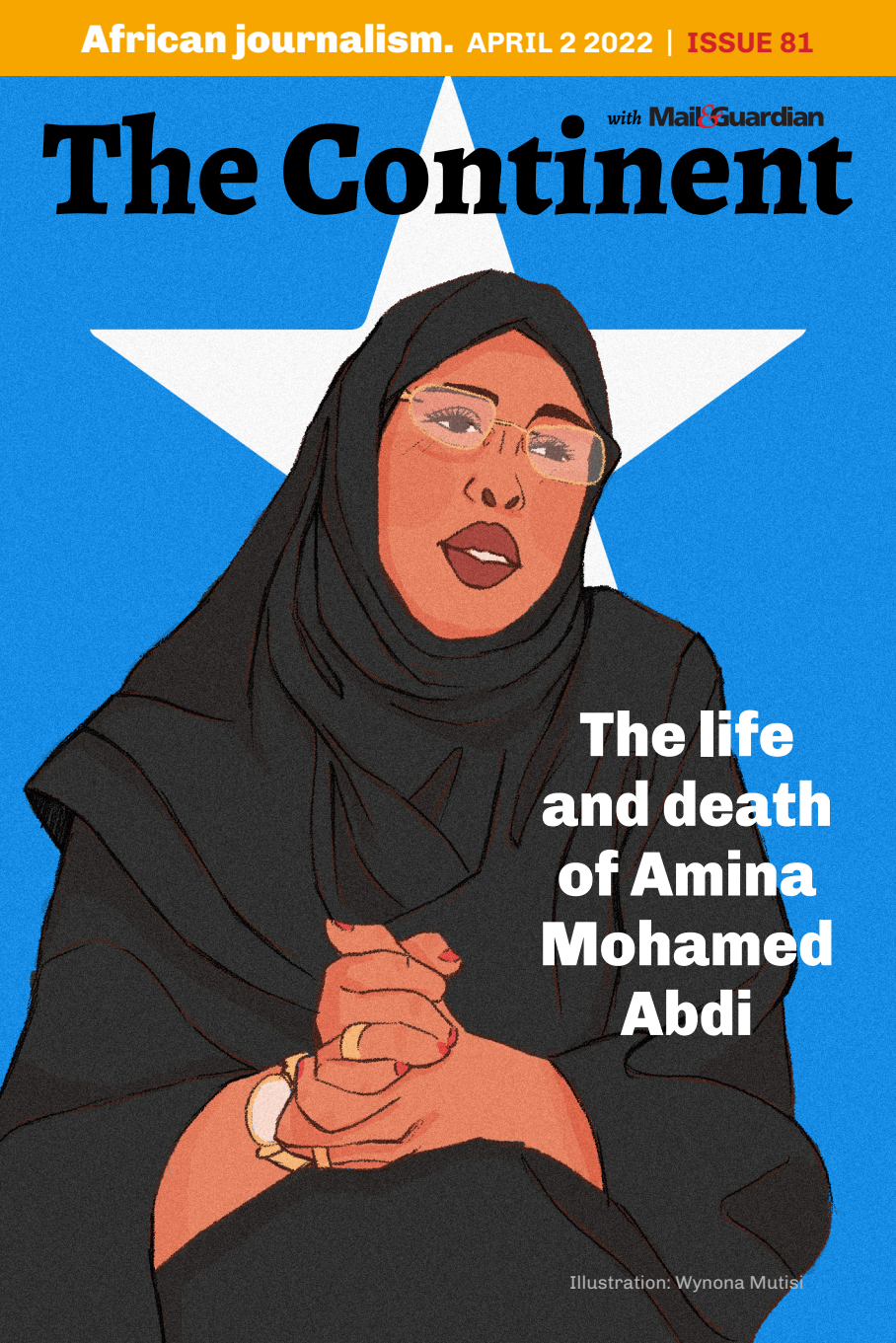


**African journalism.** APRIL 2 2022 | **ISSUE 81**

with Mail & Guardian

# The Continent

An illustration of a woman wearing a black hijab and glasses, with her hands clasped in front of her. She is set against a blue background with a large white star behind her. The style is a flat, graphic illustration with bold outlines.

**The life  
and death  
of Amina  
Mohamed  
Abdi**

Illustration: Wynona Mutisi



**COVER:** The list of women leaders who have been killed in Somalia is long. The latest victim is Amina Mohamed Abdi, an outspoken member of parliament who dared challenge the patriarchal political elite. Her death may be linked to the biggest political scandal in the country. *The Continent* reports from Mogadishu on a politician who kept running for office, and winning, despite the near-constant threat to her life (p12).

## Inside:

- **Zimbabwe:** New opposition gives Zanu-PF a headache (p7)
- **South Sudan:** A fragile peace hangs by a thread (p8)
- **Facebook:** Meet the South African whistleblower (p10)
- **Cameroon:** Men can't solve the Anglophone crisis alone (p17)

- **Movies:** An award-winning African-inspired horror story dazzles at Sundance (p19)
- **Football:** Yet another bad night for the Super Eagles (p21)
- **Travel:** The seaside town that is Cameroon's friendliest – and shiniest – tourist hotspot (p24)
- **Gambia:** Bongo bets on a third term (and who would bet against him?) (p28)

---

Get the latest edition of *The Continent*, plus every back issue (all 80 of them!) on [thecontinent.org](http://thecontinent.org)



**Windfall: A London firm has sealed a deal to build Niger's first wind farm:**

Photo: Twitter/Savannah\_Energy

## NIGER

### Power grid set to put wind in its sales

The Republic of Niger this week signed a deal with Savannah Energy PLC, a London-based company, to build the country's first wind farm. The World Bank estimates that fewer than 20% of people in the country have access to electricity. It is expected to start generating electricity in 2025 and will have a capacity of 250 megawatts. Last month, the government also signed a pact with Algeria and Nigeria for a \$13-billion Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline running from Warri in Nigeria to Hassi R'Mel in Algeria, via Niger. This will carry West African gas to European markets and supply inland stations along its route.

## SUDAN

### Stage set for Darfur war crimes trial

The trial of Ali Muhammed Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, also known as Ali Kosheib, starts in just over a week at the International Criminal Court. Kosheib is being tried as the presumed leader of the Janjaweed militia in the west Darfur region of Sudan. In the early 2000s, the group spearheaded a war campaign that included rape and mass murders targeting particular ethnic groups, and displaced over two million people. Sudan's former military leader, Omar al-Bashir, and three others are also wanted by the ICC over Darfur war crimes.

