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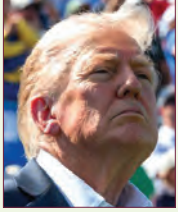
AFRICA'S BETTER FUTURE

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Easter in the Trump era



Dear God: Letter to God of War



Bishop Mpumwana The Easter hope



Turning pulpits into kiosks: Why the church must grow up

SPECIAL EDITION

GOD OF WAR



Photo: US Arm Staff Sgt. Thomas Calvert

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IN BRIEF



Conservation: Komodo dragons are on the IUCN's endangered list. Photo: Petr Ganaj

Dealing dragons

Indonesia is preparing to send two Komodo dragons to a Japanese prefecture in exchange for red pandas and giraffes after both countries signed a loan agreement last week, Reuters reports.

Indonesia's forestry ministry said the exchange was intended to encourage wild-life protection and raise awareness on biodiversity, as Komodo dragons fell under the The International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List's endangered category.

Animal rights organisation Peta accused the countries of treating the animals like "diplomatic bargaining chips". The president of Peta Asia said transporting animals to breed them in zoos normalised the misconception that conservation could take place in captivity.

The dragons, a male and a female, are expected to arrive in Japan's Shizuoka in June.

A curse of riches

A man who won the largest lottery prize in the US state of Kentucky was arrested for the third time last Friday, *The Independent* reports.

After purchasing a Powerball lottery ticket in April last year, James Farthing, 51, won a record-breaking \$167 million (about R2.8 billion), which he shared with his mother.

Four days later, the lucky winner was arrested while celebrating his prize at a beach in the state of Florida.

Police bodycam footage showed Farthing kicking an officer in the face, attempting to flee the scene and getting tased. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to time served after nine days in jail.

In February, a woman who claimed Farthing tried to force her to eat a "gummy" called 911 "in fear for her life" and claimed there were armed people in her house. After finding a fire-arm in a dryer, police arrested Farthing and charged him with intimidation in Georgetown, Washington, DC.

He was arrested again on Friday on charges of second-degree burglary and marijuana possession.

Farthing has told a media outlet that he acknowledged his bad life choices, noting the effect they had had on his mother.

Toxic glow

Italian regulators are investigating the LVMH-owned brands Sephora and Benefit for carelessly marketing their products to teens and younger children, CNBC reports.

The Italian Competition Authority (AGCM) announced that it had launched its investigation last Friday based on "unfair commercial

NUMBERS OF THE WEEK



14



The number of people who have died in US Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody so far this year, *NBC News* reports. In 2025, 33 people died in the custody of ICE. The latest death, which occurred last week, was that of Jose Guadalupe Ramos-Solano, who was in federal custody in California after being convicted of possession of a controlled substance and theft. Ramos-Solano, who was found to have diabetes, hyperlipidemia and hypertension during an intake screening, was found unresponsive in his bunk on 25 March. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Mexico would take stronger measures to protest the death of its citizen.

54

Is Alfred Ntombela's age on 3 April. The South African actor celebrates his birthday with American actor Eddie Murphy and English singer Leona Lewis.



12

The weight in tons of KitKat bars that were stolen when thieves hijacked a vehicle containing the product while it was in transit from a production site in Italy to a delivery location in Poland, *Global News* reports. Over 400,000 bars were stolen in the heist last week. The vehicle and its contents have yet to be recovered.



40,367

MISSING



The number of registered missing people that Mexico's government says are showing signs of life among its list of 132,534 missing persons, *Mexico News Daily* and *CTV News* report. Thirty-one percent of the missing people showed signs of life through legal activity, such as birth certificates, tax filings, marriage registries, vaccination or phone records. Around 46,000 or thirty-three percent of missing persons had insufficient data, like missing names or dates, which derailed search efforts. Search groups criticised the Friday announcement as the government's way of 'disappearing' the disappeared to downplay the travesty of missing people.

The number of migrants who died off the coast of Greece after spending six days at sea on a rubber boat without food or water, *Reuters* reports. According to the Greek coast guard in a statement released late on Friday, the group of migrants had lost orientation and 22 deceased individuals were thrown overboard on the orders of traffickers. A Frontex European Border Agency vessel rescued 26 other surviving migrants.

22



Graphic: BUSI LETHOLE Compiled by: MAMAPUTLE BOIKANYO

practices" that encouraged minors to use products that were safe for adults only.

AGCM said the company marketed products such as anti-ageing creams, serums and masks to children and even employed a marketing strategy with young influencers promoting products to young audiences.

The regulators added that Sephora and Benefit failed to label products with precautions to safeguard children from using them at the risk of their health.

AGCM and financial police officers inspected the premises of Sephora Italia, LVMH Profumi e Cosmetici Italia and LVMH Italia on Thursday.

Succulent cinema

The footage of an Australian man being arrested outside a Chinese restaurant as he delivered one of the world's most famous internet monologues has been added to the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA), the BBC reports.

The video shows Jack Karlson being arrested in Brisbane over suspicion of using stolen credit cards, though some theorise it was a case of mistaken identity.

Karlson, a convicted petty criminal, gave journalists and onlookers a theatrical performance with phrases like "Gentlemen, this is democracy manifest" and "What is the charge? Eating a meal? A succulent Chinese meal".

Though it was filmed in 1991, the video



Viral: A screenshot of the video showing Jack Karlson's arrest. Photo: Supplied

gained internet gold status only when it was published and went viral online in 2009.

The NFSA, which preserves audiovisual media and records culturally iconic recordings annually, called Karlson's monologue "dramatic, indignant and unexpectedly articulate". It said that his speech had become a "short-hand for irreverent Australian humour".

A lingering verdict

A Belgian ex-diplomat, 93, who was ordered to stand trial over the murder of Patrice Lumumba, the Democratic Republic of Congo's former prime minister, has appealed the decision, *Africanews* reports.

Etienne Davignon is the sole surviving person among the 10 Belgians Lumumba's family accused of being complicit in his 1961 murder.

Davignon's lawyer told AFP that his client had appealed against a Belgian court's order to stand trial for "participation in war crimes" and for the "unlawful detention and transfer" of Lumumba.

He is also accused of "humiliating and degrading treatment", though not in relation to the former leader's killing.

Belgian mercenaries killed Lumumba, 35, an anti-colonial icon who openly criticised European powers, in January 1961, months after taking office as prime minister.

If Davignon's appeal fails, his trial would be expected to take place in January next year.

A twisted bromance

A legal battle over the paternity of a child referred to as "P" has reached a stalemate as DNA testing fails to distinguish between identical twin brothers, *Sky News* reports. The mother admitted having sex with both siblings within a four-day window.

Sir Andrew McFarlane, a president of the family division of the High Court of England and Wales, ruled it "not possible" to identify the biological father, noting that while science might eventually catch up, the child's reality

remained a "binary" truth rather than a single man. Although one twin was originally registered as the father, the court ordered his parental responsibility to cease without definitively stripping his title.

The mother of P and one of the twins took the case to court after the second brother was listed as the child's father on the birth certificate.

Lost in space

Sperm might get lost on its way to the egg in an extraterrestrial environment that lacks gravity, according to new research from Australia's Adelaide University cited by *News Medical*.

