict one big change we'll see in their field.

## Hollywood movies you can make at home

Today, there is a massive difference between the production quality of the videos we shoot at home and the blockbusters we watch at the movies. In 20 years, however, new technological developments will continue to narrow that gap and make high-quality movie production accessible to everyone.

"Film schools are already starting to offer virtual-production programs," says Paul Warner, a film director and senior instructor at the New York Film Academy. "The thing that's incredible with the virtual studio is you can do it at home. You don't have to shoot on location, so it's much cheaper."

Warner sees virtual-production technology becoming much cheaper and more powerful over the next two decades. When shooting an action movie, for example, there will be no need for a separate post-production process. Instead, the director will see all the visual effects like fires and



MSG Sphere Exosphere lights up in Las Vegas, Nevada for the first time to celebrate Independence Day prior to the MSG Sphere's Opening in September.



Online entertainment could spur a resurgence in everything from theater and opera to ballet and concerts, as people start to crave human connection and shared in-person experiences.



Medium shot of a director giving instructions on a walkie-talkie during the shooting of a scene.

explosions projected on a high-quality LED screen behind the actors and can shoot a realistic scene right there, changing the effects as needed.

Meanwhile, generative AI will allow filmmakers to

generate realistic background scenes like crowds and battles, instead of shooting on location and using hundreds of extras. Warner worries that this will cause job losses in the movie industry, but he says it will also create op-

portunities for independent filmmakers to shoot movies that would need large studio budgets today.

## AI test audiences

The traditional model of entertainment has been for

creators to produce a movie, show or song, and then present it to audiences, where it becomes either a hit or a flop. Use of artificial intelligence will overturn that model in the next 20 years, making the production pro-

cess into more of a collaboration between creator and audience. Or at least an AI audience.

"The boundary between creator and consumer will largely dissolve in the next 20 years," says Stephanie Dolan, U.S. entertainment leader at Deloitte. "Not having to wait until a movie is shot, edited and viewed to understand consumer preferences for plot or archetypes or character development, but to be able to use predictive real-time data to make those types of decisions, I think would be really powerful in having fans help creators tell the stories that fans want to hear."

Instead of gathering people in a room to give feedback on a work in progress, for example, creators could use AI personas to test how their movie or TV show will play with different audiences. The AI will be trained on masses of detailed historical data about how people responded to previous productions, analyzing where they lost interest or started to multitask, and will be able to predict the reaction to a new movie. Directors can then make changes as they go, quickly testing different ideas and getting instant feedback. They could even create different endings for different kinds of fan: a happy ending for the romantics and

a tear-jerker for those who appreciate a good tragedy.

**AI companions in videogames**

When Jesse Schell thinks about the future of videogames, he sees one major change coming: "It's all about AI companions." He predicts a future in which AI companions become consistent characters across different games—and across decades.

"AI companions are going to change the way that we play games—not only the way we interact with in-game characters but also the way we interact with each other in games," says Schell, videogame designer and distinguished professor of entertainment technology at Carnegie Mellon University. "They're going to be outside of the games as well, in our regular lives, and they're going to be part of play and education."

Schell sees people keeping their AI companions throughout their lives, just as people today often still use the online handles they created as teenagers in the 1990s. These companions will remember games we won and characters we defeated years ago, drawing on a wealth of shared experiences that will deepen the gaming experience, Schell says.

Virtual and augmented reality will also bring a new level of realism, allowing gamers to feel as if their AI companion is right there with them, and advances in robotics could even allow people to create physical versions of AI companions.

"It's one thing to talk about a companion in a traditional screen-based videogame," Schell says. "It's another thing to have a companion who's right there with you, where you can make eye contact and have a verbal conversation. I think that will start to be a very normal way to interact with these characters."

**Live will thrive**

Future Americans will probably spend even more time on digital devices than they do now, but it will not be the death knell of live entertainment. In fact, it could spur a resurgence in everything from theater and opera to ballet and concerts, as people start to crave human connection and shared in-person experiences to balance out screen time and atomized forms of entertainment.

