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The Continent



**Controversies
cloud Rwanda's
commonwealth
parade**

Photo: Simon Wohlfahrt/AFP

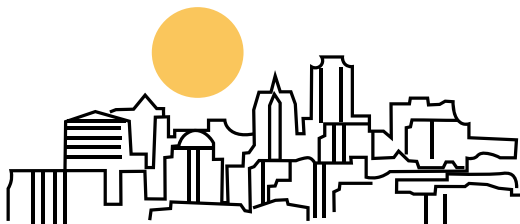


Cover: The Commonwealth summit in Kigali this week is meant to showcase the best of Rwanda to the rest of the world. Sure enough, the country is making headlines – but for all the wrong reasons (p8). And for anyone still wondering whether it is a good idea for Britain to be offloading its asylum seekers onto Rwanda, it might be worth listening to the experiences of the Rwandan refugee community in Maputo (p11).

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HassanSMohamud



SOMALIA

New president, new premier, new friendships

In a move that communicates a clear difference in attitude from his immediate predecessor, Somalia's newly elected president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, has appointed a legislator from the semi-autonomous region of Jubaland to be his prime minister. His predecessor, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, commonly known as Farmaajo, had a confrontational relationship with Jubaland. The appointed prime minister, Hamza Abdi Barre, was an educator who co-founded Kismayo university and taught at the university of Mogadishu, before joining parliament in December.

ETHIOPIA

Tigray agrees to consider peace talks

The Ethiopian government has selected a committee, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, to prepare for negotiations with the Tigray People's Liberation Front. The committee is expected to work out the nuts and bolts for the talks in 10-15 days. In an open letter, the liberation front indicated it was open to negotiating and would send a delegation if the process was "credible, impartial and principled". The two-year civil war has displaced more than 9-million people, and those who remained are facing starvation and collapsed social services.

TOGO

State of emergency as conflict spills over

On Monday, Togo declared a state of emergency in Savanes, its northernmost region, at the border with Burkina Faso. This follows the fatal May attack by militants from the Sahel region which killed eight people. Before then, Togo, a coastal country sitting at the Gulf of Guinea, had been spared the militancy that has destabilised its northern neighbours: Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali. It is speculated that the militants are pushing south to gain sea access for arms and other trade.

TANZANIA

Maasai violently evicted to make way for trophy hunting

Dozens of Maasai people have been arrested and/or injured in the past two weeks as they resisted plans by the Tanzania government to remove them from land in Ngorongoro and Loliondo. The Tanzanian authorities want to expand the Unesco-designated Ngorongoro conservation area, and in Loliondo they want to make room for a luxury resort for trophy hunting and elite tourism. Maasai have lived and grazed on these lands for centuries, but are already restricted in their use by existing wildlife parks.

GABON

Energy fossil fuels forest foolishness

France's TotalEnergies this week said it had bought a 49% stake in a Gabonese forestry company, for which they will likely be able to claim carbon offsets. Instead of cutting their own carbon emissions, fossil fuel companies find projects that let them say they are, for example, preventing deforestation – while continuing their polluting business models. Gabon has vast forests – and vast oil reserves that have long attracted multinational companies but benefited few of its people.



Debt to rights: President Hichilema is set on reversing Zambia's insolvency.

Photo: Twitter/HHichilema

ZAMBIA

First creditors' meeting on debt restructuring

Inching closer to resolving its debt crisis, Zambia has, for the first time since it defaulted on its sovereign loans in 2020, convinced its creditors to meet and rework the payment plans. By the start of this year, Zambia owed external debtors some \$17.3-billion and being a sovereign defaulter makes it unlikely to get other foreign financial assistance. The International Monetary Fund earlier agreed to give Zambia \$1.4-billion so it can begin paying the loans once again.

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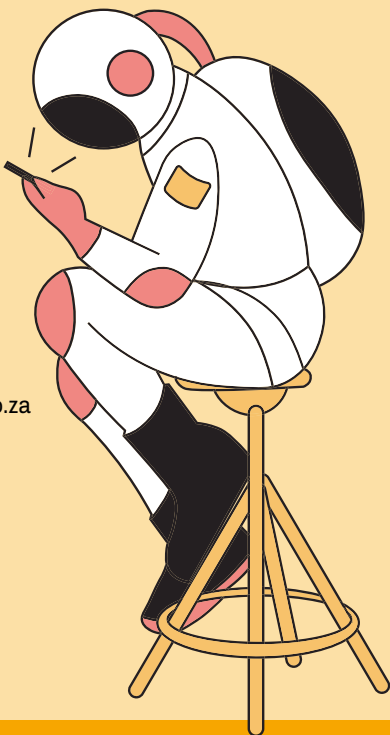
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Appealing: Journalist Jeffrey Moyo has been given a suspended jail sentence.

ZIMBABWE

Journalist convicted amid outcry

This week, a court in Bulawayo convicted Jeffrey Moyo, a regular contributor to *The Continent*, and penalised him with a fine of about \$650 and a two year suspended sentence, for having helped two *New York Times* journalists get press accreditation for a reporting trip in the country. The Zimbabwe Media Commission, which issued the accreditation, later claimed it was fake. The official who issued the cards was acquitted of any crime. Moyo is free now and has appealed both conviction and sentence.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

The Lancet insists that African contributors to scientific research be acknowledged

The Lancet, a top international medical science journal, will stop accepting papers that use data from Africa without acknowledging African contributors. “[In] such a paper you probably had a local researcher collecting data, or you “helicoptered” to Africa, but you chose not to recognise them, which is not acceptable,” Dr Sabine Kleinert, the journal’s senior executive editor, told the World Conference on Research Integrity, hosted by the University of Cape Town.

LIBYA

ICC confirms death of Libyan warlord

The International Criminal Court has dropped its case against Mahmoud al-Werfalli after he was killed last month. The court issued warrants for Werfalli in 2017, accusing him of executing 33 people, and in 2018 after he allegedly took part in executing 10 people in Benghazi. Arresting him proved difficult as he was reportedly protected by Khalifa Haftar, a field marshal who controls part of the country.

South Africa

Another major SA city runs out of water

The country's fourth largest city, Gqeberha, is about to run out of water after drought and long-term mismanagement of its water resources.

Gqeberha is a key node in South Africa's economy. The city's car-making industry exports parts and vehicles around the world. It is in the heartland that birthed the ruling African National Congress's greatest leaders. Now its taps are running dry, with emergency boreholes, water tankers and the army deployed to help manage the crisis.