## ISRAEL

### Israel joins Spain in Western Sahara flip

Referring to Western Sahara's decades-old fight to be recognised as independent of Morocco, Israel's foreign minister says his country will join Morocco in fighting "attempts to weaken" its "sovereignty and territorial integrity". He lauded Spain's move to back Morocco as "a positive development." North African countries like Morocco are increasingly receptive to Israel's overtures but others like Algeria and Tunisia have ruled out establishing ties with it.

## TANZANIA

## Newspaper licence restored after five years off the presses

Tanzania's information minister, Nape Nnauye, says he will restore the licences of three newspapers banned under former president, John Magufuli: *Mawio*, *MwanaHALISI Mseto* and *Tanzania Daima*. *Mawio*, an investigative newspaper, was banned five years ago over stories linking former presidents Benjamin Mkapa and Jakaya Kikwete to corruption in Tanzania's mining sector. *Mawio's* editor Simon Mkina is a frequent contributor to *The Continent*.



**Start the presses:** The bans on three newspapers are finally set to be lifted.

## ALGERIA

## Unemployment relief for a lost generation

With oil prices surging, Algeria has decided to invest its windfall in the country's youth. Its new permanent unemployment benefit programme will see nearly 600,000 people aged 19 to 40 paid \$91 a month. Unemployment is as high as 15%. Beneficiaries must have never held a formal job contract or received any state aid, nor turned down more than two job offers. They must be actively looking for work and not have an employed spouse. Algeria's ruling elite has also faced many protests thanks to high unemployment and low incomes.

## MADAGASCAR

## Human rights court gains a new member, but not much support

Madagascar has finally joined the African Court for Human and Peoples' Rights. But, as with the 24 other states who have done this, there is a giant caveat: it will only recognise its jurisdiction for cases brought by an African state party or intergovernmental body. Only eight member states allow the court to hear cases from individuals and NGOs. The court, which is based in Arusha, has so far received 325 cases but just three were from a complaint all of its members recognise.

# FIGHT FAKE NEWS WITH REAL NEWS.

Disinformation is often shared on closed networks like WhatsApp. That's why *The Continent* exists. Help us fight fake news by subscribing to high quality journalism, and share that instead.



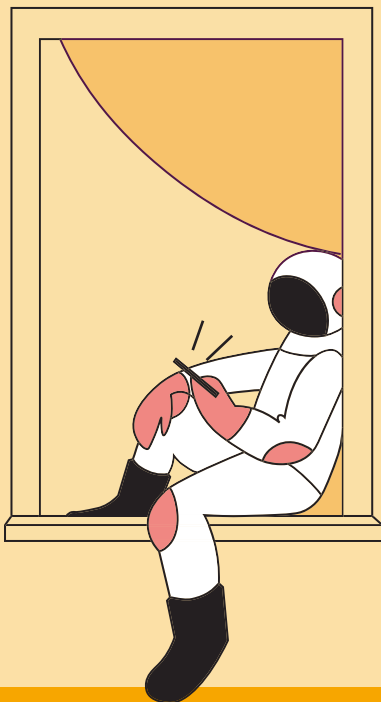
Get your copy delivered to your phone or inbox every Saturday. And if you like what you read, forward it to your friends, family and colleagues – not indiscriminately, but only with people who might appreciate it.



## HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

**Email:** [TheContinent@mg.co.za](mailto:TheContinent@mg.co.za) with 'SUBSCRIBE' in the subject box

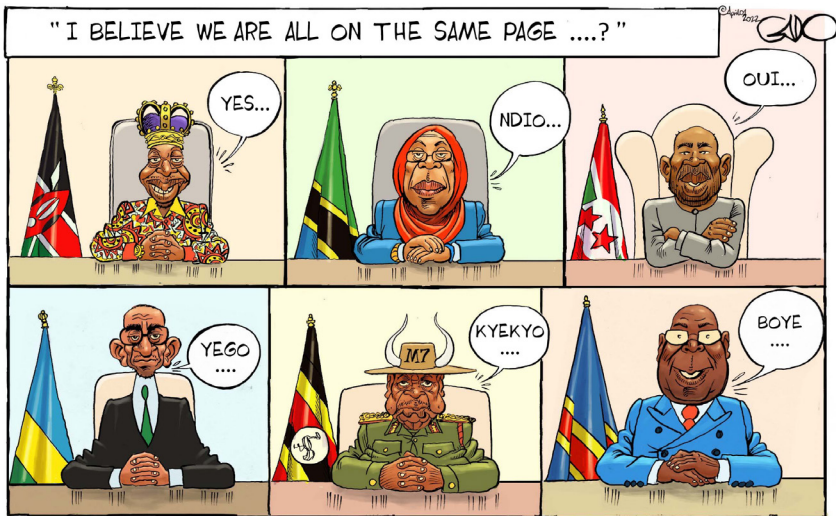
**WhatsApp/Signal:** Save +27 73 805 6068 on your phone, and send us a message saying 'NEWS'



Share real news.

**The Continent**

with Mail Guardian



**Uneasy bedfellows:** The Democratic Republic of Congo officially joined the East African Community this week.

**GHANA**

**Borders reopen after two-year pandemic closure**

Ghanaians living in border communities can now resume trade with and visits to Togo, Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Faced with an economic squeeze that has even started calls and fears of a coup to remove him, President Nana Akufo-Addo this week announced the end of a two-year-long closure of the country’s land and sea borders. He also eased other internal Covid measures, even though the country has fully vaccinated only 16% of its population.

**ETHIOPIA**

**Food aid finally finds its way into Tigray**

For the first time since December, food aid has reached Ethiopia’s besieged Tigray region, the World Food Program announced on Friday. More than five million people in the region face starvation or are starving, while the Ethiopian government and Tigray rebels trade accusations that the other is blocking humanitarian organisations from reaching them. The region has been under siege since government forces pushed out its rebels, who had advanced towards the capital, but decided not to pursue them into Tigray itself.

