

The Continent

with Mail & Guardian

Saving Somalia's beaches



Photo: Abdirahman Ahmed
Aden/The Continent

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Cover: For decades, in the absence of functioning municipal services, Mogadishu's iconic coastline was used as a rubbish dump. Then people started to pick up the litter – and suddenly Lido Beach is back in business. Could it be that simple? (p15)

We're back!

Welcome to Season 9! We've been around for two and a half years and 103 editions, with 18,000 of you subscribing and sharing our newspaper each week. This season will be packed with the usual assortment of journalism from all across Africa. We finish with the annual Africans of the Year special (which you can read in your December holidays). Thank you for coming with us on this journey.

The Success Story of Silicon Savannah

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CLIMATE CHANGE

United Nations warns of catastrophic climate breakdown

World leaders – with a few notable exceptions **cough** Sunak, Xi, Putin **cough** – are poised to meet in Egypt next week to promise to do a great deal about climate change. This week, the United Nations released another urgent alert that underscored how little (particularly rich) countries are doing about the world heating to catastrophic levels. It also said that just 24 countries have submitted more ambitious plans for how they will reduce carbon emissions, something they all promised to do before the new talks began.

BRAZIL

Amazon's fate in the balance as Brazil votes again

The final round of Brazil's election pits incumbent Jair Bolsonaro against former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, with Lula marginally ahead in the polls. The result will determine the future of not just Brazil but also that of the world's largest tropical rainforest, the Amazon. Lula has pledged to aggressively combat deforestation, which increased dramatically over the last decade. Under Bolsonaro's watch, the Amazon started emitting more carbon than it absorbed as trees were hacked down.

CHINA

Xi Jinping elected for a third term

African countries are often told to follow in China's footsteps. But perhaps China is learning from us. In a power play that is all too familiar to residents of

Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Uganda, Cameroon, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire – to name just a few – President Xi Jinping has given himself a third term in office, tearing up the country's political rulebook in the process. Under Xi, China has become the world's largest proponent of renewable energy, as well as establishing the world's most effective surveillance state.



SOUTH AFRICA

Eyebrows raised as SA gives berth to giant Russian yacht

A 145-metre superyacht belonging to the Russian billionaire Alexey Mordashov has been granted permission to dock in Cape Town. In the wake of Russia's

invasion of Ukraine, Modashov was sanctioned by the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States due to his alleged links with Russian President Vladimir Putin. South Africa has resisted intense pressure to join in wider sanctions. "South Africa has no legal obligation to abide by sanctions imposed by the US and EU," said a spokesperson for the country's president.



UNITED KINGDOM

The empire strikes back, diversely

Rishi Sunak made history when he became Britain's first non-white prime minister on Tuesday, after being appointed by a handful of members of parliament. Sunak's family emigrated from India to Kenya, and then again to Britain after Kenya attained independence in 1963. His appointment has been hailed as a victory for representation – however, given that he is also a proud member of Britain's billionaire class, it is not yet clear which minority group he will be representing.

SENEGAL

Notorious arms dealer's secret deal comes to light

Senegal's environment ministry bought \$77-million worth of assault rifles, semiautomatic pistols, ammunition, and other weapons earlier this year. The deal was not disclosed to the public until the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project published details of the contract this week. The weapons were bought from an infamous Nigerien arms dealer called Aboubakar Hima, who has previously been accused by his own government of brokering corrupt arms deals worth \$240-million.

BURKINA FASO

Coup leaders want civilians to join fight

When Burkina Faso's current military junta seized power in a coup in September, it promised to solve the country's deteriorating security situation. Now it has revealed its grand plan: to send thousands of civilians into the firing line against well-trained militants. The junta has launched a drive to recruit 35,000 civilians into a new force called Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland, according to the BBC. The volunteers will be given just two weeks of training.

ANTARCTICA

Warring thwarts thawing worries

The south pole is one of the last places on Earth not yet ruined by humans. It has

valuable resources, which will become accessible as the world heats. Scientists want large parts of the region to be protected, but their efforts have been waylaid by tensions between the United States, China and Russia, who won't work together to keep the world habitable.



SCAPEGOATING

Pope blames porn for priestly perversities

This week, Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church, warned that pornography is a “vice” that grips “even priests and nuns”. He said “the devil enters from there”. Thousands of Catholic priests around the world have been implicated in rape and sexual abuse, much of it committed before porn became readily available via the internet. The church has often protected them by paying off victims or quietly moving perpetrators to another diocese. One in five Africans is Catholic.

