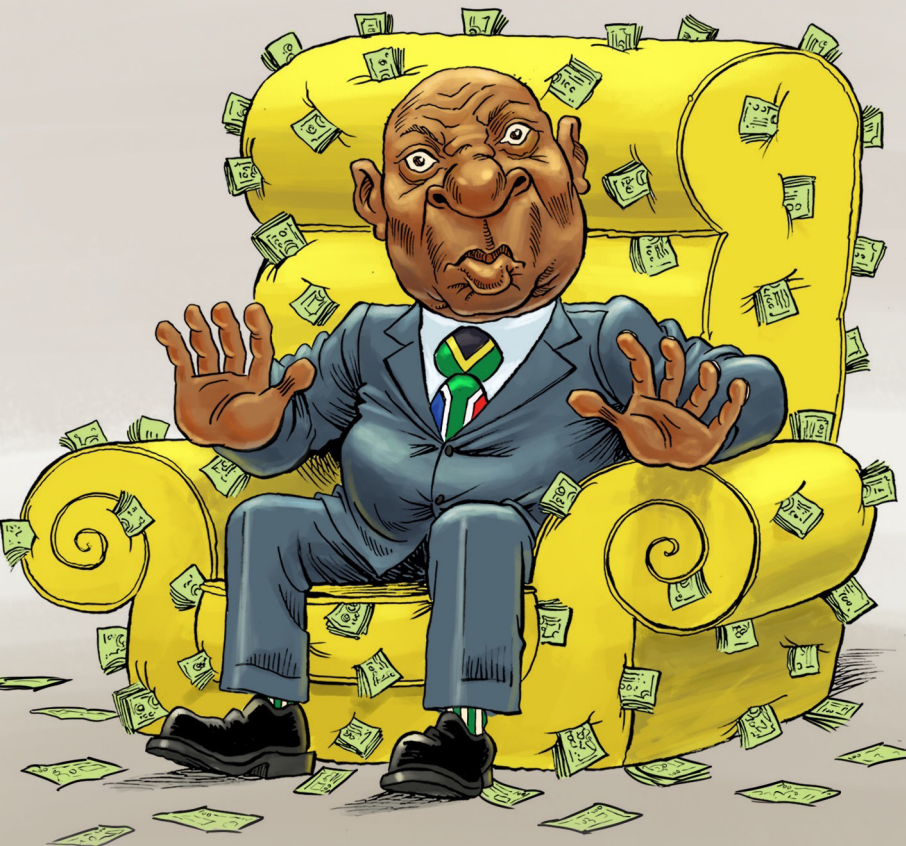


# The Continent

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**The couch that could  
unseat a president**

# Inside:

■ **Unapology tour:** Belgium's King visits DRC's president (p8)

■ **Mozambique:** New terror drives hunger (p15)

■ **Nigeria:** The aftermath of the Owo church massacre (p17)

■ **Afrobarometer:** Our politicians aren't listening to us (p20)

■ **Comment:** Africa must rethink its response to terrorism, and fast (p21)

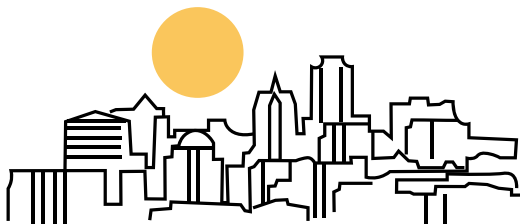
■ **In pictures:** Our highlights from the Dakar Biennale (p23)

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**Cover:** In a story that is exactly as strange as it sounds, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa is accused of hiding \$4-million in cash in his couch and under his mattress – and then, when it was stolen, trying to cover up the crime and pay off the criminals. He denies the allegations, and it is hard to tell at this stage how much is true and how much is attempted political assassination. What we do know for sure is that this is an insight into the desperate power struggles within the ruling ANC, as Africa's oldest political party gets ready to choose its next president – with Ramaphosa's re-election looking shakier than ever (p10 and p12).



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## CONSERVATION

## Kenya trumpets twin twins

“Waking up to exciting & great News!” the Kenya Wildlife Services announced on Twitter earlier this week. For the second time this year, an elephant in Aberdare National Park had given birth to twins – an extremely rare occurrence. The first twins were seen in January. According to charity Save the Elephants, the last known case of twin elephants happened in 2006.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

## TikTok mirrors Facebook's flaws

Surprise, surprise: another social media platform is being used to spread hate speech and fake news. The dangers of Facebook and Twitter are well-documented, but a new study – by researcher Odanga Madung at the Mozilla Foundation – has found that TikTok is just as bad, especially in the context of Kenya's upcoming election. “The upshot is that TikTok is failing its first real test in Africa. Rather than learn from the mistakes of more established platforms like Facebook and Twitter, TikTok is following in their footsteps, hosting and spreading political disinformation ahead of a delicate African election,” the report says.



## NIGERIA

## The ‘godfather’ gets an offer he can’t refuse

Bola Tinubu, the former governor popularly known as ‘the godfather of Lagos’, has been chosen as the ruling party’s candidate for president in next year’s election. Seventy-year-old Tinubu beat 13 other candidates in the primaries. “I am a thinker and I am a doer,” said Tinubu as he accepted the nomination. “We will create wealth. We will turn Nigeria around. It will be our Eldorado.” First, though, he will have to defeat opposition leader Atiku Abubakar next February.



