

**African journalism.** JULY 10 2021 | **ISSUE 53**

with Mail & Guardian

# The Continent



## Zuma's downfall

South Africa jails a  
former president

Graphic: John McCann

# Inside:

■ **Cover story:** On Thursday, South Africa jailed a former president. Jacob Zuma was booked into the Estcourt Correctional Centre to start a 15-month term for contempt of court, but this might just be the beginning of his problems (p14)

■ **Refugees in Malawi:** The not-so-warm heart of Africa (p11)

■ **Interview:** Musician Nubian Li recounts his prison ordeal (p18)

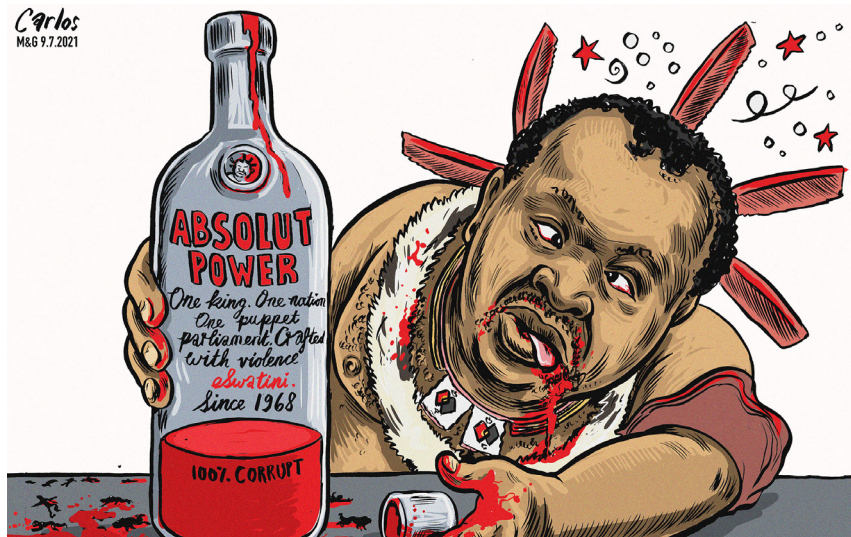
■ **Too good to be true:** Why do young Nigerians keep falling for Ponzi schemes? (p21)

■ **North vs South:** Al Ahly and Kaizer Chiefs fight for supremacy (p25)

## WE'LL BE BACK

The Continent takes regular publication breaks to allow our journalists (and our finances) to recover. You won't hear from us for the next three Saturdays, but normal service will resume on August 7. If you're not subscribed already, make sure to do so before then so that you don't miss out (WhatsApp us on +27 73 805 6068 or email us on [TheContinent@mg.co.za](mailto:TheContinent@mg.co.za)). Like all the really good things in life, it's free!

Carlos  
M&G 9.7.2021



**Absolut Power:** King Mswati III rules over Africa's last absolute monarchy. But as unrest grows, how much longer can he keep it up, and his subjects down? (p9)

# The week in numbers



## 4-million

... the number of confirmed Covid deaths globally, a milestone passed this week.



... South Sudan's birthday.

## 1,130

... the number of Benin Bronzes Nigeria has called on Germany to return.



## 1,174

... carats, the size of a diamond found in Botswana, making it the third largest diamond ever found.

## 170 – 250-billion

The amount in US dollars that Africa's tourism industry has lost in revenue because of the pandemic.



Photo: Wakil  
Kohsar/AFP



**Good luck?: An Afghan National Army soldier takes a selfie with his mobile phone inside the Bagram US air base after all US and Nato troops left.**

## WORLD

# West abandons Afghanistan

Two decades after invading Afghanistan – and \$2-trillion later – the United States is withdrawing all its forces as of August 31. The massive effort to defeat the Taliban appears to have ended in failure, with the Islamist militant group currently on the resurgence. It has already reclaimed half of the country's 407 districts, and some intelligence analysts expect them to overrun the capital Kabul within six months. Tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of civilians have died since the invasion. Millions have been displaced. But American companies had a place to profit with little oversight, so it's mission accomplished in the land of Empire.

## RWANDA

# Soldiers sent to fight insurgency in Mozambique

On Friday, Rwanda began deploying a 1,000-strong force to Mozambique to help combat the insurgency in Cabo Delgado, comprising soldiers and policemen trained “to deal with terrorism and security-related issues”, President Paul Kagame’s government said. This force is separate to the deployment approved by the Southern African Development Community last month. The insurgency has displaced 800,000 people and halted work on \$20-billion worth of energy projects.

## TOGO

# Pirates jailed in historic verdict

Nine pirates who attempted to hijack a ship in Togolese waters have been sentenced to prison terms ranging from 12 to 20 years, marking the first time pirates have been tried in the West African nation. Ten pirates, including seven Nigerians, two Togolese and one Ghanaian, went on trial for “maritime piracy, wilful violence and groups of criminals”. One of the Togolese men was acquitted. They were found guilty of attacking the tanker G-Dona 1 in May 2019.

## SPORTS

## Tokyo bans fans 'mid podium odium

The Tokyo Olympics will be held in empty arenas after Japan announced a Covid-19 state of emergency for the capital city. Fans from abroad had already been barred from attending the world's pre-eminent athletics event, which is scheduled to begin on July 23, after being postponed last year due to the pandemic. The decision to go ahead with the Olympics at all has been widely criticised in the Japanese media.

## SOUTH AFRICA

## Dubai's DP World goes all in on South African logistics company

Dubai-based DP World, a multinational logistics company, is set to acquire South African logistics company Imperial after making an all-cash offer of 12.73-billion rand (\$887-million) as it seeks to expand its footprint in Africa. The publicly listed Imperial will be delisted from the Johannesburg Stock Exchange when the deal goes through. DP World already has operations in Algeria, Angola, Djibouti, Egypt, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somaliland and South Africa.



## HAITI

## President Moïse assassinated

Jovenel Moïse, Haiti's president since 2017, was killed in his private residence by unknown gunmen early on Wednesday morning, plunging the nation further into political crisis. His wife, Martine, was injured and has been flown to a Miami hospital. There have been protests in Haiti since February urging Moïse to step down. His opponents say his term ended on February 7, which marked the fifth anniversary of his predecessor stepping down; Moïse argued it started a year later when he took office. A referendum on the constitution planned for June 27 was postponed and is expected to take place in September when elections for a new president and parliament are scheduled to be held. It is unclear how Moïse's demise affects both. Acting Prime Minister Claude Joseph, who was due to be replaced this week, says he is now in charge of the country. Haitian police have arrested two Americans and 15 Colombians for the hit.

