

The Continent

with Mail & Guardian

PHOTO FEATURE

Life in Mogadishu



Photo: Abdurahman Yusuf

COVER: Living in Mogadishu

How do you live in one of Africa's most unstable cities? Weekly bomb attacks make for a cynical outlook (and mess up your chances of getting to work on time). With elections delayed, instability is set to continue, and yet for many leaving the city is not an option. We step into the shoes of those who have no choice but to carry on.

Inside:

- **Dynastic democracy:** Another father-son transition in a "democratic" country? Franck Biya won't talk about his plans but someone is stoking the fires of succession on his behalf. (p6)
- **Reverting to type:** We're taught that the northern hemisphere dominates font; that Helvetica is beautiful. But in *Colonial Bastard*, our layout designer finds a subversive African riposte. (p9)
- **Basketball's big dreams:** Africa's first NBA-backed league tips off in Kigali on Sunday. (p11)
- **An African original:** In the breakthrough film of the year, Philippe Lacôte digs into the excitement and unreliability of oral traditions. (p17)

A nearly 8m-tall sculpture called *The Oracle* was unveiled at the Rockefeller Center in New York last week. In a statement, the artist – Sanford Biggers – said his work looks at the whitewashing of European sculptural history and how African sculptures were stripped from their homes and turned into something other than what they were made for. The piece has drawn praise, condemnation and derision. What would **you** put in that space to commemorate our continent? Send us an email, or a message on Signal or on WhatsApp.



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

The week in numbers

68

The number of children trafficked and used for illegal labour on cocoa farms who were rescued by police in Côte d'Ivoire this week. Most of the children came from neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali. The Ivorian ministry of women, family and children will work to reunite the children with their families.



Photo: Prior Gold Pictures

100-million

The number of streams on Spotify that each of Burna Boy's last three albums have reached – at least. His albums *Outside*, *African Giant* and *Twice as Tall* have individually raked up at least this number of streams or more. He is the only African artist to have reached this milestone.

0

The number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in Chad, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eritrea and Tanzania. The WHO says nearly a dozen countries, most in Africa, have yet to receive any vaccine doses. In the US, meanwhile, jabs are being handed out along with free t-shirts and popcorn vouchers at outdoor concerts in Colorado.

\$6-million

The amount of money to be paid by Petra Diamonds to workers who were beaten and detained by security officials working at the company's Williamson Mine in Tanzania. Some 71 workers will share in the compensation for the violation of their rights, but the diamond maker made no admission of liability as part of the settlement.

>4,000

The number of people who attended President Yoweri Museveni's swearing-in ceremony for a sixth term in Kampala. Uganda's health ministry only permits gatherings of up to 200 under Covid-19 restrictions. Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, won a bitterly contested election in January.

South Sudan

Peace holds as Kiir brings in new parliament

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir has reconstituted a new national parliament, two days after disbanding the previous one, in line with the accord that brought a precarious peace to the world's youngest state.

Kiir announced the new parliament in an address broadcast on state TV. The address did not mention the Council of States, the upper legislative chamber of parliament, that was also dissolved.

The Revitalized Transitional Legislative Assembly now consists of 550 members, up from 400, drawn from all political parties that signed the peace accord. The reconstitution was a key component of the peace agreement reached to put an end to the five-year civil war that ravaged South Sudan from 2013 to 2018. A UN report published in April warned that the country could slip into renewed "large-scale conflict" due to the slow implementation of the peace deal. The war left 380,000 people dead and four million displaced.

Kiir's ruling Sudan People's Liberation

Movement has 332 members in the new parliament and Vice President Riek Machar's Sudan People Liberation Movement-In Opposition (SPLM-IO) has 128. The set is completed with South Sudan Opposition Alliance's 50 seats and other parties, including former detainees, who have 40 seats between them.

South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after decades of war. But the new nation descended into war itself in 2013 when Kiir sacked his vice president, Machar. There were many deals signed to bring an end to the violence and deadlines for the formation of national unity governments came and went before plans for a coalition government were agreed in February 2020.

Peace remains fragile in the oil-rich nation. More than 1,000 were killed in communal clashes, mainly over cattle raiding, in the last six months of 2020.

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The Continent
with MailGuardian

Cameroon's democratic repositioning: Is the republic now a de facto monarchy?



Dressed for succession: Franck Biya, 48, is a Cameroonian businessman. He is also the son of President Paul Biya, who will be turning 90 soon. But does this necessarily mean he will be president, too?

Regina Sondo in Yaoundé

The seventh term of Cameroon's president Paul Biya theoretically ends in 2025. By then, he will be in his 90s. Conversation has naturally turned to the question of who will succeed him.

His 48-year-old son, Franck, is increasingly being linked with the role. His supporters of course deny there is a plan for him to take over, and the first family refuses to comment. But even if it is not they who are putting his name forward, *someone* is. Many someones. Enough someones that young Franck has become the topic du jour in local and social media.

After nearly four decades of rule by Biya senior and facing ongoing issues, such as the state's violence towards the English-speaking south, the question of who will be Cameroon's next president has become a hot topic.

Facebook Pages and groups like *Mouvements des Frankistes*, *Franck Biya pour 2025* and *Franck Biya For President*, have been vocal in promoting him as the next president.

Some of the people behind these groups insist Franck himself is not driving any of this. Mohamed Rahim Noumeu, of the *Citizens Movement in Support of Franck Biya for Peace and Unity in Cameroon*, tells *The Continent*: "Contrary to rumours, no member of the government is with us, for the first time in Cameroon history, we have created a spontaneous movement of compatriots



End of the road: Cameroonien President Paul Biya's current term – his SEVENTH – is expected to be his last. Photo: AFP

that is not submissive to elites or other policies – not even to Franck Biya.”

