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**The top-
secret
testimonies
that implicate
Rwanda's
president in
war crimes**

Photo: Alexander Joe/AFP/Getty Images



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COVER STORY: Rwanda's President Paul Kagame is credited with ending the Rwandan genocide. But less well known is that even as he did so, his forces are alleged to have committed war crimes. Eyewitness testimony leaked to the *Mail & Guardian* from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda paints a damning picture of atrocities committed by Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front both during and after the genocide (p11).

READER SURVEY RESULTS

**This meeting is called to order.
All protocol observed.**

Last week, we asked you to complete a survey to help us understand more about you. We received an overwhelming number of responses – thank you! We are still analysing the results, but we can share the headline findings with you.

This blew us away: **75%** of you regularly share *The Continent* with friends, family or colleagues. And about **25%** of you regularly share *The Continent* with more than five individuals or WhatsApp groups. These numbers are far higher than we expected. For this, we are eternally grateful.

More than half of you want to see more politics and economics in these pages, and there was also lots of support for more opinion, environmental reporting and travel and lifestyle stories. You also flooded the feedback section with compliments and positive reinforcement – after a long, hard year, you've got no idea how much this means to us.

Several readers asked if we intend to introduce some kind of paywall. This we can answer definitively: No! This is not in our plans. We *are* exploring other ways of generating income, including advertising. We will keep you posted, and from time to time we will check in with you via another survey like this one, to make sure you are still happy with our direction.

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50%+

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Who makes the best jollof rice?

Yes, we know, this was a cheeky one (and the protest votes from the Pilau Lobby are duly noted). But we put our faith in you to rise above our culinary differences, and you did not disappoint us. A sizable majority of 36.5% answered: 'There's no such thing as bad jollof rice', with the rest of the votes split relatively evenly between the other options. One reader, in a comment, said it best: **"Behave yourself, Africa doesn't need another conflict – the BEST jollof rice is the one in front of you at all times."** Amen.

The Week in Numbers

\$15,000

The 'bond' that some African tourists and visitors must pay before being allowed to enter the United States, according to new regulations that will come into force on 24 December. The new rule applies to citizens of Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe and Sudan.

70%

The proportion of the world's farmland that is operated by 1% of the world's farms. This extreme concentration of land ownership is more concerning given that 70% of the world's food is produced by small-holder and artisanal farms, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

0.5%

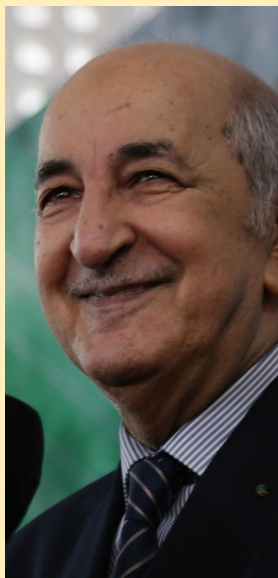
The percentage of the United Kingdom's national budget that will be allocated for foreign aid, as of next year. This is down from the 0.7% target which is enshrined in UK law, and which was promised by the ruling Conservative party during the most recent election.

\$33-million

The amount that South Africa has paid to the Covax mechanism to ensure it gets access to Covid-19 vaccines when they are ready. The payment will secure a spot for South Africa "at the front of the queue", the country's finance minister said.

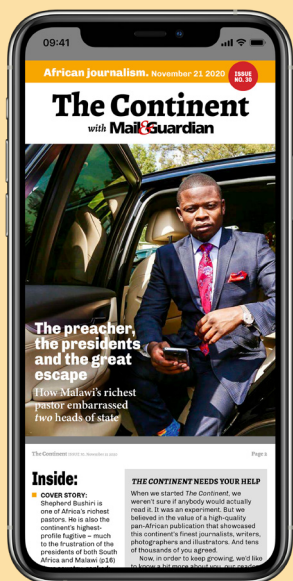
46 days (and counting)

The length of time since Algeria's President Abdelmadjid Tebboune was last seen in public. He is receiving medical treatment after contracting Covid-19. The extended medical leave of former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika sparked widespread protests and ultimately his downfall last year.



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Africa

Six out of 10 Africans need a Covid vaccine, says the AU

But who will foot the bill?

Laura López González

Experts from the African Union and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) say the continent will need to vaccinate 60% of the population in order to bring outbreaks under control.

If an eventual Covid-19 vaccine is comprised of two shots, this means Africa will need about 1.5-billion doses of a jab, said Dr Raji Tajudeen, who heads up public health institutes and research at Africa CDC.

It could cost as much as \$15-billion to meet the African Union target, depending on the ultimate price tag of vaccines. The African Union and Africa CDC expect part of the cost to be covered by the World Bank and direct donors, as well as the African Import Export Bank – and a new

global vaccine initiative called Covax.

Covax is expected to provide up to one in five of the jabs needed for the continent. Led by the vaccine alliance Gavi, Covax will pool participating countries' buying power to ensure poorer nations have access to affordable vaccines.

The race for nations to secure stocks of jabs has been fierce. India, the United States and the European Union alone have negotiated deals for as many as 4-billion doses, according to a recent analysis by Duke University in the US.

In contrast, Covax has so far secured 700-million doses, according to the university's work.

The AU and Africa CDC expect part of the cost to be covered by the World Bank and direct donors

Most countries in Africa qualify to receive subsidised doses through Covax, but many may still need to pay up to \$2 per dose — which could be out of some countries' reach.