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## AFRICA

## The pandemic is worse than ever

The continent recorded more than 251,000 new cases of Covid-19 in the week ending July 4, a 20% increase from the previous week. This makes it the continent's worst week of the pandemic, the World Health Organisation announced Thursday. Sixteen African countries are experiencing a surge in infections fuelled by the Delta variant of the virus, and case counts are doubling every 18 days. Cases have been rising for seven straight weeks. "For Africa, the worst is yet to come," warned Dr Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's Africa chief. "The end to this precipitous rise is still weeks away." Vaccination remains painfully low: with just over 53-million vaccine jabs administered, only about 1% of Africa's population is fully vaccinated.

## NIGERIA

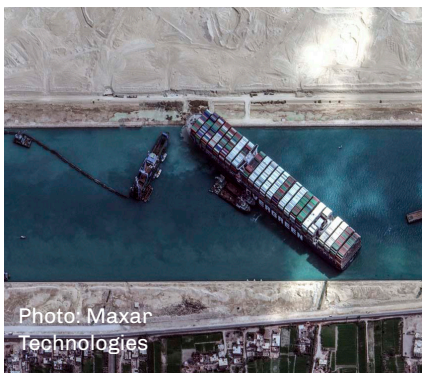
## Yet another school kidnapping

In depressingly familiar news, dozens of schoolchildren were kidnapped on Monday in Nigeria's northwestern Kaduna State by armed men who raided Bethel Baptist High School. Twenty eight of the abducted students and one of their teachers have now been reunited with their families, but about 120 are still missing. It is the latest in a string of incidents that have rocked north and central Nigeria, where heavily armed criminal gangs have embarked on a campaign of rustling cattle, sacking villages and kidnapping people for ransom. About 1,000 students have been abducted since December; most of them have been released after negotiations, though some remain missing and others have been killed.

## EGYPT

## Ever Given finally comes unstuck

Egypt has released the Ever Given, the container ship that blocked the Suez Canal for days in March, after reaching a compensation agreement with the ship's owner and insurers. It is unknown how much exchanged hands but Egypt had demanded \$550-million.



# Ethiopia



**Defatigable: Captured Ethiopian Army soldiers are guided towards the Mekelle Rehabilitation Centre in the Tigray regional capital.** Photo: AFP

## Tigray offers olive branch

**T**he head of the Tigray Defence Forces, the armed wing of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, has called on the Ethiopian government to engage with the northern region's leaders to find a path to a political solution to the conflict.

Last week, General Tsadkan Gebretensae led Tigrayan forces in a stunning comeback as they retook Mekelle and other key towns in the region.

Amid renewed fears that famine and deprivation will affect millions of people in Tigray, he said this week that the Ethiopian government could not win the war and that a bilateral ceasefire was the only way out from the eight months of crisis that has killed thousands of civilians

and an unknown number of troops.

"After the defeat of Abiy's forces, we are saying, let's have a negotiated ceasefire," Gebretensae told Reuters. "We are restraining ourselves for a realistic political solution to the whole problem. I would like the international community to understand this situation."

Gebretensae did not rule out the possibility of continued fighting should a solution prove elusive. "If there is no other choice, then the next choice will be: try to resolve it militarily."

The call for a ceasefire comes as the United Nations warns that food shortages in Tigray have worsened over the past two weeks, with 400,000 people affected by famine and another 1.8-million estimated to be at imminent risk.

Reaching Tigray has been difficult for aid agencies, but the Ethiopian government has denied that it is blocking aid or using hunger as a tactic of war. The country's aviation authority said flights to Tigray from the capital Addis Ababa are now allowed with the approval of the foreign ministry, though no such flights had taken off yet.

Meanwhile, Médecins Sans Frontières has called for an investigation into the killing of three of its staffers in Tigray and announced it would be scaling back operations in some parts of the region. ■



# Eswatini

## Unrest shakes the kingdom

**T**he Kingdom of Eswatini has been rocked by unrest over the past couple of months. Protests have turned violent, King Mswati III is said to have fled the country, government buildings have been damaged and police have reportedly assaulted protesters.

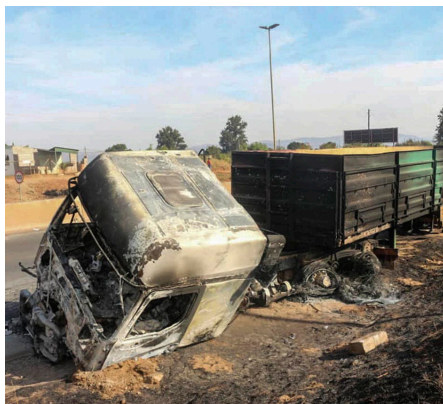
It appears that a considerable segment of Eswatini's 1.2-million people no longer want the tag of "Africa's last absolute monarchy" and would rather live in a democracy. Thanks to Mswati's use of force – and the assistance of cellphone companies who helped switch off the internet – it is hard to say how many of his subjects would prefer to opt out of subjugation, though.

Aggrieved citizens and rights groups have accused His Majesty and the greater royal family of enjoying lives of splendour while the general population descends into poverty.

Security forces have killed at least 20 people and 150 others have been hospitalised from gunshot wounds, according to Amnesty International.

At first, the government denied any knowledge of casualties but later confirmed 27 people had died last week.

Missing in their acknowledgement is



**Road worrier: A burnt truck in Manzini, Eswatini, where dozens of protesters have been killed and scores injured in clashes with police.** Photo: AFP

the maltreatment of journalists.

Two journalists from *New Frame*, a South African publication, were allegedly detained and tortured by security forces after being forced to delete material from their devices. The regime seems to think that if there are no records, it didn't happen.

Magnificent Mndebele and Cebelihle Mbuyisa also say they had plastic bags placed over their heads during their ordeal.

Through the publication's legal intervention, the reporters were released and they returned to South Africa when it was safe to do so. Most Swati reporters, however, do not have this luxury. ■

## Customer Notice.

### Access to social media platforms.

**Y'ello Valued Customer,**

Please take note that as of this morning **all social media platforms are accessible.**

We regret the inconvenience caused by the unavailability of these platforms.

### MTN Eswatini Management.

We're in this together  
*everywhere you go*

Ts & Cs apply.