"The experience of being together with other humans who are doing something extraordinary—whether that's the most incredible soprano or Yo-Yo Ma on the cello or Taylor Swift lighting up the stage—those are seminal experiences," says Mariko Silver, president and CEO of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. "Humans are

wired for connection."

While some forms of live entertainment, such as opera and classical music, have remained largely unchanged for centuries, Silver sees venues trying harder to reach audiences that are more used to online entertainment. Some performances will encourage audience participation, perhaps including technology—for example, audiences logging instant responses to works and voting for what they want to hear or see next.

**Live entertainment—with a tech twist**

Mike Bechtel also sees live entertainment blossoming in 20 years, but with technology at the heart of it. "Any entertainment experience worth having is going to be a hybrid of spatial and digital," says Bechtel, futurist and professor of corporate innovation at the University of Notre Dame. "It's going to be the best of both."

The entertainment venues of the future will feature wraparound video screens, perfect audio and the ability to create physical experiences like wind and rain, he says. Venues like the Las Vegas Sphere are already offering something similar, and 20 years of development will make digital experiences so realistic that audiences can't differentiate them from physical reality.

Virtual and augmented reality will also be a key part of live entertainment, Bechtel says, allowing individual audience members to experience different versions of the same show. Today's clunky VR headsets will be replaced by unobtrusive devices, perhaps embedded in contact lenses or even brain-computer interfaces. They could allow individual audience members to customize a movie, for example, by skipping scenes they don't like, changing the audio or even choosing separate plot paths.

"It's like those old 'choose your own adventure' books," Bechtel says. "I'm choosing my own adventure scene by scene." With brain-computer interfaces, we could think about what we want to happen next, or the movie could adapt based on physical signals: "Maybe you don't know what you want to have happen next, but your heart rate and autonomic nervous system suggest you're a little too wound up. So we're going to spare you the terror scene and move you right to the happy ending."

Audiences of the future will still talk about the movie as they leave the theater, but instead of discussing what they thought of the ending, they'll be talking about which ending they chose.

"In 25 years, we won't watch entertainment," Bechtel says. "We'll enter it. We'll be part of it."

# Bra Straps and Panty Lines Used to be a Red Carpet Don't. Now They're Front-and-Center.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

The 'naked dressing' trend has gotten so big that now stylists and brands are crafting red-carpet lingerie that is made to be seen

By Faran Krentcil

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

At her home in Los Angeles, the celebrity stylist Tara Swennen often tells her teenage daughter, "You can't just walk out of the house in a bra top!" At work, it's another story. "I've been encouraging my clients to wear visible lingerie on the red carpet a lot," said Swennen, who has dressed stars from Allison Janney to Kristen Stewart for the Oscars, Golden Globes and Emmys. "It's a modern way to dress up if you're a grown, confident adult," she said.

Recently, Swennen put the actress Sarah Michelle Gellar in a lace burgundy bra and matching sheer pencil skirt from the California-based label L'Agence (she draped it with an oversized matching blazer). She also styled "Wicked" star Idina Menzel in a tweed jacket with a black lace bustier peeking out during a red carpet appearance last November. "A few years ago, you'd send a client out in visible lingerie and it would be a tabloid story," Swennen said.

Today, it's practically a requirement for making the best-dressed list. Just look at "One Battle After Another" actress Teyana Taylor, who wore a Schiaparelli haute couture dress with a built-in diamante thong to the Golden Globes in January, or Margot Robbie, who wore a sheer Chanel couture dress over a bralette and tap pants at a film festival in Sydney.

Fleur du Mal designer Jennifer Zuccarini has seen a "drastic uptick" in sales of her satin bralettes since 2021. Most recently, the actress Dakota Fanning sported a black one to the Fendi show, paired with a sharp black suit from the label's new designer Maria Grazia Chiuri. Zuccarini is also making more and more custom lingerie for clients worldwide.

Zuccarini said the switch happened because of two things: A post-pandemic search for fashion options that merged comfort with style, and a seismic red carpet shift that

began in 2014 when Rihanna wore the infamous "naked dress"—essentially a spiderweb made with Swarovski crystals—to the CFDA Awards in Manhattan. Similar looks from Beyoncé, Dakota Johnson and Jennifer Lawrence emerged soon after, and like anything labeled #naked online, they quickly went viral.