Researchers from the university used sperm samples from three mammals, including humans. They subjected them to a 3D clinostat that simulates zero-gravity conditions in space.

The researchers watched sperm try to navigate a model designed to mimic the female reproductive tract and discovered that the number of sperm that could manoeuvre through the tract decreased when compared with normal gravity conditions.

The introduction of progesterone, a sex hormone released by the egg, did, however, help the sperm steer towards the right direction. The study also analysed the effect of microgravity during the fertilisation process on embryo development using non-human animal models.

With four to six hours of exposure to microgravity, mouse eggs saw reduced fertilisation rates, slower development and a reduction of cells forming the foetus, the study's senior author said.

Cross-border crime watch

Matvei Rumiantsev, a 22-year-old Russian national, was sentenced to four years in prison by a London court after an assault on a woman that was witnessed via video call by Barron Trump, CNN reports.

During the emergency, the US president's son alerted British authorities from overseas after seeing the victim being attacked in real-time through a video call with the victim.

The court heard that Rumiantsev's violence was partly fuelled by resentment regarding the victim's social media friendship with the younger Trump. While the defendant attempted to interfere with the legal process by sending a letter from jail pressuring the woman to drop her claims, he was ultimately convicted of assault occasioning bodily harm and perverting the course of justice.

The victim testified that the US intervention probably saved her life, highlighting the unusual international cooperation that led to the assailant's capture and jailing at Snaresbrook Crown Court. — Mamaputle Boikanyo

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God of War



Lingering destruction: An Iranian man gestures as he stands near destroyed homes after a military strike on Tehran, Iran's capital, on March 15, 2026. Photo: Unicef/Kenare/AFP

Lesego Chepape

There is a way war settles into the body long before it ever reaches the ground beneath your feet. It arrives first as a headline, a flicker on a screen, a number too large to comprehend. Then it grows teeth. It becomes names. Faces. A child carried through dust. A mother counting what is left.

Dear God
I am writing to ask if you are watching.

Not in the abstract way people say you are everywhere, in everything. I mean here, now — inside the rubble, inside the smoke that clings to skin, inside the silence that follows after a bomb has done its work. I want to know if you are present in the moment a person realises their life has split into a before and an after.

Because from where we are standing, it feels like the world is breaking in too many places at once.

Wars are no longer distant things we read about in history books. They are live-streamed, dissected, debated in real time. They exist in the scroll of a thumb, between an advert and a meme. And yet, despite how close they appear, they remain impossibly far from those of us who are not directly caught in the crossfire.

That distance is its own kind of violence, the kind that allows us to look away, to continue eating, laughing, living, while somewhere else, someone is learning how to survive loss in its rawest form.

Do you see them? Do you see the families who sleep in shifts because the night is louder than the day? The fathers who have to decide which child to carry when there is no time to carry both? The mothers who whisper reassurances they no longer believe? The children who have learnt the language of sirens before they have learnt how to read?

I wonder what it does to the soul to grow up like that.

We talk about trauma like it is something that can be named and treated, something that exists within the neat boundaries of a diagnosis. But what happens when trauma becomes the environment itself? When fear is not an event but a

Letter to God of war

An unflinching letter to God that wrestles with the visibility of suffering and the uneasy distance between those who endure war and those who witness it

condition? When survival is the only curriculum?

God, if you are watching, then you must also be witnessing the quiet wars, the ones that do not make headlines.

The war inside a person who has lost everything and is expected to keep going. The war of displacement, where home becomes a memory instead of a place. The war of waiting for news, for aid, for a ceasefire that feels more like a pause than an ending.

The war of remembering what life used to feel like before it was reduced to the basics of food, water, shelter and the fragile hope of making it through another day.

There is a particular cruelty in how war rearranges priorities. It strips life down to its barest essentials but in doing so, it also strips away dignity. It forces people into positions where survival demands choices no one should ever have to make.

And still, somehow, people endure.

This is the part that confuses me the most. The resilience we so often praise. The way people continue to love, to care for one another, to find moments of tenderness amid devastation. A shared piece of bread. A hand held in the dark. A lullaby sung over the distant sound of gunfire.

Is that you?
Is that where you exist, in the small acts of humanity that persist despite everything? In the refusal to let violence be the final word?

Because if that is the case, then you are quieter than we expected. Smaller. Less visible than the version of you that people often preach about.

But maybe that is the point. Maybe you are not in the spectacle of war but in the resistance to it. Not in the power that destroys but in the frag-

ile, stubborn insistence on life.

I have questions.

If you can see all this, if you can feel the weight of every life lost, every future interrupted, then what does it do to you? Do you grieve? Do you intervene? Or have you stepped back, allowing us to navigate the consequences of our own making? Because it is us, isn't it?

The wars are not acts of nature. They are decisions. Strategies. Calculations made in boardrooms and offices far removed from the people who will ultimately pay the price. They are sustained by systems that prioritise power over people, territory over humanity.

And yet, the language of war is often dressed up in something else. Honour. Security. Justice. Words that attempt to make sense of something that is, at its core, senseless.

I wonder if you recognise any of it.

If you hear the prayers spoken on all sides, each one convinced of its own righteousness. Each one asking for protection, for victory, for the survival of their own people. What do you do with that? How do you hold the contradiction of it all?

Because for every person praying for safety, there is another person who has been cast as the threat. And in the middle of it all, there are those who are simply trying to live.

God, I am not writing to you because I expect easy answers. I know there are none. But I am writing because silence feels like complicity and I need to believe that someone, somewhere is bearing witness.

That the lives being lost are not just numbers. That the suffering is not disappearing into a void. There is something deeply unsettling about

The God Edition

how quickly the world moves on.

A conflict erupts, dominates the news cycle and then, slowly, it fades. Not because it has ended but because something else has taken its place. Attention shifts. Outrage dissipates. The machinery of daily life continues.

But for those living through it, there is no moving on. There is only moving through.

And so I ask again: Do you see them?

Do you see the people who will spend years rebuilding not just their homes but their sense of safety? The children who will carry these experiences into adulthood, shaping the way they understand the world and their place in it? The communities that will never fully return to what they once were?

War does not end when the fighting stops. It lingers. In bodies. In memories. In the spaces where something used to exist and now does not.

If you are watching, then you must also be witnessing the aftermath. The slow, painstaking work of recovery. The grief that surfaces long after the immediate danger has passed. The attempt to make meaning out of something that defies understanding.

I do not know what role you play in all this. I do not know if you are a passive observer or an active presence. I do not know if you intervene in ways we cannot see or if you have left us to figure this out on our own.

But I do know this: we cannot afford to become numb.

Because numbness is what allows war to continue.

It is what makes it possible for us to accept the unacceptable, to normalise the abnormal. It creates a distance between us and the reality of what is happening, a distance that is comfortable but dangerous.

Maybe this letter is less about you and more about us.

About our responsibility to remain engaged, to resist the urge to look away. To hold space for the complexity of the situations without losing sight of the humanity at their core. To question the narratives we are given, to seek out the stories that are often overlooked.

To remember.

Because memory is a form of resistance. It is a way of honouring those who have been affected, of refusing to let their experiences be erased or forgotten.