LOAN ARRANGER

Ghana wants Ken gone as cedi recedes

The lawmakers of Ghana's ruling party have called for the firing of Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta as the cash-strapped country battles economic hardship. Ofori-Atta has just returned from an attempt to secure a \$3-billion loan from the IMF. The ultimatum was supported by 80 legislators out of the 137 (ruling) New Patriotic Party parliamentary caucus. The cedi was named the world's worst-performing currency for this year by Bloomberg earlier this month.

THE AGENDA

YOU BETTER WATCH OUT

◆ A note to crooks and money launderers: Avoid Johannesburg on 31 October, when the **18th African Investigative Journalism Conference** begins at Wits University, bringing together the continent's finest muckrakers. *The Continent* will be speaking on a panel on 1 November.

TAX RETURNS

◆ The South African Institute of Taxation is hosting the 11th annual **Africa Transfer Pricing Summit** on 4 November. Transfer Pricing is an arcane accounting practice that governs how goods or services are exchanged between divisions of the same company. It is the mechanism by which much of Africa's wealth has been looted.

PICK YOUR POISON

◆ **The 7th Biennale of Contemporary Art** continues in Lubumbashi, in the DRC, exploring a theme of toxicity (apt for a mining town).

PRIVATE PRACTICE

◆ **The Privacy Symposium Africa** begins in Nairobi on 2 November, looking at best practice when it comes to protecting your digital data.

HIRE PURPOSE

◆ **African Arguments** is looking for a politics and society editor, based anywhere in Africa or in London. Salary \$35-40k pa. More details [here](#).

FOOTIE FEAT

◆ **Kings of Queenstown**, released on Netflix on 4 November, is a new movie from acclaimed South African director Jahmil XT Quebeka. Timed for the upcoming World Cup, it tells the story of a young soccer star navigating tricky family dynamics.

OUT OF COMMISSION

◆ **Human Rights Watch** releases a report on November 2 on the closure of camps for internally displaced people in Borno State, Nigeria.

The Agenda is a new section in *The Continent* that highlights the best upcoming music, movies, books, conferences, reports, product launches and job opportunities. We want to hear from our readers: please let us know if you or your organisation has something cool in the pipeline that our audience should know about on agenda@thecontinent.org. In some cases, we will accept payment for agenda entries (we'll make it clear when we do) – this helps us keep the newspaper free.

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Africa

The true and terrible cost of developing African gas

Some countries want to develop their gas fields. But the numbers show that no one will be buying their gas as early as 2035.

ANALYSIS
Sipho Kings

If countries like Tanzania, Senegal and South Africa develop their gas fields, they run the risk of investing billions in projects that will have no customers. That's one of the conclusions of three pieces of research published by the African Climate Foundation this week.

Africa has vast gas reserves. Nigeria, Algeria and Egypt make a lot of money selling gas. With countries committed to reducing carbon emissions to zero by 2050, gas is replacing coal in power plants in big polluters like India, China, the EU and the United States.

Petrochemical companies support this

because it keeps them in business. Their lobby has worked hard to get gas labelled as a "clean" energy source. It isn't.

The International Energy Agency says the only way to keep global heating to below 1.5°C is if no new gas fields are built up. But Egypt is using this year's COP climate negotiations to push for a place for gas well into the future.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made gas very valuable right now. Seeing this, a slew of African countries with gas want to develop theirs. But because renewable energy is so much cheaper than even gas, they project that Europe won't want any new African gas by as soon as 2030. China – the world's largest buyer – is dramatically reducing its own emissions and is building more renewable energy than anyone else.

It takes on average 10 years to go from planning a gas project to selling the gas, and then 15 years to pay off that project, so countries like Senegal would need gas prices to be high until the late 2040s. But the research predicts that prices would drop in the mid 2030s. So these countries will likely be left unable to pay off the massive debt of building new plants. ■

Editor's note: The African Climate Foundation is a funder of The Continent but has no say in the commissioning, selection, writing or editing of articles.

Zimbabwe

'Next time, send the real Mr Bean'

Zimbabwe's cricket team beat Pakistan in a major upset – but the real star of the show was a Rowan Atkinson impersonator

The group stages of the T20 Cricket World Cup are under way in Australia. On Thursday evening, heavyweights Pakistan took on unfancied Zimbabwe in what organisers thought would be a relatively innocuous, low-profile clash.

How wrong they were.

Ahead of the match, Ngugi Chasura took to Twitter to remind the world of a historic injustice inflicted upon his country. "As Zimbabweans we won't forgive you ... you once gave us that Fraud Pak Bean instead of Mr Bean Rowan ... we will settle the matter tomorrow."

Some background: In 2016, the Harare Agricultural Show advertised a special appearance from Mr Bean, the bumbling hero of the TV show of the same name. Tickets were sold for \$10, and "Mr Bean" even got a police escort from the airport.