Efforts to raise funds to meet the AU vaccine target may, in part, go to helping countries bridge that gap – and to cover the shortfall between what Covax can provide and the AU target. ■

Ethiopia

After Tigray ultimatum expires, Abiy threatens 'final phase' of military operations

On Sunday, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed issued an ultimatum to the leaders of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF): "Your journey of destruction is coming to an end, and we urge you to surrender peacefully within the next 72 hours, recognising you are at a point of no return. Take this last opportunity."

He said that Ethiopian forces had encircled the regional capital Mekele, and he warned civilians to get out of the city or stay in their homes.

The conflict between the national government and the Tigrayan regional authorities broke out earlier this month, after months of rising tensions. A communications blackout means that it has been very hard for independent sources to get any reliable information

from the area, with both sides claiming to have the upper hand militarily.

Human rights groups are reporting that massacres of civilians have almost certainly been carried out by both sides. The United Nations has warned of possible war crimes being committed.

On Wednesday, Abiy's ultimatum expired; and on Friday he announced the beginning of the "final phase" of the military operation.

But the Tigrayan forces are likely to put up a fight. A diplomatic source told Reuters that the TPLF are mobilising civilians in the city, and "are digging trenches and everyone has an AK-47".

Meanwhile, more than 43,000 refugees have fled from Tigray into neighbouring Sudan, while the United Nations has warned that nearly 100,000 Eritrean refugees in Tigray are about to run out of food. ■



Destruction: A damaged tank abandoned on the side of a road near Humera in western Tigray. (Photo: Eduardo Soteras/AFP)



Welcome to Mekele

*Nestled in Ethiopia's Tigrayan highlands is the regional capital and university town of Mekele. Earlier this week, the Ethiopian government warned its 500,000-strong civilian population to flee ahead of a full-scale military assault. Before the conflict broke out, journalist **Samuel Getachew** was a frequent visitor. He describes a charming, energetic and friendly town.*

The first time I visited Mekele, it was almost like visiting a foreign land, dissociated from the rest of Ethiopia. That is how I felt. Everything felt different, distant – but, in its diversity, I found a beautiful place worth visiting over and over again. In just four years, I visited Mekele four times. These were the places I visited and where I made friends.

Favourite restaurant

The Abay Cultural Restaurant stood out the most for me. The place is beautifully decorated and had many delicacies on its menu. I often ordered “tehlo”, a speciality dish from Adigrat, a city two hours from Mekele. It is a marinated meat, mixed with yogurt and berbere spice – an acquired taste. It was so good that



Crossroads: Religious architecture traces a richly textured path through Mekele's long and storied history.
(Photo: Eduardo Soterias/AFP)

I often tried to emulate it in my own kitchen in Addis – each time that I fail, I am reminded of my times in this beautiful city.

Favourite bar

The city has lots of bars – too many – to choose from, and the local “tela betes” – serving traditional homebrewed beer – were also great. I often went to the Abreha Castel Hotel bar. With its generous green space overlooking the city, it was great. There was also a bartender in his 70s, an Italian who would sing for me, suggest places to visit and wish me a great flight back to Addis. Little did he know that I always take public road transportation so that I get to meet unique people like him who enrich my own life.

Things to do

I liked to sit on one of the plastic chairs under the many trees, drinking

Ethiopian coffee and eating anbasha – a sweet flatbread – as I searched for new friends, who were more often than not happily inclined to open their hearts in conversation. Politics meant little to the people I met. They all seemed to be in a rush to show me their city and invite me for lunch.

Things to see

Mekele, like the rest of the region, is host to a number of churches that have been hewn into the rock itself, as well as decaying castles from another era. I like to visit these places and learn about the area's past. And no matter one's take on Ethiopian politics, which is often viewed from an ethnic lens, the Martyrs Monument Museum is a wonderful place to understand the struggle against the brutal government of Mengistu Hailamariam, for which thousands of Mekele's residents gave their lives.

Getting around

I often walked. Not only did that help me to discover the city more, but with little infrastructure, the city's roads were almost always crowded and it was much easier to get to your destination on foot. People are always friendly to help and proud to show you around.

Soundtrack to the city

The music of Abraham Gebremedhin often made me dance, or attempt to dance, without even knowing a word of the meaning of his words. I listened to it often when I was in Mekele. It reminded me, and still does, of the power of music to connect people that are strangers. I often listen to it in Addis to take me back to my time in Tigray.

Vibe check

The city is often dusty, but there are many things to be excited about. Its population is young, much like the rest of Ethiopia, and they are energetic and friendly enough to approach and start instant conversation. It warmed my heart how excited they get when they discover you are a local tourist. ■

Samuel Getachew is a journalist and traveler.

No mean feet: Mekele might not suit cars, but it's great for walking – which explains the roaring trade in colourful kicks. (Photo:BBC World Service)



Do you want to show us around your town or city?

Send an email to thecontinent@mg.co.za and we'll be in touch!

Exclusive: The top-secret testimonies that implicate Rwanda's president in war crimes

For years, UN investigators secretly compiled evidence that implicated Rwandan President Paul Kagame and other high-level Rwandan officials in mass killings before, during and after the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The explosive evidence came from Tutsi soldiers who broke with the regime and risked their lives to expose what they knew. Their sworn testimony contradicted the dominant story about the country's brutal descent into violence, which depicted Kagame and his Rwandan Patriotic Front as the country's saviors. Despite the testimonies, the UN war crimes tribunal – on the recommendation of the United States – never prosecuted Kagame and his commanders. Now, for the first time, a significant portion of the evidence is revealed, in redacted form.