God, if you are listening, then perhaps the question is not just whether you can see it all but whether we can. Whether we are willing to look closely, to sit with discomfort, to acknowledge the ways in which we are connected to these conflicts, even when they feel distant.

And whether, in doing so, we can begin to imagine something different. A world where war is not inevitable. Where conflict does not have to escalate into violence. Where the value of human life is not conditional, not negotiable.

It feels impossible, I know. But then again, so does the idea that people can continue to find love, kindness and hope amid unimaginable destruction.

And yet, they do. Maybe that is where change begins.

Not in grand gestures or sweeping declarations but in the small, everyday choices that affirm our shared humanity.

In the refusal to accept war as the default. In the insistence that another way is possible.

I do not know if this letter will reach you. But I hope it reaches someone. I hope it lingers long enough to make us pause, to make us question, to make us feel. Because feeling, truly feeling, might be the first step towards something better.

Yours, in uncertainty and in hope.

God of War

With only 16% of municipalities passing audits, South Africans face failing water systems, roads and governance. The coming elections test not only politics but morality, highlighting a growing call for divine restoration



Dysfunctional: Infrastructure failure and lack of repair and upgrade, seen on a road at a taxi rank in Emfuleni. The municipality is in a complete state of failure. Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

Mandisa Nyathi

The first signs of municipal collapse do not appear in council meetings, parliament or in political party boardrooms where coalitions are discussed.

They appear in burst water pipes left unrepaired for months, in roads riddled with potholes, in the hum of generators as communities brace for rolling power outages caused by transformer failures and in the stench of sewage that flows in our streets and into our homes as municipalities continue to promise to come and resolve the problems but never come.

Across South Africa, local government has stopped being an abstract part of the state. It has become a visible, daily reality of dysfunction. And it is on this terrain that the next local government elections will be fought.

By the time parties campaign across wards and metros, residents will not be meeting promises on a blank slate.

They will judge them against broken streetlights, dry taps, overflowing refuse and months of waiting for repairs that never happen. This election is not just a political contest; it is a test of accountability and effectiveness.

The latest auditor-general report, released last week, paints a stark picture.

Auditor-general Tsakani Maluleke warned of “minimal progress” in public sector audit outcomes, highlighting ongoing struggles with accountability, financial discipline and institutional integrity.

For municipalities, the outlook is bleak as only 41 of South Africa’s 257 municipalities, about 16%, achieved clean audits in the most recent local government reporting cycle.

These numbers translate into real-world consequences where roads remain unrepaired, water pipes continue to leak, clinics struggle to operate and communities are forced into repeated service-delivery protests for basics that should be guaranteed. On

Only God can save municipalities as collapse deepens

Choices prioritising expedience over service, loyalty over competence and access over accountability have created this breakdown

paper, municipalities function. In practice, they are visibly fraying.

The political stakes of this collapse are high. Every ward is contested ground, every service-delivery protest a warning, every coalition negotiation a test of power. But the failure of local government is not just administrative, it is moral and increasingly, spiritual.

For many South Africans, the crisis has revealed that human leadership alone cannot restore what has been allowed to fall into decay.

The AG report exposes not only administrative weaknesses but systemic governance fatigue. Across municipalities, basic controls are ignored or inconsistently applied. Financial statements are submitted late or contain errors, Maluleke said.

Promised corrective measures, including consequence management, are sporadic. Officials continue in their posts, contracts are renewed and the same failures recur year after year.

In February, Maluleke told parliament that nine municipal audits were still outstanding because accounting officers failed to submit financial statements on time.

This is not merely bureaucratic delay; it reflects a culture where deadlines are ignored, failures are tolerated and accountability is nego-

tiated rather than enforced.

As political parties prepare for elections, municipal performance dominates campaigning. Every failed audit becomes political ammunition. Every collapsed project is a campaign talking point.

Every ward with dry taps becomes a referendum on governance. For the ruling party, the report is a warning; for opposition parties, an opportunity; for voters, confirmation of a reality they have lived for years.

Yet the crisis is not only administrative. It is ethical. Persistent audit failures suggest a system where the public office is disconnected from public responsibility.

Choices prioritising expedience over service, loyalty over competence and access over accountability have created this breakdown.

Many South Africans see the rot not as a political problem alone but as a moral one, a symptom of a deeper need for righteousness and restoration, a season of spiritual reflection as much as political engagement.

The biblical principle that “righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people” (Proverbs 14:34) has taken on urgent significance.

Across towns and townships, citizens are turning their eyes upward, recognising that human effort has been insufficient and that only God can bring true restoration.

The imagery of the “God of war” is particularly resonant. Not a call to human violence, it is a plea for divine intervention, echoing the biblical notion of order being restored from chaos for “God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

In a nation where municipalities fail repeatedly, where audits are ignored and where promises dissolve into empty rhetoric, many believe that only God can fight the battles

that human institutions have lost.

The upcoming local government elections are framed as both a political and spiritual reckoning.

Communities will not only decide who governs but also affirm what kind of leadership they are willing to tolerate. Ballots will register dissatisfaction and hope but they cannot restore ethical discipline, financial integrity or the will to serve, only God can.

This is not to suggest that the vote is irrelevant. Municipal accountability remains critical.

Yet as streets and communities testify daily to dysfunction, citizens are increasingly realising that meaningful restoration requires more than elections, policies or oversight. It demands moral renewal and divine intervention where the righteous are put in power.

Perhaps now is the time for the God of war to place the righteous in power to restore the peace that has been longed by South Africans as Proverbs 2:9 states that when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked man rules, the people groan and sigh.

The war for South Africa’s municipalities has already begun. Broken roads, dry taps and overflowing refuse are not mere inconveniences; they are the daily evidence that human systems have failed repeatedly.

Political parties may campaign vigorously, coalitions may shift and leaders may change but unless integrity, accountability and moral courage are restored and divine wisdom is invoked, the cycle of collapse will continue.

The AG report confirms what citizens have long known: human structures, unchecked, cannot secure lasting municipal functionality.

The lessons are clear and the path forward is visible but it requires both human action and divine guidance. Only through moral leadership, civic engagement and faith in God can municipalities be restored from chronic dysfunction to functional service providers.

The God Edition

God of War

Iran war and Greater Israel Project

The US-Israel war on Iran is disrupting oil trade, pushing up petrol prices and raising concerns over the growing use of religion to justify war

Nkateko Joseph Mabasa

While there have been long-standing conflicts in the Middle East, the US-Israel attack on Iran has disrupted oil trade and petrol prices on an unprecedented scale, putting into question the future of the global economy and the legitimacy of religion-based wars.

A month into the conflict, Iran has closed the vital Strait of Hormuz, which transports 20% of global oil supply, raising oil prices to \$115 a barrel and plans to push them up to \$200 a barrel as a wartime fight-back strategy.

In response to the 28 February attack, Iran targeted US military bases and assets in the neighbouring Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar, while limiting oil tanker access through the Strait of Hormuz to countries that can pay with the Chinese Yuan, raising questions about the impact on the US dollar Swift system.

The killing of Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali

The God Edition

Khamenei, at the start of the war and during the month of Ramadan has spurred officials to describe the conflict in religious terms.