## Sorry for the inconvenience

**O**n Wednesday, MTN Eswatini issued the above announcement to its customers. What its jaunty corporate tone failed to acknowledge, however, is the reason for the “unavailability of these platforms”: that the government had ordered it to suspend access to social media and the internet, as it sought to quell opposition to King Mswati III. MTN, along with the state-owned Eswatini Mobile and eSwatini Telecommunications Corporation, complied.

Without the internet, protesters found it difficult to organise demonstrations or coordinate support for victims of the government’s brutal crackdown. The

shutdown directly helped an authoritarian state to keep repressing its people.

On the African continent, MTN also operates in Benin\*, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville\*, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda\* and Zambia. If any of those governments order an internet shutdown, how will MTN respond? After all, “we’re in this together – everywhere you go”. ■

*\*In Benin, Congo-Brazzaville and Uganda, we already know the answer: MTN has previously assisted governments to block internet access.*

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# Malawi

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## Refugees once found safety here. Those days are over.

**Citing security concerns, the state told refugees to report to Malawi's only camp – which is already well over capacity.**

### Golden Matonga in Lilongwe

**F**or years, Malawi has been welcoming to refugees. Unlike many other countries, the country has for the most part allowed refugees to settle and live in harmony with the local population: intermarrying, investing in business and contributing to the country's development in the fields of medicine, nursing, teaching, arts and entrepreneurship, among others.

Though there have been sporadic tensions in past decades as foreign nationals assimilated into the population, these have been relatively muted.

Yet suddenly, in April this year, Malawi's homeland security minister Richard Chimwendo announced an

immediate shift in policy. In a press briefing, he issued an ultimatum for all refugees to return to the sole refugee camp at Dzaleka, Dowa in central Malawi within 14 days.

Rattled, and fearing attacks from xenophobic opportunists, members of the expatriate population rushed to court to obtain an injunction.

"People came to my shop and started telling us they will attack us when the deadline expires," said Elie Umukunzi, a foreign expatriate who is not a refugee. "Everyone regards me as a refugee but I am a businessman of Rwandese origin with working permits."

Umukunzi joined forces with other foreign nationals who have considerable investments in the country in the court action. One day before the expiry of the government ultimatum, the high court granted Umukunzi an injunction restraining the government from going ahead with the action. Another group of foreign nationals obtained a similar injunction in another court, but the state continues to press its case and another key ruling is expected in the next week.

The state has been at pains to explain its decision. It says refugees are welcome, but must stay at Dzaleka. Addressing journalists after a visit to the camp, Chimwendo said security both at home and in neighboring Mozambique was the motivation for the government's actions.



**Not pumped: Refugees draw water at Dzaleka camp. It is reportedly over capacity, and residents fear the health implications of further crowding.**

Chimwendo assured the refugees that their lives and property would be protected and that, after all refugees had registered at the camp, those who have substantial investments and had intermarried with the local population could formally make applications to continue living outside the camp.

“They will be allowed to live outside only to wind up their businesses, not for good,” the minister said. “We are not chasing them, and we just want them to be where they should be. Those who have businesses ... will have to operate from Dzaleka. If they are married they must apply for permanent residence... We are not sending them back to their countries.”

The state’s security concerns appear to be focused on neighbouring Mozambique, where foreign fighters have been blamed for fueling an insurgency in Cabo Delgado. Malawi is among the regional countries that have pledged to provide troops to combat the insurgency.

But rights activists are not convinced. The Human Rights Defenders Coalition, the most prominent civil society group in Malawi, has warned that any move must be handled with caution.

“The government should make sure that it is not promoting xenophobic attacks against foreigners. It should make sure it allows people who have legal documents of doing business and residence to stay. The state should adhere to principles of human rights as they are implementing their action,” chairperson Gift Trapence told *The Continent*. “Refugees are one of the most vulnerable groups. As such, the government should make sure that they execute the actions within the laws of this country and international refugee law.”

Refugees say the Dzaleka camp is no longer habitable. Initially meant to host up to 10,000 refugees, it is now home to 50,000 living in dilapidated and congested housing, and facing water and sanitation challenges. The state says another 2,000 refugees are living among various communities outside the camp.

The government has said it will expand the camp to accommodate new arrivals, but this has done little to reassure those affected.

“With the Covid-19 pandemic, the conditions make the camp a time bomb for diseases as we already have poor sanitation and it’s already congested,” said Romain Bijangala, a leader of the Congolese community inside the Dzaleka camp. “We are asking for government to allow those who are outside to continue staying there.” ■

# South Africa

## Jacob Zuma goes to jail

**S**outh Africa has several former leaders who ought to be in prison. The architects of apartheid remain free, and one, FW de Klerk, even has a Nobel Peace Prize. This week, though, a man who fought that regime – and then allegedly looted the country to the brink of collapse – did end up behind bars.

Despite evidence that he lived well beyond his means, former president Jacob Zuma is only now facing any consequences. That's in part because during his time in charge of South Africa, Zuma oversaw the dismantling of many of the institutions that might hold him to account, such as police investigative teams and the tax ministry.

But he failed to neuter the judiciary. And after his party, the ruling African National Congress, replaced him to secure its electoral future, he has shown nothing but scorn for the courts.

On Thursday, however, Zuma handed himself over to police to begin a 15-month sentence – not for any malfeasance committed while in office, but for contempt of court.

The sentence, delivered by the Constitutional Court, the nation's highest judicial body, follows his failure to appear



**Contemporary contretemps: Former South African president Jacob Zuma has been jailed for contempt of court.**

before an inquiry investigating allegations of corruption during his nine-year tenure. Zuma himself set up the investigation while he was president but then claimed it was prejudiced against him.

He will be eligible for parole in four months, according to the justice minister.

In the meantime, his corruption trial alongside French arms manufacturer Thales will continue. He is accused of receiving bribes as deputy president in 1999 through his associate Schabir Shaik, who was convicted of corruption charges in 2005. Shaik went to jail, Thales kept profiting, and Zuma ascended to the presidency. Only now is he beginning to face the music. ■



**Inglorious husband:**  
Jacob Zuma with Gloria  
Bongekile Ngema, one of  
his four current wives.

Photo: AFP

## All the president's women

**It was the women in Jacob Zuma's life who threw the former South African president's character flaws into sharpest relief. And it was women who ultimately brought him down.**

### Kiri Rupiah

**I**n 2002, Jacob Zuma asked a princess to marry him. But this was no fairytale romance. Sebentile Dlamini, sister to Eswatini's King Mswati III, said yes, and the families agreed on a lobola of 50 cattle. And then they waited. And waited.