The movement has more than 50,000 members, with delegations across the ten regions of Cameroon. Rahim says the group's primary objective is to ensure a peaceful transition. “Some of the main causes of unrest in our young states and even in the West are poorly negotiated political transitions; we need to ensure that doesn't happen here.”

The movement's secretary-general, Bega Gamaliel, says it isn't unlawful for Franck to stand for president, so it would be up to voters to decide “through the ballot box”.

Walang Michael, director of the Madiba Leadership Centre, says it seems likely that the touting of the younger Biya for president is a way for politicians with existing power to protect themselves. “The Franck Biya leadership saga is a creation of powerful and influential political cowards who do not have the courage

to pay for their crimes as many of their contemporaries have done – and are still doing – in Kondengui prison in Yaoundé.”

Michael says an electoral win for Franck would show that results were “highly rigged and falsified” as he does not have a political base.

Recent events in Chad, though, with Mahamat Idriss Déby taking power after his father's sudden death, show that hereditary rule in ostensibly democratic countries is not unusual. Powerful families around the world have the connections and resources to retain dynastic power.

Something is clearly happening in Cameroon. As the Biya patriarch heads towards his 90th birthday, the stakes are high and the political class is manoeuvring to secure its future.

Biya Junior is keeping quiet. It might take the death of his father, or the 2025 elections, to give Cameroonians clarity on where he stands. For now, the campaigns in his name continue. ■

Madagascar

Catastrophic crop failures put millions of lives in peril

With successive low harvests and drought sapping this year's crop, entire communities in southern Madagascar are facing months of serious food insecurity.

This is despite the island having a temperate climate and fertile soil, factors that have allowed subsistence farmers to grow a wide variety of crops, from maize to plums and pears. In recent years however rainfall has dipped and southern Madagascar has had to deal with several seasons of below-average harvests.

In February, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation warned that low rainfall – 40% to 60% below average – meant the next harvest would be “well below” Madagascar's usual yield. The agency said this would “likely trigger an increase in the prevalence and severity of food insecurity”.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also played a part, with job losses meaning less money for households to buy food, and an

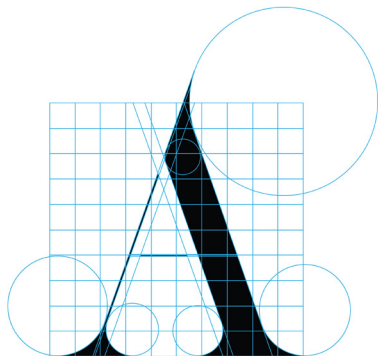
increase in staple food prices.

As the harvest season arrives, so too have warnings of a food crisis escalated. The global best standard for measuring the severity of a food crisis, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, now says 14,000 people in the worst-hit Atsimo region are at a “catastrophic” level of food insecurity.

This month's notice from the classification system says these people “have virtually exhausted their ability to use coping strategies to access food and income”.

This month's notice from the classification system says 14,000 people 'have virtually exhausted their ability to use coping strategies to access food'

Things are only slightly better in neighbouring districts, with more than half of their populations on the brink of starvation. With high food prices and a low harvest, the notice says 200,000 more people in the whole region will become food secure, by December, raising the total number to to a total of over 1.3-million. The number of people classified as being in “catastrophe” will likely double. ■



Colonial Bastard, Uppercase A, 2013.

Photo: Osmond Tshuma

as illustrated by colonialism through advertising material.

Tshuma's point of reference for the typeface was the Pears' Soap "The White Man's Burden" advertisement from 1899, which invoked racist stereotypes depicting the African as "unclean". The point of power and control in the typeface is in how it captures and adapts the typography used in fulfilling the colonial agenda.

Much like the type used by colonialists, *Colonial Bastard* is a post-modern typeface and mimics the construction of Western typefaces but makes it more superfluous. It does the job of a collective reading of the nature of colonial typography as a single representational type. *Colonial Bastard* is a typographic representation of the colonialists too, it is haughty in its construction and hails that air of superiority often associated with and glorified by Western standards.

The typeface attracted global recognition and was featured on Adobe's

Best of Behance. That recognition is well deserved as Tshuma thoughtfully used typography to subvert and speak to our colonial history and he states that his goal with his work is to "tell nuanced African stories".

Having more work like Tshuma's that uses elements of design to speak to histories and/or the present moment will create a dialogue that makes room for the realisation of how design plays a bigger role than the function often assigned to it.

More importantly, the dialogue is one that recognises type that does more than fill the space of beautiful aesthetics but rather prompts critical discussions into where typography fits within the makeup of the relationship between Roman Alphabet type and Africa's colonial history.

ABCDEF GHIJK
LMNOPQ RSTU
VWXYZ

Colonial Bastard, Uppercase Alphabet, 2013. Photo: Osmond Tshuma

As for me, encountering *Colonial Bastard* has allowed me to think about my relationship with type as both an African artist and a designer. Choosing a font to work with is no longer a mindless exercise of picking only what looks beautiful but rather a way of learning and discovering what more typography could communicate. ■

Competitive basketball is on a mission of conquest

Refiloe Seiboko

The inaugural season of the BAL – the Basketball Africa League – tips off on 16 May. Years in the making, the league is a partnership between the National Basketball Association (NBA) and International Basketball Federation (Fiba), which coordinate their respective leagues in the United States and Europe.