Just one problem: Rowan Atkinson,



Legume before wicket: 'Pak Bean', aka Pakistani comedian Asif Muhammad.

who plays Mr Bean, was nowhere near Harare at the time. The "Mr Bean" in question was in reality a Pakistani comedian and Mr Bean impersonator named Asif Muhammad.

Social media users in Pakistan and Zimbabwe have spoken of little else this week. On Thursday, presumably spurred on by the desire to redress the wrongs of the past, Zimbabwe's cricketers pulled off a stunning upset to beat Pakistan by a single run.

"What a win for Zimbabwe! Congratulations to the Chevrons," said Zimbabwe's president Emmerson Mnangagwa. "Next time, send the real Mr Bean." ■

Ethiopia

Peace talks shrouded in secrecy

Sources report 'a kind of progress' in negotiations to end the brutal civil war

Mwangi Maina

After weeks of delays, peace talks between the Ethiopian government and the Tigrayan regional leadership finally got underway in the South African capital of Pretoria this week.

Negotiations began slowly when Ethiopia's chief negotiator, deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, failed to show up on time. By Thursday, however, they were back on track. "Day three of the peace talks, there was a kind of progress," one diplomatic source present during the talks told *The Continent*. "They're hoping and aspiring for a cessation of hostilities so that the political process can commence".

As yet there has been no official confirmation of either the substance or the progress of the talks. This is deliberate. Another source told *The Continent* that participants "took an oath on Tuesday not to speak on or off the record". The talks are expected to conclude on Sunday.

Asked about transparency – or lack thereof – in the process, African Union Commission spokesperson Ebba Kalondo said the parties would determine how they want the talks conducted. "These talks are for the parties to sit around a table and talk to each other. That is our biggest priority. When we have something to report, it will be in consultation with the parties."

The bitter conflict in the northern Tigray region began in November 2020, and continued until a humanitarian ceasefire was agreed in March this year. That ceasefire was shattered in late August when fighting erupted again on the front lines. In recent days, Ethiopian forces have made major advances, capturing several significant towns in Tigray.

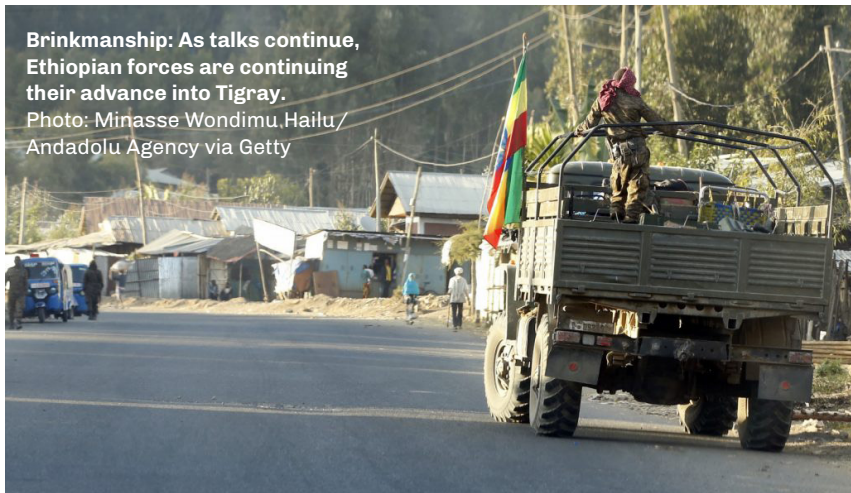
The conflict is estimated to have killed at least half a million people – either directly through the fighting or due to the ensuing humanitarian crisis – and displaced millions more. It is the world's deadliest ongoing conflict. Amnesty International said this week that all sides in the conflict have committed serious human rights violations, including mass killings and using rape as a weapon of war.

Heightened risks

The peace talks are led by the African Union, which appointed a trio of elder statesmen to guide discussions: Former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, former Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta

Brinkmanship: As talks continue, Ethiopian forces are continuing their advance into Tigray.

Photo: Minasse Wondimu Hailu / Andadolu Agency via Getty



and former South African deputy president Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Representatives from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the United States and the United Nations are among the observers. Previous secret talks organised by the United States, once in the Seychelles and twice in Djibouti, went nowhere.

Conspicuous by its absence is Eritrea, whose soldiers have been heavily involved in the fighting on behalf of the Ethiopian government. It is unclear to what extent any potential peace deal can be maintained without their involvement. Another complicating factor is the rapid progress made in recent weeks by Ethiopian forces, who have taken several key Tigrayan towns, potentially strengthening the government's hand in the negotiations.