Climate change projections for the region are for more variability in the weather, with droughts – already common enough – becoming more intense.

Previously, a chain of dams, rivers and canals was able to bring in an emergency top-up from Lesotho, which has surplus water thanks to its massive mountains and deep dams that catch snow melt and rainwater, which it sells to South Africa.

But one of the tunnels collapsed several years ago and the water stopped flowing. When the state failed to repair this infrastructure, drought spread in earnest. Now the dams that supply the metro are empty or near-empty.

Good governance is in short supply, with control of Gqeberha constantly swapping hands between coalitions of competing parties. Amid the squabbling, decisions on solving the looming water crisis were simply not made.

Gqeberha also uses a lot of water – 500 megalitres a day. Cape Town, with four times the population, was using 300 megalitres when its taps ran dry a few years ago. Much of this is thanks to a lack of maintenance: South Africa loses at least a third of its tap water through leaks.

In the face of its own failures, the city has been left with few options other than to pray for rain. ■



Dam nation: Drought and mismanagement have led to another water crisis.

Controversies reign over Rwanda's Commonwealth parade

Hosting the Commonwealth summit was supposed to be a diplomatic coup for Paul Kagame's government.

Instead, all anyone can talk about is the growing conflict across the border in the DRC, and Britain's botched attempt to export refugees to Kigali.

Beginning Monday, the Kigali Convention Centre, Africa's most expensive building, will host the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. It will be a glittering affair. The heir to the British throne, Charles Mountbatten-Windsor, will be there. So will Boris Johnson, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, along with a host of other leaders from countries that were once part of the British Empire.

Ready to welcome them will be Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, for whom this summit is a milestone in his mission to make his country a major player on the world stage. For Rwanda's size – the tiny country lies at the very bottom of what can be called Africa's middle economies – hosting an international conference of this magnitude represents a major diplomatic coup (although the continuing relevance of the Commonwealth, an entity designed to preserve links between Britain and its

former colonies, is debatable).

And, sure enough, Rwanda is in international news headlines at the moment. But not, perhaps, for the reasons Kagame's communications team might have hoped. Instead, all attention is focused on two major controversies – and both are generating awkward attention on Rwanda's appalling human rights record.

Conflict next door

The first of these is the intensifying conflict in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo. Not far from the Rwandan border, the militant rebel group M23 is making a comeback and this week seized the town of Bunagana, an important trading hub.

The Congolese government has accused Rwanda of financing and arming M23. Rwanda strongly denies these allegations, but history suggests otherwise: In 2013, a United Nations panel of experts concluded that the M23



Rwakanda Rwannabe: Paul Kagame has positioned Rwanda as a security and service technocracy, with the Kigali Convention Centre as the jewel in its crown.

rebels had received significant support from Rwanda. The United States and the European Union suspended military aid to Kigali over these alleged links.

Rwanda has several interests in the eastern DRC. The most obvious is the presence there of the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), an armed rebel group that wants to overthrow Kagame's administration. But arguably the most significant of these interests are the vast reserves of coltan, cobalt and gold there.

Rwanda has long been accused of illegally stealing these minerals. In a recent legal filing, the US mining

company Bay View – who withdrew from Rwanda, citing “rampant smuggling” – said that upwards of 90% of all the coltan exported from Rwanda is actually from the DRC.

The Rwandan government denies these claims, describing them as “baseless and scurrilous” and “a misguided attempt to embarrass Rwanda”.

Outsourcing asylum

The second controversy that is undermining the Commonwealth party is the Rwandan government's deal to allow the UK to outsource its refugee responsibilities. Under this deal, refugees

who have claimed asylum from the UK can be transferred – against their will – to Rwanda where their asylum application will be processed. If it is successful, they will be granted asylum – in Rwanda. If not? Unclear. The UK government says that this deal is designed to disincentivise human traffickers who facilitate migrant routes, but despite the sloganeering hammering this point home, how this is meant to work in practice is also not clear.

The UK government says that this deal is designed to disincentivise human traffickers who facilitate migrant routes, although how this works in practice is unclear.

Almost no one else agrees that this is a good idea. UK citizens lay down across roads to stop cars from taking refugees to the first flight to Rwanda. The European Human Rights Court halted that flight just hours before it was due to take off. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, the most senior religious figure in the United Kingdom, said the plan was “ungodly”, while even Prince Charles reportedly described it as “appalling”.

It did not help these perceptions when Boris Johnson reassured refugees from Ukraine that they would not be deported to Rwanda under the new deal. Once again, it seems that European nations apply different rules to white refugees.

It is easy to see what’s in it for Rwanda: Already, before even a single refugee has

been transferred, Britain has made a payment of \$148-million. This is on top of funds allocated for resettlement, an amount the UK refuses to disclose.

Human rights abuses

The refugee resettlement deal is also controversial because of Rwanda’s own human rights record, which is under renewed scrutiny. As Human Rights Watch put it: “Rwanda has a known track record of extrajudicial killings, suspicious deaths in custody, unlawful or arbitrary detention, torture, and abusive prosecutions, particularly targeting critics and dissidents.” Victims of these abuses include asylum seekers on its own soil: In 2018, 12 Congolese refugees were shot dead by Rwandan security forces, and a further 60 arrested, when they protested a cut to food rations.

This heavy-handed approach was in evidence even in preparation for the Commonwealth summit, when homeless people and sex workers were forcibly removed from Kigali’s streets and put into a notorious detention facility, according to Human Rights Watch.

Rwanda government spokesperson, Yolande Makolo, recently described the reporting of Human Rights Watch as a “sustained harassment of Rwanda” that “does nothing more than entrench negative stereotypes about justice and human rights in Africa.”

The world’s attention will be on Rwanda this week. Once again, however, it will be for all the wrong reasons – no matter how clean the streets are, or how lavish the summit. ■

Mozambique

‘Coercive’ extradition deal raises fears among Rwandan refugees

Shortly after President Kagame sent troops to Mozambique, a Rwandan journalist who had fled the country was mysteriously taken from his Maputo home. Now other refugees fear this will be their fate too – and it will be legal.

Luis Nhachote in Maputo

A new extradition agreement signed between Mozambique and Rwanda last week is causing panic among Rwandan refugees in Mozambique. Some of them say they are being coerced into accepting “voluntary” repatriation back to Rwanda and the agreement might make it possible for those that don’t sign

up to be forcibly taken.

In April, the Rwandan embassy in Maputo started a campaign to persuade refugees to return home, and 19 Rwandans agreed to go. However, members of the refugee community have claimed that the process is not entirely voluntary.