Judi Rever & Benedict Moran

In early July 1994, as the genocide in Rwanda was nearing its end, Christophe, whose real name and location are being withheld for safety reasons, was recruited by the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). A medical student prior to the war, Christophe was assigned to care for wounded RPF soldiers in Masaka, a neighborhood in the southeast of Rwanda's capital Kigali.

The RPF was on the brink of decisively winning the war. It was the culmination of a bloody campaign that began in 1990 when its forces invaded Rwanda from their base in Uganda, where their Tutsi families had been forced into exile for three decades.

Their struggle for political power in Rwanda took a drastic turn on April 6 1994, when a plane carrying Rwanda's Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down in Kigali, killing everyone on board, and abruptly ending a power-sharing deal that was supposed to end three

and a half years of violence. The attack set off a killing spree that left hundreds of thousands of Tutsis dead, mostly at the hands of their Hutu countrymen. By mid July, the RPF had routed the former Hutu government, and purportedly put an end to the massacres.

From his battle clinic in Masaka, though, Christophe saw that the killings were continuing. “People were disappearing,” he recently told the *Mail & Guardian*. Many of the new recruits Christophe treated shared sobering details about what they were being ordered to do to Hutu civilians – men, women and children who had no apparent connection to the killing of Tutsis. These Hutus were being arrested in different areas of the capital by RPF officials, they said, and brought to a nearby orphanage called Sainte Agathe, where they were summarily executed.

The young recruits said they were being forced by their RPF superiors to tie up civilians and kill them with hammers and hoes, before burning the victims on site and burying their ashes. It was grisly, traumatising work done daily, they told him. Many of the soldiers asked Christophe for a sick leave note to avoid taking part in the killings. “They didn’t want to kill anybody,” he said. One of the recruits told Christophe that over a mere five days, more than 6,000 people were killed.

In late July, the RPF sent Christophe and thousands of other recruits to Gabiro, a military training camp located in eastern Rwanda, on the edge of the vast wilderness that made up Akagera National Park. The rebel army had established a base there earlier in the war, and it was off



(Photo: Alexander Joe/AFP)

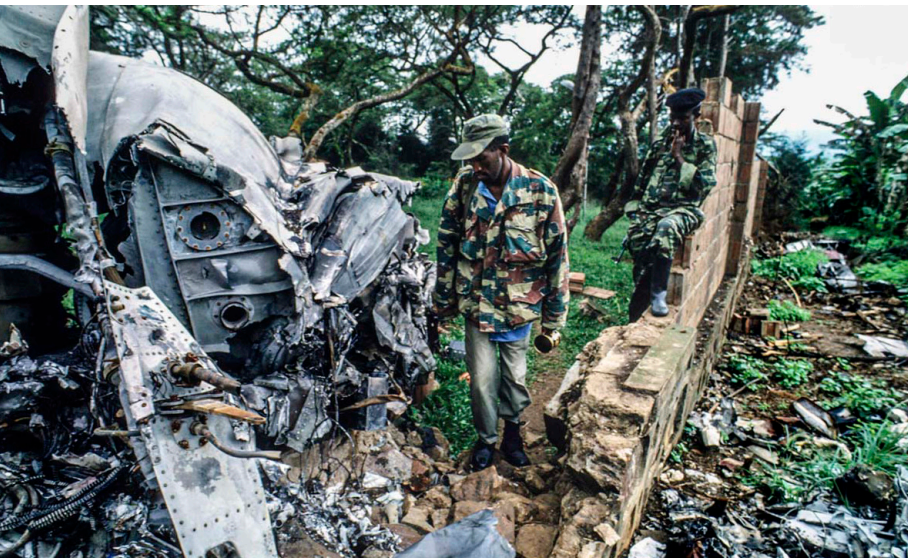
limits to international NGOs, United Nations personnel and journalists.

There, Christophe witnessed Hutus arriving in another part of the camp. Every day, for months on end, he said, RPF soldiers killed them and then burned the bodies. Backhoes – which Christophe referred to as caterpillars – worked day and night burying their remains. “You could see the trucks, you could see the smoke. You could smell burning flesh,” Christophe told the *M&G*. “All those lorries were bringing people to be killed. I saw the caterpillar and could hear it. They were doing it in a very professional way.”

Christophe feared for his life and eventually fled Rwanda. Several years after leaving, Christophe began speaking to investigators from the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). The tribunal, set up in the aftermath of the genocide, was tasked with prosecuting the most serious crimes committed in 1994. Publicly, the court focused exclusively on prosecuting high-level Hutu figures suspected of organising and committing genocide against Tutsis. But privately, a clandestine entity within the ICTR, known as the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), gathered evidence of crimes committed by the RPF. By 2003, investigators at the SIU had recruited hundreds of sources, with dozens giving sworn statements.

According to a report submitted to the ICTR’s chief prosecutor in 2003, the SIU’s investigative team had gathered explosive evidence against the RPF. Numerous witnesses corroborated Christophe’s testimony that the RPF had engaged in massacres of Hutu civilians in Gabiro, and elsewhere, prior to, during, and after the genocide. Sources testified that the RPF was behind the April 6 attack on Habyarimana’s plane. Former soldiers even told investigators that RPF commandos undertook false flag operations. Some commandos, operating in civilian clothes, had allegedly infiltrated Hutu militias in order to incite even more killings of Tutsis in a bid to further demonise the Hutu regime and bolster the RPF’s moral authority in the eyes of the international community.

