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# The Continent

with Mail & Guardian



## How Malawi saved its democracy

(Photo: Amos Gumulira/AFP)

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# So this is what democracy looks like

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In May last year, Malawi's President Peter Mutharika attempted to steal an election. So brazen was this effort that some ballot papers were manipulated with Tippex, the correction fluid, to literally erase votes for opposition candidates.

But his narrow "victory" was short-lived. Malawians took to the streets to protest. So sustained and vociferous were these protests that the capital city, Lilongwe, at times became a no-go area for the president, who retreated to his home district in the south. When Mutharika sent in the police to quell the demonstrations, the army stepped in – not to fire on civilians, but to protect their right to peacefully protest.

And when opposition parties challenged the result in court, the judiciary resisted both intimidation and financial inducements to deliver their verdict: the elections were marred by "serious irregularities", and must be annulled.

On Tuesday, Malawi held a new presidential election. Opposition candidates put aside their egos – no easy feat for a politician – to form an unstoppable coalition. Although official results have yet to be released, the

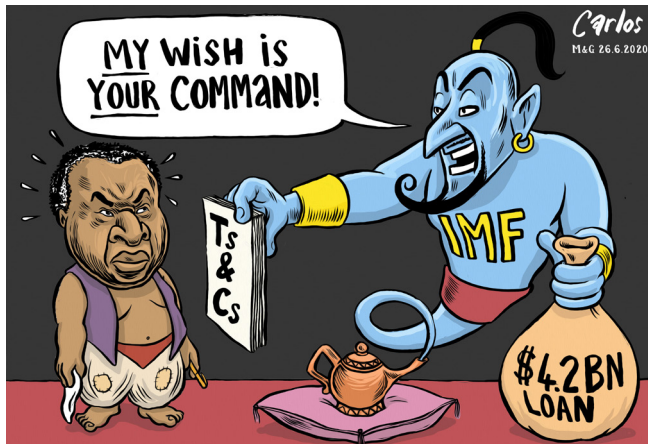
state broadcaster has called it for the opposition, with 59% of the vote to the ruling party's 38%.

## **Citizens marched alongside ballot boxes during transportation to guard against tampering**

In the absence of international observers – who were prevented from travelling by the pandemic – civil society organisations, activists and journalists took it on themselves to monitor the vote, demanding transparency every step of the way. Citizens marched alongside ballot boxes as they were transported to counting centres, to guard against tampering.

Now, of course, the hard work begins. The new administration must reverse years of corruption and incompetent governance, while charting a path for Malawi through both the pandemic and a global financial crisis.

Nonetheless, Malawi has earned the right to celebrate. This is what democracy looks like, and the rest of the world could learn a thing or two. ■



**No magic bullet:** South Africa's finance minister Tito Mboweni has approached the International Monetary Fund for a bailout.

## Inside:

- **COVER STORY:** Malawi's historic, odds-defying election (p16)
- **The Zambian protesters** who fooled the police (p8)
- **Uganda:** A cartoon character might help the president get re-elected (p12)
- **D'Banj's fall from grace:** Afrobeats star accused of rape (p21)
- **Investigation:** The Israeli mercenaries training Cameroon's most feared soldiers (p28)

### CORRECTIONS

- In Issue 10, we said that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has a volume of 74-billion litres of water. It's actually 74-billion **cubic metres**.
- In Issue 9, in our feature on pan-African flags, we ran a photograph of someone who we thought was Theodosia Okoh. But it was actually a photograph of her sister, **Dr Letitia Eva Obeng**. The photograph is misattributed elsewhere online, and we failed to double-check. Thanks to Jonas Nyabor from Dubawa Ghana, for bringing this error to our attention, and our apologies to Okoh and Obeng. Incidentally,

both were remarkable women. In addition to designing Ghana's famous flag, Okoh played a leading role in developing the sport of hockey in Ghana. Obeng, meanwhile, is known as the "grandmother of scientists" in Ghana, after becoming the first Ghanaian woman to be awarded a doctorate, by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in the 1960s.



**Theodosia Okoh (left), and her sister Dr Letitia Eva Obeng (right)**

# In the headlines this week

Samira Sawlani

## Kenya

Flicking through the channels, we couldn't help but pause on the latest episode of *Keeping up with the Kenyans*. The drama!

First, Kirinyaga governor Anne Waiguru was spotted playing solitaire on her phone during her own impeachment hearing. Then President Kenyatta held a ruling party meeting featuring a whole lot of MPs and a whole not-a-lot of social distancing.

And this just one day after the health secretary announced: "Irrespective of the person, irrespective of the size, no gatherings should be allowed in this republic."

So awkward.

## Tanzania

On to sport. Bad sport, anyway. In Tanzania, opposition leader Zitto Kabwe was arrested along with a number of his colleagues at a party meeting. The charge? "Unlawful assembly" under Covid-19 regulations.

It's like watching a football match where one team gets to both play and be the referee. As soon as the other side gets close to the goal box, they stop the game and red card them!

With Liverpool celebrating their premiership win this week, we wonder

if the Tanzanian authorities have taken their supporters' song *You'll Never Walk Alone* a little too literally.

## Zambia, Zimbabwe and the DRC

"You get an arrest and you get an arrest and you get an arrest, everyone gets an arrest!"

Celebrity guests were all the rage on the SADC talk-show circuit this week, as Zimbabwean authorities brought Obadiah Moyo onto the stage, detaining the health minister on corruption charges linked to a Covid-19 procurement scandal.

Not to be outdone, Zambian law enforcement officials invited Moyo's counterpart Chitalu Chilufya onto their own show for some soul-searching conversation after he was accused of "possession of property reasonably suspected of being proceeds of crime".

Both were released on bail and are still in their jobs, but it's interesting to see that even high-level hands may have their Rolexes replaced with cuffs if they're caught in the till.

Just ask Vital Kamerhe, the former chief of staff to President Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He's been sentenced to 20 years' hard labour after being found guilty of corruption and embezzlement.