Motjaba Khamenei, the newly-installed Ayatollah, described the war as precipitating the return of the "12th Hidden Imam", in accordance with Iran's Twelver Shia Islam.

Analysts say Middle East conflicts are often driven by eschatological reasons, where religion and history are closely linked.

Israel's objectives are seen as attempts to create a Greater Israel Project, which covers the "promised land" between the Nile River in Egypt and the Euphrates River, encompassing modern-day Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Iraq.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently described the country's objectives as a defence and deterrence against the "Amalek" — a biblical reference to the Amalekites,

who attacked the Israelites in their Exodus from Egypt.

Netanyahu previously used the same moniker to describe the Palestinians in Gaza, a critical point which South African lawyers highlighted in their genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice.

"On 28 October 2023, as Israeli forces prepared their land invasion of Gaza, the prime minister invoked the Biblical story of the total destruction of Amalek by the Israelites, stating: 'You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible. And we do remember.'

"The prime minister referred again to Amalek in the letter sent on 3 November 2023 to Israeli soldiers and officers. The relevant biblical passage reads as follows: 'Now go, attack Amalek and proscribe all that belongs to him. Spare no one but kill alike men and women, infants and sucklings, oxen and sheep, camels and asses,'" state South Africa's ICJ court papers.

In their genocide case, South African lawyers highlighted how Israeli parliamentarians "publicly deplored anyone 'feel(ing) sorry' for the 'uninvolved' Gazans,



Hit: Smoke rising from the Thai bulk carrier, Mayuree Naree, near the Strait of Hormuz after an attack in March 2026. Photo: Royal Thai Navy

asserting repeatedly that 'there are no uninvolved'."

By framing the genocide of Palestinians in religious terms and extending the US-Israel war with Iran, Israel has moved the justification for military aggression away from international law and human rights.

Similarly, US military troops were reportedly told they are "part of God's divine plan" by their commanders, as US defence secretary Peter Hegseth described the Iranians

as "enemies of righteousness" during a Christian military event.

With no clear end in sight to the US-Israel war with Iran, religious justifications for military operations are becoming a preferred tactic to mobilise sectional support by right-wing leaders.

Democracy's next big challenge is the weaponisation of faith in a creator and a country's historical struggle as a rationale for acting outside respect for human rights, decency and international law.

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God of War



Hallowed halls: Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Israel. Photo: Andrew Price

Not in ritual; but restriction

Hasina Kathrada

As Christians prepared to mark Good Friday, commemorating the crucifixion, the opening of Holy Week in Jerusalem unfolded not in ritual but in restriction.

On Palm Sunday, 29 March, senior Catholic leaders were prevented from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to celebrate Mass. Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Father Francesco Ielpo, Custos of the Holy Land, were stopped by Israeli police as they attempted to access the church without procession or public gathering.

In a joint statement, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custody of the Holy Land described the incident as “a grave precedent”.

For the first time in centuries, the heads of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land had been prevented from marking Palm Sunday at the site itself.

“Preventing the entry of the Cardinal and the Custos... constitutes a manifestly unreasonable and grossly disproportionate measure,” the statement said, describing the decision as “tainted by improper considerations” and “an extreme departure from basic principles of reasonableness, freedom of worship, and respect for the Status Quo”.

The Status Quo, formalised under Ottoman rule and maintained through successive authorities, governs custodianship and access at Jerusalem’s holy sites.

It is widely regarded as a fragile but essential framework managing overlapping religious claims, preserving Christian authority over the Church

of movement. As Easter approaches, access to Jerusalem’s holy sites reveals the politics of occupation, not a clash of faiths

of the Holy Sepulchre and Muslim authority over Al-Aqsa Mosque. Its disruption carries both symbolic and political weight.

Israeli authorities framed the restrictions as a security measure linked to a widening regional conflict. That justification sits within a broader escalation that now extends well beyond Gaza, with Israeli and United States strikes on Iran triggering retaliatory attacks across the Middle East, including missile and drone strikes targeting Gulf states such as the United Arab Emirates.

Governments across the region have warned of a widening confrontation involving state and proxy actors, raising risks to energy infrastructure, trade routes and regional stability.

Within this environment, measures imposed in Jerusalem are presented as part of a wider security calculus. Yet the Palm Sunday incident cuts directly across a narrative that continues to shape global understanding of the war in Gaza, that it is fundamentally religious.

If that framing held, religious identity would map onto protection and access. It does not.

Restrictions cut across faiths.

The blocking of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre sits alongside ongoing limitations at Al-Aqsa Mosque, pointing to a system defined less by religious distinction than by control

of movement.

During Ramadan, Israeli authorities imposed age restrictions and permit requirements that prevented many Palestinians from the West Bank, particularly younger men, from attending prayers. Even those granted permits faced uncertainty at checkpoints.

Since the latest escalation, closures have extended across multiple sites in Jerusalem’s Old City, affecting Christian and Muslim spaces alike. The language used is security. The effect is administrative control over religious life.

The same system shapes Christian access. Palestinian Christians in the West Bank require permits to enter Jerusalem during Easter, with approvals limited and often restricted to older applicants. Even when granted, access remains contingent on passing through checkpoints.

The God Edition

In Gaza, where movement has long been tightly controlled, Christian communities have been unable to travel to Jerusalem for major religious observances for years. Their Easter is marked in isolation.

Across Jerusalem, religious practice is mediated through permits, checkpoints and security authorisations, irrespective of denomination. That convergence has not gone unnoticed.

Omar Suleiman, founder of the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, pointed this week to

the parallel restrictions affecting both Christians and Muslims, noting that Christians were being barred from their churches while access to Al-Aqsa remained heavily constrained.

For Palestinian Christian pastor Munther Isaac, the implications are immediate and lived.

“As Christians around the world celebrate Palm Sunday with joy,” he said, “I hope they remember that their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem itself — where these events took place — are facing restrictions and are at times prevented from even reaching their churches.”

Isaac has consistently rejected attempts to frame the conflict as religious, arguing instead that it must be understood through power, accountability and the structures governing Palestinian life.

That distinction matters. Zionism, as a political project, is not synonymous with Judaism as a religious tradition. The modern Israeli state operates through the former, grounded in nationalism, territorial control and security imperatives.

It does not function as a neutral guarantor of religious pluralism, despite Jerusalem’s centrality to three faiths.

Yet global discourse often collapses that distinction. Framing the conflict as religious offers a form of narrative clarity. It reduces a complex political reality into a civilisational story that is easily mobilised and widely understood. It allows external actors to align along lines of identity and belief.

It also obscures the legal framework at the heart of the conflict. East Jerusalem, including the Old City, is regarded under international law as

occupied territory. This designation carries specific obligations, including the protection of civilian life and the preservation of existing institutional arrangements, including religious access.

Restrictions on movement, including access to places of worship, are therefore not simply security measures. They are subject to legal scrutiny within the framework of occupation.

International law does not operate on the basis of religion. Civilian protection, proportionality and collective punishment are legal questions, not theological ones.

Even international responses to the Palm Sunday incident reflected this. The emphasis was on freedom of worship and the preservation of established arrangements, not on religious grievance.

On the ground, the implications are clear.