In the report, UN investigators listed potential RPF targets for indictment, including President Paul Kagame himself. But when the court officially wound down in 2015, the more than 60 individuals who were convicted and jailed for genocide and other war crimes were all linked to the former Hutu-led regime. Not a single indictment of the RPF was ever issued by the UN; all evidence of RPF wrongdoing was effectively buried. Christophe met with investigators three times, and provided a written, sworn testimony to the court, but for nearly two decades, his testimony, along with that of dozens of other RPF soldiers



Trigger: A soldier combs the wreckage of the plane carrying president Juvenal Habyarimana when it was shot down in 1994, sparking the Rwandan genocide. (Photo: Scott Peterson/Liaison)

who witnessed RPF crimes, have remained sealed in the court's archive.

In this exclusive report, the *M&G* is publishing 31 documents based on testimonies the witnesses provided to UN investigators. The documents were leaked to *M&G* by various sources with extensive experience at the tribunal. The statements, which contain identifying information, have been redacted by the court and by *M&G* to protect the informants' privacy and safety. The informants who testified against the RPF to the court faced serious risks, and some were kidnapped, according to the investigators. However, it is widely believed by our sources that the unredacted witness statements are already in the possession of the RPF. One statement is unredacted because the witness died in 2010.

Since 1994, many human rights researchers, journalists, academics and legal experts at the ICTR have long contended that the crimes committed by the RPF were not comparable in nature, scope, or organisation to the Hutu-led atrocities against Tutsis. The Rwandan government has asserted that any crimes committed by members of the RPF were only acts of revenge that have already been tried by the competent Rwandan authorities. These testimonies, which include gruesome details about

RPF massacres – often from soldiers who directly participated in the killings – challenge that understanding.

One witness, for example, echoed Christophe's account of the killings at Gabiro. Speaking to investigators in French, the former soldier who joined the RPF in 1992 said that displaced Hutu civilians from villages in northern Rwanda were brought to Gabiro aboard tractor-trailer trucks, and left at a residential complex called the House of Habyarimana, three kilometres from the military camp.

"The intelligence officer selected the intelligence staff and instructors to execute the people brought by trucks ... The soldiers tied their elbows behind their backs, and one-by-one, made them walk to a 'gravesite' above the House of Habyarimana, where they were shot ... These summary executions were done day and night between four and five weeks that I was there ... By the end of April, early May, after two weeks of summary executions, the smell of corpses reached the Gabiro camp. Two bulldozers were used to bury the bodies."

Another former RPF soldier who was sent to Gabiro in mid April 1994 told the court:

"Many trucks came from different regions around the camp. Recruits who went to get firewood could see these trucks pass. In two instances, while I was about a kilometer from our camp looking for wood, I personally observed these trucks. They were tractor trailers, or semi trailers. The vehicles had 18 or 24 wheels with no licence plates. They drove past me, very close. They were full of men, women, children and old people. They were brought to an area near the houses of the former head of state, near the Gabiro airstrip, and massacred."

While these accounts do not in any way prove culpability, they may constitute prima-facie evidence needed for indictments. Taken as a whole, the evidence collected by the SIU suggests that RPF killings were not a reaction to the killing of Tutsis but instead were highly organised and strategic in nature.

Officials at first took seriously the allegations investigators collected against the RPF. In 2000, Carla Del Ponte, then the UN court's chief prosecutor, made it clear she intended to indict the RPF. "If it was Kagame who had shot down the plane, then Kagame would have been the person most responsible for the genocide," she later said at a symposium organised by the French Senate.

But in 2003, the US government warned Del Ponte that if she went ahead with her plans to indict the RPF, she would be fired, according to her memoir. Within a few months of a tense meeting she had with Pierre



Paul bearer: The UN chief prosecutor intended to indict the RPF, implying Paul Kagame could be responsible for starting the genocide, but her successor backed down. (Photo: Marco Longari/AFP)

Prosper, then US Ambassador for War Crimes, Del Ponte was removed from the ICTR. According to this leaked memo, dated 2003, Prosper struck a deal with the court to transfer jurisdiction for prosecuting RPF crimes – and evidence of RPF crimes collected by UN investigators – from the UN tribunal to the Rwandan government.

Hassan Jallow, Del Ponte's successor who oversaw the court's prosecution until it closed in 2015, was ultimately unwilling to indict the RPF. In 2005, he defended the ICTR's decision not to prosecute the RPF, writing that Kagame's army had "waged a war of liberation and defeated the Hutu government of the day, putting an end to genocide."

The *M&G* contacted authorities in Rwanda, in addition to Pierre Prosper and officials at the Tribunal but they did not respond to our request for comment. ■

This investigation has been edited for length. The complete investigation, including the redacted witness testimonies, will be available on the Mail & Guardian's website (www.mg.co.za) on Monday.



THE
MILKMAID
A FILM BY DESMOND OVBIAGELE

The movie that's too honest for Nigeria's censors

Not all of *Milkmaid's* raw, unflinching portrayal of terrorism will make it into cinemas

Dika Ofoma

The *Milkmaid* is a harrowing tale about the ordeals of young girls abducted by insurgents. While the film is largely fiction, it is inspired by the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group ravaging parts of northeast Nigeria. In telling this story, writer and director David Ovbiagele attempts to awaken the world once more to the scourge in that region of the country.