Fiba has held the African Championship/Afrobasket continental championship tournaments (for men's national teams) every four years since 1962, while the NBA has had offices in South Africa since 2010, and has hosted mini-camps, tournaments and exhibition games featuring NBA and Women's National Basketball Association stars.

Fast-forward to May 2021 and the league is raring to go in Kigali, Rwanda, with the support of noted basketball fan President Paul Kagame.

Drawing from a Champions League-inspired format and continuing with Fiba's club competition format, the BAL will hold 25 games from 16 to 30 May at the newly minted Kigali Arena.

Teams from 12 countries are

participating in the event — Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Egypt, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and Tunisia.

Speaking about the inaugural season, the former NBA Africa president and now BAL president, Amadou Gallo Fall, said the pandemic changed the way in which the league ended up being structured. Whereas it was initially planned to be held across seven cities and three months, the clubs will now play only in Kigali, and crown a champion on May 30.

The competition will be carried out in a “bubble” – with teams and personnel not being allowed to leave the designated hotel-court campus. Stringent Covid-19 protocols and constant testing will also be in place.

The NBA in particular is dreaming big on the continent, with its commissioner, Adam Silver, saying he would like to make the NBA “the biggest lifestyle brand on the continent in the next 10 years”. ■



(Photo: Afrifame Pictures)

PHOTO FEATURE

A life without peace in Mogadishu



Delayed elections, a contested presidency and ongoing violence mean life in Somalia's capital is carried out in survival mode. But this does breed a cynical sense of humour.

**Photos by Abdirahman Yusuf
Words by Amanda Sperber**



Ibrahim Abukar drives a rented tuk-tuk around Mogadishu – the beachside, bullet-ridden capital of Somalia – to support his three children. The 23-year-old usually starts work after morning prayers, at around 5am. Abukar navigates a maze of small dusty side streets that meet one of the four main smooth tarmac roads, picking up and dropping off passengers as the city begins to bustle.

The centre of Mogadishu is a mix of low, grey, flat-topped, concrete homes and stores, mid-sized hotels and a few flashy towers, the type one might see in Dubai.

Even before the pandemic last year, and before the deadline for the country to hold national elections passed earlier this year, Abukar's job was intense. The city, which sprawls along the Indian Ocean, is one of the most unstable in Africa. Bombings, often – but not always – attributed to the fundamentalist group al Shabaab are near-weekly occurrences. Assassinations and clashes between armed groups and government forces are almost as frequent – and they became a bigger concern than al Shabaab last month. City-dwellers say that when you leave home, you don't know if you're coming back.

"Mogadishu is a very risky place, you can die at any time," says Fardowsa Omar Ahmed, a 20-year-old who attends SYL University.

Living like this gives most residents an attitude of resolve combined

with a cynical sense of humour. Even though they do not live very far from school, it sometimes takes students like Ahmed hours to get to class. Roads are regularly closed off in the name of security and residents must brave a labyrinth of detours to reach their destinations.

Before the pandemic, Abukar, who drives a tuk-tuk, made \$30 a day before remitting a percentage to the tuk-tuk's owner. Now he estimates the pandemic has cut his earnings by half.



Fardowsa
Omar Ahmed
Student

When national elections were not held by the February 8 deadline, tensions between political parties rose and Abukar's job became even more fraught. In April, the intensity ratcheted up again when national security forces divided between those who supported a two-year extension and direct elections for Mohamed Abdullahi Mogammed "Farmaajo", the sitting president, and those against the extension.

Now, Mogadishu residents like Abukar and Ahmed are anxious, frustrated and sad. They are sick of political games. They are tired of living in survival mode. They want to feel safe. They want to pursue their dreams and lead full lives. They want to have fun.

"I want more peace to enjoy our country. I love to play football and go swimming on Liido Beach," 32-year-old Abdirisaq Osman Abdi, a business owner, tells *The Continent*. Abdi (who goes by Murshid) said that his shop has suffered amid the insecurity: more people are staying



Abdirisq
Osman Abdi
Business
owner



home, and he's concerned about looting and damage to property.

The Somali government has been unable to structure an electoral model since Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, known as Farmajoo, took office four years ago. When the deadline for the 2021 election passed and Farmajoo's constitutional mandate expired, he argued that a law allowed him to stay in power since no vote had taken place. The opposition disagreed, and says it no longer recognises Farmajoo as the legitimate president. Then, on the night of February 19 there was a heavy shootout, clashes with APC tanks and alleged assassination attempts on opposition stronghold hotels.

That morning saw government security forces firing at anti-government protesters. Shops inside the international airport compound, considered the safest part of the city, were set on fire, seemingly by a rocket-propelled grenade that breached its walls. By the time the violence stopped, eight people had been killed and many more were wounded. The clashes raised the threshold of the pitch of tensions in the city to heights not seen in years.

In March, the presidents of Somalia's five federal member states came to Mogadishu to try to come to an agreement to hold swift, indirect elections, and the usual circuit of conferences in up-market hotels in secure compounds followed. In April, talks collapsed and no agreements were reached. Soon after, the capital militarised in earnest, and opposition forces against the extension took over chunks of the

city. The UN reported that as many as 100,000 people fled the city, and the death toll was incalculable. Afterwards, Farmaajo agreed to rescind his extension and hand over power, but no tangible agreements have yet been reached. A new round of talks is expected to begin on May 20.