**Big spender:**  
Teodorin Obiang  
is Equatorial  
Guinea's vice-  
president,  
and son of  
the president  
(Photo: Jerome  
Leroy/AFP)

### DRC and South Sudan

Speaking of the DRC, some actual good news: The Ebola epidemic in North-Kivu and Ituri, which began in August 2018, has finally been declared over!

Unfortunately the country still has to cope with a pair of Australians, Joe and Melissa Bagala, who say they are “trapped” by Covid-19 after travelling there to “give something back”. Move over *Survivor*, we’re calling this spin-off *Saviour*. Can someone please vote these two out?

### Côte d’Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea

We all have a soft spot for the TV shows we used to watch back in the day. Even if they were a bit rubbish.

With that in mind, we note that in Côte d’Ivoire, former president Henri Konan Bédié is back and has announced his intention to run for his old job in this

year’s elections.

True, he was big in the 90s, but now *he* is nearly 90. Nostalgia is all well and good, but there are so many new shows on TV these days, has anyone got time for re-runs?

If they ever decide to bring back *MTV Cribs*, one episode we would love to see would feature vice-president of Equatorial Guinea, Teodorin Obiang, who donated four million face masks to the people of his country this week.

Poor guy, he still has to pull double duty as the president’s son, too, but we’re sure that if his six-floor home in Paris and \$30-million mansion in Malibu don’t make up for it, at least he’s still got his fleet of luxury cars and priceless Michael Jackson memorabilia.

We know he owns Michael’s crystal glove from his *Bad* tour, but we are starting to wonder if he has anything from *Don’t Stop ’Til You Get Enough*. ■

# The Week in Numbers

## 2,280

The total number of deaths in the Democratic Republic of Congo's worst-ever Ebola outbreak, which began in August 2018. It was declared over this week after no new cases were reported for the last 42 days. However, the country is dealing with a new outbreak in the north-west of the country after four cases were detected in Mbandaka this month.

## \$4.2-billion

The size of the loan that South Africa is requesting from the International Monetary Fund, according to its finance minister. He said the talks were "difficult", but believed an agreement was in sight. The funds will shore up public finances, which have been decimated by the Covid-19 pandemic. South Africa has already received a \$1-billion loan from the New Development Bank.



(Photo: Marco Longari for AFP)

## 2,000

The number of volunteers being given an experimental Covid-19 vaccine in a trial in South Africa. The volunteers range from 18 to 65 years of age, and will be monitored for a year after receiving the vaccination. The trial is being conducted by the University of the Witwatersrand in partnership with the University of Oxford.

## \$3.3-million

The amount that Saniniu Laizer, an artisanal miner in Tanzania, was paid for selling two of the largest Tanzanite gem stones ever discovered to the government. The stones weighed 9.2kg and 5.8kg respectively. Laizer plans to build a shopping mall and a school in Manyara district.

## \$7-billion

The annual revenue of Africa's space industry. 19 African countries have national space programmes with 35 African satellites launched into space since 1998, according to the 2019 African Space Industry Annual Report. The industry is expected to exceed \$10-billion by 2024.

# THE WEEKLY PAN-AFRICAN NEWSPAPER

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# Zambia

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## Audacious protesters outsmart the police

Simon Allison

**O**n Tuesday, Zambian riot police were deployed all over Lusaka. They were armed and wore full body armour. This show of force was intended to disperse a youth protest planned for Tuesday afternoon, organised in response to several government corruption scandals.

The protesters never arrived.

“We had this idea,” said Chama Fumbe, an activist rapper better known by his stage name, Pilato. “Let’s announce that the protest was on. But then let’s do it from the bush.”

At the last minute, the organisers had told their supporters to stay at home. From an undisclosed location just outside of Lusaka, 13 youth activists livestreamed themselves making fiery speeches that railed against corruption and poor governance. And, while the police searched fruitlessly for a demonstration that was not happening,

more than half a million people tuned in online.

“It has the potential to change how protest will be conducted,” Pilato said. “There are two streets. There are these physical streets and social media streets. I think this had more influence than if we’d gone to the physical streets.”

There was another upside: no one was shot, beaten or arrested. A furious police spokesperson has announced that arrests will be made – although it’s unclear what anyone could be charged with. As one joker noted on social media, not entirely accurately, only the Zambia Wildlife Authority has jurisdiction in the bush.

Information minister and government spokesperson Dora Siliya said the police presence in Lusaka was designed to deter an illegal protest. “The youth have nothing to fear from government. But when they want to gather, in the middle of a pandemic ... if it was not in a pandemic, I promise you it would be a different story,” she said. “Even Parliament is not allowed to gather.”

Laura Miti, a veteran activist and head of the Alliance for Community Action, hailed the activists’ strategic acumen. “It was a wonderful ruse,” she





**New ideas: Young Zambian activists livestreamed their protest from the bush outside Lusaka (Photo: supplied)**

said. “It was two wins – they were heard widely, and they left power with egg all over their faces. Young people feel very invigorated.”

The government, on the other hand, must be rattled, said Miti. “These protests and Malawi together cannot make for a very comfortable situation for the government.”

In this week’s presidential election in neighbouring Malawi, the ruling party – also dogged by accusations of corruption and poor governance – appears to have been dumped out of office in a landslide victory for the opposition (the results have yet to be

officially confirmed).

Pilato and his colleagues used the protest to present a youth charter for the advancement of a “a free society in which every Zambian can aspire for and attain a decent living for themselves”. Its nine central demands include better and more employment; action against corruption; respect for basic freedoms and human rights; accountable leadership; respect for the Constitution; improved education standards; access to health, good housing and sanitation for all; the promotion of women’s rights; and a fairer tax system where the rich pay their fair share. ■

# Tanzania

## Opposition leaders locked up, newspaper shut down

Simon Mkina

Arresting opposition leaders and banning independent media outlets risks becoming the new normal for the government in Tanzania. On Tuesday, ACT-Wazalendo leader Zitto Kabwe was arrested along with a member of Parliament, Suleiman Bungara, and six other party members while attending an internal meeting in Kilwa District in Lindi region, south-east of the country.