The story centers on young Aisha (Anthonieta Kalunta), the titular Milkmaid, who, having fled from the

insurgents alongside her friend Hauwa (Patience Okpala), embarks on a mission to rescue her younger sister, Zainab (Maryam Booth), who was captured too. The film flashes back and forward in its narration; there is a poignancy to it that allows the film to explore the consequences of abduction on the girls, namely, psychological trauma, stigma when returned to their families and communities, and displacement.

The girls were captured during Zainab's wedding, a small community occasion, more merry than grandiose. The insurgents camouflaged as protective



soldiers stormed the event; their guns blazed, and those who didn't die or couldn't run fast enough were thrown into captivity.

Aisha's voice-over reminisces of that day: "In my village, there is always great joy at a woman's wedding. But on the day my sister Zainab got married, 49 innocent people lost their lives, including her husband Danladi. No just explanation was provided for why they deserved to die."

Inspired by the activities of Boko Haram, director David Ovbiagele attempts to awaken the world once more to the scourge of terrorism in Nigeria

It is the only occasion that the film finds some sentimentality in the girls' plight. The scene is reminiscent of similar events in northeast Nigeria where

communities are attacked by Boko Haram insurgents, killing people in their scores, and throwing survivors, often young girls, into captivity, like the abduction of the Chibok girls in 2014 that sparked international outcry and condemnation.

At the encampment of the militants, the girls are forced into marriages and undergo physical and psychological orientation that prepares them to become religious extremist fighters too.

The Milkmaid isn't just a tale opening up the world to the stark realities of the victims and survivors of insurgency. It also takes on complex themes, exploring sibling rivalry between sisters Aisha and Zainab. When Aisha is finally reunited with Zainab, she finds her reborn and rechristened as Fathiyya (Arabic for victor), a devoted jihadist who's risen in the ranks, above her male counterparts; the reunion opening up divisions in their otherwise cordial relationship.

On the other hand, for what would pass as Stockholm syndrome, Aisha begins to bond with the husband who'd been forced



on her, a top-ranking fighter known as Dangana (Gambo Usman Kona), the same man who had spearheaded the attack on her community. But Dangana isn't the villain in this story, he's only a "soldier" dispensing duties in alliance with his indoctrination.

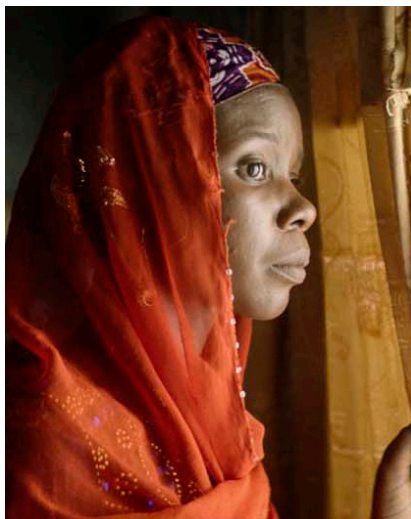
The film disputes the narrative that only those who were abducted and brainwashed into the jihadist ideology

are real victims. *The Milkmaid* chooses to humanise its characters whether as victims or perpetrators, providing empathy to their lives and decisions.

But because Nigeria is a place where art with a social and political consciousness is censored, Nigerians might not get to see the film for what it truly is as it has been altered to allow for cinema. It's initial run time of about 120 minutes has been reduced to 90 minutes. This is due to the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) initial refusal to have the film classified for cinematic viewing.

This is not the first time the NFVCB has delayed a controversial release. In 2014, *Half of a Yellow Sun* – based on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel of the same name on the Nigerian-Biafran war – was denied classification because it feared the film could threaten national security.

The "acceptable version" of *The Milkmaid* will be hitting Nigerian cinemas soon. However compromised it might be, it will surely foster much needed conversations on religious extremism and the consequences on its victims. ■



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

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

- Which African island (pictured) was named Île Bourbon after the French royal House of Bourbon, and still belongs to France?
- The decomposing corpse of the president of which country was flown to South Africa in 2012 in a plot to prevent the vice-president from assuming power?
- True or false: Present-day Burundi, Rwanda and mainland Tanzania were all part of German East Africa.
- What is the name of the virus, spread by mosquitoes, first identified in humans in Tanzania in 1952?
- Who was the first woman to be elected as head of state in Africa?
- How many African countries have Guinea in their name?
- Homeless* is famously sung by which South African choral group?
- The TAZARA railway connects which two countries?
- Koshary, the mixture of rice, lentils, macaroni, tomato sauce and spices, is the national dish of which country?
- After the United Kingdom, which country drinks the most Guinness beer?
- What colour is the home kit of Côte d'Ivoire's national football team?
- What is the deepest lake in Africa?

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 am my own Continental Free Trade Area."

Mirror, mirror on the wall, whose election was free and fairest of them all?

Samira Sawlani

For most of us this benighted year has been long and full of terrors. But for others it's been nothing short of a fairy tale. And we're not talking about the children's stories we grew up with, of which even the Disney cartoons are a distinctly pale imitation.

We're talking about real fairy tales, in lands not so very far, far away, replete with grand romances (from Janet & Yoweri and Chantal & Paul to Grace & Robert); dragons that must be slain (more commonly known in these parts as "overly vocal proponents of human rights"); and glass slippers for which the perfect feet, like all those votes for the opposition, simply cannot be found.