No one knows what comes next, but civilians like Abukar want politicians to come together to solve the political impasse. "I have never seen peace in Somalia," he says. "What I only see are people being robbed or killed, mostly by security forces." Abukar says he saw a soldier kill an elderly man near Villa Somalia, the seat of the government, last Ramadan.



**Mohamed
Said Bawak**
Yemeni
refugee

Mohamed Said Bawak, 70, is a Yemeni refugee who lives in Mogadishu. He fled from Aden, Yemen, for the comparative calm of Somalia five years ago. Now he's worried he'll have to leave. "I don't want to flee again," he says. As the stalemate continues, Bawak says people should be allowed to demonstrate peacefully and everyone should be protected by the government.

Hawa Abdi, 45, is a mother of eight. She lost a baby when she fled Mogadishu for Balcad with her family in 2005: her daughter died after a short illness in the countryside. She returned to Mogadishu, but it's gotten to the point that she is worried she will have to leave again. Leaving is expensive, though. "Ordinary people have no money to flee and during this pandemic, the situation is much worse than before," she says, of her finances. "I'm extremely worried about the ongoing political crisis in the country." ■



Philippe Lacôte is an African original

In the continent's breakthrough film of the year, the Ivorian filmmaker digs into the excitement, unreliability and compelling nature of oral traditions

Wilfred Okiche

Twenty African films made a decent showing at the Oscars this year. South Africa's Netflix original, *My Octopus Teacher* triumphed in the documentary category while Tunisia's entry, *The Man Who Sold His Skin*, was a nominee in the international feature category. But if there is one film that can claim to be the breakout hit of the year, it is *Night of the Kings*, the feverish fabulist adventure from Ivorian auteur Philippe Lacôte.

Night of the Kings ("La Nuit des Rois" in French) was unveiled at the 2020 Venice

International festival, where it struck a chord with audiences and embarked on a terrific run that would include berths at other major fests such as Toronto, Rotterdam and Sundance.

The film played "only good festivals" Lacôte, 52, boasts with a grin – justifiably proud of his work and the overwhelming response to it.

"I waited for this moment for a long time," he tells *The Continent* from his base in Abidjan. "It is an opportunity to let people know that there is a thriving cinema here. There are filmmakers here, there is history here."

Lacôte is no stranger to African cinema. He worked in several roles as a projectionist and distributor before making his feature debut *Run*, a political action thriller that became Côte d'Ivoire's second ever submission to the Oscars in the international film category back in 2015. *Night of the Kings*, which was shortlisted in the same category but ultimately failed to make the final nominees list, was Côte d'Ivoire's third attempt at the Academy Awards.

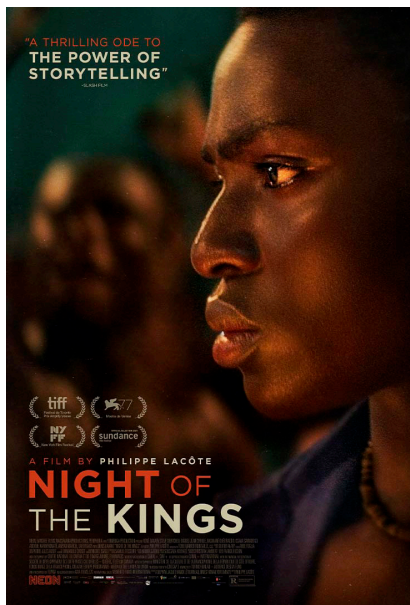
Night of the Kings is a beguiling and original vision even as it borrows significantly from the literary canon: *Arabian Nights* and Shakespeare specifically. Lacôte pays homage to the ancient art of oral storytelling and the West African lineage of griots who ensure that stories live on.

Set in Côte d'Ivoire's notorious prison La MACA – where Lacôte's mother was once held as a political prisoner – *Night of the Kings* concerns itself with probing the nature and consequences of power.

The prison is self-administered by inmates, with a powerful figure known as the Dangoro keeping the peace.

Lacôte explains this seeming contradiction where the law and criminality exist side by side: “Usually when we speak about prison, it is to say there are bad guys and good guys. My goal was to observe prisoners as a real society with their codes, laws and beliefs.”

A fresh inmate (newcomer Bakary Koné) arrives and is plunged into this world when he is chosen as the storyteller, aka the Roman. On the night of the red moon, the Roman is mandated to tell a



story that will keep the inmates up all night. Fighting to stay alive much like Scheherazade, the wily heroine of *Arabian Nights*, the Roman unspools a sprawling saga that spans histories and centuries while stretching the limits of credulity.

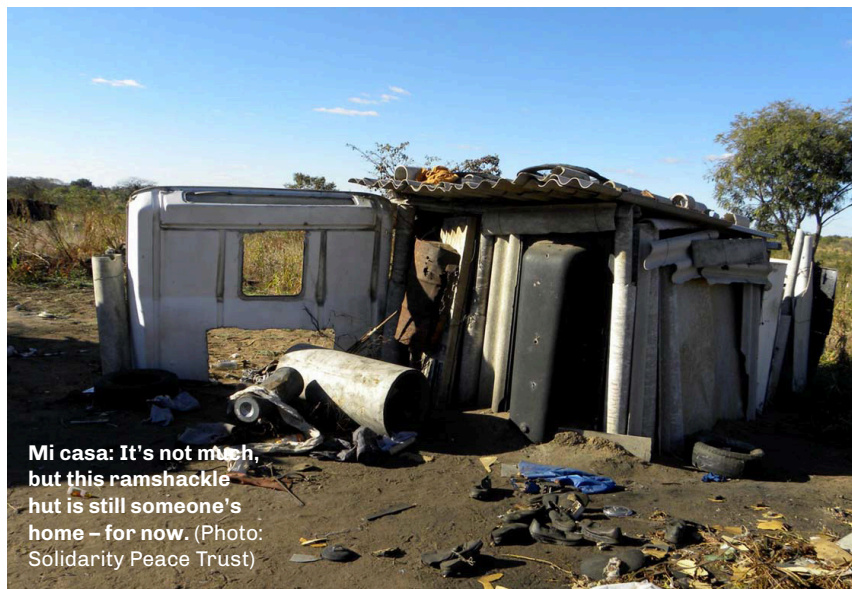
In this way, the framing of *Night of the Kings* speaks both to the excitement and unreliability of oral traditions.