At the time, Zuma – then deputy president of the Republic of South Africa

– was already married to several women.

He met his first wife, Gertrude Sizakele Khumalo, in 1959 as a 17-year-old boy, but she had to wait until 1973 for him to make an honest woman of her. In the meantime, Zuma had joined the fight against South Africa's racist apartheid regime, and spent ten years in prison on Robben Island (the same place Nelson Mandela served his life sentence for sabotage).



**Rest in peace: The late Kate Mantsho described her marriage to Zuma as '24 years of hell'. Photo: Gallo Images**

MaKhumalo has always been the often unseen and always unheard matriarch of Zuma's homestead in Nkandla – even in the long, lonely years when Zuma was in exile.

It was in exile that he met his second wife, Kate Mantsho. They married in Mozambique, where Zuma was overseeing intelligence operations for the African National Congress, in 1976.

She spoke all 11 of South Africa's official languages and contributed to the fight against apartheid. But she would not leave their union alive. She died by her own hand in 2000, leaving a note addressed to her husband, whom she forbade from attending her funeral. Their marriage was “24 years of hell”, she wrote.

It was also in exile that Zuma met and married his third wife, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who would go on to serve in his cabinet and lead the African Union Commission. They married in 1986, and divorced in 1999.

His fourth wife was Nompumelelo Ntuli, whom he married in 2008.

By then, South Africa was well into its new democratic dispensation, and Zuma had risen to become ANC president and was soon to become president of the country. Later, Zuma accused MaNtuli of trying to kill him with poisoned tea and banished her from Nkandla. She denies the allegation, and later described her marriage to Zuma as “five years of hell”.

Thobeka Madiba became his fifth wife in 2010, but later sued him for failing to pay R14,000 (\$1000) in monthly maintenance for one of their children. She was also barred from Nkandla.

He married his sixth wife, Bongekile Ngema-Zuma, in 2012.

All this time, Princess Sebentile was waiting for a wedding that never came. In 2008, when she learned that Zuma would be marrying MaNtuli first, she checked herself into a hospital for depression. Given Zuma's track record, some considered this a lucky escape.

### **An unsuitable man**

In December 2005 Zuma was charged with rape. Khwezi, his accuser, was the 31-year-old daughter of a deceased struggle comrade. She chose to be identified by a pseudonym, for her own safety. Zuma at the time was more than double her age.

Zuma denied the charges, claiming Khwezi had consented. The trial made international headlines, but it was his comments during the trial and the behaviour of his supporters that would propel the case into infamy.

On the first day of the trial, Zuma's supporters carried a poster asking: "How much did they pay you, nondindwa [bitch]?" – a reference to Khwezi. The next day, a group of mostly female Zuma supporters set fire to pictures of the complainant, shouting: "Burn this bitch."

To his critics, Zuma's own words during the trial demonstrated precisely how unsuitable he was for the office of president: Admitting to having had unprotected sex with Khwezi, who was HIV-positive, Zuma said that he had taken a shower afterwards to minimise the chances of contracting the virus.

Zuma testified further that he went ahead with condom-less sex because, in his Zulu culture, he could be accused of rape for leaving a woman sexually aroused without relief.

Zuma was acquitted in 2006. In the aftermath, Khwezi was revealed to be Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo. After her home was burned down, and after receiving multiple death threats, Kuzwayo was offered asylum in The Netherlands. She died in exile in October 2016.

### Consequences, at last

In 2009, after a bitter intra-party faction fight, Zuma became president of a nation that is often hostile to its women. The rate of femicide in South Africa is five times higher than the global average, and most South African women will experience some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime.

Although Zuma was no stranger to corruption allegations, it was the revelation that he had spent R65-



**Jacob's folly: In 2009, journalist Mandy Roussouw exposed Zuma's use of public funds to finance a lavish refurbishment of his homestead.**

million of taxpayers' money (then worth \$7.8-million) to refurbish his personal accommodation – his Nkandla homestead – that really turned the tide of public opinion. That story was broken by the journalist Mandy Roussouw in the *Mail & Guardian* in 2009. She and the newspaper were accused by the presidency of “setting out to embarrass the president”.

These allegations were investigated and then confirmed in 2014 by advocate Thuli Madonsela, South Africa's public protector. In a report that was more than 400 pages long, Madonsela explained in excruciating detail how Zuma



had “benefited unduly” from these refurbishments, which ultimately cost the state around R246-million (\$23-million at the time). Some of these details – like the bit where he tried to describe his fancy new swimming pool as a necessary firefighting tool – made Zuma the butt of national jokes. Zuma’s allies hit back, questioning Madonsela’s credentials and suggesting that she was a CIA agent.

Zuma himself, just last weekend, said his problems began with a conspiracy organised by that “beautiful little girl”, referring to Madonsela.

Despite the damning evidence presented by Madonsela, Zuma clung on as president for another four years. The corruption scandals increased in volume and scope. Soon, South Africans began using the term “state capture” to describe the relationship between the president Zuma and the Guptas, a family of Indian businessmen who had allegedly bribed their way into the heart of government (they deny these allegations, but fled the country before facing justice).

Under enormous public pressure, Zuma set up a commission of inquiry into state capture shortly before he was unseated as president by his party rival, Cyril Ramaphosa. By December 2020 the commission had interviewed 278 witnesses and amassed 159,109 pages and one exabyte of data and evidence.

None of that evidence has come from Jacob Zuma. His refusal to appear before the commission is what ultimately led to his arrest this week. “The only appropriate sentence is a direct, unsuspended order of imprisonment, because the alternative



**Leopards, spots, etc: Jacob Zuma and fifth wife Thobeka Madiba, who would later sue him for child maintenance.**

would be to effectively sentence the legitimacy of the judiciary to inevitable decay,” said acting chief justice Sisi Khamepepe, as she signed the warrant.

Predictably, the former president – through his foundation, the Jacob G Zuma Foundation – attacked the decision. It was “judicially emotional,” he said, and inconsistent with the Constitution.

But this time around, his patriarchal objections made no difference, and late on Wednesday evening this week Zuma handed himself over to the Estcourt Correctional Centre, a low-security prison where he will begin serving his 15-month sentence for contempt of court.

South African prisons are gender-segregated, which means he will be surrounded entirely by men. Perhaps Major General Nonhlanhla Zulu, the policewoman who was part of the team who persuaded him to surrender, convinced him he would be happier in their company. ■



Mutima: Nubian Li visits Bobi Wine when he was under house arrest.