Every so often, one of our dear charming princes of politics will say something straight out of the Brothers Grimm. This week it was Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, who boldly proclaimed he was quitting Twitter due to the "many insults" that had found their way into his mentions, and that instead of suffering such slings and arrows he would much rather "talk to my wife, go to sleep and work".

We're not sure whether that makes him Sleeping Beauty or Sleeping on Duty, but we do suspect his nap aptitude could be mistaken for ineptitude. Although perhaps he would have spoken out on the rising numbers of healthcare workers who succumbed to Covid-19 if only he could somehow wake up. Maybe what he needs is true love's kiss – or Handshake – from a passing prince! Times being what they are, we'd be thrilled if he settled for true love's elbow-bump from a passing PPE supplier.

**Times being what they
are, we'd be thrilled if
he settled for true love's
elbow-bump from a
passing PPE supplier**

In neighbouring Uganda, Bobi Wine is getting a crash course in what Cinderella must have felt like when her ugly stepsisters were all up in her business. The opposition leader's stepsister-in-chief, President Yoweri Museveni, is blazing away on the campaign trail while



Happily ever after: Fairytale romances in various African State Houses

seemingly oblivious that his main rival keeps getting arrested, and his supporters shot dead.

It's all too easy for the likes of Museveni to paint themselves as the heroes of the story, especially with the help of pliant state media. But even the lightest of fairy tales has a dark side, and every so often the hero will let his mask slip, revealing himself to have been a villain all the while.

Take Ethiopia, which has announced an all-out military assault on Mekelle, the capital of the country's Tigray region, after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's demand for their surrender was ignored by the Tigrayan rebels. One thread that runs through many fairy tales is the wolf at the door (just ask Little Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Pigs) and in this fable Abiy – a *Nobel Peace Prize winner* – is the one huffing and puffing and blowing things up.

He has prevented journalists and rights groups from accessing the area, and has firmly told the international community to stay out of it – even as reports of mass casualties emerge from the conflict zone, and as tens of thousands of people flee to neighbouring Sudan. These refugees

come not with fairy tales but with horror stories; many mourning loved ones killed in the fighting, or searching for family members who have disappeared.

And where is the African Union in this tale? Once upon a time, it might have been a different story. The AU could have been Ethiopia's fairy godmother, come to save the day.

Where is the African Union in this tale? The AU could have been Ethiopia's fairy godmother. Unhappily, the tale is wagging the fairy

Unhappily, even after all that has happened, the AU is too meek to call a member state to order. The tale is wagging the fairy here on the continent, we're sad to say.

No gallant knight is on their way to rescue any of us. And so, like any self-respecting damsel in distress, if Africa wants to be saved, she's just going to have to roll up her sleeves and do it herself. ■

The youth are not the problem

Jacob Rasmussen, Luke Melchiorre and Wangui Kimari

After two decades of an academic and policy focus on the demographic “challenges” prompted by Africa’s growing youth population, young people are still being presented as problematic and a threat to political stability. Along with the ahistorical homogenising of youth’s experiences across the continent, this legitimises the securitisation of this demographic with troubling effects. It is high time this was put right.

The African Union (AU)’s “African youth month” in November 2020 promises to respond to some of these challenges by recognising the diversity of youth, strengthening governments’ relationships with youth and amplifying their voices.

However, the post-independence history of the continent suggests this will be a particularly hard agenda to realise. More often than not, mass youth mobilisation and participation is met with repression and control. The sinister state practices launched in response to the youth-led anti-Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) protests in Nigeria are just

the latest example.

The characterisation of youth as an inevitable security threat serves to distort or delegitimise the specific nature of youth grievances.

In the social sciences and much policy work, the so-called “youth bulge” literature has played a central role in conjuring and sustaining this narrative, which has a double effect: positioning youth as a problematic category while simultaneously rejecting their political configurations. This helps to explain why the SabaSaba marches in Kenya and the #FeesMustFall protests in South Africa are not always accurately represented as historically specific responses to explicit and justifiable grievances, but are instead depicted as the actions of inherently anarchic youth.

A reconceptualisation of the youth politics in Africa is therefore vital if, as the AU intends, we are to recognise the diversity of this social category and empower young voices across the continent. ■

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The DRC's president is trying to break free from his predecessor's influence

Stephanie Wolters

Two and a half years after striking a political deal with his erstwhile political enemy which saw him being handed the presidency, an emboldened President Felix Tshisekedi has thrown down the gauntlet and is now openly challenging his coalition partner Joseph Kabila.

The political agreement struck between former president Kabila and Tshisekedi has never been made public, but Tshisekedi's power has been substantially limited by the Kabila faction's massive majority in the national assembly. Kabila's political platform, the Front Commun pour le Congo (FCC) has 350 MPs, while Cap pour le Changement (CACH) – which is made up of Tshisekedi's UDPS and Vital Kamerhe's Union National pour le Congo – has just 46 seats.

The basis of the agreement was the desire of both individuals for political power: Tshisekedi wanted to gain power while Kabila did not want to lose it.

Inevitably these political ambitions



Trial separation: Felix Tshisekedi (right) wants to unshackle his presidency from Joseph Kabila's persistent and inconvenient power.
(Photo: John Wessels/AFP)

would clash eventually.

Because they are central to controlling the outcome of elections, the main battle grounds were always going to be the constitutional court and the independent electoral commission.

It is not a great surprise then that Tshisekedi's decision to appoint three new judges to the constitutional court has been the tipping point in the relationship, which now appears on the brink of a very acrimonious divorce. The constitutional court has been an important ally of Kabila's for many years.