# Zimbabwe

## Headache for Zanu-PF as opposition gains ground

**A new party has swept by-elections, picking up traditional opposition seats and reigniting hopes of a proper challenge to Zimbabwe's ruling party**

**Kiri Rupiah**

**T**he Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), led by Nelson Chamisa, won 19 of the 28 parliamentary seats on offer in Zimbabwe's local government by-elections on Saturday. The polls have been described as a dress rehearsal for the 2023 presidential elections, in which the opposition will be hoping to properly loosen Zanu-PF's grip on power.

In the August 2018 general elections, Zanu-PF, which has led the country since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, won 69% of the 210 available seats. The main opposition then was an alliance of parties led by Chamisa, who had succeeded

Morgan Tsvangirai, a longtime opposition figure and leader of the Movement for Democratic Change. Two years later, Chamisa lost control of the party and the new leadership recalled scores of MPs aligned with him, opening up their seats in the by-election. Chamisa launched CCC in January this year, just weeks before the election.

"This by-election has shown that ultimately all authority comes from the citizens. Citizens are above politicians and their foolish politics," Chamisa tweeted after his party's win. "Why did you waste national resources taxpayers' money? Would these resources not have been deployed to better our health, education sectors?" Chamisa added.

Ahead of Saturday's polls, the ruling party was accused of using state resources to intimidate opposition supporters and rig the election. CCC candidates said that, contrary to Zimbabwean law, they didn't get an opportunity to inspect the voter roll compiled by the Registrar General's office.

The lead-up to the polls was marred by violence, which the opposition and journalists said was perpetrated by the police. In February, 37 CCC supporters were arrested at a rally. Opposition figures expressed concerns about the impartiality of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.

Voting day was, however, generally peaceful. ■

# South Sudan

## Tensions rise as Kiir sends in army to put the squeeze on vice-president

This may be the greatest test yet of the fledgling country's peace pact

David Mono Danga in Juba

**S**outh Sudan's civil war officially ended in 2018, when a peace deal was signed between President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar, who was reappointed as vice-president. But the fragile peace in the young country – founded just 11 years ago – now hangs in the balance.

For the past few weeks there have been clashes in Upper Nile and Unity States between South Sudan's army and forces loyal to Machar. In a dramatic escalation of hostilities, Machar's residence in the capital Juba was suddenly surrounded by government soldiers on Sunday evening.

In a statement on Monday morning, Machar described "heavily armed forces with armoured carriers on all routes leading to my residence", and said that

"persons who attempted to go to my residence were turned off by the troops".

Machar said that he had received no prior warning about the deployment, and warned that it was "disruptive to the peace implementation process".

Government spokesperson Michael Makuei said that the soldiers were there for Machar's own protection. "As long as all this nonsense subsides and as soon as all these things subside, the situation will return to normal," he told *The Continent*.

The escalation in tensions comes against the backdrop of a political dispute about the implementation of the 2018 peace deal – specifically, Kiir's unilateral decision to declassify documents relating to the origins of the conflict, and his stated intention to pardon all individuals named therein.

Political analysts and civil society groups who spoke to *The Continent* said that this decision went against the spirit of the peace agreement, and risked inflaming tensions. By Monday morning, the troops surrounding Machar's home had been withdrawn. But there was still a heavy army presence on Juba's major roads and intersections.

For resident Songa David, who lived through the outbreak of civil war in 2013 and further violence in 2016, the sight of soldiers on the streets of the capital brought back bad memories. "You will always have that fear in you," he said. ■



# Africa

## No, Covid-19 is not over

**But across Africa and despite low vaccination rates, countries are easing their restrictions**

**C**ovid is once again on the rise in certain parts of the world. But, because they mostly have seen high levels of vaccination, deaths and even hospitalisation numbers are proving low compared with earlier in the pandemic. Now, despite low levels of vaccination, African countries are quietly dropping their own Covid-19 restrictions.

The United Nations wants countries to vaccinate at least 70% of their populations. But just 16% of Africans have been fully vaccinated, compared with the global average of 57% – mostly because countries on the continent ended up at the back of the Covid vaccine queue thanks to their wealthier peers hoarding vaccines.

Nevertheless, the number of people dying from Covid on the continent has stayed low. Of the six million global deaths, just 250,000 have been in Africa; 100,000 of those in South Africa. Experts have attributed this variously to the speed with which countries locked down early in the pandemic, the youthfulness of African

nations' populations compared with Europe and Asia, and less inhospitable winter weather. Because of this low death rate, and despite the low vaccination rates, an increasing number of African countries are scaling back on their Covid restrictions and precautions.

The World Health Organisation said last week that at the end of 2020 half of Africa's countries were conducting thorough contact tracing. Now, 22 countries aren't doing any tracing at all. Nineteen are doing contact tracing of severe cases, while 13 are still doing serious surveillance. The WHO also found that fewer countries are requiring people with Covid to isolate. Where 41 countries banned mass gatherings a year ago, that number is down to 22. Mask wearing has, however, remained across much of the continent, especially on public transport.

**Now, 22 countries aren't doing any kind of tracing. The WHO's regional director for Africa said this was "a matter of concern"**

Meanwhile, global cases are on the rise, with sharp spikes in New Zealand and Hong Kong and, in the case of Shanghai this week, China's harshest lockdown yet.

We might be done with this pandemic, but it seems it's not *quite* done with us. ■

---

# Facebook

---

## **Daniel in the lion's den: He was thrown out, now he's trying to help those left behind**

**Daniel Motaung spent six traumatic months moderating isiZulu content on Facebook. After he tried to unionise – to demand fairer pay and better working conditions – he was fired. He is determined to fight for colleagues still in the digital trenches.**

### **Carey Baraka in Nairobi**

**T**his week, lawyers representing a 27-year-old former moderator of Facebook content wrote to the platform's parent company, Meta, and a subcontractor firm, Sama, with legal letters demanding that the two companies improve how they treat workers – or be sued. The saga promises to be the most public fight that Facebook has faced in Africa, barring the times governments blocked the social media platform.

In March 2019, Daniel Motaung, the South African taking on the global giant, began a new role as a content moderator at Sama's offices in Nairobi. Moderators are the internet's first line of protection from violent, graphic, hateful or misleading content. They review posts and take down unsavoury ones.

Motaung, whose role was to handle Facebook content in isiZulu, says the first video he remembers moderating was a beheading.