## Nubian Li recounts his prison ordeal

**Bobi Wine and Nubian Li have made a lot of music together. And when Bobi Wine transformed himself into the leader of Uganda's political opposition, Nubian Li stayed by his side.**

### Andrew Arinaitwe in Kampala

**F**or Ali Bukeni, joining Bobi Wine on the campaign trail was a no-brainer – despite the dangers.

Bukeni, better known by his stage name Nubian Li, is one of the 39-year-old singer-turned-politician's musical partners. The pair had recorded many songs together, and when Bobi Wine – real name Kyagulanyi Ssentamu Robert

– sought to end the 35-year tenure of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in January's elections, Bukeni was at his side.

Bobi Wine's team was regularly intimidated and increasingly targeted by security forces, culminating in the arrest of Bukeni and many other members of Bobi Wine's entourage at one of their campaign events last December in Kalangala, an island town in central Uganda.

“I told them I would comply and that there was no need to use force,” Bukeni told *The Continent*.

He was held in a truck along with scores of other campaign staffers and supporters – 127 of them, all told, were hauled to the police station in Kalangala. A crowd had gathered to barricade the route to the station. Police shot tear gas to disperse them and pushed through.

They were held for three hours at the station before being sent on a ferry to another police station, handcuffed in pairs. “We tried to contest the way they handled us but they told us it was an order from above,” Bukeni said.

Upon reaching land, they were driven to the station where soldiers wielding electric cables and batons awaited their arrival. Everyone who disembarked from the truck was made to frog-jump into the station as they were whipped, beaten with batons and pepper-sprayed.

Reports of the maltreatment of those arrested during election season abound. Bukeni said he and nine others were transferred to an army encampment where hellish conditions prevailed.

“We were forced into a very dirty cell: it had no electricity, no bathroom, no blanket. We were provided a bucket and we were all bundled into that one cell. That’s where we spent the night,” he said. “It was a very cold night.”

The ordeal continued the next morning when they had to clean the cell and dispose of the bucket containing their own waste. Thirty masked military officers stood guard outside. Their presence “psychologically affected us,” Bukeni said.



### Deep cuts: Bobi Wine and Nubian Li – partners in music, politics and principle.

The soldiers poured water into the cell and ordered the inmates to remove their shirts. “We were left in a wet room. It would become so cold, we would sit close to one another to keep warm. It was horrible, you would sleep on one side, then turn to another until all sides were hurting and the only option was to sit. Life was really very bad in that cell.”

Police spokesperson Fred Enanga told *The Continent* in a text message that allegations of torture are “unsubstantiated” but urged Bukeni and others arrested to file a formal complaint as it will “help prove or disprove their allegations”.

The torture did not stop there. Pictures, blood samples, statements and swabs of the detainees were taken. At one point during their ordeal, Bukeni’s group and four others were stripped naked at gunpoint.

Men claiming to be from human

rights groups asked for their phones and addresses. But they had guns on their waists and it was obvious they were from the military.

Amid the chaos, there was a glimmer of shared humanity. On New Year's Day, two days after the arrest, a soldier gave Bukeni and his group a bottle of juice. To show them it wasn't poisoned, he took a swig of the juice before passing it on. Other soldiers apparently expressed support for the movement and admitted they were carrying out the detentions because it was paid work.

When they were arraigned at the magistrate court on January 4, Bukeni and his fellow detainees were charged with inciting violence and spreading Covid-19. When both judges dismissed the state attorney's arguments against bail, Bukeni and his colleagues thought their ordeal was over. They were wrong.

Instead of being sent home, Bukeni and 48 others were driven to a military barracks in Kampala. Communication with their lawyers was terminated. They were now being tried in military court, accused of being in possession of bullets.

They were held at the Kitalya Maximum Security Prison, notorious for its poor conditions, and they all slept in one cell. Disease outbreaks are common at the prison; medicines are not. Prison officials shaved their heads, stripping Nubian Li of his signature look.

Bukeni said he knew their suffering was meant to deal a blow to Bobi Wine. "We were detained to isolate Kyagulanyi throughout the election period."

The hardship lessened as time wore

on. Visitors were eventually allowed and Bukeni saw his children for the first time in months. He had to explain to his distraught daughter why he had to wear the yellow prison uniform.

While most prisoners spent the day basking in the sun, Bukeni read. Bobi Wine had brought him some books but they were deemed unacceptable by the prison authorities. These included books by Malcolm X. Bukeni asked for *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, written by none other than Museveni himself in 1997; the request was denied.

Eventually he was allowed books delivered by his wife. His favourite? *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl's account of his time in a Nazi concentration camp.

In mid-June, six months after his initial detention at Kalangala, Bukeni was finally granted bail.

He says his passion for a better Uganda remains undimmed even after spending half a year behind bars. "I am for a system that works for every Ugandan," he said. He said he dreams of a free Uganda, and that he has warned Bobi Wine never to hold on to power should he ever gain it.

Meanwhile the Museveni train moves on. He won election in January and is now serving a sixth term, in power until at least 2025. Last week, he named his son, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, as commander of the army's land forces. All the institutions of the state are firmly under his control.

But Bukeni retains hope that citizen participation remains important. "It starts with us, just like in Sudan, it took citizens to rise up against the system." ■

# Ponzi schemes flourish in Nigeria's declining economy

With opportunities dwindling, Nigerian youths are investing in dubious enterprises – and paying the price

## Ope Adetayo in Lagos

**I**want to introduce you to one of the biggest investment platforms in Nigeria, RackSterli,” the pop star Davido told his millions of fans in a video last December. “If you invest with RackSterli, you’ll get paid within 12 to 24 hours, instant payment. It has built many millionaires.”

Damilare Jamiu, a painter in his 20s, was looking for extra income to launch a dry cleaning business. Last December, he came across RackSterli, and although he was sceptical, Davido’s full-throated backing and RackSterli’s claim that it had a physical office in Lagos convinced him. The scheme seemed straightforward: it invested its clients’ cash in cryptocurrency and real estate and promised a 40% monthly return on investment.

Jamiu did not become a millionaire. Instead, he was burned to the tune of 560,000 naira (\$1,365) when RackSterli went up in flames in March. He had been looking forward to a payout of about \$2,073.

“I was expecting it to crash but I was not expecting it to go [for good]... like, they would have some issues and come

back,” Jamiu told *The Continent*.