Briefing the media on Thursday, General Tadesse Werede, commander-in-chief of the Tigray Defence Forces –

who is not present in Pretoria – said the Ethiopian government should withdraw Eritrean forces for peace to be attainable.

Last week, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed – who ordered Ethiopian forces to attack Tigray in November 2020 – said the war “would end and peace will prevail ... Ethiopia will be peaceful; we will not continue fighting indefinitely. I hope the day when we will stand with our Tigrayan brothers to work together for development is near.”

Rights groups are warning that an immediate peace deal may be the only way to prevent further abuses. On Wednesday, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum said it was deeply concerned about a heightened risk of genocide in the Tigray region. “News of the peace talks are a positive step, but it is critical to recall that mass atrocities often continue to be perpetrated while negotiations are ongoing,” said director Naomi Kikoler. ■



Trials and tribulations: Job Sikhala, right, accompanies his client, former Zimbabwean foreign affairs minister Walter Mzembe, after the latter's bail hearing in 2018.
Photo: Jekesai Njikizana/AFP

The patience of Job Sikhala

Jeffrey Moyo in Harare

Job Sikhala has been in prison for more than 100 days.

The deputy chair of Zimbabwe's official opposition, the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), has been charged with inciting his supporters to commit violence. For most of his time behind bars, Sikhala has been locked up in solitary confinement at the notorious Chikurubi maximum security prison on the outskirts of Harare.

Sikhala denies the charges against him,

which have been described by human rights lawyers as politically motivated.

The 50-year-old lawyer and politician has limited contact with the outside world, and communications are strictly monitored, but was able to respond in writing to questions passed to him by *The Continent*. "I live in a single cell, which means I'm always alone, but even this strategy has not broken me," he said.

He is a big man, and the cell is tiny. He sleeps on the floor with a handful of blankets, and the small prison windows mean that there is little fresh air.

Nonetheless, he remains defiant.

"I will rather die standing for what I believe is right than be compromised. I'm a leader and have a responsibility to stand, act and speak for those that cannot."

'Threat to the regime'

Sikhala grew up in Masvingo Province, and became a student activist while studying history at the University of Zimbabwe. He was a founding member in 1999 of the Movement for Democratic Change, led by the late Morgan Tsvangirai, and went on to become an opposition MP for St Mary's constituency in Chitungwiza.

His politics have always put him at odds with the government. His current troubles began in June, after the gruesome murder of opposition activist Moreblessing Ali in Chitungwiza. Ali was allegedly killed by Pius Jamba, a well-known member of the ruling Zanu-PF, in an argument over money. Jamba is in jail and facing criminal charges.

Anti-government protests erupted during a memorial service for Ali. These turned violent when a group of Zanu-PF supporters arrived on the scene. In the aftermath of these clashes, police arrested 16 opposition supporters, including Sikhala and Godfrey Sithole, another opposition MP.

No ruling party supporters were arrested.

Earlier this month, Sikhala was denied bail for a sixth time. "No matter how strong the legal arguments are, they are not prepared to release him because of [the political interference]," said his advocate, Freddy Masarirevu. "Sikhala is seen as a threat to the regime and its interests and this case of Moreblessing Ali was a chance for them to silence him once and for all."

Sikhala echoes this analysis, saying that "our judiciary has been used to fight

political battles" and that there is "clear evidence of political interference" in the case.

The state disagrees.

In late September, when he was quizzed in Parliament about the continued detention of Sikhala and his colleague Sithole, Justice Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi said: "There is no discrimination and there is no selective application of the law." When faced with further questions in October, Ziyambi warned interested parties to desist from politicising Sikhala's matter.

'I'm a leader and have a responsibility to stand, act and speak for those that cannot.'

Masarirevu, Sikhala's lawyer, says that his client remains in good spirits, and that the success of his beloved Arsenal Football Club – currently top of the English Premier League – brings him some joy.

News of Arsenal's results come via some of the prison wardens that Sikhala has befriended.

But he worries about his family – he is father to ten children – and especially his last-born, who is just ten years old. "Sometimes thoughts of my youngest son affect me. I'm always asking, has he gone to school? Who is picking him up from school? What is he having for lunch?"

He does not know when he will get to see his family again. "If they want to keep me in here for 20 years, let them do so. I'm physically and mentally prepared." ■

PHOTO ESSAY

How Mogadishu got its beach back

Lido Beach, in the heart of Mogadishu, is Somalia's most popular beach. It was also among its most polluted – until the city's residents intervened.