Sama is Facebook's main subcontractor for content moderation in Africa. It finds people to do this work and manages them. Neither Sama nor Meta revealed the value of the contract between them. But Accenture, a global consulting firm with offices in the United States, receives \$500-million a year for performing similar work.

The company, previously known as Samasource, started out as a non-profit before going commercial. It presents itself as an organisation doing artificial intelligence in an ethical manner, by connecting the poor and unemployed, including refugees, to big technology firms for low end jobs. It boasts of having

lifted 50,000 people out of poverty in Africa and Asia.

Motaung came to a different conclusion as to why Sama hires the poor and job insecure. “This is merely a way to find cheap labour, as many Western companies have done in the Global South,” Motaung tells *The Continent*. “With this dynamic they can go find someone who is cheaper and then you will be unemployed again.”

He lost his job soon after attempting to unionise his Sama colleagues.

**“This is merely a way to find cheap labour, as many Western companies have done in the Global South”**

Motaung says content moderators in Sama’s Nairobi hub suffered real trauma from watching the videos they were moderating, but received limited mental health support. He says they also worked long work hours that were monitored by software that measures one’s screentime and movement, and were paid less than content moderators elsewhere. In a 16 February statement, Sama said its pay triples Kenya’s (\$118 monthly) minimum wage. Many workers were from other African countries and their residence in Kenya was tied to the work permits that came with their jobs and so they didn’t raise too much trouble. Because they sign nondisclosure agreements, most workers were unwilling to speak on the record.

Thinking that collective bargaining might give everyone a bit more security in asking for more, Motaung organised a loose coalition of his colleagues which

then wrote to the Sama management asking for a meeting. Things spiralled out of his control pretty quickly thereafter.

In August 2019, barely five months after he started on the job, Motaung was suspended and isolated from his colleagues. In a letter, Sama accused him of bullying and intimidating his colleagues, and putting its relationship with Facebook “at great risk”.

Shortly thereafter, he was dismissed from the job and had to leave Kenya. Motaung and his lawyers say that what Sama did was tantamount to “unlawful union-busting action”.

Although Motaung no longer has to do the traumatising work of watching social media’s underbelly, he has nevertheless sent legal letters to Sama and Facebook, making 12 demands for fair treatment of content moderators who are still on the job: better pay; better-qualified and experienced health professionals; and adequate mental health insurance. Sama and Facebook have until 19 April to respond to the demands – or be sued.

“Sama installed this mentality that I should die in silence,” Motaung tells *The Continent*. He says he will not.

Sama declined to comment for this story, but a Meta spokesperson said: “We take our responsibility to the people who review content for Meta seriously and require our partners to provide industry-leading pay, benefits and support. We also encourage content reviewers to raise issues when they become aware of them and regularly conduct independent audits to ensure our partners are meeting the high standards we expect of them.” ■



**FEATURE**

**She fought  
against the  
patriarchy.  
Then she  
was killed.**

Illustration:  
Wynona Mutisi

*Amina Mohamed Abdi was one of the government's most prominent critics. But in demanding accountability for one of Somalia's biggest political scandals, she may have made one enemy too many.*

## Hussein Mohamed in Mogadishu

**T**he first time that she ran for Parliament, in 2012, Amina Mohamed Abdi was still in her early 20s. By then, the Mogadishu-born politician had already established herself as an academic and a teacher, but she felt compelled to contribute even more.

There are not very many young women in Somali politics, and Mohamed soon found out why. "I was asked: 'You want to be a prostitute? How can a woman represent a clan?'" she said in a 2021 Reuters interview. "I insisted and said a clan is not composed only of men."

She ran under the banner of a major opposition party, and she won, occupying one of the seats reserved for women in Somalia's parliament. Four years later, she ran again – but this time for an open seat in Beledweyne town, in Hiran district, near the border with Ethiopia. Her opponents included some prominent male leaders.

She won again.

"It's not very easy to be a female politician and win the hearts and minds of the people," observed Alinur Bodaye, a former parliamentarian from Mohamed's district.

Bodaye told *The Continent* that Mohamed was an expert when it came to navigating the extraordinary complexities of Somali politics. She forged strong

relationships with the executive branch, despite representing an opposition party, and she never shied away from sensitive issues – earning herself a reputation as one of the government's fiercest critics.

Her outspokenness won her many friends, including among her constituents. She was running for Parliament again this year, in long-delayed parliamentary elections, and she was almost certain to retain her seat.

But she had also made some dangerous enemies.

## A dangerous profession

The life expectancy for women leaders in Somalia is low. The country is dangerous in general for politicians – the government is protected by a United Nations peacekeeping mission – but the risks are worse for women.

Istarlin Arush, a human rights activist, was killed during a suspected robbery at her home in Nairobi in 2002. Saado Ali Warsame, a singer turned politician, was gunned down in her car in Mogadishu in 2014. Almaas Elman, a Somali-Canadian aid worker, was shot within the heavily-fortified Mogadishu airport complex in 2019. Hibaq Abukar, the adviser on women's rights in the prime minister's office, died in a suicide bomb attack in the capital last year. Ikran Talil, a 24-year-old intelligence officer, went missing on 26 June last year, and has not been seen



**Cut down: Political leaders pray in front of Amina Mohamed Abdi's body in Mogadishu. Photo: Hassan Ali Elmi/AFP**

or heard from since.

The list goes on, and on – and Amina Mohamed was well aware of the risks.

She was vocal in demanding justice for fellow women leaders, especially Talil, the intelligence officer whose disappearance shocked the nation. Talil was supposedly in possession of documents that implicated senior government officials in Somalia's biggest political scandal: the alleged deaths of thousands of Somali soldiers in Ethiopia's Tigray region, where they had been secretly sent to fight alongside Ethiopian government forces.

The Somali government denies any troops were sent into Ethiopia, despite widespread reporting to the contrary – including in *The Continent*. Its intelligence agency, which employed Ikran, said that she was killed by Islamist militants Al

Shabaab, although the group denies it.

Mohamed did not buy the official line, and accused the presidency of getting rid of Ikran to cover up its dirty secrets.

Now she is gone too.

### **Targeted assassination**

On Wednesday last week, Mohamed was in Beledweyne, campaigning for a third term in Parliament. Someone rushed up to her, as if to embrace her – and then exploded. The suicide bomb killed both her and her bodyguard. Another bomb, at a nearby hospital where Mohamed would have been taken had she survived, killed 30 people.