Photo: Twitter/GoitaAssimi

**MALI****The uniforms are here to stay**

The military government that seized power in August 2020 is in no hurry to hand over power to civilians. This week, President-Colonel Assimi Goïta decreed that “the duration of the transition is fixed at 24 months” from 26 March 2022. Given that his administration has already missed several deadlines for elections, even this date should be treated with some scepticism. West African regional bloc Ecowas, which has been pushing hard for a swift transition, is unimpressed.

**KENYA****Ghosts in the voting machine**

There are 246,465 dead people on Kenya’s voters’ roll, said the country’s electoral commission. That’s according to an audit by KPMG, which also found that nearly half a million voters had duplicate records and more than 226,000 people were registered with someone else’s documents. Publication of the voters’ roll has been delayed until these anomalies are sorted out. The election is scheduled for 9 August.

**UNITED KINGDOM****Britain finds another way to keep Africans out**

The United Kingdom, even as it implements a much-criticised plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, has come up with a new scheme to attract the world’s best and brightest to its increasingly troubled shores. The High Potential Individual visa is available to graduates from 50 of the world’s best universities, who don’t even need a job offer to get one – and who won’t subsequently get deported to any authoritarian regimes. Glaringly absent from this list is a single African university. Indeed, all but four of the universities are in the West.



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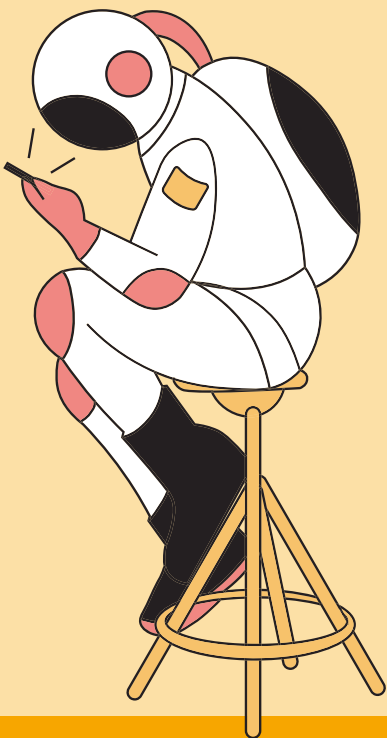
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## SOUTH AFRICA

## Another airline goes to ground

Domestic and regional airline Comair, which operates flights for low-budget Kulula and British Airways, has filed for bankruptcy. Management said that it had been grounded by the one-two punch

of pandemic-related travel restrictions followed by the recent surge in fuel prices. Comair operated about 40% of domestic flights in South Africa, running up to 19,000 trips a year. It has been a difficult few years for the country's aviation sector: South African Airways, the national carrier, went into business rescue in 2019, while several other smaller airlines have folded.



## ALGERIA

## With friends like these

The Algerian government on Wednesday suspended a 20-year-old "Friendship Treaty" with Spain, with immediate effect. At issue is Spain's recent decision to back Morocco in the dispute over the status of Western Sahara. Spain, which relies on Algeria for supplies of natural gas, says that it regrets the decision and seeks to "keep and develop the special cooperation relationship between our two countries".

## DRC-RWANDA

## Undisguised tensions

The Democratic Republic of Congo has accused Rwanda of sending 500 special forces soldiers into its territory "in disguise". Kinshasa has also accused Rwanda of backing the M23 rebel movement, which is driving a current escalation in conflict. Rwanda denies any involvement. The conflict has forced tens of thousands of people to leave their homes. East African security chiefs are discussing the creation of a special peacekeeping force to restore security.



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# Sorry seems to be the hardest word

**During his first visit to Kinshasa, the king of a small European country has expressed his “deepest regrets” for the deaths of 10-million Congolese and the destruction of the DRC.**



**About time: The King and Queen of Belgium in Kinshasa, with Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi and First Lady Denise Nyakeru.** Photo: Nicolas Maeterlinck/ Belga via AFP

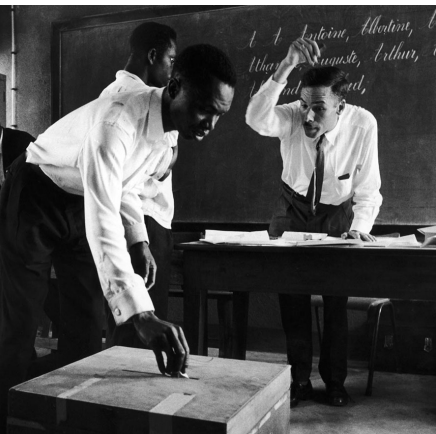
**T**he Democratic Republic of the Congo is fabulously wealthy, both in its people and their natural resources. In the late 1800s this attracted Leopold II, then king of Belgium. In 1885 he claimed what would become the DRC as his private property. Other European leaders agreed.

The owners of the land were not asked for their thoughts.

Leopold called the area the Congo Free

State but its people were not free. Instead, they were forced to harvest a lucrative rubber crop. In the 22 years to 1908, it is thought that 10-million Congolese died through being killed or from disease. When people did not meet production quotas, their limbs would be chopped off.

Leopold's wealth allowed him to build public infrastructure around Belgium, earning him the title of “Builder King”.



**White noise: Elections controlled by Belgians before independence in May 1960.** Photo: Dominique Berretty/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images

Little money was invested in the country that built his wealth.

In 1908, Leopold handed the country over to Belgium, which rebranded it as the Belgian Congo. Belgium profited until the central African country got its freedom in 1960. When Belgium left, it destroyed what infrastructure it could. It then played a leading role in the murder of Patrice Lumumba, the first elected president of the then Republic of Congo. He was replaced by Mobutu Sese Seko, who would then run a brutal dictatorship, keeping his country aligned with the West in the Cold War. This locked in decades of instability.