Today, even labels known for their ultra-demure looks are playing peek-a-boo. At her penthouse atelier in London's Mayfair district, designer Alessandra Rich showed a long black dress made of delicate French chantilly lace. "A few years ago, [retailers] would have asked us to add a panel here to cover up the underwear. Now you can ei-

ther add a slip if you prefer, or wear it sheer with simple black underwear underneath and it's great."

How to pull it off without a nutritionist, a trainer and a Pez dispenser full of GLP-1s? "I'm a curvier person," says Swennen, "and you can use a high-waisted pair of underwear as a shaper, while covering quite a lot of your torso." Both Swennen and Zuccarini point to proportion when it comes to the look, noting that when you pair a tight and tiny bra top with a boxy jacket or pleated trousers, you get more balance. Swennen recommends leaning into "the monochrome of it all" and choosing, say, a black bra with a black pencil skirt and a black evening jacket.

And don't be deterred, Swennen noted, if you're old enough to have worn a bra and blazer combo back in the 1980s when it first became fashionable eveningwear, thanks to designers like Yves Saint Laurent and Ungaro. "When I have a client that's a little nervous, I ask them to lean into their power a little bit," she said. "There are no rules anymore when it comes to fashion, as long as you're making a deliberate choice and you own it."

For those nervous about wardrobe malfunctions, a solution emerged at Prada's latest show in Milan, where eight models in the front row wore little more than grey strapless bras and sheer skirts. The French-Canadian influencer Izzi Allain admitted she had some extra help with her outfit: "My hairstylist helped me line the inside of the bra with wig tape," she said. "It's the strongest stuff I've ever used. This bra isn't going anywhere."

"Saturday Night Live" star Chloe Fineman estimates she's worn "a dozen" bras under blazers while filming TV promos. To her, wearing a visible bra to work is a cheeky way to fulfill her teenage fashion dreams. "I mean, think about it," she said. "We used to get in trouble for this. Now people want to pay a lot of money to do the same thing."

Teyana Taylor poses in the press room with the award for Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture for "One Battle After Another" during the 83rd Golden Globes on Sunday, January 11, 2026.

Dakota Johnson poses for photographers upon arrival at the Kering Women in Motion dinner at the 78th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, May 18, 2025.



CHRIS PIZELLO/AP

LEWIS JON/AP

# 'Hybrid Cafes' Are Taking Over Athens

Three concept store owners share their vision of creating coffee shops that tell a story

By Nansy Samaka

Concept stores—different products, all sharing one space, linked purely by a mutual aesthetic and vibes. Unlike the all-too-common “tourist traps”, concept stores transport you

into a real-life art exhibition where everything is niche and feels like treasure. You won't find little Acropolis souvenirs here or other obvious tokens of your travels. Instead, you get to peruse products thoughtfully designed by smaller Greek businesses you could then say you discovered. Concept stores were considered “hidden gems” of the urban jungle, yet

now they seem to be scattered all around Athens.

Despite the otherwise globalized Greek urban panorama, with a Starbucks, KFC and McDonald's in almost every area, there are still lots of shoppers who remain on the lookout for something different. A business with a sense of character, a product 'made with love' rather than mass-produced...

and it's no different with their morning coffee. Having a great quality blend isn't enough to make a café stand out — small businesses in Athens are creating experiences and marketing coffee with a story.

TO BHMA International Edition spoke with the owners of 3 unique coffee-centric concept stores in central Athens.

## Coffee with a twist!

A short walk away from bustling Ermou Street is Anoussa Mela's ANAMESA Concept Store. A sign sporting a clever catchphrase that changes every other week points you to a set of stairs which take you down to a fashionista's fairytale. “I made this store to be like a living magazine which supports who you are and boosts who you want to be.” In fact, ANAMESA was one of the first concept stores to open its doors in the Athenian cityscape; it actually dates back to 2014!