Christian communities in Gaza and the West Bank have been displaced, killed and restricted alongside their Muslim neighbours. Their population has steadily declined over decades, shaped by emigration, economic pressure and the constraints of occupation.

In Bethlehem, once predominantly Christian, they are now a minority. In Gaza, the community numbers only in the hundreds. Their presence disrupts the binary narrative often projected onto the conflict.

A conflict framed as religious cannot easily account for clergy denied access to their own sacred sites or for worshippers across faiths navigating the same system of control. As Easter approaches, Jerusalem carries its usual symbolic weight for Christians worldwide.

But on the ground, access to that symbolism is neither equal nor guaranteed. The events of Palm Sunday do not signal a religious rupture. They expose something more precise.

This is not a war of faiths. It is a system of control that operates across them.

10
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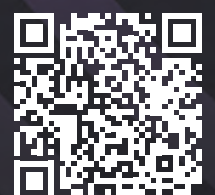
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God of War

Lesego Chopape

There is a quiet war unfolding in my house. The kind that does not announce itself with sirens or headlines.

The kind that does not make it onto timelines or into breaking news alerts but instead settles into the corners of the home, into the rhythm of breathing, into the slow, deliberate movements of a body that has carried too much for too long.

My grandmother is here, having travelled from Limpopo with very little in her hands but everything in her being.

There is an understanding among us that no one has dared to name out loud, a fragile, hovering awareness that her visit is not just a visit in the ordinary sense but something heavier, something final, something that sits between presence and departure, between being here and preparing to leave.

Before goodbye, though, there is something else entirely, something urgent and insistent, something that feels almost like a release.

There is testimony.

She talks now in a way that feels both deliberate and uncontrollable, as though the stories have been waiting for this exact moment to surface, as though her body has decided that silence is no longer necessary.

Her voice moves through the room, stretching across time, collapsing decades into single sentences, bringing the past so close it feels like it is happening again in front of us.

She talks about my grandfather but not in the way we have come to know him, not as the softened figure who existed within the safe borders of our childhood memories, not as the quiet presence who occupied space without demanding too much from it but as a man who was once sharper, more difficult, more flawed in ways that we were never made aware of.

And there is something deeply unsettling about listening to her speak of him like this, not because it feels like betrayal but because it shifts something fundamental inside us, rearranging the neat and uncomplicated stories we had told ourselves about who he was, forcing us to sit with the uncomfortable reality that people are never just one thing, that even those we think we understand are layered with histories we may never fully grasp.

She speaks of his flaws not with anger, not with resentment but with a kind of calm clarity that feels almost heavier than either, as though she has done the work of processing, of carrying, of surviving and what remains now is simply the truth, laid out plainly, without decoration, without apology.

It is strange, the way proximity to death seems to loosen the grip of silence, the way it creates space for things that once felt unsayable to be spoken without hesitation, as though the urgency of the moment demands honesty above all else.

She talks about her life as a domestic worker in apartheid South Africa in a way that sounds almost ordinary but the more she speaks, the more it becomes clear that there was nothing ordinary about it, because domestic work was never just about cleaning houses or raising other people's children.

It was about a system that quietly reorganised black life, pulling women out of their own homes and placing them into white households where their labour was needed but their lives were not fully seen.

The God of War within

A grandmother's final visit becomes a quiet reckoning with the intimate wars of the body, memory and a life shaped by apartheid's unseen violences

The God Edition

Where they woke up before dawn to travel distances shaped as much by apartheid laws as by geography, leaving their own children behind in order to care for others, learning the rhythms and intimacies of families that were not theirs while their own grew up in fragments of absence.

Even though she does not name it as violence or injustice, the weight of it sits in the way she tells it, in the pauses between her sentences, in the understanding that what she calls "work" was in fact a lifelong negotiation with a system that demanded her presence everywhere except where she was most needed.

There is a violence in that kind of life, even if it does not announce itself as such, even if it does not leave visible scars in the way we have been taught to recognise harm, because it stretches across years, across relationships, across the very structure of family itself, altering it in ways that are still unfolding long after the fact.

She does not name it as sacrifice and she does not frame it as loss but it sits there anyway, in the spaces between her sentences, in the pauses that linger just a little longer than expected, in the weight of what is not explicitly said but deeply understood.

And then there is her body, which has now become the most immediate site of this quiet war, the place where everything seems to converge, where time, labour, memory and pain all meet without buffer.

She tells us that the cartilage between her knees is completely gone, that there is nothing left to cushion the bones from one another. Now, with every movement she makes, there is direct and unforgiving contact, a grinding that she cannot escape, a friction that has become her constant companion.

Bone on bone, she explains and even in the clinical clarity of that description, there is something almost unbearable about imagining what that must feel like, about understanding that there is no position of relief, no simple adjustment that can ease the discomfort, no small intervention that can restore what has been worn away.

She describes the pain not with exaggeration, not with the kind of language that seeks to make others understand through intensity but with a careful, measured precision, as though she is documenting something that must be acknowledged in its full reality, without distortion.

"It is painful," she says and again, the simplicity of the statement carries far more than the words themselves, because what she means is that the pain is constant, that it does not negotiate, that it does not allow for rest in the way we might hope.

What she means is that her body has become a place of



Lifelong toll: The author's grandmother, Tryphina Chopape's body has become the most immediate site of the quiet war, the place where everything seems to converge, where time, labour, memory and pain all meet without buffer. Photo: Supplied

resistance, a place where ease is no longer possible.

And this is where the idea of the "God of War" begins to take on a different kind of meaning for me, shifting away from something distant and mythological and becoming something deeply personal, something that lives within the body, within memory, within the quiet conflicts we carry every day.

Because war, at its core, is about conflict and conflict does not always require armies or borders or declarations; sometimes it exists in the tension between what was and what is, between what the body remembers and what it can no longer do, between the stories that were once hidden and the need to finally speak them aloud.

My grandmother is fighting but not in a way that can be easily understood or neatly resolved, not in a way that promises victory or even relief but in a way that is ongoing, relentless, deeply embedded in the experience of being alive in a body that is slowly, inevitably changing.

She is fighting pain that does not pause, memories that continue to

surface, a body that no longer cooperates in the ways it once did.

She is doing all this in a way that refuses silence, that insists on articulation, that demands to be heard.

It makes me think about how many wars exist quietly within our families, how many stories remain just beneath the surface, never fully expressed, never fully understood, how many lives are lived in ways that we only begin to comprehend when it is almost too late to ask the questions we should have asked much earlier.

And so the act of listening becomes something more than passive reception; it becomes a responsibility, a form of care, a way of honouring what is being given in these moments of openness.

To listen is to hold space for complexity, for discomfort, for the recognition that the people we love are not simple, that their lives contain contradictions, pain, resilience and

choices that we may never fully be able to reconcile.

We cannot fix what has happened, we cannot rewrite the conditions that shaped her life, we cannot restore what her body has lost and perhaps the most difficult part of all of this is accepting that limitation, sitting with the knowledge that presence is the only offering we have left. But presence, in its fullest form, is not small.

It requires attention, patience, a willingness to remain even when the stories become heavy, even when the truths disrupt our sense of comfort, even when we would rather retreat into simpler versions of the people we thought we knew.

The God of War, then, is not always something that exists outside us, not always something that can be pointed to or named in a singular way.