Al Shabaab has reportedly claimed responsibility for the attack, although not everyone is convinced.

In the days leading up to her death,

Mohamed reported receiving death threats from members of the government, saying that these were connected to her outspoken advocacy about Ikran Talil's disappearance.

Mohamed's friends and family believe that her murder was politically motivated – an assassination. They have demanded an international investigation into the killing. Talil's mother, Qali Mohamed Gulad, said she believes state actors were responsible for her daughter's death, and that Mohamed has paid the ultimate price for fighting for justice for her daughter.

Even Somalia's prime minister, Mohamed Hussein Roble – a political enemy of President Mohamed Abdullahi Formajo – said that he too had received threats in the hours before Amina Mohamed's death.

"I'm as certain as death itself that those who killed Amina were the same people who killed Ikran," he said, speaking at a prayer meeting in Mogadishu this week in Mohamed's honour.

**Mohamed's friends and family believe that her murder was politically motivated. They have demanded an international investigation into the killing.**

The presidency has condemned the attack that claimed Mohamed's life, and sent condolences to her family.

Regardless of the identity of Mohamed's killers, for some the motivation behind her killing is clear.



**Threat to power: Before her death, Amina Mohamed Abdi said she received threats from members of government.**

As *Somali Wire*, a publication of the Sahar research think tank, explained: "For many, Amina's main crime was to be a woman who sought to challenge Somalia's patriarchal political elite and its callous indifference to the plight of ordinary people. In Somalia's corridors of power, women – even powerful women – are expected to serve as loyal devotees and cheerleaders, not to assert leadership in their own right. But for Amina, that was simply not good enough. 'I was ... brought up ... in a country when there was no government,' she once said. 'It is necessary for our children to have a government in order to get the basic rights: security, clean water and quality education' – tasks at which her male colleagues are manifestly failing." ■

# How healthy is my healthcare?

**N**ext week's World Health Day (7 April) raises high-stakes global issues, from Covid-19 to climate change. Here we want to take it right down to the household level – to people who can't get the health care they need.

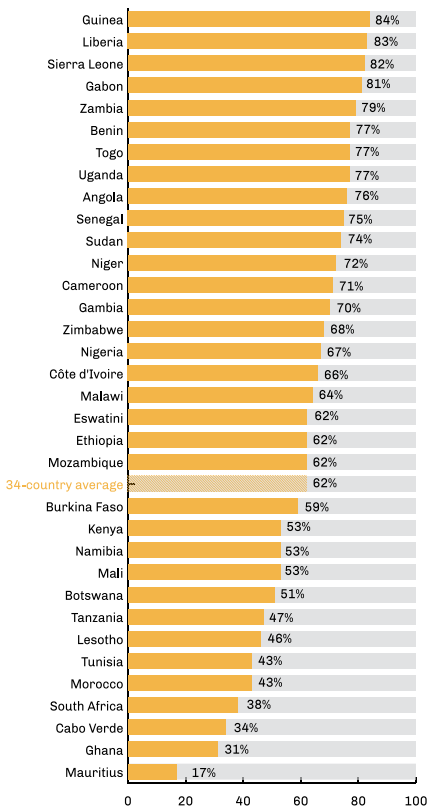
On average, across 34 African countries surveyed by Afrobarometer, more than six in 10 adults (62%) say they or a family member went without medicine or medical care at least once during the previous year, including 23% who say this happened “many times” or “always”.

This form of lived poverty affected more than half of all households in 26 of the 34 countries, including more than eight in 10 citizens in Guinea (84%), Liberia (83%), Sierra Leone (82%), and Gabon (81%). In addition, half (49%) of those who sought care at a public clinic or hospital say it was difficult to obtain the services they needed, and one in five (19%) report having to pay a bribe.

Little wonder that a majority (55%) of Africans say their government is doing a poor job of improving basic health services.

But don't blame Covid-19: Trends are

Percentage of adults who say they or a family member went without medicine or medical care at least once during the previous year | 34 African countries | 2019/2021



no better in countries surveyed before Covid-19 than in those surveyed after the start of the pandemic.

**Source:** Afrobarometer, a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.



# In Anglophone Cameroon, peace cannot be achieved without including women

**Although women are disproportionately affected in conflicts, they are not mere victims. Those in positions of authority should recognise them as the powerful agents they are.**

**Arrey Elvis Ntui**

**R**aped, uprooted or unable to access basic services, women have borne the brunt of the conflict in Cameroon's two Anglophone regions that has pitted separatists against the government since 2017. The crisis has displaced nearly 580,000, most of whom are women and children, and killed more than 6,000.

But women are not just victims. They play various roles in the conflict. As rebels, women have engaged in combat, gathered intelligence, cooked for fighters and nursed the injured. Some in the diaspora have raised funds for the insurgency or garnered online support. As peace activists, Anglophone women have led the way in advocating for an end to hostilities, whether by engaging with warring parties, mobilising communities to mitigate the violence's impact or organising protests.

Despite women's political activism, the government in Yaoundé and separatist leaders have largely sidelined them

when discussing the conflict. This is a mistake; they are overlooking important perspectives on the conflict and ignoring influential leaders, especially in rural areas or within families, who could generate buy-in from communities for an eventual political settlement.

The expertise and networks of women leaders should be leveraged better in efforts to plan for a long-term recovery. Government and separatists, with the support of outside actors, should not only address the harms women are experiencing in the conflict but also start including women in convenings to discuss a political resolution. And though prospects for a settlement appear distant for now, they should make sure women are invited to the table when negotiations take off. Doing so is critical to paving the way for lasting peace. ■

---

*Arrey Elvis Ntui is the International Crisis Group's Consulting Senior Analyst for Cameroon*

# Lesotho's richest man gets serious

**Sam Matekane is betting his outsider status will re-energise cynical voters**

**John Aerni-Flessner**

**T**he arrival of new political parties in Lesotho is commonplace – the country of about two million people has 53 of them. But Sam Matekane's Revolution for Prosperity (RFP) has more of a shot at reshaping the political landscape than most.

Matekane, reputed to be Lesotho's richest man, is well known for his extensive business and philanthropic endeavours, which may well propel Matekane's RFP to the upper echelons of Lesotho's politics this year.