Anoussa's background as a fashion journalist is at the core of everything the store represents. “Our approach isn't to sell you an item. We curate a look, we recommend, we are more editors than sales associates,” she explains. The small underground space is covered floor to ceiling in colorful patterns, textures and playful sustainable fashion and accessories.

How did the coffee element come into play? It was a natural fit from the start. “We believe concept stores should act as cultural reference points in the city. You don't need me to tell you how important coffee is to us Greeks!” she laughs. “That's why we came up with our own standalone menu of colorful coffees and beverages. It's coffee with a twist, and our twist matches your IG feed!”

Even if all you long for is a traditional cup of Joe, you won't walk away with a standard, mass-produced paper cup. Any beverage or store-bought item of your



ANAMESA's viral colorful coffee always features some personalized touch.



Photo taken during ANAMESA's Valentine's Day coffee and shopping event.

choosing will get some form of personalization, handwritten or doodled, onto the packaging itself. “I hope people coming into the space will walk out knowing themselves better, even if they don't choose to buy anything. Hopefully it will help them discover or enhance their personal style and inspire their life path moving forward.”

The act of personalization in-store is almost ritualistic in nature. Your item is placed in a shipping envelope with stickers, candies and other small goods resembling a gift sent from a loved one abroad. Instead of a shipping address, the manila envelope is scribbled with a lengthy quote reflective of your experience in the store that day. Unique in their approach as they are, Anoussa and the store staff are guaranteed to leave you with some words of wisdom, encouragement, or whatever you may need on the day. If you look a little closer, you'll notice the walls have motivational quotes and phrases inscribed all over them in permanent marker as well. Nothing goes unaltered.

ANAMESA is a must-visit for any maximalist who wants to discover small Greek designers and other sustainable independent fashion brands. If you do decide to go, take note: there is a glass cabinet on the left hand side of the entrance filled with small trinkets and accessories. Take your time and let your eyes scan the shelves, while enjoying a trendy beverage of your choice.



Handmade ceramic mugs featuring the ANAMESA logo and multicolor latte art.



The Sparkles' brunch menu features sweet and savory options you can enjoy in their hidden sun patio.

## The coffee purists

Jewelers Eirini and Venetia Voutsas have opened several retail stores in Plaka, but this newest, more ambitious project they launched with their brother Orestis Voutsas came to them once they saw the space. The Sparkles are a family business and new to the concept store scene, having first opened their doors in October 2025.

"There is something about the energy of this hidden spot, right across from the Municipal Market; it's just perfect to escape the noise of the city," Eirini says. "We had no intention of ever delving into the service industry, but the space led us there naturally. Initially it was meant to be more retail-oriented, but our design led us to create a versatile store with coffee and good breakfast food."

When it came to picking a coffee blend, the siblings spent hours tasting different samples; they rejected most of them on the spot. "We have always been huge coffee drinkers in our family; we can easily recognize when a blend is subpar," said Venetia, sipping



For 'The Sparkles,' jewelry is as big a part of their identity as their morning cup of coffee.

the very last drop of her freddo espresso. The resident coffee connoisseur is Orestis, who also fully oversees the service operations in the store.

"Coffee has always played a big role in how we host and connect in our personal lives," Eirini remarks and orders another freddo for herself. "Greeks don't tend to pay attention to the blends they drink. We're far from coffee experts, but we are particular!"

Having started their entrepreneurial careers as jewelers, the owners of Sparkles feel handmade jewelry is as integral to their identity as their morning cup of coffee. "What may sound like an unlikely pairing to

others has always made sense to us," they explain while showcasing a few of their creations. Small grey bracelets resembling the Greek bracelet *martaki*, worn to ward off the scorching March sun, adorned with little charms. Each piece features a card with a core inspiration and feeling, inviting you to take a little gift home with you. "Jewelry is never absent from any of our creations. It is our main profession and we love it. It guides us; everything else is there to surround and frame the jewelry."

The integration of their jewelry into the budding concept store is still a work in progress. Eirini and Venetia's "Sparkling Wishes" creations will be housed in small arched displays through the store. "It's taking time to finish everything, because we want to make sure it is perfect!" says Venetia. "It's important to us not to disturb the peaceful vibes of the space and make it distracting. We want our jewelry to be like treasure hidden throughout."