Belgium, like its Western peers, has taken little tangible responsibility for the theft and violence that created much of its wealth.

King Philippe took the throne there in 2013. Since then, he has been part of

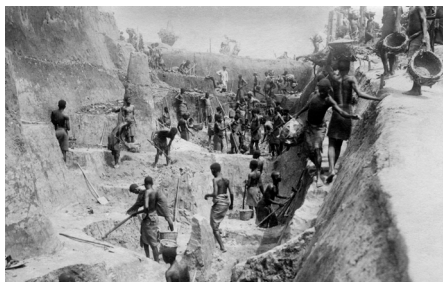
efforts by his country to make diplomatic overtures to the DRC. These have gained speed since Félix Tshisekedi took over the country's presidency.

This week, Philippe started a week-long tour of the country his family once owned. No apology was forthcoming. Neither were reparations.

He reportedly told a joint session of Parliament in Kinshasa that: "Even though many Belgians invested themselves sincerely, loving Congo and its people deeply, the colonial regime itself was based on exploitation and domination."

He did not apologise, instead saying: "I wish to reaffirm my deepest regrets for those wounds of the past."

Philippe did hand over a traditional mask of the Suku people on "indefinite loan". The mask used to reside in Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa, built by Leopold II with the wealth torn out of the DRC. His government is also meant to hand over a tooth ripped out of Lumumba's mouth by a Belgian soldier. ■



**Je ne regrette rien: Belgium has taken little responsibility for the violence and exploitation that created much of its wealth.** Photo: Pool Benoit Doppagne/Belga via AFP



# South Africa

## The robbery that could derail Ramaphosa's presidency

**Moral of the story: even presidents should put their money in a bank, instead of hiding it in the furniture.**

**Kiri Rupiah in Johannesburg**

**T**he biggest scandal of President Cyril Ramaphosa's presidency erupted this week amid claims that \$4-million in cash was stolen from his Phala Phala farm in 2020 – and that he used the power of his office to cover up the crime.

Ramaphosa admits that a robbery took place, but says a lesser amount was stolen. He denies claims of a cover-up and money laundering. He says the cash came from “the proceeds from the sale of game”. The president, a longtime buffalo and ankole cattle aficionado, is known to trade the animals.

The allegations arrive at a bad time for Ramaphosa, and cast some doubt on the future of his presidency. Already weakened due to criticism of his handling of the pandemic and a growing economic crisis, he faces a leadership challenge at the ruling African National Congress (ANC) conference in December.

The scandal was made public on Sunday, following a criminal complaint that was laid by former spy chief Arthur Fraser – one of former president Jacob Zuma's political allies. Fraser has a chequered past: he was implicated in corruption during Zuma's tenure, which he denies. Last year, in his capacity as head of the country's prison system, he attracted controversy when he granted Zuma medical parole just two months into a 15-month prison sentence.

In a 48-page witness statement, Fraser alleged that a gang of Namibians living in South Africa, working in cahoots with Ramaphosa's domestic worker, broke into Ramaphosa's Phala Phala game farm in the Limpopo province in February 2020 to steal more than \$4-million hidden in couches and mattresses.

According to Fraser: “The mere fact that Ramaphosa had large undisclosed sums of foreign currency in the form of US\$ concealed in his furniture at his Phala Phala residence is prima facie proof of money laundering.”



**Heavy is the head: South Africa's president faces a fight for his political survival.** Photo: Phill Magakoe/AFP

In Fraser's version of events, Ramaphosa also sought help from Namibia's President Hage Geingob to find the suspects, using unofficial channels. He then quashed any official investigations and paid off the criminals to buy their silence.

Namibian authorities have denied these allegations. South African police have said that they are looking at the claims, as is normal. There is no legal obligation for Ramaphosa to report the robbery at his farm, which makes money from game auctions.

### **Tarnished reputation**

South Africa has been run by the ANC since its liberation in 1994. Who runs the ANC effectively runs the country. But the party is at one of its lowest ebbs since the beginning of the democratic era, and has become synonymous with rampant graft, an ongoing energy crisis, a stagnant economy and rising youth unemployment.

Much of that is due to the nine years that Zuma was in charge. He is accused of

breaking many of the country's institutions and allowing theft at such a scale that even its two, brand new, \$20-billion power plants don't work.

Ramaphosa, his deputy, replaced him in 2018. He campaigned as a safe pair of hands, promising to clean up Zuma's mess. It is that reputation that is now under threat, even though his alleged crimes pale into insignificance compared to the corruption that Zuma is alleged to have facilitated (Zuma denies these claims).

Ramaphosa, a former trade unionist, became a billionaire businessman after 1994, thanks to the mining industry. His wealth helped win him the ANC presidency.

It has not been all bad news for Ramaphosa. On Monday, a big PR win came in the news that Atul and Rajesh Gupta had been arrested in Dubai. The two, with the aid of former president Zuma, are alleged to have built a business empire by keeping senior ANC officials on their payroll and deciding which ministers to appoint, and fire. They allegedly did this with help from private sector giants like KPMG, McKinsey, Bain & Co. and SAP SE among others. The consulting firms deny intimate involvement.

The state wants them extradited so it can start prosecuting them for what is thought to be billions of dollars in corruption and theft. They deny the accusations.

The Gupta brothers have become a symbol of what went wrong in South Africa. Their arrest and trial might reframe the awkward questions that now surround the president. ■



## Misfortune of his own making

**In its current form, South Africa's political order and economic system is unsustainable. It appears Cyril Ramaphosa does not have the political imagination, will or interest in being the transformative leader the country needs, writes [Andile Zulu](#)**

**I**n times of despair and scant alternatives, citizens desperate for change are vulnerable to the seduction of political elites masquerading as transformative leaders. South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa once retained that power of seduction. But the potency of his charms has waned as he proves himself ill-equipped to confront the many crises threatening the country's future.