Words and photos by Abdirahman Ahmed Aden in Mogadishu

Every Friday morning, 500 volunteers gather on Mogadishu's Lido Beach. They are not here to swim, but to pick up trash. They collect two to three tons of plastics, medical waste and other garbage every week.

Lido (below left) was once a prime tourist destination, and a favourite escape for the city's residents. But when the country slid into civil war in the 1980s, the capital city's stunning coastline soon became a dumping ground for its waste.

Abdisatar Arabow Ibrahim (below right), an assistant lecturer at Mogadishu University, could not understand why the beach was so dirty. "I wondered why European beaches are so clean, while our beaches are full of garbage," he tells *The Continent*.

He decided to do something about it.

With a few friends, he started to walk up and down the beach picking up rubbish. Soon, his initiative picked up momentum, with more and more people taking part. A year on, it has sparked a remarkable increase in small business activity, beachgoing and fishing in the area – and even inspired other coastal towns such as Kismayo and Merca in the south of the country to follow suit.



Volunteers don't receive any compensation, and do not have any special equipment. "We use the little we have," Ibrahim says. "But we will continue to protect our nature."

Ecosystem under threat

Lido's fishermen have long complained about the impact of the trash on their ability to fish in the area. "The trash used to hurt our feet, and even block the port," 35-year-old Abdiwali Osman Ogle, who has been fishing in Lido for over 10 years, explains: "Now, thanks to the cleaning efforts, we can easily fish without suffering from trash scattered all over the beach."

The clean beach has attracted more beachgoers and therefore more business activity. "Traders and businesses have increased in recent months," says Rowdo Said Qasim, a tea shop owner in Lido. She used to sell tea in other parts of the city, but three months ago she decided to set up her shop on the beach.

"I make enough to support my family since the beach is always full," she says. "This is because it is now all tidy and suitable for business, thanks to the boys and girls who gave their time, energy, and resources to clean it up."



Bagging rights: Volunteers are doing the most to clean up Lido beach.



Clean dream: With the beach cleared, Somalis can again enjoy playing in the waves at Lido without fear of injuring themselves on discarded trash. Photo: Arif Hudaverdi Yaman/Anadolu Agency via AFP

Most of the volunteers are students. This is why cleaning happens on Fridays, a day off in Somalia. Ibrahim Nageeye Ali is one of the volunteers. He joined the initiative in order to protect nature and the beauty of the beach. “Each one of us pays their own transportation fees and some of us come from faraway parts of the city,” the 25-year-old says.

More needed

The initiative has received support from government officials who provided municipal trucks to transport the collected garbage to official landfills in the outskirts of Mogadishu. “Some politicians sometimes join the activities, including the former prime minister Mohamed Hussein Roble,” Ibrahim says. Despite this, Ibrahim is under no illusions. “It is likely that trash will fill the beach again if the group stops working,” he warns.

While the voluntary trash collection may be better for the beach, it is not necessarily better for the environment, explains Ahmed Faroole, the founder of the Somali Environmental Forum. “The smoke resulting from the burned trash in landfills pollutes the atmosphere and contributes to the worsening climate change in our country. ■

How safe do you feel?

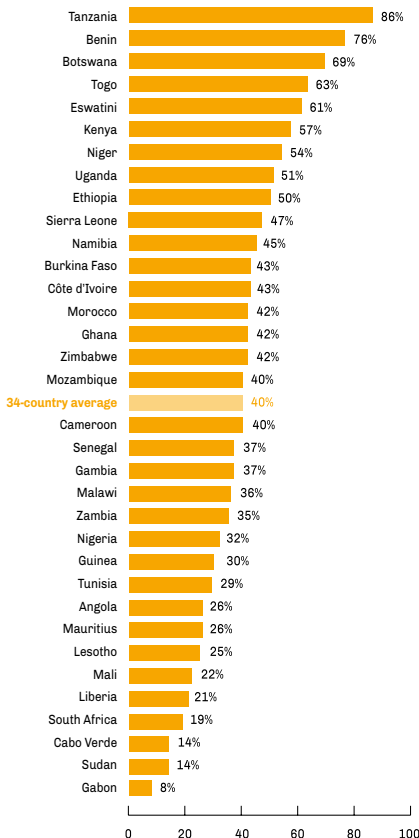
Africans are feeling less safe. Across 34 countries that Afrobarometer surveyed, nearly half (47%) of adults said they felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods at least once during the previous year. Four in 10 (39%) feared crime in their own homes, including one in seven (14%) who experienced this fear “many times” or “always”.

And things are getting worse. Across 30 countries tracked for the past decade, we see drops of seven percentage points in the proportions saying they did not experience fear in their homes or neighbourhoods.