The Sparkles is a peaceful space to "come as you are and stay as long as you like." With a hidden back patio where you can bask in the sun, it's an ideal spot for a late brunch or a coffee break amidst urban explorations.

## The savvy cup of coffee

An idea two friends had in college for a local work-wear business has turned into a multifaceted entrepreneurial project. Picture the perfectionist in your life creating the multipurpose loft of their dreams—chances are the result is "The Makers" in the city center, at the end of Praxitelous Street. Neutral hues, fragrant coffee and bites with plenty of vegan and vegetarian options—all with a home-workshop feel.

Teti Charitou and George Barlas saw a gap in the Greek market for bespoke professional wear for the ever-blooming service industry. "We were looking to open up a showroom when I spotted this space on a stroll around the city during quarantine in 2020," recounts Teti, fashion designer and co-founder of The Makers. She knew right away the space had immense potential for something more. "That is when I brought my husband Ilias Stavropoulos into the picture, who is our chef and helped us create the menu to make this café the success it is today." The end result of their collective



The 'Avo Waffle' is one of the beloved brunch options at The Makers.

efforts is a modern Athenian study-hub.

The Makers' team set out not to reflect Greek culture, but to innovate. The goal was to "bring something entirely different" to the table, and they are a unique example of a store that was prophetically ahead of its time. "The public really embraced us as a brunch and coffee place for our good music, good food and sense of familiarity," Teti explains pragmatically. "But through it all, we have remained makers at our core. Designers, wholesalers, cooks, creators."

In the early days of the concept store, the aprons were manufactured in-house right below the café. Now, the

atelier is right across the street, and meetings with prospective collaborators still happen on the top floor of the café. Ready-to-wear designs are present in almost every corner of the main sitting area. "We didn't hire an architect, so the store's design was all mine. I knew I wanted the space to be cozy and inviting, while still showcasing the wearable designs as an intrinsic part of our identity."

This business mindset became the center point for a café with a collaborative, modern atmosphere. The large dining table directly attached to the kitchen is one such conscious choice: the absence of walls and separation inspires a sense of kinship between strangers. "Everything within our space has been custom made by us, occasionally in collaboration with other Greek designers," Teti remarks, pointing to a moss green ceramic coffee mug, "We've always had a strong sense of who we are, and that has always shone through."

Local students have used it as a beloved study hub since its early days, while tourists treat The Makers as a home away from home. "Many have come back to tell us our space looks like it belongs in London," recounts Teti, "or that it is a mood booster on a busy day."



The Makers' outdoor seating area.



# Scars Beneath the Surface: Greece's Quiet Struggle with Youth Self-Injury

A growing number of young people in Greece are turning physical pain into a language for expressing emotions they struggle with—revealing a silent crisis that demands attention, understanding, and urgent support.

*Continued from Page One*

Clinical practice and research indicate that self-harming behaviors are prevalent among adolescents, including those under the age of 13, the professor notes. These behaviors may involve cutting their skin, burning themselves, pulling out their hair, or injuring their bodies with sharp objects—actions that are usually intentional and repeated, but initially occur without the intention of suicide.

Inflicting pain on oneself often represents a dysfunctional way of coping with intense emotions such as anxiety, anger, or emotional pain, suggests Dakanalas. Elena, who shares her self-traumatizing experience, says that a mixture of deep emotional pain and anger is what led her to “punish her body.”

## Triggers beneath the surface: family, trauma, and pressure

“It all started when I was 17 and I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder, a form of Crohn’s disease,” she recalls. “When the doctor explained how the condition would affect my whole life, and the sacrifices I would need to make to keep it under control, my emotional stress was so severe, I dug

my nails into my palms so hard they cut into my skin. For some reason, the pain provided relief,” she explains.

The professor suggests that when a young person experiences intense psychological distress such as insecurity, anger, guilt, emptiness, or deep disappointment—emotions they cannot always express in words—they may resort to self-harm to release or regulate emotional pain.