Ramaphosa has recently been accused of money laundering, kidnapping and defeating the ends of justice. The credibility

of these accusations remains in doubt – they were made by someone who is morally bankrupt – and investigations by the police are still under way. But the political consequences of the allegations are worth contemplating. In December Ramaphosa's party, the governing African National Congress (ANC), will hold its national conference in which the party's president is elected. The winning candidate will run in the 2024 national election.

If investigations reveal the president did indeed participate in criminal activity, it

would, according to the principles of the Constitution, render him unfit to hold office. Opposition parties in Parliament possess the constitutional tools to impeach him through a vote or motion of no confidence. Historically the ANC has easily evaded motions of no confidence because it holds the majority of seats in Parliament.

However, Ramaphosa leads a divided party in which some influential factions perceive his governance as a threat to their material interests and the sustainability of the party at large. Divisions within the party are primarily grounded in conflict over accumulation. Ramaphosa represents a political elite eager to appease corporate South Africa and foreign investment to restore and maintain conditions for accumulating capital. Opposing this faction is a kleptocratic formation keen to amass wealth through the misappropriation and abuse of state funds.

This group may punish him by casting their votes with opposition parties in a motion of no confidence.

It is not because of political plots by his enemies that Ramaphosa's future and presidential legacy have been tarnished, but the destructive outcomes of his own governance.

Elected unopposed to lead South Africa in February 2018, Cyril Ramaphosa was hailed as the antidote to South Africa's decay. His predecessor Jacob Zuma's tenure is still defined by the disturbing revelations and disastrous consequences of what is now popularly known as "state capture" — simply put, a kleptocracy rose within the ruling ANC, utilising state structures in cooperation with private firms, to

accumulate wealth and political power.

This project of corruption through networks of patronage has severely weakened the capacity of the state to effectively execute its most basic functions. With the state's capacities and resources mostly exploited by a parasitic elite obsessed with gathering power, under Zuma's "nine wasted years", some of which Ramaphosa served as his deputy, South Africa's working classes, poor and unemployed fell deeper into destitution as its middle class was introduced to a dizzying level of financial precarity.

**It is not because of political plots by his enemies that Ramaphosa's future and presidential legacy have been tarnished, but the destructive outcomes of his own governance.**

Ramaphosa ran on an anti-corruption campaign promising extensive reform. Because of his background as a union leader during the anti-apartheid liberation struggle, his role as a key negotiator in the arduous transition to democracy in the 1990s and a billionaire status from ventures in mining, food franchises and banking, Ramaphosa was initially framed by mainstream media as a benevolent technocrat.

Covid-19 was Ramaphosa's first and most revealing test. South Africa initially went into a stringent lockdown in March 2020. But the lockdown, which persisted at varying levels into 2022,

was not accompanied by substantial government support. Within two months of the lockdown, food scarcity had soared. Many small businesses, unable to obtain the financial relief promised during the prolonged lockdown, never again opened their doors. As the economy withered, by the end of July 2020, three-million people had lost their jobs.

Amidst this socio-economic malaise, Ramaphosa's successive finance ministers have remained resolute in their commitment to a policy of austerity. As poverty and unemployment soar, the reduction of social spending continues. This counter-intuitive policy choice captures how the ANC's inaction functions as a kind of cruelty against the destitute and working class.

Beyond the wreckages of the lockdown, a dysfunctional state and a flailing economy have converged to heighten social divisions and conflict. A scarcity of jobs, especially amongst young people, has allowed opportunists to spark another wave of afrophobic sentiment in major cities such as Durban and Johannesburg. Unlike previous explosions of anti-migrant mobilisations, it seemingly has support from political parties and is immensely popular on social media.

If not hyper-nationalism, violent crime undermines the possibility of social cohesion on a daily basis. Confronted with the permeance of violence, Ramaphosa has not pursued a reform of the criminal justice system or extracted crime from the root. Beyond attracting investment, there is little evidence of plans to create jobs or policies to tackle the dire conditions which



Photo: Twitter/CyrilRamaphosa

in part compel South Africans to scapegoat migrants.

This is the same Ramaphosa who was implicated in the killing of 34 striking mine workers. Although the bullets were fired by police, the strikes were around a mine he had shares in and allegedly put pressure on police to protect. Given this and his history, should we be surprised that a billionaire would consistently elevate the interests of big business over the public good during his presidency?

The recent accusations may taint the perception of his integrity, but on numerous fronts the man had already failed. It is a possibility he will be the last ANC president in power after the 2024 general elections, with the party doing disastrously in recent by-elections. Only the ANC, due to its shameless betrayal of its people, will be to blame for its tragic defeat. ■

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*Andile Zulu is a political essayist who runs the Born Free Blues blog*



# Mozambique

## Cabo Delgado's hungry refugees are running out of places to run

**Insurgents have moved into villages that used to be safe, forcing people to flee. That instability is driving widespread hunger.**

**Luis Nhachote in northern Mozambique**

**I**nsurgents in northern Mozambique opened up a new front this week with a series of brutal attacks in Ancuabe, a district which had until then been spared by the conflict – and which served as a safe haven for people fleeing fighting further north.

The first attack, on the village of Nanduli last Sunday, led thousands to flee their homes. Many are heading towards the provincial capital of Pemba, which is

already bursting at the seams with people displaced from the conflict zone.