Given this trend, it's no surprise that only 40% of citizens said their governments are doing “fairly well” or “very well” on fighting crime; for the first time in more than two decades’ worth of Afrobarometer surveys, a majority (58%) said their governments were failing on this issue.

These appraisals vary widely by country (as does citizens’ sense of security): Most people were satisfied with the government’s performance on crime in Tanzania (86%) and Benin (76%), but fewer than one in five agreed in Gabon (8%), Sudan (14%), Cabo Verde (14%), and South Africa (19%).

Government performing fairly well/ very well in the fight against crime | 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.

PHOTOGRAPHY

East Africa's finest photographs

For the fifth year running, the winners of the East African Photography Award showcased the extraordinary quality of the region's photojournalists.



The overall prize went to **Amnuel Sileshi** for his extraordinary images of Ethiopia's country's civil war, including this one of a horse and rider galloping past a destroyed tank in Mesobit.



Ericky Boniface was shortlisted for his series on Vingunguti Cemetery in Dar es Salaam, where rising waters have forced 200 graves to be relocated.



Also on the shortlist was **Gordwyn Odhiambo**, for his black-and-white series that captures the development and displacement that is permanently changing life in Kibera in Nairobi.

Ammar Abdalla Osman won the award for best single image, for his *Man with Nobody*, which was shot on his phone.





About Introspection XII, by **Margaret Njeri Ngigi**, won the more creative Imagine category.



This Kampala street scene earned **Katumba Badru** the top prize in the Planet category.

The long wait for justice at Kuje Custodial Centre

More than 70% of Nigeria's prisoners have not been formally charged with a crime – and yet remain behind bars in congested jails. A network of university law clinics is working to change that.

Zainab Onuh-Yahaya in Abuja

The road that leads to the Kuje Custodial Centre is lined with overhanging trees, lulling all who enter into a false sense of welcome.

Some of these people are pretrial detainees – people suspected of a crime for which they have not been formally tried. Many will never come out; their lives as they knew them will never be the same again.

The prison, on the outskirts of Nigeria's capital Abuja, has a functional capacity of 560 inmates. But it is heavily overcrowded, with a population as much as three times that. More than half are pre-trial inmates. Across Nigeria, such detainees account for over 70% of the entire prison population.

Rosemary Ochiwu first visited the prison in 2018 as part of a project by the Network of University Legal Aid Institutions (Nulai). She was a law clinician at the Abuja Law Clinic.

"It was the first time I had ever been in a prison," Ochiwu told *The Continent*. "My life has been split sharply into two parts – before and after Kuje. What I remember



Justice delayed: Detainees languish in prison for months and years without facing trial. Photo: Pius Utomi Ekpei/AFP

the most is the look of hopelessness on the faces of the inmates. Most had been in custody for over a year. Some had been declared missing by families who have no knowledge of their whereabouts, some had been concluded to be dead."

Ochiwu and other clinicians from two law clinics in Abuja, with support from Nulai, began the arduous task of providing pro bono legal aid for pretrial inmates at Kuje. They interviewed detainees, informed families of their whereabouts, followed up on bail terms and conditions, and organised research, case verification, and legal representation. To boost this



Just cause:
Legal clinics have
created a system
to track inmates
from their arrest.
 Photo: Pius Utomi
 Ekpei/AFP

intervention, Nulai helped set up a case management system at Kuje, which helps the Nigerian Correctional Service keep track of inmates from when they enter the system until they are released. The system has enrolled 53,686 inmates to date, with 475 receiving pro-bono legal aid from 105 law students at three law clinics.

When law meets reality

Under Nigerian law, suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty. They have a right to legal representation, and must be brought before a court within a reasonable time (usually between 24 and 48 hours) after being arrested.

It rarely works like that in practice. “The lawyer to citizen ratio in Nigeria is abysmal. There are simply not enough lawyers,” says Friday Ekpa, co-ordinator of the Kogi State University Law Clinic.

More than 48 university-based clinics have opened since 2004, providing free legal aid under the auspices of Nulai, which offers technical and institutional support.

The case management system, part of Nulai’s “Reforming Pretrial Detention in Kuje Prison” project, has been its most consequential intervention. It allows the correctional services to know how long a suspect has been in their custody; the length of time since their last court appearance; and the reasons why a case was adjourned. This information should allow them to better manage the prison population and to know when pre-trial inmates have been behind bars for an excessively long time.

Some inmates, however, are not prepared to wait any longer. In July this year, the Islamic State West Africa Province launched a daring attack on Kuje prison. In a co-ordinated assault, gunmen overpowered the guards and opened the prison’s doors. Some 68 alleged terrorists escaped, along with more than 800 other detainees who seized the opportunity to break free.