When contacted by the *Mail & Guardian*, the police in Lindi did not give a clear answer to why the group had been arrested, saying only that “they have broken our laws”. Zitto and all other members were released the following day, after spending 20 hours behind bars.

Zitto said he had been told by police that they had been arrested for “endangering the peace”. He said that the arrest was unlawful.

General elections are scheduled in Tanzania for late October. In a statement on Wednesday, Amnesty International described the arrests as “a calculated

**SAUTI YA WATU**

# Tanzania Daima

**ILALARI** Pimeni ugonjwa wa Sikosele kabla ya ndoa UK 1

**HABARI** Waislam kuanza kampeni kutetea mahabusa UK 4

**MICHEZO** Simba vs Mwavuli ni kisasi leo? UK 7

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**NCHAMBI APIGWA FAINI MILIONI 23, ANUSURIKA JELA**

**ASKOFU ASHAURI MAANDAMANO NCHI NZIMA**

>> Avitaka vyama vya siasa kutumia Sikukuu ya SabaSaba kudai Tume Huru, Mgombea Binafsi, awasihi wananchi wawae nguo nyeupe

**URAIIS Z'BAR NGOMA NZITO**

>> Vigogo 13 wajitokeza kuchukua fomu, ujio wa Dk. Hussein Mswinyi, Prof. Mbarawa wakoleza mjadala, joto la uchaguzi

**Final edition: Tanzania Daima's front page from June 20**

move to harass and intimidate the opposition and critics ahead of elections, restrict their human rights and limit their campaigning”.

While Zitto and his colleagues were in police custody, a pro-opposition daily newspaper, Tanzania Daima, had its printing and distribution licences revoked. Its website is no longer accessible. In a public notice issued on Tuesday, the government said the newspaper has been breaching journalism ethics. The daily's editor, Martin Malera, told the *M&G* that the decision is a continuation of the government's “old-fashioned” policies to control media and journalists. He said that at least 100 people had been immediately made jobless by the decision. ■

# Kenya

## The northern white rhino's resurrection is under threat

Caroline Chebet

**I**n March 2018, a male northern white rhino called Sudan died in Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Laikipia, Kenya. He was the last surviving male of his sub-species. With his passing, the northern white rhino became functionally extinct. Just two females are still alive.

But this was not supposed to be the end of the evolutionary road for the northern white rhino. Scientists had harvested and frozen sperm from the last few males, and planned to bring the sub-species back to life through in-vitro fertilisation. In January, the Avantea laboratory in Italy announced that it had successfully fertilised three embryos using the frozen sperm and eggs harvested from the surviving females.

The plan was to bring those embryos back to Ol Pejeta and use a southern white rhino as a surrogate mother. Then the pandemic struck.

Scientists were also planning to harvest more eggs from the surviving female northern white rhinos, in case

the pregnancies were unsuccessful.

“The next procedure of harvesting more eggs was to take place in Kenya by the first week of May, but travel restrictions have delayed the process,” said Dr David Ndeereh, Kenya Wildlife Service’s head of veterinary services.

The pioneering procedure to revive the sub-species is a joint effort of the Kenya Wildlife Service, the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, Avantea, Dvůr Králové Zoo and Ol Pejeta Conservancy.

Richard Vigne, the CEO of Ol Pejeta Conservancy, said that the plan had been to harvest eggs from the two surviving females every three to four months, to maximise the chances of success. “The pandemic has disrupted the timelines and we have to wait until the airspace is clear,” he said. “The whole conservation effort has been put back by the pandemic.” ■



**Functionally extinct: Sudan, pictured above at Ol Pejeta, was the last male northern white rhino** (Photo: Nichole Sobecki via Getty)



## Meet Katoto, the cartoon character who is the Ugandan president's biggest fan

Think Homer Simpson meets Robin Hood, with added propaganda. **Eric Mwine-Mugaju**

**A**fter a five year unexplained hiatus, one of Uganda's most famous cartoon characters is back on TV. Katoto hasn't changed at all: his frayed yellow hat still sits atop his shaven head, a distinctive beard giving way to a toothy smile. His fashion sense is still awful, and his agility is remarkable given the size of his potbelly.

Katoto first hit Ugandan screens in 2015, becoming an instant sensation. The locally-produced cartoon is based on the mythical adventures of a folktale

character called Ishe-Katabazi; who, in the vibrant Banyankole oral tradition, exposes the lies and absurdities of society.

In the old stories, Ishe-Katabazi was never partisan, but the bumbling Katoto is an enthusiastic supporter of President Yoweri Museveni. The president makes frequent cameo appearances in the show, usually in some heroic guise or another. Once, when Katoto tried to join the army, commander-in-chief Museveni rescued him from a rushing



river; another time, roadbuilder-in-chief Museveni inaugurated a highway in Katoto's village.

Katoto, enamoured with the new road – “straight like a carpet” – dances with glee, and shouts: “Let’s pick the man again. Again, again, again.”

Sure enough, in February 2016, President Museveni won his fifth term in office. Katoto, no doubt, was thrilled, but by then – job done – the character was retired from Ugandan screens, apart from a brief cameo last year.

### Unsophisticated and out of touch

Now he’s back.

In a short cartoon released by the ministry of health last month, Katoto as usual catapults into the scene, hastily

pushing his sick son with suspected coronavirus symptoms in a wheelbarrow to a faraway clinic. He crashes into a tree and spies a group of men watching TV. Lo and behold, President Museveni – complete with iconic hat – is on the screen. Distracted by the man in the hat, Katoto abandons his son by the side of the road and carelessly joins the throng of spectators. The president is announcing a new coronavirus symptom checker app. Katoto beams, excitedly exclaiming, “You have come to help!” He adds: “You have solved it!”

Katoto downloads a coronavirus app recommended by the president, and uses his phone to check in with a white doctor. The doctor assures him all is well. The boy gets a hefty slap from

Katoto. “You boy, why didn’t you tell me it was just hunger!”

## **Katoto’s return in the midst of a pandemic is a curious one, and cannot be disassociated from the political context in which he appears**

The clip raises several questions. Why is the doctor white? Why, after 34 years of Museveni’s rule, is it still realistic to see a young boy transported to the hospital in a wheelbarrow instead of an ambulance? Why is the young boy hungry, and why are we using his hunger as a punchline?