“The people who returned had no choice. They were threatened,” Sembene Mentynhagu, a Rwandan refugee, told *The Continent*, adding that refugees who still had family in Rwanda were especially vulnerable.

The High Commission of Rwanda in Maputo has previously insisted that the process is voluntary and they “hope to receive more people interested in returning to their origins”.

Still, refugees fear that disinterest in returning will get them labelled and taken. “The capture argument will be the génocidaire label, we are afraid,” said Theophilus Andame. Many of the perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide fled the country afterwards and are still wanted by the authorities, but refugees say that President Paul Kagame’s government also uses the label to target critics or dissenters not linked to the genocide.

“Our fear now is that the Kagame regime will choose those they call ‘génocidaires’ and the [Mozambican] government will give them up,” said Rosalia Ntiema, who left Cyangugu in

Rwanda after the genocide and has lived in Maputo ever since.

When *The Continent* put these concerns to Rwandan High Commissioner Claude Nikobisanwe, he said: “How is it raising fear? Are they criminals?”

Shattered Safety

Mozambique has been a safe haven for a small community of Rwandans, about 6,000 currently, since the 1990s. But the feeling of safety was splintered a year ago, shortly after Rwanda sent troops to Mozambique to fight militants in Cabo Delgado.

In the May 2021 case, which still remains formally unacknowledged and unexplained, an asylum seeker called Cassien Ntamuhanga was taken from his home in Maputo by what his brother in Uganda described as “10 plain-clothed security personnel, among whom were four speaking Kinyarwanda”.

The Rwandan High Commissioner denies that the country had any involvement in the abduction.

Ntamuhanga, a former radio presenter, had been involved in a political movement which opposed Paul Kagame before being arrested in 2015, alongside the musician Kizito Mihigo, who was later found dead. Ntamuhanga escaped from jail and fled to Mozambique.

What befell Ntamuhanga after he was taken from his Maputo home is unknown, although the Rwandan refugee community believe he was taken to Rwanda. Now refugees fear that under the new extradition agreement, such actions will no longer need to be clandestine.

Making matters worse, at least five people in the Rwandan community have been murdered in Mozambique in mysterious circumstances – both before and after Rwandan forces arrived in Mozambique – and the cases have not been solved by the Mozambican authorities. One of those killed was the treasurer of the refugees’ association, Revocant Keremangingo, who was gunned down last September.

At least five people in the Rwandan community have been murdered in Mozambique under mysterious circumstances

According to the refugees, a list of alleged génocidaires – consisting largely of opponents of Paul Kagame – is updated annually. “Our names were never wanted, but now it may be that those who do not want to return will be placed on that list,” says Rosalia. “We are scared.”

The Association of Rwandan Refugees in Mozambique has called on the Mozambican government to respect international law regarding refugees. “For me, the rapprochement of two African countries is always good,” said the association’s president, Cleophas Habiwareme. “But it is necessary to respect the Geneva Convention and the rights of refugees.” ■

**As a precautionary measure, the names of some of the people quoted in this story have been changed.*

The second coming of Shepherd Bushiri

After fleeing South Africa to escape charges of rape, fraud and money laundering, Prophet Shepherd Bushiri has re-established himself in his native Malawi – and business is booming, he tells *The Continent*.

Jack McBrams in Lilongwe

Shepherd Bushiri, the self-proclaimed prophet who is reputed to be one of the richest “Men of God” in Africa, lived a good life in South Africa. He stayed in a luxury housing estate, drove expensive cars to his congregation in the capital Pretoria, and owned three private jets. (Yes, three.)

Then the police started investigating, and both his lifestyle and his reputation unravelled. He was eventually charged with eight counts of rape, two of fraud and two of money laundering. He denies all the charges.

But before his trial could begin, Bushiri fled the country, returning home to Malawi on one of those private jets – much to the embarrassment of South African authorities, who have been pressing for him to be extradited.

In the two years since his return, Bushiri has thrived. Neither his popularity nor his income appear to have been dented by the serious nature of the charges against him.

His sermons in the conference centre

at the Golden Peacock Hotel in Lilongwe attract worshippers from around southern Africa, as well as from Nigeria, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Kenya.

One of these, South African Mpho Nyathi, who is on her second sojourn to Malawi, says her trips are driven by the need to “receive personal blessings from the prophet”.

In an interview inside the makeshift church premises, Bushiri says that his Jesus Nation Church – which has a presence in 72 countries, he claims – receives between 2,000 to 3,500 foreign visitors every month. That grows to 5,000 when he holds special services.

“The numbers continue increasing,” Bushiri said. “There could be so many reasons. But to me, I feel like the hunger for the word of God is the driving force, coupled with the ease of travel restrictions that Covid-19 brought.”

Last month, Bushiri took about 1,000 worshippers on a pilgrimage to the northern city of Mzuzu, his home town, where he claimed he received a vision that prompted him to start his ministry in 2010.



Shepherd on the lam: South African authorities want Shepherd Bushiri extradited. Photo: Amos Gumulira/AFP

The demand, he says, is also because “Malawi is a beautiful place with so many places that people want to visit.”

Spiritual growth

Where there is demand there are also business opportunities. Bushiri is building an expansive hotel complex in the eastern city of Mangochi on the shores of Lake Malawi. Goshen City, due to open in October, will comprise a hotel, a lodge, a school, a clinic, apartments, a chapel, a church, a business park and a sports arena, according to construction plans *The Continent* has seen. He tried a similar project in South Africa, ignoring environmental planning laws.

Despite the extradition process, Bushiri says the Malawian state is supportive: “We don’t do anything outside government’s dictates.”

With flights to these areas increasing, the tourism ministry’s spokesperson says:

“We are working together. We give advice in certain areas.”

The national carrier, Malawi Airlines, has seen a 14% jump in passenger numbers since Bushiri relocated. Its spokesperson Only Taulo says it has “a very good business working relationship with the Bushiri ministry’s logistics teams”. This has extended to extra flights to Johannesburg to cater for the increased demand.

Local entrepreneurs are also seeing opportunities in religious tourism.

Anthony Mukumbwa runs Rayoni Spiritual Tourism Centre specifically to fly pilgrims to Bushiri’s services. He said: “I saw an opportunity in the movement of people travelling to Malawi to meet the prophet and worship.” His company leases and charters at least two flights a month, with 136 passengers on each.