Provincial governor Valige Tauabo was at pains to insist that people should return to their homes, promising a greater military presence to ensure no further attacks happened.

He even led by example, accompanying some of the displaced in vehicles from his own entourage back to the village of Silva Macua. He was there on Wednesday when a graphite mine was attacked, less than 15km up the road. When the military arrived it found two headless bodies, before retreating when confronted by insurgents.

A third attack now seems to have taken place, at a village called Ntutupue, a little further along the road to Pemba. A group of insurgents captured two artisanal miners, then beheaded one, and sent his companion away to spread the news – and the terror.

### **Fights over food aid**

The civilian population is increasingly left with nowhere to go. The latest attacks will increase pressure on the coastal city of Pemba, where many thousands of displaced people already subsist off a combination of food aid from national and international relief agencies, and the kindness of friends, family and strangers in the city.

More than a million people in Cabo



**Lookouts: Men keep an eye on the sea at the port of the Paquitequete neighborhood, where boats are expected to arrive with displaced people from Palma and Afungi after suffering attacks by armed groups. Photo: Alfredo Zuniga/AFP**

Delgado faced a food insecurity crisis in the first three months of 2022, according to a recently published humanitarian plan for the region. A further 23,553 people face a food emergency, meaning that they are likely to starve to death without immediate food aid.

Last month, *The Continent* visited a refugee camp at Muaja in Ancuabe.

Amina Mussa, 30, fled from the district of Macomia, where she used to farm and sell her produce across the province. Along her four-day trek to safety, she buried two of her children. “They couldn’t stand the hunger and died, I had to bury them along the way,” she said. “I covered them with branches and continued on.”

Refugees said they were being excluded from food aid distribution on suspicion of belonging to the insurgency, and in favour of people from the area. This, they said, was being done by people in local government who distribute aid from the World Food Programme.

Contacted by *The Continent* by telephone, Atia Kululu, head of the administrative post of Minheiene and

one of those accused of blocking access to food, denied the claims.

Mussagy Alawe, 37, has been at the refugee camp for two years and said he never imagined he would end up “running away from war to be discriminated against because of food”. He tried to take the case to the police, he said, but “nobody took our complaint seriously. You know here the police obey the government.”

The World Food Programme told *The Continent* that it reached 920,000 people affected by the conflict with humanitarian food assistance in April and May: 850,000 in Cabo Delgado, and 70,000 in Nampula. However, a lack of funding has forced them to halve the rations they give. Now, less than 40% of an adult’s caloric needs are covered by the assistance. The organisation says it urgently needs \$86-million to provide lifesaving assistance to people affected by the conflict through December 2022.

The expansion of violence in northern Mozambique means there is no end to the conflict in sight. ■

# Nigeria



Photo: Adekunle Yusuf / The Continent

## Owo residents reel from devastating church attack

**An attack on a church in south western Nigeria left 40 dead and twice as many injured**

**Justina Asishana and Rahaman Adekunle Yusuf in Owo**

**T**he quiet town of Owo, in Nigeria's south-west Ondo state, sits at the intersection of roads from the major towns of Akure, Kabba, Benin City and Siluko. On ordinary days, residents mill around dealing in cocoa, for which it is a major collection point, or buying and selling yams, cassava, corn, rice, palm oil and kernels, pumpkins and okra. But this

week, the air is thick with grief, shock, anger, devastation and tension.

On 5 June, on the Christian holiday known as Pentecost Sunday, gunmen stormed St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church and opened fire on congregants, leaving 40 people dead and 87 others injured.

"I first saw a dark man. He shot twice and I ran into the church, shut the door and shouted that everyone should lie on the floor. Shortly after, they came



Photo: Adekunle Yusuf/The Continent

into the church and started shooting indiscriminately. They also used explosive devices. I was on the floor till they left,” one eyewitness, who asked not to be named, told *The Continent*.

Another eyewitness, a 12-year-old, was taken to church by her grandmother, who was killed in the attack. “We had almost ended the service. The Reverend Father was about to say the grace when we started hearing gunshots,” she said. The girl joined other congregants who fled the church via the priest’s toilet behind the altar. “People were going out through the window and jumping the fence. I joined them and I ran to Iloro before I remembered my grandma was still in the church.”

After the shooters left, the young girl ran back to the church, only to find her granny half-dead by the door. “I called on one man to help me lift her so we could rush her to the hospital but he said she can’t make it. A few minutes later, she

died,” the girl recounted.

Inside the church, 48 hours after the attack, charred human body parts, debris, abandoned shoes and bibles were strewn about. The lectern and the pews were broken, and the scene was made even more macabre by the smell of blood in the air.

Outside, the traumatised town is a shadow of its usual self: many residents: many residents have left to stay with friends or relatives elsewhere. Business activities are paralysed, especially around Owaluwa street where the church is located. Some of the shops on the street were owned by victims of the attack, or their relatives.

### **‘An attack on the collective psyche’**

On Tuesday, the women of the Owo community marched through the streets, raining curses on the perpetrators of the



**More promises:**  
**Nigerian Vice President Yemi Osinbajo (second from the right), the Ondo State Governor Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu (second from left) met with security chiefs in Owo. Photo: Adekunle Yusuf/The Continent**

attack. Their procession ended at the palace of the area monarch, Oba Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye III, whom they implored to employ traditional ways in avenging the lives lost. He promised to do everything humanly possible to ensure the attackers do not get off scot-free, and asked the women and all residents of the town to remain calm, saying the government and the traditional authority are doing their best to bring the terrorists to book.