“The griot is the storyteller, the praise singer and the historian,” Lacôte offers. “When they perform there is no border between what is real and imagined. Dreams, legend, politics, all of these elements are contained in the same story.”

Art has a place in remapping a fresh narrative for Lacôte's home country, still emerging from the trauma of a civil war. Lacôte sees a role for himself within this context – and embraces it. ■

No masks. No Covid. But problems do abound.

With no cases of Covid-19, a Zimbabwe informal settlement's residents are more concerned about making ends meet – and their imminent eviction



Mi casa: It's not much, but this ramshackle hut is still someone's home – for now. (Photo: Solidarity Peace Trust)

Kudzai Mashininga

Over the course of 20 years, 60-year-old Tonny Ndlovu has been evicted twice from the Killarney informal settlement in Bulawayo during government operations. But he always found his way back to the place that has been his home since Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980.

The first time Ndlovu was evicted from the settlement was in 1985. The second time was in 2005 when Zimbabwe's government launched a large-scale campaign, codenamed Operation Murambatsvina (Clear the Filth), to forcibly clear slums across the country, making Ndlovu one of a reported 700,000 Zimbabweans who found themselves

homeless.

That exercise was described as having been carried out with “indifference to human suffering” by United Nations special envoy Anna Tibaijuka, who was at the time the executive director of UN-Habitat. Kofi Annan, in his capacity as United Nations secretary general, described her report on Zimbabwe as “distressing”.

Although Ndlovu has repeatedly chosen returned to the settlement, life there is far from rosy: people live in squalid conditions, there are no taps providing running water and there is no electricity. What it does have, however, is a single “Blair toilet” – a ventilated pit latrine – shared by 120 families.

Ndlovu said he came back after being evicted because he could not find a way to make a living at the place he was taken to. But at Killarney camp there are a number of ways to get by – illegal mining at nearby claims, running shebeens and looking for menial jobs in nearby wealthy suburbs.

As an old-timer at the settlement, Ndlovu was at one point chosen by other settlers to be the “village head”, giving him the authority to act as a magistrate to solve differences among residents and represent the camp in meetings with donors and council officials, among others.

Ndlovu was born in the area in 1961 to migrants parents from Malawi who worked at a nearby mine that closed at independence in 1980, forcing him into homelessness.

“In 1985, we were moved from here and taken to Tsholotsho and we were just dumped in the forest,” he told *The*



(Photo: Solidarity Peace Trust)

Continent. “We were not allocated any land, we were not given any papers. If you don’t see even one person following up on you after leaving you in the forest, you must know you were dumped. It was like being left in the Kalahari desert.”

The Killarney settlement is home to people from different backgrounds and different districts of the country, as well as those who trace their roots to neighbouring countries such as Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi.

Some worked for white employers who fled the country during the 1970s liberation war and others found themselves destitute as a result of economic hardships in the country.

With the outbreak of Covid-19 last year, and no basic services, the settlement seemed like it would be the perfect setting for the virus to spread.

Yet, during the interview, Ndlovu wore no mask and there are up to 10 other people without masks in his home.

The same indifference to the threat of the pandemic prevailed along the camp's roads and at neighbouring homesteads.

"People have masks but they only wear them when they are leaving the camp," Ndlovu said. "Since Covid-19 started there has not been a death recorded here so no one has died of Covid-19. We are sometimes tested by a mobile clinic but no one has tested positive. We do not know of any Covid-19 case or patient here."

"Since Covid-19 started there has not been a death recorded here so no one has died. We are sometimes tested by a mobile clinic but no one has tested positive."

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Zimbabwe has recorded more than 38 086 cases of the virus, with 1,557 deaths reported by 27 April. Dr Edwin Sibanda, the director of health services in Bulawayo, confirmed his department had not received any Covid-19 alerts from the Killarney informal settlement. "As a result, there is currently no record of patients residing at the informal settlement. No one was suspected or followed up from the area on Covid-related issues."

However, in the nearby suburbs of Killarney, Parklands and Khumalo, which enjoy proper sanitation services, a number of cases have been reported.

Zimbabwe's vaccine rollout began in

early March. The WHO said 410,611 doses of the vaccine had been administered by 27 April. According to Our World in Data, as of 26 April, 2.4% of the population had received at least one dose of the Sinopharm vaccine and 0.3% had been fully vaccinated.

Ndlovu said the major worry in the Killarney camp right now was not Covid-19 but rather yet another eviction, which he said was imminent. There is no chance of a third comeback for him to the land he has known since childhood, because it is earmarked for the development of a residential suburb.

"I don't think we will be here by August. They have already pegged the stands," he said, resignedly.