The FCC argues that Tshisekedi



Allez ally:
Kabila (left) and
Tshisekedi in
more copacetic
and less back-
stabby times.
(Photos: Tony
Karumba/AFP)

violated procedure in the judges' appointments, and there is some validity to this point. It is a view that is shared by civil society organisations such as La Lucha who argue that the aim is not to shift power from one political faction to another, but to ensure fundamental reform within the bounds of the constitution.

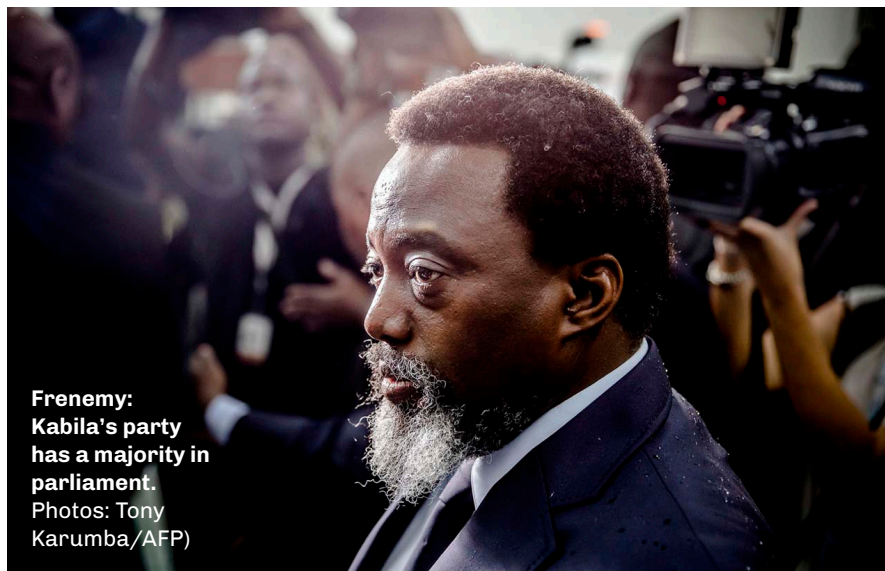
But an emboldened Tshisekedi is now pushing ahead with political consultations which have seen him meeting with the leaders of opposition parties; the influential Catholic church; Nobel Prize winner Denis Mukwege; and a host of civil society organisations, private sector actors, diaspora groups and others. The objective is to form what Tshisekedi calls the Union Sacrée, or Sacred Union.

Presumably he is referring to a new political coalition to govern the country – but that won't be possible without a significant realignment in parliament, where floor-crossing [changing from one

political party to another] is not allowed.

The FCC is pushing back hard. In the last ten days Kabila has written to the heads of the AU and the UN, and has dispatched his loyalists to South Africa, Egypt and Kenya, among others, in an attempt to convince foreign governments that what Tshisekedi is doing is a violation of their political agreement and goes beyond the bounds of his presidential powers. The





**Frenemy:
Kabila's party
has a majority in
parliament.**

Photos: Tony
Karumba/AFP)

FCC also says that it will engage in talks, but only within the context of the existing coalition agreement with CACH.

So where can all of this lead? In order for the FCC to lose its parliamentary majority, entire political parties would have to leave the platform, as individual MPs who choose to leave their political parties automatically lose their seats. There are signs that support for the FCC is weakening, however: close to 100 MPs recently boycotted a meeting convened by Kabila.

Meanwhile, even with main opposition parties' support, CACH will not have enough to gain a majority without some FCC dissidents rallying to it.

Having gone this far, it is hard to see how Tshisekedi and Kabila can patch up this relationship. This could mean that even more acrimonious times are ahead,

at least in the medium-term, widening the impasse in the current government and making it even more difficult to govern coherently.

At the same time, in the long-run, the loss of control of the constitutional court may be a mortal blow to Kabila, who can no longer control the outcome of elections. This means that he cannot guarantee his supporters that he – or someone else from the FCC – will be back in power in 2023. With that in mind, more and more parties may gravitate to the Tshisekedi camp, whose star is clearly on the rise. If that happens, Tshisekedi might just have the opportunity to move the DRC into a new direction. Let's hope he seizes it. ■

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(Illustration: Chelsea Charles for TBIJ)

Imprisoned under the cover of Covid

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism exposes how new pandemic rules were used to justify a violent raid on an LGBTQ+ homeless shelter in Uganda

Madlen Davies

On March 29, the Children of the Sun Foundation shelter in Kyengera, near Kampala, was raided by Ugandan security forces. At the time, it was home to 21 transgender women and gay and bisexual men.

The residents were taken outside, where town councillors and army officials beat and shouted at them, asking them why they were gay and what they were doing at the shelter. (Same-sex sexual acts

are illegal in Uganda and carry a potential penalty of life imprisonment.)

During the raid, the residents say that the local mayor, Hajji Abdu Kiyimba, whipped them with a cane and opened the gate, telling villagers to come and “see these gays”. The residents believe he tipped off journalists who arrived to film and take photos, publicly outing them.

The residents were then arrested, under the guise of public health protections brought in because of the coronavirus pandemic.

They were sent to Kitalya Mini-Max Prison, where they say they were subjected to nearly two months of abuse and beatings. They claim they were denied access to healthcare and legal representation. (The assistant prison officer in charge denies these allegations.) When Adrian Jjuuko, the group's lawyer, and his team arrived at the prison they were told they could not see their clients by officials claiming it was a Covid-19 risk.