Zandi Kankhuni, a tourism lecturer at Mzuzu University, said Malawi ought to put in measures to harness the growing religious tourism. “Religious and sports tourism is something the government can focus on so as to complement the international tourism that we so much focus on as a country.”

For now, all these ambitious growth plans depend on Bushiri’s continued freedom – which is by no means guaranteed. He faced another court hearing on June 17, where lawyers representing the South African state argued for his extradition. The outcome of these proceedings, which are likely to be drawn out, will determine not only Bushiri’s future, but that of the entire industry that surrounds him. ■



Photo: BBC

Racism for sale on Chinese social media

On Chinese social media, there is an entire industry devoted to getting African children – generally the poorer and dirtier the better – to wish someone happy birthday, or to say something in Mandarin. There are thousands of such videos, which sell from anywhere between \$10 and \$70. Most of them are not explicitly racist, although the subtext is pretty clear. But some make no effort to disguise their contempt.

The most infamous such video was published in 2020, and featured a group of children chanting: “I am a black monster and my IQ is low.” The kids, who are smiling and enthusiastic, clearly have no idea what they have been told to say. In China, the video prompted outrage among China-Africa scholars and diplomats – but no action was taken. Journalists Runako Celina and Henry Mhango, along with the team at BBC Africa Eye, decided to investigate for themselves. They traced the video to its source, a village in Malawi; and confronted Lu Ke, the Chinese man who has made a living in the village by producing these videos.

We spoke to Celina, who has previously contributed to The Continent. The conversation has been edited for length.

The Continent: How did you come across this story?

This was while I was living in Beijing. This industry started in 2015, and I first heard about it in 2017 or 2018. Just seeing the type of content – Africans uttering words in Chinese – was really strange. I questioned the concept of an industry like that ... I'd experienced racist incidents myself, and understood the narrative about Africans in China. It felt odd. And I could see the content getting worse.

What is that narrative?

There's a wider historical preference for whiteness. That comes from a cultural attitude more than anything else. Many people will never come into contact with a living, breathing African person, and rely on narratives that come from the media. State media might show images of people China has been helping – but of course that paints a picture of a benefactor and a person in need. Then you've got the narratives created more recently on social media, which in large part shows people in rural areas, impoverished, and encourages people to think of Africans and Africanness in that way.

In the wake of Black Lives Matter, media talks a lot about racism in the US. We rarely talk about racism in China, the other superpower. Why do you think that is?

You see lots of misinformed narratives, on both the positive and negative sides. There's this sweet spot in the middle that is the truth, that you cannot really tap into unless you've been there. I decided the

only way to increase understanding was to actually go there, and to see what they are teaching the next generation of diplomats and opinion leaders, and that informed my understanding. We are not really doing that – going over in large numbers – so it's understandable why we don't speak out: we don't really know about it.

There is an incredible moment in the investigation when you confront Lu Ke, the Chinese video producer, and do so in Mandarin. What was his reaction?

He was nervous, it was like he was thinking, "Damn, this show has been rumbled." I think he was in shock. What was really interesting, in hidden camera footage [acquired earlier by another reporter posing as a potential video buyer], he said, "The worst black people are the ones that speak Chinese." For ages I've been thinking about that comment. One of the reasons I think he said that is that this industry couldn't be unearthed without understanding the language. Translation is a radical act in a sense. It taps you into something that is so foreign and far removed from you – and maybe it taps into things that someone else would rather you not know.

The story was published on Tuesday. What has the reaction been like?

The authorities in Malawi have put out a statement, saying they are making efforts to find him [Lu Ke]. The Chinese embassy has come out to say this is hideous, this is wrong, it cannot be allowed to happen. ■

Liberia

If the state won't deal with civil war criminals, then civil society will

Liberia decided not to prosecute anyone for crimes committed during its first and second civil wars. Now, one organisation is documenting and aiding prosecution outside the country

Dounard Bondo in Monrovia

During the first Liberian civil war in the 1990s, Alieu Kosiah served as a commander of the rebel group United Liberation Movement of Liberia. After the war, Kosiah and other commanders like him were spared reprisal by the state, despite calls for prosecution by victims and human rights organisations.

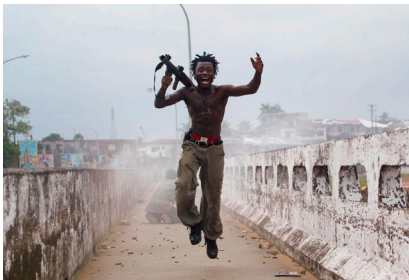
It wasn't until 2014 – 19 years after the first civil war and his relocation to Switzerland – that authorities in that country arrested Kosiah for his alleged involvement in mass killings in parts of Liberia's Lofa County from 1993 to 1995.

Several survivors, represented by Alain Werner, the director of the Swiss NGO Civitas Maxima, filed criminal complaints against Kosiah. They accused him of ordering civilian massacres, rapes, and other atrocities.

In prosecuting Kosiah, a Liberia-based organisation, the Global Justice and Research Project, working with Civitas Maxima, provided the prosecution with witnesses and documentation. This resulted in a 20-year jail term for Kosiah.

According to the United Nations, war crimes consist of two primary elements: a violation that took place during an armed conflict, and “intent and knowledge” of the act and conflict.

While establishing that a violation took place isn't always hard, investigating and prosecuting it can take years, and it's notoriously hard to prove. Atrocities during war time are not properly documented, thus there is little or no documentary evidence to prosecute individuals for these crimes in Liberia. Often the only record of war crimes is oral evidence, so prosecutors have to rely heavily on witness statements.



Bomb's away: A Liberian fighter loyal to the state exults after firing a grenade at rebels near Monrovia. Photo: Getty Images

Founded in 2012 by Hassan Bility, the Global Justice and Research Project is a non-governmental organisation that advocates and facilitates justice for crimes committed during the Liberian civil wars.

Bility says the government's refusal to prosecute war criminals inspired the project. "I believe that justice should not be delayed until all the accused perpetrators die. As a country that went through a devastating civil war, we need to create some deterrent mechanism, otherwise, there's a huge chance that we will return to war at some point soon."

Justice, at home and away

The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2005, recommended a number of reconciliatory measures. These included the prosecution for war crimes and a 30-year ban from public office for a list of individuals, including then president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. None of this came to pass.

As a result, known actors in the Liberian war enjoy freedom and power

built on their political positions. Former leaders of warring factions like Prince Johnson and George Boley occupy positions in the legislature. Both are political allies of the president. Despite efforts by the justice research project and other rights organisations, Liberia has refused to establish a war crimes court.