A woman who lives in the settlement, who asked to be identified only as Mandlovu, said life was hard at the informal settlement, and she and other young women had resorted to sex work. None of her colleagues had caught Covid-19, but they do not know how much longer they will continue being bypassed by the virus in their line of work.

"No one among us has fallen sick. We do not have sanitisers but we do our best to prevent getting Covid-19. For example, with our clients since Covid started, it's just sex and no kissing," she said.

According to the Matabeleland Institute for Human Rights, the Zimbabwean Census Statistics Office does not record the population of slum dwellers separately from the rest of the population, making it difficult to have authoritative statistics on the number of people living in slums. ■

THE QUIZ

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

"Where's MY statue? No, no, it's fine, I'll wait."

- 1_ The statue pictured below is of Laurent-Désiré Kabila. He was president of which country?
- 2_ What is the capital of that country?
- 3_ Which country's president, Salva Kiir, recently reconstituted a new national parliament?
- 4_ True or false: The demonym for someone from Mogadishu is Mogadishawi.
- 5_ Which country gets its name from the Zambezi River?
- 6_ Which artist recently became the only African artist to receive at least 100-million individual streams for three albums?
- 7_ Name the president who was sworn in for his sixth presidential term this week.
- 8_ In which city is the inaugural season of the Basketball Africa League being held?
- 9_ Is the dinar currency used in Morocco or Tunisia?
- 10_ True or false: Lagos is Nigeria's capital city.
- 11_ In which state is the city of Lagos found?
- 12_ Cotonou and Porto-Novo are cities in which country?



(Photo: Tony Karumba/AFP)

How did I do? WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you

Zambia faces birth control shortages after UK slashes UN funding

The United Nations Population Fund is the world's largest provider of contraception to poor countries. The UK's cuts to the agency are almost three times more severe than anything imposed previously by the Trump administration.

Laura López González

The United Kingdom has said it will cut 85% of its funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) this year. In Zambia – where UNFPA provides at least 60% of contraception for the public sector – activists are bracing for possible birth control shortages.

Although Zambia is one of four countries in Africa with relatively liberal abortion laws, Mary Kubota – not her real name – knew terminating her pregnancy wasn't an option her family would support when she got pregnant.

Instead, the teen turned to traditional medicine in hopes of ending the pregnancy. When that didn't work, she looked to something more extreme, says Inonge Wina-Chinyama, a senior advisor on youth and disability for MSI Reproductive Choices in Lusaka, Zambia. (MSI Reproductive Choices was formerly known as Marie Stopes International.)

“She tried so hard to terminate the pregnancy,” Inonge Wina-Chinyama remembers, “that she crushed bottles and drank that ... Her life would have been very different if she had that termination.”

About half of all 19-year-old women in Zambia are already mothers, according to the country's latest demographic health survey, from 2018. Still, although almost 50% of women use some form of contraception, about one in five married women don't – but say they wish they could.

MSI helps to bridge the gap, offering mobile clinics and teen-friendly services. But although MSI's name is on the door of these clinics, it's still UNFPA-bought birth control inside.

In late April, UNFPA's leading donor – the UK government – said it would reduce funding for the agency by almost \$180-million this year. The UK has blamed Covid-19's strain on the public purse for the decision. Still, the proposed

cuts are almost three times as severe as those imposed by former US President Donald Trump in 2017, based on US funding levels the previous year. Trump's decision was part of a broad withdrawal of US support for sexual and reproductive health services globally, from which the world is still recovering.

Today, UNFPA buys reproductive health commodities – such as contraceptive implants and medicines to prevent maternal deaths – for 150 countries. In 26 nations, including Zambia, the UN agency is the major procurer of contraception.

In another 22 countries, it is the *only* buyer.

UNFPA has used these economies of scale to negotiate, for instance, rock-bottom prices for male condoms and even demand more environmentally friendly production processes, UNFPA Procurement Services Branch Chief Eric Dupont explains.

According to Sarah Shaw, the head of advocacy at MSI Reproductive Choices, the agency is a fundamental part of how the world provides contraception.

“Donors that fund us to deliver services will say, ‘We’re not going to fund you to procure your own commodities because that’s what UNFPA is good at,’ she says.

She adds: “UNFPA is still trying to figure out what these cuts are going to mean in countries but for us, it looks like there is a chance we might not get any more commodities for the rest of the year.”

Amos Mwale is the executive director for the nonprofit Centre 4 Reproductive



Photo Op: As UK foreign secretary, Boris Johnson helped load an aid package for Somalia. Now, as prime minister, he is presiding over an 85% cut to Britain's contribution to the UN's Population Fund. Photo: Karel Prinsloo/UNICEF

Health and Education and says Zambia is already expecting that the UK decision will result in birth control shortages.

Mwale says he hopes the UK will consider stretching proposed cuts over several years to allow countries to transition off its aid.

Back in Lusaka, Kubota delivered a healthy baby. Then she sought out MSI for contraception, becoming a peer educator before managing the organisation's call centre for teens. She is now a third-year university student majoring in social work.

“Contraception allows girls to finish school, pursue their education, and space their kids...” says Wina-Chinyama. “We have seen the transformational power of contraception and the positive changes in a girl's life when she has control over her body – and her future.” ■

DRC

‘Ebola aid workers’ implicated in sex-for-jobs abuse report

An investigation has uncovered an extensive abuse of power by men who told their victims they were working for the World Health Organisation

More than 20 Congolese women have accused aid workers of sexual abuse in new claims that include rape and unwanted pregnancies, with United Nations investigators uncovering similar allegations of workers exploiting vulnerable women.