It has been four months and the comeback has yet to happen, and the office that helped to convince Jamiu no longer exists, if it ever truly did.

“I thought if there was an issue, I could just go there [to the office],” he said.

Jamiu is one of many Nigerians who have lost money to suspected Ponzi schemes – scams that promise enormous returns within a short period, paying existing investors with money from new users. They collapse as numbers grow and the founders and early adopters bolt with their investors’ money.

Ponzi schemes are not new in Nigeria; they first surfaced in the 1980s, a decade marked by the poor economic leadership of the country’s military dictators. The earliest recorded schemes were the Umama Umama scheme in Calabar in the 1980s and the Planwell in Edo state in the early 1990s. More recently, however, such scams have proliferated as never before thanks to the internet. Despite repeated losses, Nigerian youth in particular still patronise the schemes in droves.

In 2016, three million Nigerians lost \$44-million when MMM – a popular Russian enterprise promising a 30%

return – crashed, according to Nigeria's Securities and Exchange Commission.

The country's worsening unemployment problem and widespread poverty also share blame for making Ponzi schemes fashionable. Some 33% of Nigerians were unemployed in the last quarter of 2020, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Many more are underemployed.

Kalu Aja, a finance expert, told *The Continent* that the recent success of bitcoin and the stock market has made people embrace risky ventures in return for astronomical rewards. "Investors believe high returns are still possible, though risky. They do not believe it is impossible to make 25% [return] a month, they only believe it carries a higher amount of risk."

### Tempting fate

When MyBonus2u, an alleged Ponzi scheme that surfaced online last October, crashed earlier this year, hundreds of Nigerians were left high and dry. Uche Azeh, 26, was one of the unfortunates; the university student lost 500,000 naira (\$1219.5).

The scheme was promoted as an e-commerce platform with a three to five percent daily ROI after users made 60 orders. The wannabe investors believed they were helping products from well-known e-commerce companies like Alibaba, Jumia, Amazon and others gain market prominence in Nigeria. MyBonus2u's CEO, Omotola Adanna, had degrees from Stanford and Harvard and was named one of Africa.com's Top 50 Standout Entrepreneurs.



**Goliatho: Suspected Ponzi schemes are being fronted by celebrities like Davido.**

Every single detail, including Adanna's profile, turned out to be false. The name was a nom de guerre and the mastermind behind the scheme is unknown; MyBonus2u's social media accounts have been silent since January.

"They were really convincing. If you Google them, you would see they are somehow linked to many high profile organizations like Amazon," Uche told *The Continent*. "I don't know how they were able to pull that off"

Uche was well aware of the risks involved in investing in a questionable venture like MyBonus2u. But he believed that he would be able to reap his rewards before the whole thing came tumbling down.

Like so many Nigerian youth before him, he was wrong. ■

# Elections, weak institutions and the Covid-19 crisis in Cabo Verde

Abel Djassi Amado

**H**ailed as a democratic example on the African continent, Cabo Verde held its seventh round of multi-party parliamentary elections on April 18.

The election was effectively a two-horse race between the incumbent Movement for Democracy and the main opposition party, the African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde. In the end, voters preferred the status quo, but for some this was secondary to the impact of the elections on Covid-19.

The National Electoral Commission (CNE) developed measures to lessen the possible spread of the virus during the campaigns and entered into a pact with the parties to take appropriate precautions.

Yet in contrast to cases like South Korea where elections did not lead to a big increase in Covid-19 cases, the parties put winning the election before public health, and the CNE was not strong enough to enforce the rules.

Despite being a high-quality democracy, the country also features aspects of neo-patrimonial politics, including weak institutions.

As caution was thrown to the wind,

many mass meetings were held, with few of those attending wearing masks.

The spike in cases that followed led to shortages of oxygen in hospitals, prompting National Health Director Jorge Barreto to say that the situation was “serious [and] it is not under control.”

Although the number of cases (in low 30,000s) and deaths (fewer than 300) may look low, this is because Cabo Verde has a tiny population.

On the continent, Cabo Verde is second only to South Africa in the number of cases per one million citizens – and the fifth highest African country in terms of deaths per one million people.

Although the number of cases has since subsided, Cabo Verde nevertheless offers us an important reminder that electioneering can have serious consequences for public health during a pandemic when basic social distancing rules are not followed. ■



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# THE QUIZ

0-4

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

5-7

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

8-10

"You haven't tried Akabanga oil? Let's hook you up."

- 1\_ Where was former South African president Nelson Mandela imprisoned for 27 years?
- 2\_ In which country is one most likely to find Akabanga oil?
- 3\_ NBA star Giannis Antetokounmpo was born and raised in Greece. An African country claims him, though. Which one?
- 4\_ Which country did Italy not colonize: Liberia or Somalia?
- 5\_ What currency is used in Namibia?
- 6\_ In which city can one visit the Fortaleza de São

Miguel?

7\_ Joseph Kabila is a former head of state of which country?

8\_ Who was the last active ruler of the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt?

9\_ *Zangalewa* by Cameroonian group Golden Sounds laid the foundation for which international hit by Shakira in 2010?

10\_ Which country is Africa's most recent sovereign state or country (with widespread recognition)?



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



## North v. South

**Egypt's Al Ahly take on South Africa's Kaizer Chiefs in next Saturday's Champions League final. The sub-Saharan divide has never felt more real – and one coach is stuck in the middle**



**After Sundown: Kaizer Chiefs fans are all too familiar with Al Ahly manager Pitso Mosimane, who has plenty of form keeping their side in check. Photo: Gallo Images**

### Luke Feltham

**O**ne of the more remarkable football interviews in recent years took place amid the detritus of a Sundowns – Wydad Casablanca game in early 2019 in Pretoria. A furious Pitso Mosimane entered the press area still screaming at

the enemy he had been warring with for the past 90 minutes.

Eventually turning his attention to the microphone in front of him he blurted: “They do this to us in Morocco! We go anywhere, everybody bullies us. It’s about time Sundowns comes up and plays Champions League. They come to

South Africa and want to bully us? No ... we know what to do – if people bully us, we give it back. Gone are the days ... The North Africans are always bullying everybody, they don't want to lose."

The battlelines could not have been more clearly marked if he had drawn them with the groundsman's chalk.

Indeed throughout his career in South African football, Mosimane has never hidden the glee it brought him to slay North African giants; to be the pest they could never swat away for good. And since winning the Champions League in 2016, his side was perpetually the problem team no one wanted to draw.