In Finland, information submitted by the project to Finnish authorities led to the arrest and trial of Gibril Massaquoi.

Gibril, who is a former commander of the Revolutionary United Front – a Sierra Leonean rebel group – was accused of committing mass atrocities in Liberia, as civil wars in both countries were intertwined. A portion of Massaquoi's trial was held in Liberia last year, making it the first time a court prosecuting war crimes was held on Liberian soil.

While both Gibril and Kosiah trials were held under universal jurisdiction, there are many countries that can or do not prosecute war criminals for crimes committed in another country.

With the help of the justice research project, the US has prosecuted Mohammed Jabbateh, Thomas Woewiyu, and more recently, indicted Sekou Camara for omitting their roles in the Liberian civil wars while applying to migrate to America.

Jabbateh was sentenced to 30 years in prison. This sentence is also one of the longest sentences for immigration fraud in US history. Woewiyu died before his sentencing.

Despite threats of violence, the justice research project work continues and Bility remains undeterred. ■

Who will counter hate speech?

June 18 is the United Nations' International Day for Countering Hate Speech. We'll assume that all people of goodwill are opposed to hate speech – communications designed to attack or vilify certain groups in society.

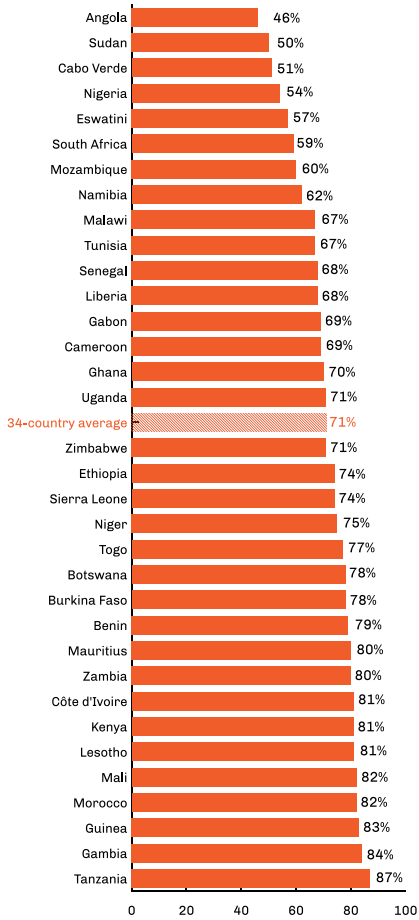
Hurtful, harmful and dangerous on so many levels, hate speech is easier than ever to spread via digital media. The question, then, is how to counter it – without infringing on other rights, such as freedom of speech.

Afrobarometer asked more than 48,000 people in 34 African countries whether they want a media that's free to publish any views and ideas without government control; and whether they want the government to have the right to limit or prohibit the sharing of hate speech.

The answer to both was “yes”: 62% support a free media, and even more (71%) want government restrictions on hate speech. No country, except Angola, had a majority that wanted carte blanche – at least as far as government regulations go – for hate speech.

The survey did not ask exactly how to find that just-right balance of free speech and human decency, however. Food for thought on Countering Hate Speech Day.

Percentage who say government should have the right to prohibit hate speech | 34 African countries | 2019/2021



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.

Kenya



Iron Woman:
Raila Odinga's
presidential
running mate
Martha Karua.
Photo: AFP

Martha Karua – beyond symbolism

For the first time a woman is running on a major presidential ticket – a big marker in Kenya's history. But for marginalised voters, the politics of representation comes with many contradictions.

Maureen Kasuku in Nairobi

Kenya's former prime minister Raila Odinga, a frontrunner in August's presidential election, chose Martha Karua, a former justice and constitutional affairs minister, as his running mate. It makes

her the first woman in Kenya to run on a major political party's presidential ticket.

Before this, she was a fierce opponent of Odinga. In her acceptance speech, Karua, who vied for the presidency in 2013 and came in sixth, said that her selection is "a moment for the women of

Kenya”, and a change that “generations of women have fought for”.

A peer of Odinga in the Second Liberation struggle, where Kenyans struggled to create a multiparty democracy, Karua is a lawyer by training. She cut her teeth as a critic of the autocratic Daniel Arap Moi regime and a defender of the Constitution. That regime had created a one-party state by amending the Constitution in 1982.

At the height of the struggle against this in the 1990s, Karua endeared herself to the public as a tenacious defender of civil rights. As a member of the council that leads the Law Society of Kenya, she called for a tribunal to probe two top judges, including the chief justice at the time, for consistently deciding cases in a manner that cemented the legality of the one-party state.

It was an unprecedented move of judicial defiance at the time.

After Moi bowed to pressure and allowed the restoration of multiparty politics, Karua entered mainstream politics in the early 1990s, becoming a member of Parliament. She was also legal secretary of the Democratic Party and chairperson of the League of Kenyan Women Voters.

She was instrumental in pushing for a countrywide civic education exercise targeting female voters and a vocal member of the opposition. She came to be known by the moniker “Iron Lady”.

Moi’s autocratic 24-year rule ended with the 2002 election that brought Mwai Kibaki to power. Kibaki appointed Karua as water minister, marking the start of

contradictions in her public service record.

There, Karua was instrumental in streamlining water provision in Kenya and reviving essential irrigation projects. Later as justice minister, she was applauded for resigning when she felt the rest of the executive was frustrating her efforts to carry out her duties.

But her own record is not spotless. As justice minister, even though she had branded herself as an anti-corruption crusader, Karua called a press conference to reject a dossier from a former head of ethics in Kibaki’s state house. That dossier related to billions worth of corruption in a scandal that came to be known as Anglo Leasing.

In December 2015, the *Independent* newspaper in the United Kingdom alleged that Karua had been bribed with a £50,000 donation to her 2013 presidential campaign by British American Tobacco to block a rival tobacco firm from being awarded a multimillion-pound contract. Karua refuted the amount, not the donation itself, saying she only received Ksh 2,000,000 (\$17,000).

Her move onto the Odinga slate comes despite her accusing him of “ethnic cleansing” in the violence that followed the disputed 2007 election.

It also provides a quandary for Kenyan voters in August. Karua comes with contradictions that some might overlook because of the symbolism of a woman being at the top. There have been times where her rhetoric and actions are disconnected. And her allegiance is to the ruling class first. ■

Ghana

Anti-LGBTQ morality police are now gunning for straight people too

A new hate law in Ghana was brought in last year to target LGBTQ people. But that mood has now seen a straight couple flogged after their sex video was leaked, sparking outrage.