Authorities everywhere seem to have released strongly worded statements condemning the attack. The UN secretary general urged Nigerian authorities “to spare no effort in bringing the perpetrators to justice.” The Pope said it was an “act of unspeakable violence” by “those blinded by hatred.” In a broadcast, Ondo state governor Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu called the attack “vile and satanic”. Nigeria’s president, Muhammadu Buhari called it “a heinous crime” and vowed, “Nigeria will eventually win” and

that “darkness will never overcome the light”.

But it’s all scant relief for Ademola, a resident who ran to the scene right after the attack and now is battling nightmares. “I was at home when I saw a girl running and shouting, ‘They are killing people in the church, they are killing people!’ I ran to the church. What I saw was unbelievable,” he said.

Some \$360,000 has been donated to the victims of the attack and the church, the state governor disclosed during his Tuesday broadcast. He also said that his government would commit every available resource to hunting down the assailants.

So far, no arrests have been made and nobody has claimed responsibility for the tragedy, which Governor Akeredolu described as “an attack on the collective psyche”. Watching the shock, grief and trauma of the people of Owo town, it is clear that life here will never be the same again. ■



# Is anybody listening?

**O**ur elected representatives are supposed to represent us, right?

But are they even listening to us?

Most Africans don't think so. On average across 33 countries that Afrobarometer surveyed in 2019/2021, only one in eight citizens (12%) say members of Parliament (MPs) "often" or "always" try to listen to what people have to say. About a quarter (28%) say they "only sometimes" listen, while a majority (57%) say they "never" do.

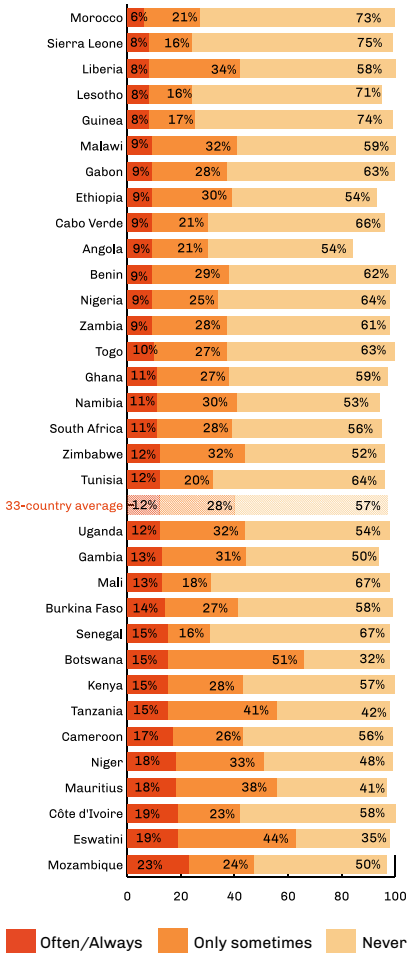
Not a single country claims to have responsive MPs: At the top, 23% of Mozambicans think they usually listen. "Never" is the majority response in all but seven countries.

Local government councillors fare only slightly better: 19% of respondents say these local officials generally try to listen. More citizens find a willing ear in their (usually non-elected) traditional leaders (41%).

What Africans really want – 78% across 20 countries where this question was asked – is elected officials who not only listen but also act on their constituents' views, instead of following their own ideas in deciding what's best for their country.

Well, we can always dream. But being listened to would be a start.

## How often do MPs listen to what people have to say? | 33 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.

# Misdiagnosis drives Africa's terrorism problem

**As terrorism proliferates, the continent's leaders are focused on responding with force, rather than on the problems that cause insurgencies**

**Solomon A. Dersso**

**T**errorism is thriving in Africa, with too many leaders failing to address the real reasons that make the emergence and growth of terrorist groups possible.

Across the continent, attacks and deaths as a result of terrorism rose 400% and 237% respectively between 2012 and 2020. This is according to the African Union's Algiers-based Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism.

Groups identified as terrorists are now present in every region of Africa. The Global Terrorism Index in March said 18 countries on the continent are affected by terrorism.

In light of this trend, the African Union hosted a summit on terrorism late last month.

Speaking there, the AU Commission's chair noted that from Somalia to the Sahel and Mozambique, regional bodies were responding with hard policy instruments: border controls, intelligence sharing, investment in their criminal justice systems, and soldiers. Bilateral agreements between countries reinforce this response, like with the involvement of Rwandan soldiers in northern Mozambique.

Responding with force to stop terrorist attacks is the default response across most of the continent.

In his recent visit to West Africa, the United Nations secretary general said: "Operating in these circumstances ... calls not for a peacekeeping force, but a strong force to enforce peace and fight terrorism."

He said a force "from the African Union" was needed, backed by a chapter seven mandate from the UN Security Council and "an obligatory financing".

But this does not solve the problems that drive terrorism.

## **A more nuanced approach**

In late May, as the AU meeting happened, the Addis Ababa-based think tank Amani Africa released a comprehensive report into the failures of counter-terrorism across the continent. It warned that: "Africa faces the unfortunate challenge of having become the epicentre of terrorism and violent extremism."

At the core of its findings is the reality that the threat of terrorism is growing despite the investment in, and increased



**Out in force:**  
Government  
soldiers look  
at the scene  
of suicide  
bomb attack  
in Mogadishu  
on January 16.  
Photo: AFP via  
Getty Images

use of, counter terrorism measures.

Amani said that countries are focused on responding to violence – the symptom of the problem – instead of the “political and socio-economic pathologies” that constitute the core of the problem.