The New Humanitarian and the Thomson Reuters Foundation spoke to 22 women in Butembo who said male aid workers responding to an Ebola crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo offered them jobs in exchange for sex.

Fourteen of the 22 women in Butembo – an aid hub during the Ebola outbreak – said the men identified themselves as workers with the World Health Organization (WHO), one of the lead agencies in the crisis that killed 2,200 people between 2018 and 2020.

“WHO is committed to taking prompt and robust action, including collaborating with relevant national authorities on

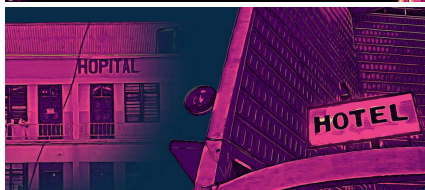
criminal proceedings, in all cases where WHO staff may be found guilty of perpetrating (sexual exploitation and abuse),” said WHO spokeswoman Marcia Poole.

A total of seven organisations were named, including two other UN agencies.

One woman said she was raped by a man who said he was with the WHO, and reporters learned of three others who said they had become pregnant.

Twenty-two women in Butembo said male aid workers responding to an Ebola crisis in eastern DRC offered them jobs in exchange for sex.

One of those women died after a botched abortion as she tried to conceal the pregnancy from her husband and children, her sister said.



Power and abuse: Men claiming to be aid workers are alleged to have lured Congolese women to hotel rooms and used promises of work to pressure them into sexual trysts. Some women fell pregnant, some terminated their pregnancies, and at least one woman died. (Illustrations: Robert Flummerfelt/The New Humanitarian)

“If I give you work, what will you give me in return?” read a WhatsApp message shared with reporters by another woman who said she drank a poisonous concoction to terminate her pregnancy – not uncommon in Congo, where abortion is illegal.

She said the message was from a Congolese man she met in a bar in 2019 who had arrived in a vehicle with the WHO logo.

The message continued: “You are a woman. I think you know what you can give me.”

The woman said she had sex with the man and was then employed by the WHO as a cleaner. She said after she was given

work, she was expected to sleep with him regularly. When she became pregnant, the man blocked her on WhatsApp and she ended up having an abortion, she said.

The WHO said the UN’s investigative Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) had identified two women in Butembo as “potentially having had sexually exploitative relationships with individuals connected to WHO”.

It said the information would be shared with an independent commission set up in October to investigate claims of sexual exploitation and abuse during Congo’s Ebola outbreak.

In response to the allegations of rape, pregnancy and the woman’s death from

abortion-related complications, the WHO said it had been instructed to refer all allegations relating to the response during that time period to the commission.

“The commission will take the lead in investigating these allegations and will issue recommendations to the director-general,” Poole said in an email.

A spokeswoman for the independent commission, Kadidia Coulibaly, said its team began investigating on the ground in early May and the commission aimed to publish its report at the end of August.

“The commission will take the lead in investigating these allegations and will issue recommendations to the director-general.”

Reporters in Butembo conducted more than 40 interviews with the 22 women, aid workers, hotel staff and others who worked in the Ebola response over a five-month period. A total of 23 women were involved, including the mother who died after an abortion.

Most women were hired as cleaners in Ebola treatment centres where they would disinfect clothing and bedding for the sick and for responders. Others went to villages where they burned the belongings of Ebola victims or worked on awareness campaigns.

One woman said she thought she was going for a job interview. Instead, she said she was raped in a hotel room by a Cameroonian man who said he worked for the WHO.

In 2019, the mother of four was told by a friend working for the WHO that her supervisor was looking to hire a new cleaner.

There was one condition, said the friend: “No matter what he tells you, just agree”. The two women went to the man’s hotel room. After a brief introduction, the friend took a phone call and abruptly left the room. The man quickly came to the point, said the 32-year-old woman: have sex with him and she could have a job.

She said she tried to leave but the man blocked her.

“He pushed me onto the bed, forced himself on top of me and started to take my clothes off,” she said. “I tried to get out from under him, but he was so strong and he held me there. Then, he violated me.”

Several days later, she said he called to tell her she could start work. “Every day at work it was miserable.”

The WHO said it was unable to respond to the allegation of rape but would refer the information on to the independent commission.

This investigation follows another, conducted last September in Beni, 60 kilometres northeast of Butembo. There, 51 women said dozens of men, mostly foreigners, had coerced them into having sex in exchange for jobs. ■

This investigation was conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation and The New Humanitarian

Nigeria must rally – or fall to a crippling triple threat

Jibrin Ibrahim

The loudest voices in Nigeria today are those of discord and disintegration. The government is panicking – warning Nigerians not to break up the country in response to loud cries from those who say they have had enough of being forcibly married to people from other communities and want a divorce. It is not hard to see why many describe Nigeria as a failed state. But it is more helpful to leave aside whether the state is “failed” and talk about ongoing processes of construction and deconstruction – and above all, the direction of travel.

The Nigerian state is undergoing a three-dimensional crisis: first, an economic crisis generated by rampant corruption; second, a crisis of citizenship symbolised by ethno-regionalism, the Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder killings, agitations for secession and indigene/settler conflicts; and third, a democratic crisis in which hopes for a “true democracy” are thwarted by a self-serving and manipulative political class.

These challenges have largely broken the social pact between citizens and the

state. That is why, today, Nigerians find themselves in a moment of doubt about their nationhood. The country has survived two similar moments – during the civil war of the 1960s and prolonged military rule in the early 1990s – but there is no guarantee it will survive the third.