Sometimes, it lives in the body of a woman who has endured more than she ever spoke about.

Sometimes war exists between what the body remembers and what it can no longer do

Many lives are lived in ways that we only begin to comprehend when it is almost too late to ask the questions

God of War

Sheree Bega

As missiles, drones and military convoys dominate coverage of the unfolding US-Israel war with Iran, another, slower form of destruction is taking shape — one that threatens ecosystems, water, soil, air and the climate itself.

For Reverend Rachel Mash, the environmental coordinator of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, the environmental cost of war is inseparable from human suffering.

“War is a long-term devastation on a population; you are destroying something for generations ahead, even two, three, four generations,” she said.

One of the most striking environmental phenomena linked to the conflict is the emergence of black rain over Tehran after airstrikes on fuel depots and oil facilities. Black rain occurs when soot and toxic particulates rise into the atmosphere and fall with rain, carrying hazardous chemicals into soil, water systems and urban surfaces.

In March, satellite and witness reports documented blackened rainwater and oily residues, with analysts warning the rain may carry benzene, toluene, acetone, methylene chloride and other hydrocarbons, raising long-term risks for agriculture, drinking water and human health.

Some Iranian officials and climate advocates have begun calling such attacks ecocide, capturing the destruction of entire ecosystems, not just human communities.

The UN Environment Programme (Unep) has warned that attacks on oil facilities and industrial sites in and around Tehran are producing heavy smoke with hazardous compounds that raise concerns for both human and environmental health.

Pollution from uncontrolled fires can enter soil and water, leach into groundwater and be absorbed by crops, risking contamination of food supplies.

Key infrastructure such as desalination plants, critical to water security in the Gulf region, is also vulnerable to destruction — potentially creating catastrophic consequences for access to freshwater even before war-related pollution is fully accounted for, Unep said. Under the Geneva Convention, attacking desalination plants is a war crime.

“When you bomb fuel depots or one of these oil fields, the fires burn for weeks before they can be controlled,” Mash said. “The carbon emissions are incredible and that’s not even counting the emissions of the military itself: the massive ships sailing from the US to the Middle East, the bombers, the drones ...

“It’s just insanity. We’re increasing our carbon emissions at a time when we should be doing the opposite and at the same time destroying people’s ecosystems, their land and their water — all for generations to come.”

The Conflict and Environment Observatory estimates that militaries are responsible for roughly 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Brown University’s Costs of War project found that between 2001 and 2017, the US military alone emitted 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases, including fuel for aircraft, ships and vehicles deployed worldwide.

A recent analysis by the Climate and Community Institute estimated that the first two weeks of the 2026 war released nearly 5.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, more than the annual emissions of some small countries.

The largest contributions came from destroyed civilian infrastructure, bombed oil facilities (2.1 million tonnes), combat fuel use (583 000



Ecocide: Neighbourhoods targeted in airstrikes reportedly carried out by US and Israeli fighter jets in March 2026. Photo: Behnam tofighi

When war poisons the earth

The conflict in Iran is causing severe environmental damage, from black rain and toxic smoke to threats to water, soil and climate, warn faith leaders and environmental experts

tonnes) and lost military equipment (190 000 tonnes).

For Francesca de Gasparis, the executive director of the Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute, the scale of destruction moves beyond conventional notions of war.

“The level of toxicity and pollution in the soil, water and air quality is so severe that it is considered an ecocide ... It’s at a level that is very difficult for us to comprehend or respond to,” she said.

“This kind of warfare is having a devastating impact on our ecosystems and on the planet’s capacity to support life.”

Iran grapples with poor air quality, soil degradation and deepening water scarcity. Bombardment and pollution now threaten drinking water and irrigation systems.

For Mash, Gaza offers a stark illustration of what prolonged war can do to a landscape and its future.

“Up to 80% of water wells in Gaza have been destroyed ... Many wastewater treatment plants are not functioning,” she said. “You’ve now got untreated sewage going straight into the Mediterranean Sea and the Mediterranean doesn’t flush out. Pollution is leaching into aquifers.

“Ninety-five percent of tree crops,

including one million olive trees are estimated to have been destroyed and 80% of agricultural land is damaged ... And then, of course, there’s the toxic contamination.

“Some of these buildings that have been bombed have asbestos in their roofs. There are toxins from bombs going into the soil. There’s no waste management so trash is just accumulating in informal landfills.”

The lesson is that war does not end when the bombs stop falling.

“We see the deaths and we see the suffering but the environmental challenge is that the next generation — or the next two or three generations — will still be suffering from this,” she said.

De Gasparis, too, drew a direct parallel between Gaza and Iran. “We know that what’s happened in Gaza in terms of destruction of farmlands, water and natural resources, and in Iran, with blowing up of oil fields, is so severe it is considered an ecocide,” she said.

“We’re seeing impacts at a climate level that’s entirely going to cause major emissions and ecosystem impacts that are extremely damaging.”

Mash and de Gasparis argue that religion is repeatedly misused to justify aggression, despite the core teachings of major faiths emphasising compassion, stewardship, non-violence and care for neighbours.

“Some political leaders claim to act in their religion’s name but none of the religions call for this kind of violence — it’s a wilful misinterpretation,” de Gasparis said. “It’s actually using religion for nefarious ends, dressing up greed as devotion.”

This fosters intolerance and escalates violence.

“Leaders say they are correcting

The God Edition

the world order while accusing others of racism or ‘othering’ but they themselves create the conditions for more crime and retribution. If you take up arms, don’t be surprised if others do the same.

“Actions carried out in the name of the Jewish faith, the Christian faith or the Muslim faith are not representative of those religions.”

Mash makes a similar point, arguing that many wars are driven by land, oil and strategic control, with religion often providing a convenient moral cover.

“In most wars, there’s a strong political dimension — control over oil, land or strategic territory,” she said.

Beneath the language of holy war is a more familiar pattern of dispossession, extraction and power.

Mash said the conflict was increasingly being cast in religious terms.

“You’ve got people like Pete Hegseth [US secretary of war] who quote the Bible in support of the war. Similar rhetoric is used against the US and Israel by Iran. It is a geopolitical conflict being supported by religious views.”

“Then you’ve got that clash and what happens to Christians who live in Iran, what happens to Muslims who live in America. They then become seen as aligned with the enemy.”

Mash said the violence reflected a failure to recognise others’ humanity. “They are of a different religion or

a different culture so they don’t matter. When we no longer feel the pain of someone else’s child being shot we have lost our humanity.”

Some people are interpreting the US-Israel war with Iran as a sign of the “end times”.

Mash rejects apocalyptic readings of the current moment, arguing that conflict in the region was historically entrenched rather than divinely ordained.

“Wars in the Middle East have probably been the longest running conflict ... I don’t think it’s the end times, I think that’s twisting of the scriptures.

“When the scriptures were written, they were waiting for the Messiah to come, which led to an emphasis on faithful living, loving your neighbour, caring for those in distress, looking after the orphan and widow. You weren’t supposed to be speeding up the end times by going and bombing people.”

For de Gasparis, the spiritual damage mirrors the ecological one.

“We are living in a time of horrifying collapse of values and people not acting in good faith,” she said.