While accepting that there are capacity gaps that limit the effectiveness of the hard security instruments used for countering terrorism on the continent, the Amani report says the dominant view about terrorism in Africa is based on a misdiagnosis of the nature of the phenomenon.

There are two aspects to this misdiagnosis.

The first is the thinking that terrorist groups are the main the problem. The second is that these groups are mainly ideologically driven by global jihad.

The reality, according to the report, is that terrorist groups are complex socio-political entities that are embedded in, and feed on, local political, social and security dynamics. The grievances and vulnerabilities that these produce on the part of affected communities are the conditions that precipitate the emergence

and growth of terrorist groups.

Such misdiagnoses also lead to faulty policy responses.

The Amani Africa report advocates for a human security based approach. This puts affected communities at the core of any policy and intervention – seeking to resolve their grievances and the conflict dynamics of which terrorist groups are a part, thereby prioritising a multipronged strategy focusing on governance reforms and development and humanitarian interventions.

Doing this means more investment in the governance, the economic and social issues facing communities in affected territories. This should at least match the funding for military, police, intelligence and criminal justice instruments.

The report also, perhaps controversially, demands that negotiating with terrorists is firmly included in the peace and security toolbox for responding to the threat of terrorism. ■

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*Solomon A. Dersso is the founding director of Amani Africa*

## ART

# The Dakar Biennale is back – and it was worth the wait



Portrait of a Young Soldier by Modou Dieng

*After a two-year delay – yes, the pandemic ruined everything – the Dakar Biennale is back, showcasing the very best of contemporary African art. Work from 59 different artists from 28 countries is on show at various locations around the city. The exhibitions will run until 21 June. For those of us that won't make it in person, we asked photojournalist **Fatou Warkha** to share her highlights*



This is *Echo*, by Victor Sonna. He was born in Cameroon and lives in the Netherlands. "I am always occupied with the struggle of holding onto my African roots on one hand, and integrating into my European home on the other."



At the Museum of Black Civilisations, a steady stream of visitors come to admire the art on show, including the works of the late Senegalese artist Kalidou Sy (on the right).





These tapestries are created by Aboulaye Konate. Each colour is created by a specific dye from a different region of Mali.



*Kumavau Nginya Vaa (From There To Here)* is by Nairobi-based Kaloki Nyamai, who uses mixed media – including bits of metal, textiles and charcoal – and draws inspiration from his own family history.



Ngozi-Omeje Ezema is a ceramic artist from Nsukka in Nigeria. Her installations are created with pieces of suspended terracotta. This one is called *Think tea, think cup III*.



Ana Silva is a visual artist from Angola. Her work uses materials like canvas, wood, metal, acrylic, and fabric. "I cannot separate my work from my experience in Angola, at a time when access to materials was difficult due to the war of independence and the civil war."



The roots and role of slavery in Cuban culture is at the heart of Juan Roberto Diago Durruthy's work – a theme which resonates in Senegal, which was deeply scarred by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.





This piece by Ivorian-born, Dakar-based artist Nampemanla uses recycled materials to create his faceless portraits, which represent the migrants perishing in the Mediterranean or in the Libyan desert, all too often with no record of their identity.

# 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

"Vive le Congo indépendant et souverain!"



**1\_** The Obudu Plateau is found on the Oshie Ridge of the Sankwala Mountain range. In which country is this?

**2\_** The Republic of Zaire used to be the name of which country?

**3\_** Name the two colonies that Belgium had in Africa in the early 1900s.

**4\_** Which year was the Belgian colonial empire dissolved?

**5\_** What is the capital city of Mali?

**6\_** Kirundi is an official language of which country?

**7\_** Thiéboudienne is

known as the national dish of which country?

**8\_** True or false: Raila Odinga is the deputy president of Kenya.

**9\_** Algeria, Libya and Tunisia all use their own versions of which currency?

**10\_** Which country is considered the second-largest Lusophone country in terms of total population and area?

## 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)

# Winter is coming



## Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

Dearest readers, we bring this week's column to you from the Kenyan capital Nairobi, where we are all enduring what can best be described as "stealing your boyfriend's hoodie" weather. This is a seasonal thing, not to be confused with the all-year-round "stealing public funds" climate enjoyed by many a politician.

Yes, wintry days have arrived in a few parts of the African continent, especially south of the equator. It may still be warm in Kinshasa, although King Philippe of Belgium may be forgiven for getting confused: he received what can best be described as a chilly welcome when he made his first trip to the country that his country so effectively looted, extorted, enslaved and impoverished.

To make up for all this, the king came bearing a gift: specifically, the generous donation on "indefinite loan" of a large traditional mask of the Suku people, which Belgian soldiers stole during the colonial era. The mask has been on display in Belgium's Africa Museum ever since (the Belgian colonisers were not only thieves, but proud thieves, apparently – there are over 2,000 works

from Africa displayed in that museum, most of which were stolen).

In a spectacular display of tone-deafness, the king said that the people of the DRC should "discover and admire" the mask.

King Philippe did allude to the crimes of the past. Addressing Congolese lawmakers, he said that Belgium's colonial rule was "marked by paternalism, discrimination and racism" and he expressed his "deepest regrets for those wounds of past".

He did not apologise.

**King Philippe of Belgium received what can best be described as a chilly welcome when he made his first trip to the country that his country so effectively looted and enslaved**

As Kenyan journalist Ramah Nyang tweeted: "Regret is not the same thing as a straightforward apology and efforts to make amends. But when you lack power, 'regret' shall be offered as a ceremonial, public and utterly pointless, offering."