Francis Kokutse

When the proponents of Ghana's proposed anti-LGBTQ law started the push for it, a key group they targeted to recruit to their cause were the country's traditional leaders. One of the four public engagements they did prior to formally bringing the bill was with the National House of Chiefs in Kumasi. That's what Sam Nartey George, the politician

championing the proposed law, told *The Continent* in February.

In the months that followed, traditional chiefs would become a key feature of the backlash against LGBTQ Ghanaians, holding press conferences to denounce them and claiming they were seeing an increase in same sex conduct in their areas. One of the most enthusiastic traditional chiefs in this regard was the Wa Naa, overlord of the Waala people in the Upper West region of northern Ghana.

In July 2021, Wa Naa set up a task force to monitor gay people, saying he had banned homosexuality with immediate effect in Wa, the area he rules over, because the bill would take too long to become law.

His pronouncement and task force came just weeks after a violent attack on a presumed gay man in the area, which was reported by local media, albeit in a manner that glorified the violence. Around the same time, youths in the area were agitating for a "Fix Wa: Stop lesbianism" demonstration. They claimed they were failing to find wives, because Waala girls were becoming lesbians.

But in the year since that Wa taskforce was set up, it does not seem to have found many gay or lesbian people to apprehend. Instead, Wa Naa's morality police have turned on heterosexual conduct they frowned upon. In a case that shocked the



Hateful: The Wa Naa's palace, where a young man and woman were flogged after an intimate video was shared on social media without their consent.

country in mid-May, after a sex tape depicting a couple in Wa was leaked to social media, young men tracked the man and woman down, tied them to a pole in the yard of the Wa Naa's palace and flogged them.

The saga would stretch for weeks. While Accra-based institutions and individuals expressed shock and condemnation, in the streets of Wa, the feeling was that it was right and fitting.

The Ghana Bar Association described the action as “barbaric, humiliating, dehumanising, degrading and amounting to the violation” of the human rights of a young couple. The executive director of the human rights group, Songtaaba, Lamnatu Adam, said it was “unacceptable.” Amnesty International said “there is no justification whatsoever for such an act”.

But up north in Wa, police were

battling youth who were riotously angry at attempts to reprimand the perpetrators. On 1 June 2022, about a hundred protesting youth stormed the local police station demanding the release of three people who had been arrested for masterminding the public humiliation of the couple.

The Ghana Bar Association described the action as ‘barbaric, dehumanising, degrading and amounting to the violation of human rights’

After an initial denial, the Wa Naa, Fuseini Pelpuo, has admitted to the Ghana News Agency that he ordered the flogging of the couple, and said it was part of measures they had put in place to fight immoral and deviant behaviour. ■

Nigeria

Photo: Aris
Messinis/
Pool/Getty
Images



Abandon all hoop: Nigeria's basketball fiasco

Nigeria's government has pulled its national teams out of international competition for two years, devastating players. Serious and long-lasting sanctions will follow. More damage will be done on top of the impact of years of incompetence, red tape and power struggles in the sport's hierarchy.

Tolu Olasoji and Femi Adefeso

In August, Nigerian basketball star Ezinne Kalu will likely be organising a training camp for young talent. She was meant to be preparing to fly her country's flag at the world cup in Australia, in September.

The national team, D'Tigress, are the highest ranked in Africa. In last year's Olympics, they came close to beating the United States. After qualifying for the world cup, their chances looked good. As defending African champions, they were also on the way to breaking Senegal's record of four consecutive continental

championship titles.

But then the country's president, Muhammadu Buhari, got involved. Earlier this month, the International Basketball Federation announced that Nigeria would be replaced by Mali. This was at the request of Buhari, it said.

This had been signalled in May, by the country's sports minister in a statement, which blamed "the unending crises that have plagued and nearly crippled basketball development in the country". It had decided to pull Nigeria out of international competition for two years.

To fix the crisis, an Interim Management Committee was appointed to oversee a complete restructure of the sport in the country, in the stead of the Nigerian Basketball Federation. In 2010, former president Goodluck Jonathan made a similar move in football before reconsidering the decision – because such a move violates the international

federation's rules on states not interfering in national teams. Heavy sanctions are now expected. A four-to-six year ban could be instituted.

Kalu told *The Continent* that the decision to pull D'Tigress out of competition is "heartbreaking". And D'Tigers, the men's team, will halt its qualifying campaign for next year's world cup. It currently leads its group.

Leadership tussle

The Nigerian Basketball Federation has been in a leadership crisis since 2017, when its election cycle produced two presidents: then-incumbent Tijjani Umar and Musa Kida.

The former was elected with the federation's constitution, which had yet to be ratified by the international basketball federation. The latter's election was organised using electoral guidelines by the Nigerian sports ministry.



Net loss: Jordan Nwora of Nigeria's men's team, which faces an international ban due to factional politics. Photo: Getty Images

A factional battle ensued, and the international federation nullified both elections. It asked both sides to work on a constitution and organise new elections. This duly happened, but with one faction reportedly left out of the process. In the next election, two presidents were again elected, and both sides claimed legitimacy.

Thanks to this, the local men's and women's basketball leagues have been on a hiatus for the past five and three years respectively. But this didn't stop the national team from achieving success: poor administration has seemingly always been a problem, but one that has been hidden by good players and good results.

Mfon Udoka, who has played for and coached Nigeria, said the talent of the country's athletes had allowed administrators to get away with atrocities. "When you have a team as dominant as this current team of three-time Afrobasket champs, that makes you look like you're doing everything right," she told *The Continent*.

Udoka said maladministration had characterised basketball in Nigeria both during her career as a player and as a coach. Preparation for tournaments was shabby and left to the last minute. Care and comfort for players were compromised.

Current star Kalu, who played a huge role in the team's recent success, also pointed out that: "Somehow, there have always [been] issues that affected us off the court."

The cost has not been limited to access to the international stage. Domestic representation on the national team has also dropped. During Udoka's days, as an



Twice as tall: Top-tier talent has been burned by gutter-grade administration.
Photo: N Krstic/MB Media/Getty Images

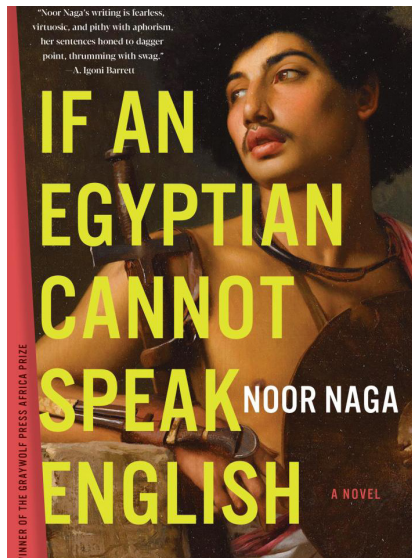
American-born Nigerian, she was in the minority. That, she said, was testament to the impressive level of the sport on the local front, achieved through deliberate sports development programmes.