Among them were a number of pretrial inmates – the exact number is not known – some of whom remain at large. ■

Trapped in a house haunted by history and horror

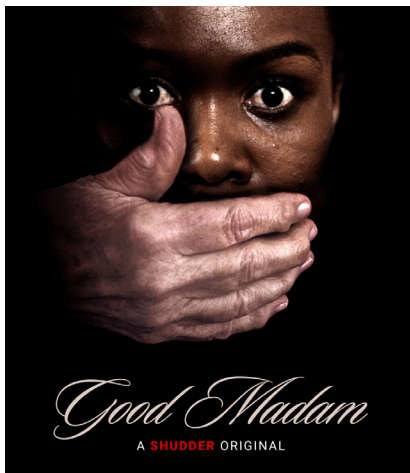
The relationship between a 'madam' and her domestic worker is the scariest part of this spooky South African film

Wilfred Okiche

South African filmmaker Jena Cato Bass has made a successful career of her willingness to be adventurous with her cinema. Having attempted tropes that are typical of the western road movie (*Flatland*) and romantic drama (*Love the One You Love*), Bass continues her dive into genre film-making with the creepy, atmospheric horror of *Good Madam*.

A young woman, Tsidi (Chumisa Cosa) moves into the Cape Town mansion where her mother Mavis (Nosipho Mtebe) has worked as a domestic worker for decades. Tsidi is upset to find that her mom remains slavishly devoted to her now infirm boss, who is kept offscreen for the most part. Tsidi is also disturbed by the house itself, haunted by noises and visions that make no sense to her. Are they real or imagined?

Bass makes a case for the banality of evil: with deft sound design, *Good Madam* depicts the everyday ways evil manifests. The relationship between Mavis and her employer is of course a metaphor for the structural inequalities Black South Africans still grapple with. While Mavis is happy to live in servitude, her daughter Tsidi, born free in a democratic South



Africa, sees things differently.

But *Good Madam* wants to play in the horror space as well and so Bass is compelled to deliver the spooks. In this regard, despite moments of real dread, Bass is not quite as successful at bridging the gap between the supernatural and the ordinary. *Good Madam* is better at showing that, rather than the bogeyman under the bed, the real horrors of life are often man-made, and the psychological scars are just as traumatic. ■

Good Madam is streaming on Amazon Prime Video

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

"If there's a pageant for quizzes, best believe the crown is mine."



1_ Which African country has the highest population density?

2_ What is the name of the 2006 Oscar-winning feature film about Ugandan dictator Idi Amin?

3_ This popular South African dish, originating from Indian labourers in the 19th century, consists of a hollowed out loaf of bread stuffed with spicy meat or vegetable curry. What is it?

4_ On 6 February 1820, the first group of formerly enslaved people in the United States departed from New York to resettle in which African country?

5_ Which renowned Zimbabwean author has been given a suspended

prison sentence after being found guilty of inciting violence by staging a peaceful protest?

6_ True or false? Uganda was the first country to achieve sign language recognition on a constitutional level?

7_ The Africa Centres for Disease Control is based in which city?

8_ Zozibini Tunzi was the longest-serving Miss Universe in history. Where is she from?

9_ Christopher Elnathan Okoro Cole was president for a day in 1971. Which country was he the first president of?

10_ True or false? Landlocked Ethiopia used to have a navy.

HOW DID I DO?

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

Basic human frights



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

And we're back! Dearest reader, our separation from you was truly taxing. Our love for you is akin to that of a long-standing leader's love for removing term limits, our devotion to you can only be likened to a government's passionate attachment to its tear gas reserves, we would steal the moon and the stars, like our favourite politicians plundering public funds, to prove our adoration.

This edition comes to you right on time for Halloween, a holiday that may not be a thing in your household or country, possibly because the shenanigans of some of our leaders spook us out more than enough already.

Take President Faustin-Archange Touadéra of the Central African Republic, who this week announced the removal of Danièle Darlan as the president of the country's Constitutional Court. This decision comes a month after the court rejected a draft reform of the constitution which would allow Touadéra to run for a third term. Darlan has been defiant, saying that her term ends in 2024, however, the government has already set in motion plans to replace her.



Daddy's boy: Idriss Deby Jr. has just been sworn in as president of Chad for another two years. Photo: Chad presidency

We do wonder if our leaders spend Halloween watching scary movies? If so, there's a new release courtesy of our new *Keeping Up With The Coupdashions* cast member, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who joins the cast from Burkina Faso after leading the country's second coup in nine months, removing Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba from office.