The case was so extreme – even by Uganda's standards – that it received international attention. The United Nations and human rights organisations called for the residents' release.

During their stay in prison, members of the group say that they were beaten, whipped and burned. They allege that Philimon Woniala, the assistant officer in charge of the prison, accused one of them of having sex with another man and sought to get the shelter residents to confess to being gay. They say he made all 20 residents lie on the floor and whipped them with canes and metal wire until they bled, calling on other prisoners to join in.

“[The other prisoners] were watching and they would be like, ‘Kill them. Stop beating them, just kill them,’” said Kelvin, a 22-year-old shelter resident.

Group members reported seeing prisoners die from violence, starvation and sickness. One thought about taking his own life. Finally, after 42 days, Jjuuko was given access to his clients. “We found them in bad shape,” he said.

In court, lawyers succeeded in getting the charges withdrawn by the prosecutors and the residents were released.

None of Woniala, Kitalya Mini-Max Prison or the Uganda Prisons Service responded to a request for comment. In affidavits signed in August, Woniala denied all allegations against him. They also stated that the group “enjoyed a peaceful stay” and were “treated with dignity”. The second hearing of the court case for the mayor and Woniala began on November 25.

The LGBTQ+ community has long faced discrimination in Uganda, where there have been repeated attempts to introduce the death penalty for same-sex relations. The situation has been intensified by the pandemic.

The number of LGBTQ+ people arrested there has at least doubled since March, human rights organisations report. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism has learned of more than 100 cases in which the police or military have been accused of using new powers to extort or imprison LGBTQ+ people.

While restrictions are easing in various countries, many of the laws brought in to deal with Covid-19 have no end dates, said Louise Edwards of the non-profit African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum. With little scrutiny of the police, victims of human rights violations may be denied justice. “It's deeply concerning,” she said.

Kyengeru town council and the Ugandan army did not respond to the Bureau's requests for comment. The mayor did not respond but denied all allegations against him in an affidavit signed in August. ■

This is an investigation by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism



Indomitable:
Gaëlle Enganamouit
celebrates with fans
after Cameroon's
2-1 win over
Switzerland in the
group stages of
the 2015 Women's
World Cup. (Photo:
Maddie Meyer/FIFA
via Getty Images)

A new dawn for women's football in Cameroon

Daniel Ekonde

For the first time, women playing top-tier football nationally in Cameroon will receive monthly salaries.

In mid-November international brewery company Guinness signed a partnership with the Cameroon Football Federation (Fecafoot) agreeing to pay all 300 players FCFA 30,000 – about \$54 – every month, and also to equip the new 12-team Guinness Super League.

Although the duration of the sponsorship has not been disclosed, the partnership is “a winning choice”, according to Fecafoot President Seidou Mbombo Njoya. “[It] will enable the federation to grab all the possibilities and opportunities that women’s football will generate in the forthcoming years,” he said.

Guinness will bypass third parties and pay the monies directly into the accounts of the players, who often accuse their clubs of not respecting financial commitments. Ajebe Raissa, a defender with Eding Sport, one of the Super League clubs told *The Continent* that this payment method is the best way.

“Over the years, clubs have received funding for players but the presidents always cut it, and at times don’t [even] give the players at all. The new system will



**Proud lioness:
Emilienne Mbango
Moutomé played
in the men's first
division of Leopard
Douala in the 1970s**

encourage us. At least our parents won't see any bad in us practising football.”

In the 1970s, before women's football teams were ubiquitous, only a few countries allowed a woman to play football with men. Cameroon was one of them, and saw Emilienne Mbango Moutomé play alongside football legend Roger Milla at Leopard Douala in the men's first division. Yet the country only formed a women's football team in the 1980s.

The team, nicknamed the Indomitable Lionesses, has been very successful in international competitions – appearing four times in the Women's Africa Cup of Nations (AWCON) finals and twice in the Women's World Cup knockout stage. But lack of essential funding and structuring at the elementary level has kept Cameroon from winning even one AWCON trophy.

“Cameroon is one of the biggest countries in women's football in Africa and for the national side to be successful, it starts with grassroots development and the league at home,” Usher Komugisha, a Ugandan journalist known for

commentating on the women's game in Africa, told *The Continent*.

Komugisha believes the Guinness sponsorship of women's football “is a big step in the right direction” and believes this could encourage other corporate companies to embrace the women's sector of the sport.

Currently, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) has plans to launch a Women's CAF Champions League, an equivalent of the men's CAF Champions League contested by domestic league winners and runners-up in Africa.

But Africa's drive to invest in female football is still blighted by lack of sponsorship. South Africa's female league known as the Sifa Women's National League has been without sponsorship for more than a year since Sasol, an energy and chemical company, chose not to renew its 2009 deal. The revamped league was launched last year without a sponsor and South African stakeholders are still lobbying for sponsorship – a grim reminder of the state of the women's game on the continent. ■



The Big Picture

Less travelled: A man from the Banyamulenge community jumps over a stream to attend the funeral of a herder killed a day before by an armed militia, in a village near Minembwe in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Minembwe is an enclave inaccessible by land. The road going up from Uvira and Fizi on the shores of Lake Tanganyika is impassable. Apart from UN helicopters, the only transport there is via a small carrier plane from Bukavu that lands two or three times a week on a makeshift airfield. (Photo: Alexis Huguet/AFP)

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