The sub-Saharan renaissance he threatened never materialised, however – a team from the region hasn't appeared in the final since that victory.

Until now, that is.

But in a somewhat ironic twist of fate, this time Mosimane is on the other side.

He has the opportunity to make it back-to-back titles when his Al-Ahly of Egypt confront Kaizer Chiefs in the final next Saturday. The South African side will be shooting for their first "star", joining rivals Orlando Pirates and Sundowns as the only teams from the country to have won the Champions League.

Compounding his internal conflict is the fact that Mosimane was raised a fan of Amakhosi – the Kaizer Chiefs.

"But at this point in time it's about me and my family and my team. Those come first," he told the South African Football Journalists Association over a Zoom call this week. "It's either I want to give the medal to [Stuart] Baxter or I want to keep

it. And I think you know the answer.

"It would be nice for another South African team to get a star, to be honest, if I look at the other side. It will be a boost for our country to have three big teams with a star, why not? But we are not a welfare or charitable organisation of handing out stars here. You have to earn it."

**"It would be nice for another South African team to get a star, to be honest, if I look at the other side. It will be a boost for our country to have three big teams with a star, why not?"**

As much as he undoubtedly loved the Sundowns project and everything it represented, Mosimane could not resist the allure of Africa's most successful team. At the time of his signature to the Egyptian team he reasoned it was akin to an advance by Real Madrid or Barcelona – a call you simply can't say no to.

Where he once fought against the legacy of North African football it is now intimately tied to his own. Victory next weekend will earn Al Ahly title number 10; or in local parlance "El Ashra" – inspired by Madrid's "La Decima".

As novel as the final dynamic is, the sight of Mosimane will be ominously familiar to Chiefs. His most successful period back home ran adjacent to some of Amakhosi's most painful. Labouring under a six-year trophy drought that belies the club's stature, the famous team



**Red Sea: Al Ahly fans are deeply invested in the final in Casablanca, where a victory would earn them 'El Ashra' – their 10th title. Photo: NurPhoto via Getty Images**

from Soweto were forced to watch as their Mamelodi rivals hoarded both talent and silverware.

Even his parting gift, tellingly, was to snatch the domestic league from their desperate clutches in the last 30 minutes of the 2020 season.

Chiefs have endured a peculiar year since his departure. To rectify the final-day disappointment, Gavin Hunt – another of South Africa's elite coaches – was appointed manager. But what in theory was a dream marriage quickly turned to divorce following pathetic domestic form.

What he had managed to do, however, was hang around in the Champions League. Scot Stuart Baxter, upon returning to helm his former club, finished the job. Something about the competition was calling this season.

"To be honest I'd like to know what happened in that story," Mosimane says

of their continental journey. "It's very awkward, I've never seen something like this. One day you're good, six months later you're completely different; and you have the same players.

"Kaizer Chiefs are in the final because they play a different type of football, especially away. They can hold on, they are strong with set pieces, they have good height."

With historical prestige now in his corner, the emphasis is on Mosimane to solve the underdog's enigma. In doing so he will deny his homeland what would be a momentous accomplishment.

When he first entered his new Cairo palace, *The Continent* wrote of his appointment: "It would seem the fate of South African, Egyptian and African pride intersect in a manner never before seen on the football pitch."

We didn't realise quite how right we would be. ■

# He came, he saw, he conquered. He left.

**A season of trophies was not enough to keep Zamalek's basketball coach in Cairo**

**Refiloe Seiboko**

**O**ver the course of eight months, Agustí Julbe signed on as Egyptian powerhouse club Zamalek's head coach, led his team to triumph in the Basketball Africa League's inaugural season, and emerged victorious from the Egyptian Basketball Super League.

That meant a 15th national title for the team. Like their football siblings, they have earned the right to carry the "most titled in the 20th century" accolade.

And then he left.

Speaking to *The Continent* in June, he said that as a Spaniard he saw parallels between his new team and European behemoth Barcelona. "Somehow, Zamalek is pretty similar: a big sports club, the main sport that is football, with a 110-year history with a tradition of winning championships."

It also had one other key ingredient: a serious rivalry with Cairo's Al Ahly.

Julbe said of the fans that "they are so passionate ... everything is heaven

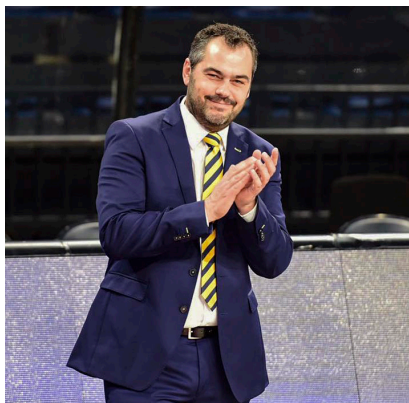
and hell, you know? So let's try to keep winning to keep them happy."

Announcing his departure this week, his tone was similarly dramatic, describing his tenure as "a nightmare that ended the best way possible".

He leaves behind a club laden with accolades, but also one that seems plagued by internal strife. The general manager responsible for recruiting Julbe was out a week after signing him. The team president is an interim appointment (after the former president was banned from all sports-related activities for four years).

That president has also publicly alluded to issues he has with the country's sports minister. Speaking to *The Continent* about the non-basketball side of the mega club, Julbe said: "I don't like to talk bad about people or things when they don't have the [opportunity] to defend themselves but there have been situations in the club, in the structure of the club, the organisation, which I did not like much."

Zamalek now need to find another way to continue their sporting domination. ■



## PROFILE

# Rhobi Samwelly



**Saving Tanzania's girls from the cruel traditions of FGM**

**Priya Sippy**

Illustration: Wynona Mutisi

**I**t's cutting season in Mara, one of Tanzania's northernmost regions. Rhobi Samwelly stands outside a safe house in Butiama as the sound of a car rumbles across the rough road. She is anticipating the arrival of a new guest.

A young girl is sitting in the back seat, her head tilted against the window. A police officer sits by her side.

The girl has been brought to the safe house after Samwelly's team received information she was at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM).

This is one of two safe houses in Mara region that Samwelly has built. The other is in Serengeti district. They provide a refuge for those escaping FGM, an all too common practice in Mara, where around 40% of girls are cut. In certain tribes, the practice is believed to increase a girl's value for marriage.