Also cooling is the relationship between Algeria and Spain, after Spain appeared to take Morocco's side in the dispute over the status of Western Sahara. Algeria officially withdrew in disgust this





**Armed response: Ugandan authorities prepare to arrest Kizza Besigye.** Photo: Twitter/kizzabesigye1

week from a two decades-old “Friendship Treaty” with Spain, which could have severe ramifications for Spain’s next winter: after all, Algeria is the country’s main supplier of natural gas.

Winter is not such a concern in Uganda, where it is warm all the time. Instead, once again, things are heating up for opposition leader Kizza Besigye, who is again facing criminal charges, this time for trying to organise a peaceful protest over the soaring cost of living. Charged with inciting violence, he was initially told to pay \$8,000 to secure bail. This was reduced on appeal, and Besigye was released this week. We have no doubt, however, that he will be back behind bars soon: his opposition to President Yoweri Museveni has made him probably the most arrested man in Africa.

On cold winter’s days, there is nothing we like more than cozying up at home and binge-watching our favourite series Keeping up with the Coupdashian.

This week, Mali’s junta leaders have promised that there will be at least two more seasons to look forward to, as they delayed the transition to civilian rule by 24 months – infuriating regional bloc Ecowas in the process.

All jokes aside, what does make our blood run cold is the news of atrocities like that committed in Nigeria’s Ondo State, where gunmen attacked a church service and left at least 40 people dead. And the warning this week, from the United Nations, that “if the world does not widen its gaze from the war in Ukraine and act immediately, an explosion of child deaths is about to happen” following four successive years of failed rains in the East African region, leaving 386,000 children in Somalia in need of treatment for severe malnutrition.

We cannot let any more seasons pass before we address these crises, and their causes. ■

# The fight for Zimbabwe's future will miss Alex Magaisa

## OBITUARY

Chipo Dendere

**I**t is still very hard to think of Alex Magaisa, our friend and colleague, in the past tense.

Even after the news of his untimely death, aged 46, the author of the *Big Saturday Read* who taught and researched law at the University of Kent lives on. This is not only because he was woven into the tapestry of Zimbabwean political life, having helped to write the 2013 Constitution and served as an effective chief of staff for Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai between 2012 and 2013. It is also because his ideas, work and ideals continue to shape his country and will do so for decades to come. As a result, many of us are still checking our last chats with him and thinking of what we could have said to him during the last week of his life.

We would have wanted him to know that he was not only highly regarded for his numerous accomplishments but that he was also loved for the kind and humble person that he was. Although he had written about his struggles with a chronic illness there was no indication that in the same week he posted messages of frustration and hope about Arsenal, his



**Irreplaceable: "This loss is heavy and hard to accept ... We have lost a mentor, a confidant, a friend and a leader."**

beloved football team, he would also bid us farewell. He has left a hole that no one else can fill.

Alex Magaisa was born on 9 August 1975 in the then Charter District of Rhodesia (now Chikomba District in Zimbabwe), and despite spending a considerable part of his life outside of the country, alongside his family it remained his greatest love and top priority. It is

rarely discussed, but for a child born during the colonial period to achieve what he did was no easy task. Perhaps this is why he was so generous with his knowledge and always willing to “boost up” others, even those much more junior than himself. Having witnessed so much hardship and inequality, Alex understood that access to education should not be taken for granted and therefore dedicated his life to writing for the public audience. Many academics write work that is not accessible to the people they write about, hidden in expensive hard-to-access journals or paywalls of newspapers. Not Alex! Instead, he channelled many of his best insights into the *Big Saturday Read*, a free website that everyone could access and which quickly became essential reading for anyone interested in Zimbabwe.

A friend and colleague, Irene Peters, remembered Alex for his indisputable work ethic. Peters said Magaisa worked as though he knew he was in a race against time and had to get all his words out there.

His great influence was not only down to the quality of his words, it was also rooted in his inclusive personality. Despite political tensions and the constant threat posed by speaking truth to power in an extremely violent political environment, Alex would always reach across the aisle. It is no surprise then that a memorial for him in a Twitter Space drew over 2,000 listeners. Among those who reflected on his legacy was Saviour Kasukuwere, a former ZANU-PF minister. Their political beliefs could not have been more different, but according to Kasukuwere, Alex never

walked away from an opportunity to engage. Neither did he allow the criticism of those less tolerant than him to silence his efforts towards engagement, because he understood that Zimbabwe could only move forwards through dialogue and mutual understanding.

On Twitter, where he spent much of his time educating and bantering with his legion of followers, people have described him as gentle, patient, kind and always willing to educate. Numerous touching stories have been shared, but the ones that stand out the most are reflections that show his ubuntu spirit in full display. Sometimes this was spiritual, sometimes emotional, sometimes practical. For one young mother stranded in London with no family nearby, he booked a hotel room and bought them food. Alex did not care that this young mother was a strong ZANU-PF supporter who disagreed with his politics. He saw her as an individual in need of help, a human being who deserved compassion, and as a fellow Zimbabwean. We must honour Alex’s legacy by being more tolerant and working to create a kinder and less polarised world.

WaMagaisa, as friends and fans knew him, will be sorely missed. ■

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*In this piece Chipso Dendere, Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at Wellesley College, channels the thoughts and memories of many Zimbabweans expressed over Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook. This obituary was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa*



# The Big Picture

Photo: Seyllou/AFP

Roaring pride: Senegalese fans rejoice watching their reigning continental champion Lions at the Diamniadio Olympic Stadium – also known as Stade Me. Abdoulaye Wade – during the first day of the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers against Benin. Marksman Sadio Mané scored a hat-trick in the 3-1 home victory, and scored a game-winning penalty in the 98th minute against Rwanda.



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