The general elections in September this year were always going to be a watershed, considering Pakalitha Mosisili and Tom Thabane, the two men who served as prime minister from 2002 to 2020, have both retired. In January the race opened up even more with the splintering of the ruling All Basotho Convention (ABC) into two factions. Sitting prime minister, Moeketsi Majoro, lost the ABC leadership battle to Nkaku Kabi, leaving the biggest party irrevocably split.



The Lesotho populace has been souring on electoral politics over the past decade of political turmoil. Only 47% of the electorate voted in 2017 and fewer than half of Basotho surveyed in 2019 thought elections were the best way to choose leaders.

Into this environment strolls Matekane and his RFP. Matekane made his money in transport, construction, property and mining. He has built public visibility through charitable giving, ranging from new schools and sports fields to leading a private-sector effort to increase the supply of Covid-19 vaccines in Lesotho.

His party will soon show whether it has the organisational chops and staying power to win elections, but his reputation likely makes his new party an attractive option come September, to an electorate disillusioned by “politics as usual”. ■

---

*John Aerni-Flessner is an Associate Professor of African History at Michigan State University*



## A particularly African horror story

**Nikyatu Jusu's Sundance-winning supernatural debut feature is heavily inspired by West African folklore.**

**Wilfred Okiche**

**H**istory was made in January when Nikyatu Jusu's debut feature *Nanny* became the first horror film to win the grand jury prize in the United States dramatic category at the Sundance film festival. Jusu – a first generation American whose parents immigrated from Sierra Leone – became only the second Black woman to win the top prize in the festival's 38-year history, following in the footsteps of Chinonye Chukwu, a Nigerian-American filmmaker who first claimed the prize in 2019 with her prison drama *Clemency*.

Atmospheric and visually arresting, *Nanny* tells the story of Aisha (Anna

Diop), an undocumented Senegalese immigrant working as a domestic helper for a privileged New York City couple. Aisha hopes to save up enough money to bring her son over to the US. On top of the indignities meted out by her employers and the passive aggressiveness of American-style liberal racism, Aisha has to contend with disturbing visions that keep haunting her.

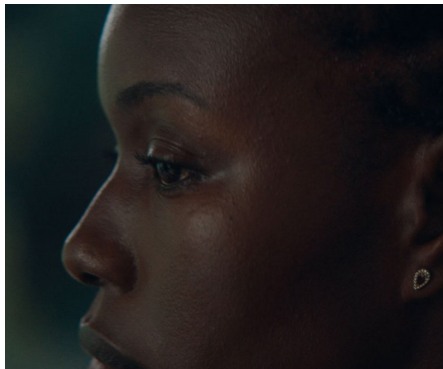
Recently acquired for worldwide distribution by Blumhouse and Amazon Prime Video, *Nanny* is clearly rooted in the horror genre, thus is positioned to attract a wide audience when it is released. But it is the African inspirations and Jusu's commitment to authenticity that give the film its unique voice and singular identity.

In telling this culturally-specific story spanning two continents, Jusu – also the writer and executive producer – is able to do something that is important to her: use filmmaking to bridge the gaps between Africa and the diaspora, particularly with African-Americans. She tells *The Continent* about this tension: “The traditional educational systems on both sides of the divide do not have the goal of bridging the African diaspora gaps. And so individual Black artists have to figure out if this is a priority. For me it is.”

*Nanny’s* Aisha is haunted by visions of Mami Wata and Anansi the Spider, two of the most prominent figures in West African folklore. The mermaid-like siren Mami Wata is a complex figure that honours the essential and terrifying power of water bodies.

With origins in the Akan ethnic region of Ghana, Anansi the Spider is a trickster figure who uses their wit and ingenuity to get through difficult situations. The transatlantic slave trade led to the propagation of this mythology in the Caribbean regions and in the southern Gullah culture of the US, where a similar trickster figure goes by the name Br’er Rabbit. Jusu incorporates these mythical elements and complications into her heroine’s very relatable quest for a better life, blurring the lines between the mundane and the supernatural.

*Nanny* also moves from high to low brow, finding time to pay homage to Nollywood film culture and the never-ending jollof wars raging among West African countries. In one memorable scene, an American character asks Aisha



**Haunted:** Anna Diop as Aisha in *Nikyatou*  
**Jusu’s lauded debut feature *Nanny*.**

who makes the best jollof rice. He’s heard a lot from Nigerians bragging about their superiority. Aisha’s response is a sharp retort that Nigerians think they are the best at everything.

In some ways *Nanny* plays as a corrective to the tragedy of Ousmane Sembène’s *Black Girl (La Noire de)*, that redoubtable classic of African cinema, as Jusu fashions a journey for her heroine that is more upbeat and ultimately hopeful even in the midst of tragedy.

From her unique perspective as an American who is also very much African, Jusu imagines herself as positioned to see not only the tension lines but the common connections between Africans and the diaspora.

She concludes: “We have to figure out how to be clearer about engaging with each other because it only benefits us to really understand where the other is coming from.

And art has a role to play in this whether we see it clearly or not.” ■



Photo: Pius Utomi  
Ekpei/ AFP

## The trouble with Nigerian football

**For the first time since 2006, the Super Eagles will not be at the World Cup. It didn't have to be this way – and football boss Amaju Pinnick has a lot to answer for.**

**Tolu Olasoji**

Let's flip the script and, just for a second, imagine that the Super Eagles won their match on Tuesday and were heading to the 2022 World Cup, to be held later this year in Qatar.

Imagine another genre-defining Nike football jersey, combining purists' nostalgia with influence from Afrobeats. Imagine the many partnerships and sponsorships that would bring much-

needed cash flooding into the coffers of the NFF – the Nigerian Football Federation – even amid the silent grunts from the players' camp as they protest about unsettled bonuses. Imagine the unnecessarily large Nigerian delegation in Qatar, ostensibly there to strengthen “bilateral relations”, as the over-confident NFF boss Amaju Pinnick said, even before Nigeria secured their spot.