"Now, you can kind of see where there's a huge drop-off. Because really nothing is being done by Nigeria's grassroots girls."

The decline is also apparent in the male national team, which has seen experienced players driven into early retirement. As it is, a four- or six-year ban would only see Kalu, a 29-year-old currently performing at the peak of her career, return internationally in what for most other players would be the twilight of their careers. Others who are just starting out now have even less of a shot.

Udoka believes that as far as this ban is concerned, those who are losing the most are not the rival factions battling for control, but the players themselves.

"This is not pointing at the other faction and not focusing on where you failed. All of you failed. Goodbye!" ■



Lost and found in translation

Noor Naga's elegant novel finds that being 'home' is no guarantee of belonging

Jacqueline Nyathi

The protagonist of *If an Egyptian cannot speak English* remains unnamed until near the end of Noor Naga's novel. She has moved to Cairo to reconnect with her roots. A "third-culture kid" raised in the United States by Egyptian parents, she marks her race as "other" on the US census form. Her parents check "white".

The first of the three parts of the book introduces her to us, not in her voice but in that of a man – referred to throughout the book as "the boy from Shobrakheit" – with whom she enters into an entanglement.

He speaks no English. Though she is not comfortable in Arabic, that's what they converse in. He left his village after the death of his beloved grandmother, and found himself caught up in the revolution of 2011. The boy from Shobrakheit and the American girl are both strangers in Cairo, and in their alternating voices the story of their increasingly disturbing interactions unfolds.

In parallel with their relationship, the couple's narrative voices diverge in the second part, and footnotes begin to appear, demystifying previously opaque terms and ideas. A new character, William, a white British man, is introduced. In an intriguing commentary about identity for those who have left and come back, the American girl feels at home with him, returning to English and, in her words, safety and indigeneity. Tensions mount until you just know something is about to happen, which of course it does in the novel's climax. What follows this climax is unexpected, and makes the novel truly remarkable.

The inventive structure of *If an Egyptian cannot speak English* is so finely wrought that one almost wishes other novelists would emulate its ambition – but then perhaps it is only Naga who can really pull it off. ■

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

"Still waiting for a patron saint to drive all the snakes out of Africa."



1_ Who is the patron saint of Nigeria?

2_ Filipe Jacinto Nyusi is the president of which country?

3_ In 2015 which former first lady was tried and convicted of crimes against humanity?

4_ What is the capital of Togo?

5_ In which city is the Ecowas Bank for Investment and Development located?

6_ What is the name of the martial art created by the Hausa people of Nigeria?

7_ What is the name of the Eritrean cyclist who

this year won stage 10 of the Giro d'Italia?

8_ What is the nickname given to penguins found on the southwestern coast of Africa?

9_ Which Liverpool player recently won the Professional Footballers Association's player of the year award?

10_ Martha Karua is a politician from which country?

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

Africa's most notorious wildlife smuggler is finally behind bars

Moazu Kromah, aka 'Kampala Man', ran the biggest wildlife-trafficking syndicate on the continent – and various law enforcement authorities knew it. So why did it take so long to bring him to justice, and what about the rest of his network?

The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime

Liberian national Moazu Kromah, known as “Kampala Man”, led one of the most active wildlife-trafficking syndicates on the African continent before his arrest in the Ugandan capital in February 2017.

Five years later, and 11,000km away from Kampala, Kromah quietly entered into a plea bargain with the Southern District of New York, which is known for tackling high-profile organised crime and corruption cases.

Earlier this month he pled guilty to three wildlife-trafficking offences for which he was indicted before being expelled to the United States in 2019. His two co-accused made similar deals shortly thereafter.

Yet prosecuting members of Kromah's network and the individuals who facilitated his shipments of ivory and

other wildlife products is, collectively, a far larger task.

In Kenya alone, 15 major ivory-trafficking cases known to be linked to Kromah's network have been prosecuted since 2010. These account for over 30 tonnes of seized ivory, and many have been going on for several years – yet only one case has secured a conviction.

Kromah's criminal network was vast, shipping ivory in containers from Mombasa, Kenya and Pemba (in northern Mozambique) and rhino horn by air from Entebbe, Uganda, and Nairobi, Kenya.

The New York indictment of Kromah argued that between 2012 and 2019, his network was responsible for trafficking at least 190kg of rhino horn and at least 10 tonnes of elephant ivory, sourcing these products from Uganda, the DRC, Guinea, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique.

The true volumes of ivory trafficked by his network are thought to be far higher.



Kampala Man: Moazu Kromah. Photo: Natural Resources Conservation Network

Transnational criminal syndicate

Kromah was first arrested in Kampala in February 2017. Some 437 pieces of ivory weighing 1.3 tonnes were also seized. The operation was a collaboration between the Uganda Wildlife Authority and members of a Ugandan investigative non-profit, the Natural Resource Conservation Network.

The investigators described Kromah as being at “the centre of a vast ring of organised criminals ... connected to at least four other major criminal syndicates ... supplying the biggest wildlife criminal syndicates worldwide”.

However, the case did not progress through the Ugandan courts, perhaps unsurprisingly: Kromah reportedly offered officials a large cash bribe (allegedly worth \$50,000) to make it disappear. US authorities then initiated another investigation: In 2018, an informant set up a deal in which Kromah and his associates delivered three rhino

horns to the US. With a case within the jurisdiction of US authorities’ secured, Kromah was again arrested in June 2019 and extradited to the US.

Long road to justice

Kromah’s conviction is just one part of the arduous, largely-unheralded work of untangling the networks of his associates and facilitators. For some commentators, the delays experienced in prosecuting these cases are an unavoidable consequence of prosecution authorities being restricted in terms of personnel, resources and capacity. Some of the institutions are also still in their infancy.

Shamini Jayanathan, an advisor on environmental crime prosecutions at the United Nations, has said that “failures in prosecution disclosure, lack of organisation of witnesses, exhibits and lack of coordination with investigators are inevitable in the context of such limited prosecution resources”.