But an even more important question is: why is Katoto back? Why now?

Katoto’s return in the midst of a pandemic is a curious one, and once again cannot be disassociated from the political context in which he appears.

Early next year, Museveni faces perhaps his most significant electoral challenge yet. Veteran opposition leader Kizza Besigye has teamed up with Bobi Wine, the massively popular pop star-turned-parliamentarian, to form a united opposition coalition.

Bobi Wine appeals to a constituency that Museveni struggles with – the youth.

Museveni has tried many times to appeal to the youth. He calls them “Bazukulu” (grandchildren), invoking the respect and obedience that is due to an elder. He has tried to rebrand

himself as “M7 Man of the Ghetto”, in a futile effort to steal the thunder of “the Ghetto President” – Bobi Wine. He has even dished out cash to youth groups in poorer areas, but all to no avail.

Instead, the president has been nicknamed Katala, Luganda slang for someone unsophisticated and out-of-touch.

### **No coincidence**

In 2015, the enormous popularity of the cartoon character Katoto helped Museveni’s message reach younger audiences. It is no coincidence that with elections once again on the horizon, Katoto has made his grand return. This time, however, the character may be even more influential because political rallies and face-to-face campaigning have been banned as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. All campaigning, therefore, must be virtual.

To facilitate this – and to help schoolchildren with virtual learning – Uganda has announced an ambitious plan to install two solar-powered televisions in every single village in the country. That’s nearly 140,000 screens which will broadcast news from the state-owned Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, which has channels broadcasting in many local languages and has been found to favour the ruling party in previous elections; and 140,000 screens that may show a seemingly-innocuous cartoon about a clumsy, loveable, pot-bellied villager with a fierce love for his president. ■

# Ilhan Omar's America

Ifrah Udgoon

**T***his is What America Looks Like* is Ilhan Omar's answer to a question that the United States has grappled with since its inception: Who is an American?

It has always been very selective in who it allows within its borders. For a long time, this did not include people who looked like Omar: a hijab-wearing black Muslim woman from Somalia.

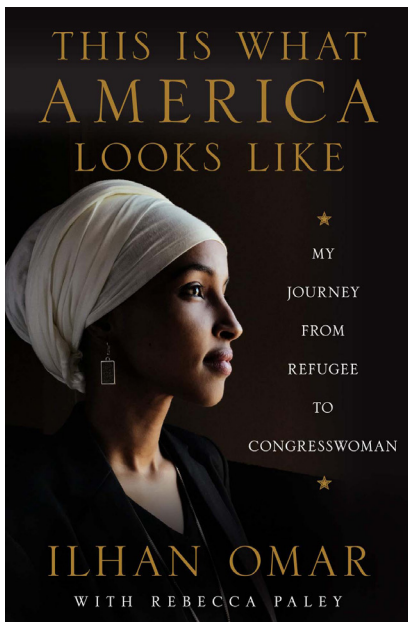
Against the US's historically racist backdrop, Omar's jagged edges force their way through, compelling the US to live up to its promise of being a nation of immigrants.

We journey from her idyllic life in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, where she lived as the child of her single father among her six siblings, her grandfather and other relatives.

We see her live through the first shots of civil war, the disintegration of civil society, the violence committed against neighbours and friends, and finally her escape to a refugee camp in Kenya and arrival in the US.

Omar details the crossroads she faced with her family, within her marriage and the questioning of her own identity.

We also witness her path to the



political activism she has become known for – and which made her the first Somali-American elected to the US Congress.

As a Somali-American woman who also immigrated to the US and grew up without a mother, I share a certain kinship with Omar. As I read about her navigating a third culture, not being Somali enough and not American enough, I kept thinking: I have been there.

In *This is What America Looks Like*, a woman boldly tells her story and reclaims her narrative, reminding us to always fight for the life and world we all deserve in the process. ■



**Changing of the guard:** The recent election appears to have delivered a stunning victory for the opposition, although official results are not yet in (Photo: Amos Gumulira/AFP)

## How Malawi saved its democracy

**Farewell to Malawi's President Peter Mutharika and his autocratic tendencies. Welcome to President-elect Lazarus Chakwera's promise of a new dawn. [Golden Matonga](#)**

**A**head of Tuesday's historic election, Malawi's President Peter Mutharika – *outgoing* President Peter Mutharika – frowned on the idea that any authority could supersede his own. But as he prepares to leave office in disgrace, it has become clear that he was never as powerful as he thought he was – and that Malawi's democracy is stronger than anyone gave it credit for.

Mutharika railed against the courts which had nullified his





**Unpopular:**  
**President**  
**Arthur Peter**  
**Mutharika waves**  
**at supporters as**  
**he arrives at a**  
**campaign event in**  
**Lilongwe on June**  
**17, 2020 (Photo:**  
**Amos Gumulira/**  
**AFP)**

controversial election win in May last year, calling their decision a “judicial coup”. But the judges held firm, refusing to be either intimidated or bribed.

He sought to undermine the independence of the judiciary by attempting to force the chief justice and his deputy into early retirement. Once again, the courts said no, after furious protestations from civil society.

When he sent police to disperse peaceful protesters, the military stepped in to protect anti-government demonstrations. Both the army chief and his second-in-command were fired, but the tone had already been set.

And, when the president finally submitted himself to a new presidential election, organised by the Malawi Electoral Commission under a new leadership that he was unable to influence, the people expressed their own power in no uncertain terms.

Mutharika, with just 38% of the vote according to a tally released by the state broadcaster – official results were still outstanding at the time of writing – has been booted out of office. He’s not happy. Already, his Democratic People’s Party has released a statement implying it might reject the result, while his running mate, Atupele Muluzi, has dismissed the vote as “a farce”.

Mutharika himself, after casting his ballot, claimed that the election was being mismanaged: “It’s sad and very much unnecessary, our monitors are being chased away. It’s very sad because the election has to be credible,” said Mutharika, apparently oblivious to the irony.