Yet both women insist on separating states and their leaders from the people who must live through the consequences.

“Most people in Iran, Gaza, Israel, the US, or Cuba are not driven by hatred,” De Gasparis said.

“They want to live, love and coexist peacefully. It is the leadership — not the people — who must be held accountable for terror and destruction.

“Ordinary people struggle to defend their communities and call out the perpetrators of these terrible violent genocide and ecocides. I do believe the arc of justice is long but it curves and reckoning will come.”

Mash, too, finds hope not in the conduct of states but in the possibilities of interfaith solidarity.

She recalled that Ramadan and Lent began on the same day this year, with Purim taking place during the same period. In that overlap, she saw a small but powerful reminder of common ground.

“Christianity, Islam and Judaism all trace our roots back to Abraham,” she said.

“If we can teach young people to understand each other’s beliefs, we can build empathy, learn about others and strengthen our own faith.”

‘When you bomb fuel depots or one of these oil fields, the fires burn for weeks before they can be controlled’

Bobi Wine in exile: Fighting Museveni, the god of Uganda

Lenin Ndebele

Two months after another disputed presidential election victory in Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni remains unsettled by pressure from opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu.

The pop star-turned-politician known as Bobi Wine has since moved from the streets of Kampala to self-imposed exile in the United States.

But back home, the regime continues its crackdown on his allies and supporters. In the US, Bobi Wine is on a mission to call on world leaders to sanction Museveni, 81, who this year clocks 40 years in power.

Addressing a public lecture at George Washington University on Thursday last week, he spoke about the systematic repression in Ugandan politics.

Bobi Wine called for the international community to stop legitimising Museveni and urged development partners to terminate cooperation. He also warned that if ignored, the “mode of dictatorship” seen in Uganda could be exported to other countries in the region.

The 44-year-old is a relatively popular young politician in Uganda and parts of Africa. Hailing from the slums of Kamwokya in Kampala, in 2017, he transitioned from entertainment to activism, winning a by-election for the Kyadondo County East constituency.

His win was a seismic shift, showing his ability to mobilise voters outside established party structures. The 2021 presidential bid, under the National Unity Platform, dubbed “People Power”, gained him international attention.

Wearing his signature red beret—later banned by the government—he challenged Museveni, promising to overhaul a system he described as a “kleptocracy”. Today, he continues on that road. But challenging the god of Ugandan politics comes at a huge cost.

In the biggest effort of his political career to date, he lost to Museveni of the ruling National Resistance Movement, who won a seventh term with 71.65% of the vote, while he came second with 24.72% in a disputed election in January.

Museveni, to his inner circle and supporters, mostly in rural areas, is still the indispensable “Mzee” [respected elder] – the guarantor of stability who brought order out of the chaos of the 1980s. Sadly, for Bobi Wine, Museveni is not giving in. The air in Kampala doesn’t just carry the scent of daily life but also the weight of his feared name.

For Bobi Wine, who dared challenge him, life has been a nightmare that led to his fleeing to the US.

The great escape

Talking to the *Mail & Guardian* from

While President Yoweri Museveni consolidates power at home, Bobi Wine calls for sanctions and warns that Uganda’s “mode of dictatorship” could spread across the region



Face of youth: Bobi Wine was four years old when Museveni came to power.

the US, Bobi Wine said he was not running away for good but “to live to fight another day” because had he stayed, he could have been killed.

For nearly 60 days following the disputed 15 January 2026 presidential election, Bobi Wine was Uganda’s most wanted man.

Despite his Magere residence being under a heavy military siege, involving drones and counter-terrorism units, Bobi Wine somehow slipped through the net on the very night Museveni was declared the winner of a seventh term.

“The day after the elections, I was raided but I was able to escape from my house. On another raid a few days later, my house was run over, my wife severely beaten and my family members tortured.

“My wife was later hospitalised and was facilitated to escape from the hospital. Then she also had to escape Uganda with our children,” he said, declining to reveal their whereabouts.

But Bobi Wine remained in the country, relying on a network of “boda boda” (motorcycle taxi) riders and local supporters who provided food and shelter. At the same time, security forces raided the homes of his associates.

Help from Museveni’s enforcers

He said that some of the people who helped him escape to the US were members of the military and police, who were unhappy with Museveni.

“There are many oppressed men and women in uniform and these are the people who helped me to escape. That’s why, to me, the issue is about the Ugandan people versus their oppressors,” he said.

Bobi Wine’s escape caused significant internal friction within the Ugandan government.

The police disciplinary unit at the directorate of counter terrorism arrested nine of the 16 counter-terrorism guards assigned to him, charging them with “neglect of duty”.

Because of the assisted escape from the country, Bobi Wine evaded a confrontation with the military, led by Museveni’s son, General Muhoozi

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Kainerugaba.

Muhoozi, as he is called, has been employing bullying tactics on the social media platform X, where he called Bobi Wine “KaBobi”, a somewhat belittling way of referring to him.

One thing Muhoozi openly declared was that he would “behead” Bobi Wine or “castrate” his associates when he got hold of them. While this has scared Bobi Wine into exile, he said it has not stopped his political ambitions.

“My fight is in Uganda. I am aware that no one but us, the youth, will save us from the oppressors,” he said.

Voice of the youth maimed

If the Ugandan youths do not push for change now, it will be even harder in the future, he said. “We cannot wait for anyone to come save us. It’s our present and future. Let’s deal with it ourselves.”

Ahead of the January elections, the youth vowed to vote against “geriatric autocracy” in favour of youthful, vibrant leadership that understands their challenges. Hence, in Kampala, where Bobi Wine first became a celebrity as a musician with hits such as *Ghetto President*, Museveni faced resistance.

According to World Bank figures, Kampala has the highest concentration of youths, aged 18–30 countrywide, with 32.7% of the city’s population falling within this bracket. As part of a national trend, 73.2% of Ugandans are under 30 and the country has one of the youngest populations in the world.

“We are the majority and are supposed to be the most productive for our country but that is not the case,” Bobi Wine said.

A largely unskilled youthful population faces limited job opportunities, with many citizens feeling the pinch of rising food and fuel prices. While Bobi Wine is the face of youthful resistance, there are other youthful Ugandans who have felt the wrath of the regime.

While he was lucky to escape, he talks about others who didn’t make it out. Like Arnold Mukose, a journalist with the *Alternative Digital Media*, who was abducted last week.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), his is a

case of “forced disappearance”.

CPJ Africa director Angela Quintal said: “Ugandan authorities must urgently reveal the journalist’s whereabouts and ensure that journalists can work without fear of being arrested or disappearing.”

Then there’s Natabi Fauzia, the wife of Bobi Wine’s assistant, Sheriff Najja. According to Bobi Wine, she was abducted on 12 March at the family residence when she failed to account for her husband and Bobi Wine’s whereabouts.

Bobi Wine added that there were more than 20 of his associates who had been killed by the regime since January.

Museveni for life?

For four decades, Museveni has not just occupied the presidency; he has woven himself into the very fabric of Uganda’s existence. To some, he is the “Sower”, the father of the nation or “Mzee”, a respected elder.

To others, he is the immovable object against which all political opposition eventually breaks down.