Corruption has also delayed – and, in some cases, derailed – court processes, as is suspected to have been the case in the initial Ugandan prosecution of Kromah.

Non-profits have however proved instrumental in supporting investigations and prosecutions, and gathering evidence on wildlife-trafficking networks. Their work continues: although Kampala Man and several key associates are behind bars, other members of his network remain at large. ■

For more on this story, read the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime’s upcoming Risk Bulletin.

Eritrea's Isaias Afwerki banks on the cult of celebrity

One of the world's most repressive regimes continues because of ignorant endorsements

Yohannes Woldemariam

Celebrity endorsements are like gold dust for flagging dictatorships. Despite being notorious for shunning the limelight, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki has not bucked this trend, engaging in “celebrity washing” – using well-known names and faces to try and divert attention away from the brutal tactics he uses to stay in power.

Celebrities who have directly or indirectly endorsed Isaias include figures such as the late American rapper Nipsey Hussle, born to an Eritrean father and an American mother and raised in the United States, and the stand-up comedian and actor Tiffany Haddish, who is also of mixed American and Eritrean parentage.

The motivation of such figures is not clear, but their willingness to be associated with Isaias appears to be based on a combination of naïveté and a deep longing for a connection with a “motherland” they barely know. But such a connection is almost impossible to establish without being willing to cater in some way to the predatory leader and his cronies.

When Haddish was pushed about her reluctance to criticise the dictatorship by

the *New York Times*, she both admitted to “ignorance about a subject matter” and talked about the fact that Eritrea “holds a special place in my heart”. While she promised to keep learning and ask a lot of questions, critics were left wondering how hard one needed to study to recognise one of the world’s most repressive regimes.

Isaias has also sought to gain reflected glory by taking credit for the success of athletes such as long-distance runners Meb Keflezighi, Zersenay Tadese and more recently cyclist Biniam Ghirmay. This is ironic considering how little support exists for athletics in Eritrea.

Such high-profile endorsements of the president, passing largely without scrutiny or challenge on the global stage, sap the strength and energy of the opposition back home. True patriotism is not about flying the flag of whatever regime is in power, but fighting for the principles and values to which your people aspire. ■

Yohannes Woldemariam has been commenting and researching on the Horn of Africa for many years. This analysis is produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa



Are you ready to grumble?



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

Once again we bring you this week's drift from the Kenyan capital Nairobi, where election season – or, as we like to call it, the “silly season” – is officially under way.

Elections often serve as a reminder that some politicians are akin to that admirer who pursues you with chocolates, flowers and expensive dates, promising to take you on a trip to Dubai. Only for you to find that once you give into their charms, the closest you get to Dubai is looking at the photos they are posting up on Instagram of themselves and their new squeeze in front of the Burj Khalifa.

Billboards, banners and even vehicles featuring images of those vying for various positions can be seen around Kenya, ahead of the August polls that will see the two leading candidates, former prime minister, Raila “Baba” Odinga, battle for the presidency against the current deputy, William “Hustler” Ruto.

Although with these nicknames perhaps they'd be better suited to a wrestling ring?

While Kenyans struggle with the rising cost of living, fuel price increases,

drought and a debt crisis, the politicians are busy trading barbs like WWE stars trash-talking each other ahead of their next bout, while occasionally remembering they need people to actually vote for them, and making carefully designed promises that they can spend the next few years breaking.

Johnson ...

One story dominating headlines in the country concerns Johnson Sakaja, the senator who was set to vie for the position of Nairobi governor under the banner of Ruto's United Democratic Alliance.

This week the Commission for University Education revoked its recognition of his degree certificate, putting his academic credentials in question.

Sakaja meanwhile insists that President Uhuru Kenyatta has mobilised state machinery in an “intimidation spree” meant to scupper his campaign.

As court battles commence and both Sakaja and Ruto insist he will be on the ballot paper, a group of civic and human rights organisations known as the Angaza Movement say the tests conducted by the electoral commission of the results transmission system remain a concern.

Considering the controversies around technology in previous polls, this deserves as much attention as any politicians getting ready to rumble.

... and Johnson

Academic qualifications are important, but can be misleading even if they're legitimate. Take, for example, one particular product of both Eton and Oxford, those prestigious bastions of British whateverness: Boris Johnson is a useful reminder that a posh education does not guarantee you will be a decent, sensible or fit-for-purpose human being. The callousness and ineptness of the British prime minister was once again on display this week when his government tried and failed to deport its first batch of asylum seekers to Rwanda.

The plane was on the tarmac, all ready to take off, when a last minute ruling by the European Court of Human Rights saw the flight cancelled. Those who were on the plane have spoken of harsh and harrowing treatment as they were forced onto the flight. Just months ago, the British government were urging Brits to welcome Ukrainian refugees with open arms, yet when it comes to refugees from other parts of the world, the same courtesy cannot be extended.

Maasai madness

Many of us applauded when Samia Suluhu Hassan became president of Tanzania, a monumental appointment for the country. This week however, there was monumental *disappointment* as reports emerged that members of the Maasai community in Loliondo were being forcibly evicted from their land to make space for a "tourism operation". According to Amnesty International, when community members began to

protest against security officials who were there to demarcate their land, they were met with a "massive use of force".

While a spokesperson for the Tanzanian embassy said the government has never hurt anyone, the images and videos circulating tell a different story.

While *The Guardian* quoted a spokesperson for Tanzanian embassy in Washington as saying the government had not hurt anyone and that reports of assault and injuries were "propaganda", the images and videos circulating on social media tell a different story.

Injustice in journalism

At his inauguration in 2018, Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa announced that "Zimbabwe is open for business". What he failed to add was "unless you're a journalist".

This week *New York Times* and *The Continent* freelance reporter Jeffrey Moyo was handed a two-year suspended jail sentence, along with a whopping fine.

Moyo was arrested last year, accused of obtaining fake media accreditation documents for his colleagues. Fortunately he is not in detention, and will be appealing both conviction and sentence.

In the meantime, we hope the next big WWE match will see Mnangagwa wrestling with his own conscience (clearly the underdog). No prizes for guessing who we're rooting for. ■

The Big Picture

Photo: Fethi Belaid/AFP

Top of the food chain: Sitting on a throne of wheat in a field in Tunisia might not seem like your idea of apex authority, but in today's global food economy? Hail to the king! Tunisia is one of the world's biggest importers of Ukrainian wheat – or it was, anyway, until the Russian invasion of Ukraine brought exports from the breadbasket of the world to a standstill, accelerating the cost-of-living crisis.



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