## Celebratory mood

Meanwhile, in the Lilongwe headquarters of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), supporters of opposition candidate Lazarus Chakwera grew more delirious as more results trickled in. On Thursday afternoon, when the state broadcaster called it for their candidate, the party began in earnest, and as the night wore on the music got louder and the beer ran freely.

The MCP is Malawi's oldest party. It has a chequered history: although it helped to liberate Malawi from British colonisation, it also spent much of its 31 years in power creating and enforcing a one-party state.

This time around must be different, analysts warn. Nandin Patel, an eminent political scientist, said that the country cannot afford to run on autopilot any longer. "The country has been in election mood since 2018. So virtually, for two years, there has been virtually no real governance," she said.

But it won't be easy, cautioned Joseph Chunga, a political science lecturer at the University of Malawi. "Chakwera's first assignment should be putting in place a government machinery that can deliver. As it stands, the new leadership will be naïve if it proceeds on assumption that the current government system is in shape to serve the nation."



**President-elect: Lazarus Chakwera was a pastor before turning to politics** (Photo: Amos Gumulira/AFP)

The incoming president, Chakwera – a charismatic orator who speaks with a deep American accent – is relatively new to politics, having made his name as an evangelical pastor. “He is a very generous man. I have seen him give and give some more to everyone. I have been deeply impacted by that,” said Nicky Chakwera, his son.

Chakwera’s victory was aided by his political alliance with Saulos Chilima, a corporate executive who is also relatively new to politics. Chilima was Mutharika’s running mate in 2014, and has served as vice-president of the country ever since. But he fell out with Mutharika midway through his first term, and formed his own opposition party.

In the annulled 2019 vote, Chakwera and Chilima split the opposition vote, which made a Mutharika victory plausible. They did not make the same mistake this time around. After bonding during the long legal battle to set aside the last election, they formed a political alliance which proved to be unstoppable, even making significant inroads in constituencies thought to be strongholds for Mutharika.

But this was not simply a victory for sensible politics. Ultimately, it was a victory for Malawi’s maturing democracy – and the judges, generals, journalists, activists, politicians and ordinary civilians who fought so hard to protect it. ■

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## ‘No Malawian will ever take any rubbish again’

**Martha Chizuma**, Malawi’s national ombudsman and a commissioner of the Malawi Human Rights Commission, on the historic election

I woke up at 5am on election day, and was literally on the road all day. I went to my polling station in Lilongwe at 5.30am, and had to wait until they finished setting up. The actual voting started at 6.10am. I was the second person to vote at my centre. Then afterwards I left my place, and went to my village – Chizuma village, where my

father is headman, about 150 kilometres from Lilongwe. I took my mother with me. Although she lives at my house, she is registered to vote in the village, and she said there was no way that she was not going to vote.

In the village, I picked up some of my cousins and took them all to the voting station. Then I dropped them all

**Waiting for change: Voters line up at the Malembo polling station in Lilongwe**

(Photo: Amos Gumulira/AFP)



back at their homes, and drove to the neighbouring district, Salima, where I was going to observe the voting. There are four constituencies in Salima, and I visited all of them – 12 polling stations in total.

What I saw was so amazing. By 10.30am, I was already at polling station number four. In all the polling stations I had visited, more than half of the registered voters had already voted. You would have a polling station with about 800 registered voters, and already more than 500 had voted. You can tell by the number of packs of ballot papers that had been used – there are a specific number of ballots in each pack.

It was fascinating to see that 70% or 80% of the people in the queues were women, even though there are no women on the ballot paper. That was something that got me thinking. There were also a lot of really old people, in their 80s and 90s, being helped by their children to vote.

This is a turning point for Malawi.

People have seen how politics affects their daily lives. For the past 13 months or so, Malawi's democracy has matured, probably ten times over. The people of Malawi are quite awake now. I don't think any Malawian will ever take any rubbish again. I don't see this country ever going back to where it was.

After I had finished the observations, I went back to my village to pick up my mother. I made everyone show me their finger dipped in ink, to prove that they had voted. There was one cousin with clean fingers – I said, 'You are going to vote, now!' There was just ten minutes before the voting closed at 6pm, but we were only five minutes away from the polling station, so she made it just in time.

My mother and I drove back to Lilongwe. My colleagues stayed in Salima District to observe the counting – everything went smoothly. Now we wait for the official results. ■

*As told to Simon Allison*



## SO, YOU THINK YOU'RE A REAL PAN-AFRICAN?

Take this quiz to find out how well you really know our continent

- 1.** The Danakil Depression (pictured above) is the one of the hottest places on Earth in terms of year-round average temperatures. What country is it in?
- 2.** Which canal flows through Egypt?
- 3.** What gemstone is unique to Tanzania?
- 4.** Which South African city is known as eGoli, or the City of Gold?
- 5.** The Chagos Islands officially belong to which country?
- 6.** South Africa imports water from which mountainous neighbouring country?
- 7.** The land border between Botswana and Zambia is one of the shortest in the world. Is it 150 metres, 1.5 kilometres, or 15 kilometres long?
- 8.** Senegal's president is currently in quarantine. What is his name?
- 9.** What is the capital of Morocco?
- 10.** Who was the first elected female head of state in Africa?
- 11.** How many players in Liverpool's current title-winning squad represent African nations?
- 12.** The highest mountain in Africa is Mount Kilimanjaro. What is the second-highest?

## How did I do?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we will send you the answers immediately.

**0-4**

"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

**5-8**

"I can't wait to explore more of this continent."

**9-12**

"I can see the whole continent from the top of Kilimanjaro."



**Twist in the case: Despite being accused of rape, musician D'banj was not arrested by police — instead, his accuser was** (Photo: Robin Little/Redferns)

## Speaking out against D'banj

**After accusing the Afrobeats superstar of rape, Seyitan Babatayo was arrested. Vincent Desmond**

**H**er name is Seyitan Babatayo. She is a final year student at the University of Lagos. In December 2018, she attended a party at the Glee Hotel in Lagos. That evening, she said, a man let himself into her hotel room while she was sleeping. She woke up and asked him what he was doing. He raped her.