You'll have to keep imagining, because none of it is actually happening. Tuesday's

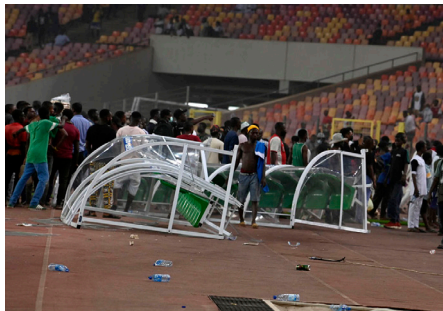
1-1 draw with Ghana ensured that it is the Black Stars who will join Cameroon, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia in the African contingent at the tournament later this year. The disappointing result for the country was further marred by fan violence at the Moshood Abiola Stadium in Abuja.

This is a rude awakening for Nigeria. With one exception in 2006, it has competed in every World Cup Finals since 1994. But its failure to qualify does highlight the fact that there is really nothing going on in the Nigerian football ecosystem at the moment.

For instance, age-grade competitions, which used to thrive even amid age falsification claims, have become a shadow of their former selves. The national football leagues, heralded by the Nigerian Football Professional League, have taken a turn for the worse. Grassroots development is almost non-existent, and the once-leading women's national teams are playing catch-up to the likes of South Africa and Cameroon. They have also missed out on two consecutive Olympic games and are treated as an afterthought. No one dares question this, as former Super Falcons captain Desire Oparanozie found out to her cost when she was stripped of the captaincy after complaining about playing conditions.

### **An individual sport**

Since Pinnick's appointment as NFF president, a seemingly concerted effort has been directed towards the Super Eagles, its flagship project. But even as the Super Eagles have stalled, one person's



**On the rampage: Fans weren't happy when Ghana qualified for the 2022 World Cup at Nigeria's expense. Photo: Pisu Utomi Ekpei/AFP**

star has continued to rise – that of Pinnick himself.

After dominating the continental football scene, stamping his status as a kingmaker in the Confederation of African Football, he's risen to the top echelon of the global body Fifa. He is part of the Fifa executive council, the most crucial decision-making organ in world football. So while Nigeria's national team will miss out in Qatar, and be in footballing limbo for the next few years, Pinnick will not.

This is not what the football technocrat promised when he became the president of the NFF in 2014. The aim was to take Nigerian football to the summit. Now, the only party there is him.

To understand how we got here, it's imperative to look at Pinnick's pet project: the Super Eagles.

After failing to even qualify for the first two African Cup of Nations (Afcon) tournaments of his reign, Pinnick appointed the pragmatic German Gernot



**Hiccup of Nations: Nigeria's domination in the 2013 African Cup of Nations in South Africa has turned out to be an outlying bump on the road to futility.** Photo: Lee Warren/Gallo Images/Getty Images

Rohr as manager. Under Rohr, Nigeria qualified for the 2018 World Cup with a game to spare – before an underwhelming group stage exit in the tournament itself – and went on to a third-place finish in the 2019 Afcon.

### Unwelcome interference

But relations with the Pinnick-led administration were tense. Rohr strived to work independently and prioritised decent quality in his set up. He objected to the board's efforts to force home-based players on his team, and often complained publicly about interference.

With work relations – and on-field showings – turning sour, Pinnick relieved Rohr of his position just a few weeks before this year's Afcon in Cameroon. Austin Eguaveon was drafted in to replace the Franco-German – a desperate move. Surprisingly, the former Nigeria international teased the football senses of fans with some nostalgic wing-play, but nonetheless failed to progress past the group phase of the tournament.

Again, in the make-or-break World

Cup qualifier this week, Eguaveon had his limitations exploited by an introspective Ghana setup, who were themselves reeling from disgrace in Cameroon. He now holds the unenviable record of handling the country on both occasions (2006 and 2022) that it failed to reach the World Cup since making its debut in 1994.

Eguaveon resigned on Thursday, with immediate effect. But there has been no such accountability from Pinnick – who is reportedly tweaking federation rules to allow himself to run for a third term – or the NFF.

“There was nothing the team needed that was lacking,” the NFF said in a statement. “The truth is that we left nothing to chance. It is sad that things turned out the way they did.”

For Nigerian football, it is sadder still that Pinnick alone will be flying the country's flag in Qatar – even as the country's entire football economy collapses around him. ■

---

Tolu Olasoji is a Nigerian sports writer and regular contributor to *The Continent*



*Welcome to*  
**Limbe, Cameroon**

**The 'Town of Friendship' has long served as Cameroon's door to the world, delivering postcard scenery from the centre of 600km of pristine ocean coastline adorned with beautiful islands**

**Erwin Ayota**

Cameroon's cherished southwestern tourist city of Limbe owes its name to the nature that makes this such a beautiful place to visit. The Limbe river runs through two of the city's major attractions, before emptying itself in the Atlantic Ocean. For a century the city was named for Victoria; the colonial British queen. Now, the city and surrounding area reclaim and remix that heritage and the surrounding natural wonderland into a truly dynamic setting with amazing food, incredible energy and a friendliness that makes it an unmissable tourist destination.

**Sightseeing**

Visit the Limbe Wildlife Centre; a rescue, rehabilitation and conservation project that hosts gorillas, drills, chimpanzees, pangolins and crocodiles – all victims of the illegal animal trade. Then there is the Limbe Botanic Garden, a preserve of over 250 species of flora and trees as old as 130 years. It welcomes children and adults alike throughout the week, with entry ranging from \$0.50 to \$4.

The Bimbilla Village Slave Trade Site marks the last journey on the motherland for thousands of people ferried in chains to Europe and the Americas three centuries ago. Their descendants often trace their ancestry



to this part of the continent and make a journey of return to honour the memory of their ancestors and their suffering.

To the west coast, the village of Debundscha has the distinction of being the second wettest place in Africa – and sixth on the world ranking, with an estimated average rainfall of 10,299mm.

Seated behind the highest mountain in west and central Africa, the biodiversity in and around Debundscha represents a fascinating eco-tourism destination, as in the shadow of Mount Cameroon, the landscape's many waterfalls provide refuge all kinds of wildlife, including elephants.

### Vibe of the city

While the natural riches of this attractive city cannot be overstated, its heartbeat remains the culture of its people. Limbe is fondly called the town of friendship and opportunities, recognising the welcoming nature of its residents, regardless of or perhaps because of how cosmopolitan the population is increasingly becoming.

The town – which is very safe to stay in – has also often been recognised as Cameroon's cleanest city: another reason it has become a preferred destination for tourists in the country.