Traoré has now been sworn in as interim president, making the 34-year-old Africa's youngest head of state, followed by 38-year-old General Mahamat Idriss Déby in Chad, 39-year-old Colonel Assimi Goïta in Mali and our biceped bae 42-year-old Colonel Mamady

Doumbouya in Guinea.

Look at these millennial hotshots putting the rest of us to shame, leading coups and overthrowing governments while we watch from the couch eating chips, watching soapies and posting nonsense on Instagram.

That said, we're sure plenty of tears were shed and fists angrily pounded into pillows at the Ecowas group therapy session. The regional bloc has already condemned the coup and sent to Burkina Faso a delegation led by Mahamadou Issoufou, the former president of Niger. He subsequently said he was "satisfied with the meeting". We're not sure exactly what that means, but Traoré has apparently agreed to adhere to a timeline that ought to see the country return to civilian rule by 2024.

Trick or treaty

We've heard that before, notably from Mahamat Déby in Chad. Following the death of his father Idriss last year, Déby took power in what was branded a "dynastic coup". (Taking over from daddy! We're sure Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's son Muhoozi is looking on with interest, after tweeting that the only way he can "repay" his mother's love is by becoming president of Uganda.)

The transition period in Chad was to last 18 months, and Déby Jr had suggested he would not run for office at the end of it. However, in the spirit of Halloween we think instead of offering a choice of "trick or treat" he's gone straight for "trick". Junior has now been sworn in as Chad's transition president for another two years

and will have the option to put himself forward as a candidate in future elections.

Meanwhile, demonstrators in Chad took to the streets in protest over the decision to delay the transition, leading to a crackdown by security forces. More than 50 people were killed, hundreds injured and many more arrested.

Similar news from Sudan, where demonstrators took to the streets to mark the one-year anniversary of the coup there, and to demand a return to civilian rule. Once more they were greeted with tear gas and rubber bullets from security forces. The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors say one protester was killed, bringing the total number of deaths since the protests began to 118.

Diversity in disgrace

Speaking of regime change, the island nation of the United Kingdom continues to struggle with political instability. Rishi Sunak has become the country's third prime minister (un-elected, we might add) in two months.

His Asian and East African roots have prompted some to hail his accession as a victory for migrants and people of colour. But we'd do well to remember that anyone who is complicit in or enforces policies that oppress migrants and minorities is not someone to be celebrated.

Sunak's appointment of the astonishingly right-wing Suella Braverman as home secretary and his own voting against policies like free meals for children are a stark reminder that his being prime minister is not a win for anyone, let alone for people of colour. ■

How can we decolonise the internet?

If the logic underlying internet behaviour does not change, Africans will continue to be exploited

Shi Kang'ethe

There's a crisis in the African tech ecosystem, and it's called digital colonialism. When digital platforms first arrived on the continent, optimists hoped they would help us "leapfrog" traditional stages of development and catch up with the West. The reality has been considerably more complex.

The Decolonizing the Internet forum, organised by FEMNET and Whoseknowledge in Lusaka last month, brought together feminists and digital, data and language activists to consider the challenges, including: the reality that despite the successes of MPesa and Ushahidi, the biggest platforms are controlled by Western states; the difficulties Africans have in shaping global debates; and the fact that 33 countries have no data privacy laws, leaving citizens vulnerable to misuse of personal data.

Today, big tech firms control computer-mediated experiences, giving them direct

power over political, economic and cultural domains of life – a new form of imperial control. At the same time, spyware and online tracking – combined with the manipulation of Big Data for the private gain of multinationals – amount to a system of global surveillance capitalism.

The digital world has reproduced the power imbalances of the real world, including the idea that vast inequalities are natural and don't need to be challenged – preserving the dominance of countries like the United States, and the logic that underpins exploitative political systems in Africa itself.

The forum also highlighted possible solutions. Moving forward, we need to:

- Engage with policymakers and the media over how best to promote uptake of digital literacy and fact-checking skills initiatives funded by and for Africans;
- Monitor and hold social media firms, corporations and states accountable for violations of online and civil rights;
- Fight to make Google Translate more inclusive;
- Campaign to repeal and amend existing digital/cyber laws;
- Deepen collaboration with local media and civil society groups to debunk fake news and ensure genuine transformation.

Let's start now. ■



Shi Kang'ethe is the founder of Toxic Work Spaces. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa

The Big Picture

Photo: Marco Longari /AFP

Canter loop: A Basotho horseman races his pony past onlookers during a race in Semonkong, a remote town in the Maluti mountains on October 15. Horse racing is a century-old tradition in this mountainous southern African country, and attracts big crowds who gather both to appreciate the jockeys' horsemanship and to gamble on the outcome.



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