His name, Babatayo said in a Twitter thread earlier this month, is Oladapo Daniel Oyebanjo. He is better known, of course, as D'banj: the multi-award-winning, multimillionaire Afrobeats star, and one of Nigeria's most recognisable celebrities. Just days before Babatayo went public, D'banj had posted messages

expressing solidarity with women who had been raped – this was part of Babatayo's motivation for speaking out, she said.

It took D'banj nearly two weeks to respond to Babatayo's allegations. He did so in a letter published on Instagram on June 15. In it, he denied all the allegations, accused Babatayo of lying and demanded 100-million naira (\$257,000) in damages.

And then, on June 16, Babatayo – not D'banj – was arrested. “Four armed policemen stormed into my apartment, and arrested me without a warrant,” she said in a statement released on June 24.

“They seized my phones, other personal effects and detained me in the police cell overnight.”

Babatayo was not charged with anything, although she was made to sign a gag order. The next day, she was released from jail – and into the custody of D’banj and his team. She was made to spend the night in a location chosen by D’banj’s team, she said. “I was isolated from my family, coerced, pressured and intimidated in person by D’banj and his team to retract all statements and to announce that my testimony was a publicity stunt.”

D’banj has not responded publicly to these specific allegations, and his team did not respond to the *Mail & Guardian’s* requests for comment. On Instagram, the pop star posted a video of himself singing a verse from his hit *Olurun Maje*, which begins:

*Some people dey want make I cry*

*Some people dey pray make I die, why?*

It was captioned: “Innocent until proven guilty...STOP SOCIAL MEDIA TRIAL. SAY NO TO RAPE AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION.”

### **Friends to the rescue**

When they stopped hearing from Babatayo, her friends became worried. Not only was she not in contact, but her tweets accusing D’banj were suddenly deleted, and replaced by new tweets in support of the artist. They swung into action to find her.

Ayodele Olufintuade, a writer, reached out to her feminist networks. Through a contact in the police, they

traced Babatayo to a police station. A lawyer, Ayodeji Osowobi from the Stand to End Rape Initiative, stepped in to help, and was able to secure her release from custody.

“It’s weird but she wasn’t charged with anything. She was just picked up and we later heard, interrogated, then her social media platforms accessed and all her tweets deleted. It was like a badly scripted mafia saga,” Olufintuade told the *M&G*.

### **When they stopped hearing from Babatayo, her friends became worried. They swung into action to find her**

What happened next, according to Olufintuade, was even more sinister. “Her second abduction was as weird as the first. The last we heard of her was that she’d been released to her lawyer. We panicked the following morning because she had an appointment to meet with the Lagos Police Public Relations Officer but we couldn’t reach her. And when we eventually did, a male voice was in the background screaming at her, asking if she was still in touch with ‘those people’ – us, I assume. It took a lot of work but we eventually tracked her down to D’banj’s manager’s house in Ikoyi. From what we heard, immediately as she was released from the police station she had simply been picked up by D’banj’s manager and detained overnight.”

The *M&G* reached out to D’banj’s manager for comment, but received no response. Nor did D’banj’s management firm, CSA Global, respond to requests for comment.

Kiki Mordi, a prominent journalist, had been working with Babatayo to help her tell her story. She first raised the alarm about Babatayo’s arrest and reported abduction on social media. She told the *M&G* that Babatayo had previously sought assistance from the police. “This is not the first time she’s trying to make an official police case. She tried to make one a couple of weeks ago and she wasn’t allowed because the policeman said she didn’t have a case and they laughed at her and chased her away from her from the office,” Mordi told the *M&G*.

### Public backlash

There has been a huge public backlash against D’banj in the wake of Babatayo’s allegations. Nearly 25,000 people have signed a Change.Org petition asking NGOs and brands to disassociate themselves from D’banj.

It has been widely reported that D’banj is a United Nations Ambassador for Peace, but a UN spokesperson confirmed to the *M&G* that this is not true, and that the artist “has nothing to do with the United Nations”.

D’banj is an ambassador for the ONE Campaign, an anti-poverty group. “ONE is aware of the allegations against D’banj and monitoring the situation closely. We believe in justice and accountability, and it is crucial that this



**Protect women: Men Against Rape protested against gender-based violence in Lagos last week** (Photo: Adekunle Ajayi/NurPhoto)

matter is investigated thoroughly and transparently,” executive director Edwin Ikhouria told the *M&G*.

The allegations against D’banj come in an atmosphere of increased awareness of and activism against gender-based violence in Nigeria. The brutal rape and murder in May of Uwaila Vera Omozuwa, a 22-year-old student at the University of Benin, sparked outrage across Nigeria and precipitated a national conversation on the subject.

Other high profile figures have also been implicated recently: this month, tech entrepreneur Kelechi Udoagwu shared her story of being harassed, allegedly by Kendall Ananyi, the chief executive of internet provider Tizeti; and actress Sylvia Oluchy accused Nollywood director Lancelot Imasuen of sexual assault, prompting the Actors Guild of Nigeria to set up a dedicated telephone line for survivors to report sexual harassment, assault and rape. ■



# The dangers of practising medicine in Sudan

Even as they save lives, doctors are being repeatedly assaulted. **Ayin**

**S**udan can be a dangerous place to be a doctor. According to the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors – a civil society group pivotal in the revolution that ousted former president Omar al-Bashir – attacks on medical teams by security forces and civilians have become a common phenomenon.

In some months, attacks against doctors took place almost every other day. The committee documented at least 14 cases of attacks against doctors in April alone.

One such attack occurred in Omdurman Hospital on May 20. After a man succumbed to a knife wound, the patient's family started a massive assault against the medical staff, according to Dr M Ahmed, one of the victims of the attack. "The family of the deceased followed us [medical staff] and more than 10 of them beat us and tore our clothes," Dr Ahmed said. "After that they followed us again to the security office, beat the security guards and attacked us using bricks. There were more than 30 persons at this time."