### Getting around

Steering Limbe's good vibes are the city's taxi drivers, driven by camaraderie and candour in their neat and comfortable yellow-painted cabs. This is an ideal way to appreciate the



colours of the city; its buildings, people running errands, roadside businesses, the numerous trees, greenery and ocean views. The breezy ride often gets so interesting you wish you weren't stopping soon.

Pro tip: make sure you greet whenever you get in, remind the driver you don't know precisely where your destination is and feel free to ask questions about what catches your attention along the way. Taxi fare is as low as \$0.25 for short distances to \$4.50 for hires.

Everything you may need is often close by and there is usually very little or no traffic at all. Motorbikes are also available and affordable – just in case!

### What to eat

You should stop by the cosy Parisse restaurant to take in some excellent Cameroon cuisine: tasty eru (finely shredded eru leaves, cooked with palm oil and nicely cut waterleaf – best served with either garri or water fufu; both alternative forms of cassava);



Photos: Erwin Ayota



mind-blowing kwacoco and mbanga soup (grated cocoyams steamed to perfection and soup consisting of pounded red palm kernel – served with some fleshy stock fish); nutritious ndole (a savoury vegetable dish featuring bitter leaf, cooked with a blend of peanuts and other spices); satisfying ekwang (grated cocoyams wrapped in cocoyam leaves and cooked in palm oil

with crayfish or meat); or delicate fries, plus refreshment, for \$6. Parisse is in Ngeme, en route to the volcanic sand beaches, and superb for solo chilling or with friends and family at sunset.

### Nightlife njoka

There's no better place to live and love nightlife in the city than at Sappa Road, littered with snacks, cabaret and nightclubs – particularly Salento Lounge, Apple Night Club, Ocean Blue and Empire. This is a preferred sector for njoka – as having fun is fondly termed in Cameroon. Before you go out, enjoy some fish, chicken or soya (skewered meat). Then make sure you leave the club early enough to catch a bowl of pepper soup to get ahead of your morning hunger after all the drinks and dancing. Drinks start at less than \$2 for a bottle of something good; meals here and in most parts of town go for between \$1 and \$5.

### Best time of the year

A great time to visit Limbe is early January – in the shadow of the festive season effervescence, and far from the rainy season and February harmattan.

### Song that represents the feel of the city

Ida Banton's *No Wahala* is the perfect song for Limbe – in step with the stress-free, enjoyment-filled life that you can live here. Your best life. ■



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

Send an email to [thecontinent@mg.co.za](mailto:thecontinent@mg.co.za) and we'll be in touch!

# THE QUIZ

0-3

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

4-7

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

8-10

"I may not be the only tree in the desert but I am the best one."



- 1\_** Citizens' Coalition for Change is a political party in which country?
- 2\_** The Ténéré Tree (pictured) was once considered the most isolated tree in the world. It was found in the Sahara Desert, northeast of which country?
- 3\_** The loti is the currency of which country?
- 4\_** True or false: The Democratic Republic of Congo is part of Ecowas.
- 5\_** True or false: Lake Elizabeth is one of Africa's Great Lakes.
- 6\_** What is the demonym for people from Guinea-Bissau?
- 7\_** Name two religions that are most prevalent across Africa.
- 8\_** Which of these is a city in Togo: Limbe, Lomé or Lilongwe?
- 9\_** Name the Horn of Africa country whose name is the Italianised version of the Latin for "Red Sea".
- 10\_** What is the southernmost point in Africa?

## HOW DID I DO?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

Would you like to send us some quiz questions or even curate your own quiz? Let us know at [TheContinent@mg.co.za](mailto:TheContinent@mg.co.za)

# Bongo drums up a third term

**Gabon's president has no intention of releasing his – or his family's – grip on the country**

**Mbulle-Nziege Leonard**

**G**abonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba has declared he will run for a third term in office, and has already taken a number of steps designed to ease his quest to become the latest African “president for life”.

In 2017, Parliament abolished the two-term presidential term limit stipulated in the constitution, paving the way for a lifetime presidency.

Furthermore, since his narrow victory over former African Union chairperson Jean Ping in the 2016 presidential election, Bongo exploited existing weaknesses in the Gabonese opposition, which has since fragmented following a series of defections.

Bongo's bid to set himself up as a perennial president is nonetheless remarkable. Just four years ago he suffered a life-threatening stroke in October 2018 and spent the ensuing year in recovery and rehabilitation, mostly in Morocco and the United Kingdom.

The resulting vacuum generated

a power struggle that saw Bongo's influential cabinet director Brice Laccruche Alihanga carry out a purge of Bongo loyalists. Despite this, when Bongo resumed presidential duties in November 2019, he proved able to regain control.

Most notably, the Operation Scorpion anti-corruption campaign was used to arrest Alihanga and many of the associates he had placed in high-ranking positions.

Perhaps worried about his health – Bongo is still visibly frail and uses a cane to walk, although he did undertake official overseas visits to France, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom last year – the president has already begun to line up his successor: Following his own return to political life, Bongo has pushed his eldest son, Noureddin Valentin Bongo, into the political limelight.

In June 2020, Valentin was appointed director of presidential affairs, a position he held until September 2021.

This experience – Valentin's first in government – gave him a better understanding of state affairs and appears to mirror the way that Ali Bongo's father, Omar Bongo Ondimba, who ruled Gabon from 1968 to 2009, prepared him for power prior to his own demise in 2009.

Neither time nor death, it seems, will see the Bongo dynasty relax its grip over Gabon. ■



*Mbulle-Nziege Leonard is a doctoral candidate at the University of Cape Town.*

## THE BIG PICTURE

**Out of the dark: A Layene pilgrim enters the sacred recollection cave in Ngor in the Senegalese city of Dakar. Each year thousands of Layene Muslims embark on a pilgrimage from the birth place of their community in nearby Camberene and finishing at the sacred cave in Ngor. Thousands of followers of the Layene Sufi Muslim brotherhood gathered in Dakar on pilgrimage this year – for the first time since 2019 without Covid-19 restrictions. Photo: John Wessels/AFP**



The Continent is published by the Adamela Trust, a not-for-profit organisation founded by Mail & Guardian journalists that is dedicated to fostering quality journalism. It is produced with the M&G, Africa's leading independent newspaper, and upholds strict editorial standards. For queries and complaints, or to make a donation, please contact [TheContinent@mg.co.za](mailto:TheContinent@mg.co.za).