“Physical pain can provide temporary relief or a feeling of being in control. In some cases, the behavior may even develop addictive characteristics, because it offers short-term emotional relief,” he explains.

The causes of self-harm are multifactorial. They are associated with anxiety, depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, difficulty managing intense emotions, or traumatic experiences such as abuse or the loss of a significant other.

Experiences such as bullying, social rejection, and family conflict can also significantly increase vulnerability.

Anastasios G., a young architect who has long been battling his self-injurious behavior, attributes his “addiction,” as he calls it, to his overbearing family.

## Silence and stigma: barriers to seeking help

“Although I was a straight-A student all through school, I could never seem to live up to my father’s high expectations of what a ‘perfect son’ should be like,” he says. “I became obsessed with his approval, but only ever saw disappointment in his eyes,” he adds.

The professor points out that self-harm does not occur only in families with serious dysfunction; it can appear in any family and even in children who otherwise seem to function normally. Anastasios says that to the outside world “I was a perfectly normal kid,” but “when I locked the door of my room, I would silently use a small penknife or some other sharp object to scratch the inner part of my arms and punish myself for not being ‘perfect.’”

The digital environment also appears to play a role in intensifying the problem. Many young people encounter self-harm content on social media, where images or narratives can sometimes act as imitation triggers or contribute to the normalization of the behavior, Dakanalas explains.

But to what extent do young people who self-harm seek help from professionals, and how accessible are men-

tal health services in Greece?

Elena admits that she didn’t seek professional help or psychotherapy until she found the courage to confess what was going on to a friend. Significantly, she only did so when the cutting marks on her arms were accidentally revealed. “I tried very hard to cover them up, even using make-up, especially during the warmer months when we wear lighter clothing,” she says.

## A system under strain: gaps in mental health support

Self-harming behavior is not a diagnosis in itself, but a symptom of deeper psychological distress, the professor explains, adding that evaluation by a mental health professional is essential to identify underlying difficulties and design an appropriate therapeutic intervention.

“However, many young people who self-harm do not seek help, generally because they feel ashamed or frightened or have difficulty expressing their emotions,” notes the psychiatrist.

Elena has yet to reveal to her parents that the therapy they are paying for covers more than just her autoimmune condition. Beyond managing her physical health, the sessions also help her address the harm

she inflicts on her own body. “I don’t think my parents would understand why it started; my mother would definitely collapse,” she says.

For his part, Anastasios says he didn’t visit a psychotherapist until he was able to pay for the sessions on his own. “The thought of turning to my parents was out of the question, given that I consider them part of the problem. What’s more, my condition is ‘taboo’ in their social circle,” he stresses.

Unfortunately, according to the professor, Greece lacks the necessary services, funding, and prevention initiatives to address this phenomenon.

## Breaking the cycle: early intervention and awareness

Research indicates that most young people try to cope with their pain alone. Public child and adolescent mental health services remain inaccessible for many due to a shortage of specialized professionals, geographical disparities, and limited funding. As a result, treatment in Greece is largely confined to the costly private sector, says Dakanalas.

Services such as 24-hour helplines (1018, 1056, etc.) providing individuals with anonymous and free counseling and guidance are avail-

able. However, these services can only ever play a supportive role; they cannot replace systematic therapy.

Early recognition and supportive interventions are crucial, stresses the professor. Families and schools can play a crucial role in the former, but parents and teachers need to be trained to spot physical signs such as frequent cuts and wounds or the use of bandages or band-aids to hide injuries. Behavioral changes like withdrawal from socializing, spending more time alone, or a worsening school performance can also serve as alarm bells. Emotional shifts and general signs of psychological distress such as sudden mood changes or frequent outbursts of anger, sadness, or anxiety should never be ignored, notes Dakanalas.

Early intervention can reduce the risk of self-harm and strengthen psychological resilience. The professor emphasizes that measures such as introducing psycho-education programs in schools can help strengthen resilience and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health.

The challenge is significant, but with systematic effort and proper support, public policy and services can become effective tools for prevention and support, Dakanalas concludes.