Dr Hassan Akkar, director of the hospital's accident department, warned



**Ailing: Pharmacists in Sudan protest against medical shortages** (Photo: Mahmoud Hjai via Anadolu Agency)

that more cases like this assault would lead to the collapse of the health system. "Sudanese people will not find any doctor to treat them."

## Doctors are not miracle workers

Khartoum staff shortages have led many, if not most, hospitals in the capital to shut down. This takes place at a time where roughly 90% of confirmed coronavirus infections are in the capital, the health ministry reported in early June (Sudan now has 8,984 cases).

According to government spokesperson Faisal Mohamed Saleh,

the dearth of doctors is a long-term issue since there have been few appointments of medical staff for the past 15 years. While cash-strapped, the government started appealing for more medical staff last month for Khartoum State, calling for specialists and nurses to work in isolation centres in five separate locations, offering relatively high financial allocations to fill these posts.

The situation is just as bad in other parts of the country. In April, 41 doctors left Al-Daein Hospital in the capital of East Darfur State to protest repeated attacks by security forces. Medical support for nine localities was essentially put on standstill.

“Our last protest was a result of an attack on doctors in the hospital after we admitted four patients with gun wounds,” said Dr Hussain Osman, one of the protesting doctors. The medical team was unable to save all of the wounded patients. “After one doctor treated the wounds, the assailant attacked him and made it visibly clear that he was carrying a gun ... he even attacked a police officer at the hospital.”

Often the relatives or friends of patients expect the doctors to perform “miracles” despite a severe lack of medical supplies. “The hospital in El Daein lacks even the most basic ingredients,” Dr Osman told Ayin. “The power goes off and everything is halted.”

Several medical professionals told Ayin the public often blame doctors for any medical failures, not appreciating the fact that Sudan’s medical teams often work with very limited resources.

“Hospitals are not equipped properly, there is almost a lack of everything: lifesaving drugs, medical devices and staff,” Dr Hamed Zakria Omer from the Police Hospital in Khartoum said. “Then the relatives or colleagues to patients blame it all on doctors and attack them if their patient did not receive proper care. Often emergency cases are brought in at the very last moment as well, where recovery is unlikely.”

But there are other factors, said Dr Ibrahim Adam Osman, the medical director of El Geneina Isolation Centre for Covid-19 patients. “Most of the assaults come from people with military backgrounds who are accustomed to immunity for any violent behaviour,” Adam said. This, coupled with poor protection and communication between healthcare providers and the public, triggers a litany of abuse, he added.

Legal protection against assaults may be the first vital step – and a new law passed earlier this month aims to do exactly that. But adequate medical equipment, including personal protective gear for medical staff contending with the pandemic, must be the second, immediate step, doctors told Ayin.

With high mortality rates emanating from other diseases along with Covid-19, Dr Osman Salih, the head of the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, believes Sudan is facing one of its greatest medical challenges in history. ■

*This report is published in collaboration with Ayin, an independent Sudanese media house. For their own safety, the journalists write anonymously.*

# The Scouts on the pandemic front lines

**Armed with sanitisers and masks, the Ravens are sometimes people's only source of information.**

**Njeri Kimani**

**W**hen Kenya's National Scout Organisation called on the country's scouts to help with the response to Covid-19, Charles Karim was listening. He leads a troop of nine scouts in the highlands of Kerico, a tea-growing district west of the Rift Valley. They call themselves the Ravens.

"We are in a generation changing moment," said Karim. "It is a war that we are fighting, with sanitisers and masks."

The Ravens fanned out into homes and villages in three counties, Sigowet-Soin, Ainamoi and Belgut.

They estimate that they have reached out to at least 3,000 families since they started a month ago.

In especially rural areas, some people have no idea what is going on. The Ravens take government Covid-19 information leaflets with them, and carefully translate the information into local languages.

They also distribute donated masks and hand sanitisers, and emphasise the importance of washing hands with soap

(or, in the absence of soap, ash).

Mostly, they receive a friendly welcome – except when their scout uniforms are mistaken for police uniforms. "We have had some cold receptions from people who think we are coming to arrest them," said another Raven Scout, Immaculate Joy.

In a village setting, the idea of social distancing can seem ridiculous; so too the advice to cough into one's elbow. "This is a new phenomenon in the country. Many people laugh through the training and we have to keep explaining why it is important for the reduction of the spread of germs," said Karim.

**The Ravens take government Covid-19 leaflets with them, and carefully translate the information into local languages**

It is not unusual for the scout movement to be involved in public health promotion, and the Covid-19 pandemic is no exception. According to World Scouting, scouts have also been involved in Covid-19 awareness-raising efforts in Botswana, Cape Verde, Cote D'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, the Seychelles, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia. ■

# The epidemic of violence in Zimbabwe

Alex Magaisa

Under the cover of the coronavirus pandemic, while global attention is focused elsewhere, President Emmerson Mnangagwa's Zanu-PF government is taking the opportunity to tighten its stranglehold on Nelson Chamisa's opposition. But instead of party leaders being in the firing line, it is rank and file MPs and activists who are suffering the worst of the violence.

At 26, Joana Mamombe is one of Zimbabwe's youngest MPs, and part of a new generation of opposition leaders. Mamombe was just six when the MDC was formed in 1999 to challenge Zanu-PF's political dominance.

Now, however, she and two colleagues, Netsai Marova and Cecilia Chimbori, are languishing in Harare's remand prison. The circumstances of their incarceration are bizarre but emblematic of the dire state of democracy in Zimbabwe.

The "MDC Trio" were part of an anti-poverty demonstration in Harare when they were arrested on 13 May. They were later abducted from the police station and taken to a place where they

were tortured. Their accounts of torture, which included sexual abuse and being forced to eat human waste, are horrific.

Having been dumped in a rural location 60 miles from Harare, their ordeal continued after they were admitted to hospital. Despite being victims, the three women were subjected to constant surveillance by armed police and state agents. Intimate images of their bodies were leaked to social media following a forensic examination by a government investigator.

Days later, before their wounds had healed, the state arrested them for allegedly faking their abductions. Home Affairs Minister Kazembe Kazembe made an elaborate but incoherent statement dismissing their case. A magistrate rejected their bail application, astonishingly reasoning that their case had harmed the country's economic prospects.