Before the safe houses existed, Samwelly says there was no place for girls to go to be protected against FGM. She knows this because she considered running away when she was 13 and her mother told her she was to be cut. Samwelly was scared after a close friend died from the same procedure, but she had nowhere to go.

**Samwelly was scared after a close friend died from the same procedure but she had nowhere to go.**

"I thought about leaving home and going to the nearby town, but I did not know where I could stay, how I could get

food or who would pay my school fees. I had many questions and no answers.”

With no alternative, Samwelly was cut against her wishes. The procedure left her unconscious, and she almost bled to death. “I cried and cried, but my parents did not listen. A piece of my brain broke when I was cut.”

She has since made it her mission to help women and girls escape FGM. Her activism started at home by forgiving her parents for cutting her on the condition that they would not cut her six younger sisters.

### **Her activism started at home by forgiving her parents for cutting her, on the condition that they would not cut her six younger sisters.**

In 2017, she started her NGO, Hope for Women and Girls, which runs safe houses and campaigns against FGM.

Campaign volunteers educate schools and communities, highlighting the dangers of cutting, and aiming to change the social norms that sustain it. The safe houses provide counselling, schooling, and vocational training – equipping girls with skills that will help them to find employment and become independent.

Samwelly says that those who survive the procedure will have a difficult time reaching their potential as FGM is typically a precursor for forced marriage.

“Many of these girls want to be doctors and lawyers. When they get cut and are

married early, they cannot achieve their dreams,” she says.

FGM is illegal in Tanzania and therefore shrouded in secrecy. Samwelly’s network of volunteer across villages report girls facing FGM, and they work with the police and social welfare to bring girls to the safe house. More than 1,800 girls have been sheltered.

After three months of sheltering them and educating their parents, Samwelly reunites the girls with their families. They return to their parents on the condition that they will not be cut and that their education will resume.

However, deeply entrenched customs mean that some parents continue refuse to respect their daughters’ wishes. Behavioural change remains the biggest challenge in the fight against FGM, often simply because of the financial stakes involved: families receive a higher dowry if their daughter is cut. As such, Samwelly has faced many threats over the years, with community members also seeing her as the “enemy” of their way of life.

Despite such threats and resistance from traditional communities, she continues to push for change. She has spoken at the UN Assembly, addressed the United Kingdom’s House of Commons, and engaged with Tanzanian government officials on the issue.

And she advocates for the laws to be upheld against those who practice this illegal ritual. ■

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*This article is part of a series on human rights defenders, funded by Internews.*

# Field of dreams



## Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

If you're a football fan – or if you have English people living near you, spend any time on social media, or even just breathe the same air as people who do – you may have heard the phrase, “It’s coming home” once or twice over the past few weeks.

“Bring it home” – once the mantra of the British Museum’s fleet of archaeologists, tomb-robbers and cultural appropriators – has become the rallying cry of England’s football fans as their national side’s success in the UEFA European Football Championship brings the final to their green and purportedly pleasant land, with supporters’ glee running the full gamut from garden-variety hooliganism to outright cardiganism.

**We wish them luck – not necessarily on the field, but certainly getting to it.**

We wish them luck – not necessarily on the field, but certainly getting to it. The UK’s grasp of basic geography leaves something to be desired, as demonstrated by its minister for Africa, James Duddridge, who confused Zimbabwe

with Zambia during an address at the funeral of Kenneth Kaunda. (At least he remembered not to call it Rhodesia?)

### Alike in indignity

As England beat Denmark on Wednesday night, social media feeds were divided on the subject of “home”.

On one side football fans were posting “IT’S COMING HOME”.

On the other, South Africans wondered, “Is he still at home?” as the midnight deadline for former president Jacob Zuma to hand himself over to police edged ever closer.

With a convoy of elite police forces en route, journalists gathered outside Zuma’s home observed to his son Edward that the clock was ticking. To which Zuma Jr was quick to reply: “I suggest the clock untick itself”.

Fortunately for both home crowds, a penalty shoot-out was avoided in both instances.

Just below the final whistle, Zuma handed himself over and has now begun serving a 15-month jail sentence handed to him by the Constitutional Court for contempt of court.

The Law: 1. Jacob Zuma: 0

But is the game really over? Or are we in for extra time? Ref says play on!

### Dam nations

While the Euros final will be a clash of

colonisers as Italy take on England at Wembley, countries on the continent who suffered the indignity of being colonised by them are also going at it tooth and nail.

The flex-off between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia over the latter's damming of the Nile has been plaguing intracontinental relations over the past year.

You'd think Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed would have his hands full with the whole civil war business playing out in Tigray, but apparently he wants his dam full too: This week Cairo announced that it had received notification from Addis Ababa that Ethiopia would be starting the next phase of filling its new megadam. Egypt promptly "rejected this unilateral action", and accused Ethiopia of "ill intentions".

(Sudan confirming it had received a similar communiqué. "They sent a nonsense letter".)

This verbal volley has led both Egypt and Sudan to accuse Ethiopia of breaking international law.

Ethiopia on the other hand issued its version of a red card to the League of Arab States, releasing a statement rejecting what it described as "unwelcome meddling" by the organisation, after it called on the UN to intervene in the matter.

If Mali's former president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's son, Karim, has any interest in football, he may wish to shift his focus to athletics, and start getting into running shape.

Or running-away shape, at any rate: Interpol has reportedly issued an arrest warrant for Keita Jr over the disappearance of investigative journalist Birama Toure,

who has not been seen since 2016.

If Keita did have up posters in his room of footballing legends such as George Weah, Didier Drogba and Sadio Mane, he may want to replace them with the likes of Joseph Kony and others who have managed to evade the agency.

Although those footballers do make much better role models. Especially for kids on the continent, kicking a ball around in the playground, dreaming of playing in the greatest stadiums in the world.

Children deserve more dreams like that. Instead of the nightmares. Like the kidnapping of 120 children, snatched from their school in Kaduna, Nigeria.

## **Children deserve more dreams like that. Instead of nightmares.**

According to Al Jazeera, this is the 10th mass school kidnapping in northwestern Nigeria since December 2020.

Never mind the English. Forget Italy. Can we please just put our differences aside for a moment, and find a way to stop these attacks that are robbing us of an entire generation?

Our hope is in their dreams.

Bring them home. ■

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*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

**Molecular mission:** Members of the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces Rescue and Relief Unit take part in a biochemical simulation organised by the United States Defence Threat Reduction Agency as part of the 'African Lion' military exercise, in the port of Agadir. Photo: Fadel Senna/AFP



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