The greatest threat facing the country today is therefore that of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Nigerians no longer trust the government or the different arms of the state, leading to a series of conspiracy theories that reinterpret every action in a negative light. Worse still, the government has no effective counter-narrative to create hope. In its absence, more Nigerians – 50% of whom have nothing to lose but their extreme poverty – have begun to procure arms, with an increasing number taking part in banditry and violence.

The greatest threat facing the country today is therefore that of a self-fulfilling prophecy

It may not yet be too late, but against this backdrop both citizens and political leaders must discover their agency and urgently act to save the Nigerian state. ■



Professor Jibrin Ibrahim is a Senior Fellow, Centre for Democracy and Development, Abuja. This was produced in collaboration with DIA.

It's a dark time: Let there be more light



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

Around the world – and in countries across Africa – Muslims are celebrating Eid, as the month of Ramadan comes to an end. We wish all those across the continent a happy Eid, and hope that it is filled with love and joy – even as we also hold in our hearts all those for whom celebrations are not on the cards this year, particularly the people of Palestine.

The plight of the Palestinian people is close to the hearts of so many on our continent, and demonstrations of solidarity have already been held in several countries, including Kenya and South Africa, and many others have taken to social media to highlight the ongoing atrocities taking place in Israel.

As we were putting this edition of *The Continent* to bed, Al Jazeera was reporting that 122 people had been killed in Gaza so far and 10 in the occupied West Bank, among them at least 17 children. And the number of wounded is climbing as buildings, schools and homes continue to be destroyed by Israeli forces.

While the African Union Commission chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat

has condemned the attacks, and the governments of Namibia and South Africa have expressed concerns regarding events in the region, the silence of others is deafening.

First and foremost, they must call out the events in Palestine for what they are: not “clashes” between equal forces, they are the devastating face of state-sanctioned occupation, violence and oppression, and complicit in this are members of the “international community” who have contorted themselves into a tangled mess of circular rationalisations and ostrich-headed sandpits as they compete to see who can turn the blindest eye.

And yet, it is Eid: a celebration that cannot be deferred. So, in countless homes here and around the world, raiments of joy are being drawn over our grief and anguish – for some perhaps, as an act of defiance; for others, to remind themselves and their families of the love and peace they wish for the world.

Dare we hope for peace, though – in Palestine or at home? Of course. We must.

Peace breaks out

Take the presidents of Kenya and Somalia, for example. Tensions have been high between both countries since Mogadishu suspended diplomatic ties with Nairobi and recalled its envoys in December. Without hope for a

peaceful resolution, would Somalia have announced resumption of relations with its neighbours? Would Kenya have welcomed it? And yet, this is what has somehow come to pass.

It's Eid! Perhaps a few boxes of Somali xalwo are even now on their way to Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, with a special delivery of mandaziis and mabuyu already being feasted on by President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo and his family.

Wouldn't that be nice? Much nicer than what's actually happening: Despite the detente, after Somalia reiterated that its ban on imports from Kenya of the narcotic leaf miira would remain in place, Kenya went and suspended flights to and from Somalia.

Such foolishness. It's Eid! President Kenyatta, how are you going to get your xalwo delivered if you've grounded all the planes? Honestly, some of these uncles.

President Kenyatta, how are you going to get your xalwo delivered if you've grounded all the planes?

While they may not have celebrated Eid together, the two did turn up for another kind of celebration: President Yoweri Museveni's swearing-in ceremony in Uganda.

There they bore witness, along with thousands of un-socially-distanced others, as The Hatted One took to the podium to begin his sixth term. Bible in hand, he pledged to "faithfully exercise the functions of the president of Uganda, and uphold, preserve and defend the

constitution". Ah, let it not be said he does not have a sense of humour!

All that was missing was a DJ who could have dropped some beats to get everyone to loosen up a bit. Perhaps even a Bobi Wine track or two?

Avunculations all round

Unfortunately a live performance would have been out of the question, partly because security forces had arrived at the homes of both Wine and senior opposition figure Kizza Besigye – presumably to escort them safely to the swearing-in? But they must have had a flat tire or something because they couldn't seem to shift, and it became one of those awkward who-has-parked-who-in situations.

"Come on guys, whose humvee is that blocking the driveway? The one with the gun turret? Auntie Afiya please wake Uncle up from his snooze and tell him to move his armoured vehicle so we can go to the thing over at the Musevenis!"

Uncles will uncle. Sigh.

On that note: Be you Muslim or Christian, Hindu or Jewish; Taoist, Buddhist or Pagan; a follower of Odinism or animism; of any faith – or none at all, may you find the peace and joy you hope, wish or pray for.

From our family to yours:

Eid Mubarak. ■

Samira Sawlani is a journalist and analyst with a focus on East Africa. She holds an MA in international studies and diplomacy from the School of Oriental and African Studies, and previously worked in the humanitarian aid sector.

THE BIG PICTURE

Far from home: In the village of Coorom in Uganda, the extended family of Dominic Ongwen listen to his sentencing by the International Criminal Court in Den Haag. On May 6, Ongwen – abducted as a child and press-ganged into the notorious Lord's Resistance Army, where he later became a high-ranking commander – was sentenced to 25 years in jail for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Now 45 years old, Ongwen was found guilty in February of 61 charges which included many counts of murder, rape and sexual enslavement that took place during a reign of terror by the LRA in the 2000s, led by fugitive LRA leader Joseph Kony. Photo: Sumy Sadurni/AFP



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