The situation of the MDC Trio represents Zimbabwe's continuing descent into authoritarianism – and their experience is not unique. When Mnangagwa replaced Mugabe as President in 2017, the expectation was that Zimbabwe would get better. Many Zimbabweans lament that it is far worse. ■

*Alex Magaisa is a lecturer of law at the Kent Law School of the University of Kent. This analysis was produced in partnership with Democracy in Africa*



# Making a killing: Israeli mercenaries in Cameroon

Israeli citizens have been training Cameroon's most notorious military unit for years – making themselves huge sums in the process. **Emmanuel Freudenthal and Youri van der Weide**

**Profitable force: Cohorts of an elite unit of the Cameroonian army, the Rapid Intervention Battalion, have allegedly been trained by Israeli citizens** (Photo: Stringer/AFP)

**I**n November 2018, Eran Moas basked under the Caribbean sun by an infinity pool stretching towards the horizon.

The beachside villa in the Bahamas he had rented did not come cheap at a cool \$20,000 a day, but this expense was of little concern to Moas. The Israeli citizen's personal portfolio of properties includes a New York flat worth over \$20-million, which he bought without a loan, and a Los Angeles villa worth over \$12-million.

But his usual place of residence is a massive mansion in Cameroon's capital of Yaoundé where he reportedly travels around in a bullet-proof car escorted by

a team of bodyguards.

Moas enjoys this lifestyle thanks to his long-standing job with the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR), an elite unit of the Cameroonian army, as well as business ventures with the Cameroonian government. The BIR operates under the direct orders of President Paul Biya, who has been in power for 37 years. The Cameroonian battalion is known for the arduous training regime its soldiers go through and their access to superior weaponry.

The BIR is also notorious for its ruthlessness. Human rights organisations have documented extensive torture and arbitrary killings by the unit. One of its

former soldiers told *African Arguments* that he personally witnessed two mass executions in the north of Cameroon in which a group of about 10 victims were forced to dig their own graves, then told to lie in them before being shot dead.

Moas is not the only Israeli contractor to provide services to the BIR. An investigation by *African Arguments*, in partnership with Israel's Channel 12, examined long-standing ties between certain Israeli citizens and President Biya's elite forces. These links stretch from the 1980s up to today.

The investigation found no evidence of direct links between these individuals and human rights violations but they were reportedly giving orders to the soldiers.

Working with the BIR is a lucrative venture. The unit is well funded and widely believed to be financed through an "off-budget" account of Cameroon's national oil company.

Israelis are involved in the training, command and supply of weapons to the BIR, although the corporate structures through which they operate are opaque. New soldiers are recruited for the unit every few years and are trained in batches of one to two thousand. After graduating, soldiers have been given Israeli-made assault rifles, at least until recently. One former BIR recruit, who graduated in 2015, says that about a hundred Israeli trainers spent three months in Cameroon training his cohort. The recruit says they told him they were each paid around \$1,000 a day.

According to Israeli human rights

lawyer Eitay Mack, who campaigns to increase transparency in Israeli defence exports, the arrangement between the BIR and Israeli's trainers is highly unusual.

"It's a very rare situation that Israel is approving someone to conduct a unit," he says. Mack explains that Moas and his colleagues would need formal licences from the Israeli government

## **The unit is well funded believed to be financed through an 'off-budget' account of Cameroon's national oil company**

for their work in Cameroon. Mack says it's unlikely they would circumvent this requirement.

"[Moas] is doing it with a licence from the Israeli government for sure. He is not doing it on his own as a private citizen," he said.

Called on his Cameroonian cell phone, Moas hung up after we introduced ourselves and he did not respond to questions sent to his WhatsApp account. The Israeli embassy in Yaoundé directed us to the ministry of foreign affairs in Israel. Their spokesperson said they would not comment, adding: "We don't have to give an explanation." ■

*This investigation has been edited for length. The original, published by African Arguments, is here: <https://bit.ly/AfricanArgumentsInvestigation>. This article was developed with the support of the Money Trail Project.*

# Algeria's barefoot footballers

Tolu Olasoji

**P**aradou AC, a tiny football club in Algiers, had to travel an unconventional road to ensure their continued survival.

“Seeing academy kids play barefoot, without a goalie, against players two to three years older and completely dominate them with beautiful, technical football – the way it’s supposed to be played – it’s hard not to appreciate it,” Walid Ziani, a Canadian-Algerian journalist, enthused to *The Continent*.

Paradou was established in 1994 but after a failed expedition in the country’s top division, founder Kheiredine Zetchi was forced to innovate. He was inspired by Ivorian club Asec Mimosas and its famous academy, which produced a golden generation of Ivorian players, including Yaya and Kolo Touré.

The idea of football academies in Algeria used to be almost non-existent. That all changed in 2007.

Established in Tessala El Merdja, in the rural southern outskirts of Algiers, players from ages 11 to 13 were brought into the academy. Their football education was delivered in an unconventional style. They played



**On the ball: Paradou AC's investment in its academy has paid off (Photo: Paradou AC)**

barefooted and without a goalie, against older players who were stronger and more physically imposing. These battles helped them develop an astute ball control that was far superior to that of most of their peers.

By May 2017, Paradou had earned promotion. The club has gone on to play in the 2019 CAF Confederation Cup while four academy graduates were in Egypt as Algeria coasted to the Africa Cup of Nations trophy in 2019.

Eight Paradou exports have landed in Europe. Among them, Hicham Boudaoui earned the record for the most expensive transfer from Algeria after he joined Nice for €4-million last year.

Paradou has become one of the African hotspots for European scouts and agents looking to poach North African talents that have honed their skills in the most natural way: barefooted. ■



## The Big Picture

**Alley hoop:** A young girl learns to play with a new hula hoop outside an orphanage in Nairobi, Kenya. Last month, food and toys were distributed to about 500 orphans by Kenya's National Muslim Covid-19 Response Committee to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, the Muslim holiday which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. (Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba for AFP)

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