The “old man with a hat”, as some call him, rose to power in 1986 after Milton Obote had become unpopular and soldiers in his own army staged a coup, led by Tito Okello Lutwa.

Okello took power but his government was weak and divided. Then, Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi, in a bid to prevent a total military takeover by Museveni, brought all stakeholders in the Ugandan crisis to sign the Nairobi peace agreement in December 1985.

A month later, Museveni broke the deal and his National Resistance Army captured key military installations and advanced on Kampala. When addressing the country, Museveni regularly reminds the nation that he brought fundamental change in 1986, as the one who stabilised a country once synonymous with the shadows of Idi Amin and Obote.

But he carefully avoids what was then his tagline, “The problem in Africa is leaders who overstay.” Instead, now he argues: “Some people think that being in power for a long time is a bad thing but the more you stay, the more you learn. I am now an expert in governance.”

Bobi Wine was four years old when Museveni came to power and he wonders why Museveni broke his covenant with the people.

“He sounded like a reformist. He told the people that the problem Africa had was leaders who overstayed their welcome in power. But guess what? 40 years later, he is still in power, unwanted just like the leaders he complained about.

If I were to be honest, Idi Amin was 10 times better than Museveni,” Bobi Wine said.

Bobi Wine is the poster boy of African opposition politics, often serving as a symbol of young, pop-culture-driven resistance to long-standing authoritarian regimes.

“Some people think that being in power for a long time is a bad thing, but the more you stay, the more you learn. I am now an expert in governance.”

Retail didn't die; it merely reset

I had breakfast with the CEO of Hammerson, Rob Wilkinson, at The Silo Hotel last week. It was one of those conversations that forces you to rethink a narrative we've all become comfortable with.

If you've been paying attention over the past few years, you've probably heard some version of this: retail is dead, e-commerce has won, big malls are dinosaurs.

Except, sitting across the table, listening to a business, which was "on its knees six years ago", talking about growth, expansion and rising values, it is evident that the story has evolved into something different.

Retail didn't die; it adapted. And in some areas and cases, it has come back stronger.

Wilkinson put it bluntly: "The past 18 months have shown how the retail market has transformed."

What's changed is not demand but rather behaviour. It's the "renaissance of retail", as Wilkinson calls it.

The rise of platforms like Amazon forced retailers to rethink everything. But instead of replacing physical stores, online has ended up reinforcing them.

"The market now understands you need to be online and offline," he said.

Omnichannel isn't a buzzword anymore; it's essential for survival. And most importantly, it's profitable.

Hammerson said the most valuable customer today was the one who interacted both digitally and physically. They spent more, returned more often and engaged more deeply with brands.

Courier services are expensive and retailers are slowly but surely realising that they cannot solely absorb the costs anymore. When you want to return an unwanted item, retailers encourage you to come into the store for the return — most times this results in the same customer purchasing more goods from the store.

That has triggered a new trend we are seeing globally: fewer stores but better ones. It's not about scale and aggressive store roll-out nationally anymore; it's about chasing quality spaces in better locations.

Instead of 150 mediocre stores scattered across a country, brands want flagship space in the best-performing centres with the strongest footfall.

Wilkinson called it simply: "You get the best or the rest."

Hammerson's portfolio reflects

The top performers are evolving into more complex and diverse spaces than traditional malls. They are becoming places where people don't just shop but also spend time, live and connect



Ask Ash
Ash Müller

that strategy. It has 10 core-city dominant centres across the UK, Ireland and France, all in dense, well-connected urban nodes. As for vacancies? They're nearly full — 96% occupancy, with assets in Dublin and Marseille approaching 99%.

In real estate, high occupancy plus rental growth doesn't just improve income, it compresses yields and drives value. Hammerson's UK portfolio is trading at net yields of 7% to 8.5%. That's expected to tighten, which means property values go up.

If shopping for physical goods isn't the main driver of people physically walking back into malls, what is?

The answer is experience.

"The real driver bringing people back is experiential retail," Wilkinson said. Think less "buy and leave" and more "stay, engage, return".

In one of its Bristol centres, Hammerson introduced a new-format luxury cinema. Not just any cinema but a destination. Footfall extended into the evening, meaning restaurants and late-night retailers could benefit from shoppers' increased dwell time.

The asset's economics have changed. With unexpected insight twists that no one expected. Gen Z love big shopping malls. "They're one of the biggest contributors to footfall and spending," he said.

After being locked out of physical experiences during Covid, they've come back with the intent to socialise, shop and spend. Retail has become cultural again.

When it comes to Hammerson, it has hidden value sitting beneath its mall portfolio too.

That value being a lot of land. Across the centres sits about 30 hectares of additional space that has an estimated value of around £300 million (about R6.8 billion). Undeveloped land gives optionality.

"We can develop it, recycle capital,



Comeback: Ash Müller with the CEO of Hammerson, Rob Wilkinson. Hammerson has repaired its balance sheet, repositioned its assets, improved occupancy and is looking to acquire more. Photo: Supplied

or hold," Wilkinson explained.

In Dublin, Hammerson has tested this. A residential tower with 107 units, built-to-rent, integrated into the retail environment. A mall on your doorstep is a great accessory to a residential offering like this. Convenience is key.

It's a model that feels familiar if you're watching what's happening in places like Waterfall City or parts of Cape Town. Retail is evolving into mixed-use urban infrastructure.

Then there is the tech layer that we do not see. Hammerson has invested heavily in data and technology inside its centres. Something far more sophisticated than your standard

footfall counter.

Its systems can (anonymously) track customer movement, understand behavioural patterns and even assess how shoppers respond to advertising and store layouts.

"It's transformational compared to what we had before," Wilkinson said.

Incorporating data science into the shopping experience is how the mall can continuously improve the shopper experience. It changes everything from leasing decisions to tenant mix to rental strategy.

Why should South Africans care about this? Here's the part that makes all of the above more than just an interesting European case study:

A third of Hammerson's shareholders are South African. The Public Investment Corporation and Coronation Fund Managers are among its largest investors. And the company is listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. That means South African capital is exposed to this retail recovery story.

If global retail real estate is repositioning, stabilising and in some cases growing again, what does that mean for how we think about listed property locally?

For years, the topic of listed property has been a difficult conversation in South Africa. Covid hit valuations, interest rates squeezed yields and confidence fluctuates.

But sitting in that room, listening to a business that has repaired its balance sheet, repositioned its assets, improved occupancy and is actively looking to acquire, we see that the listed property is not a static story; it's cyclical and strategic.

Hammerson is looking ahead to acquisition opportunities, with several large UK retail assets expected to come to market as overleveraged owners exit. It is preparing to buy when others are forced to sell and that is its next play.

There's a tendency in property to latch onto simple narratives like office is dead, retail is dead and everyone is moving to Cape Town. But when it comes to this asset class, retail didn't disappear; it has reset.

The weaker assets struggled for a long time, while the stronger ones adapted. Now, the top performers are evolving into more complex and diverse spaces than traditional malls. They are becoming places where people don't just shop but also spend time, live and connect. Perhaps this is the lesson from the retail sector worldwide today.

Focusing more on what type of retail survives rather than whether it will survive. If the future of retail is fewer, better, more experiential spaces in prime locations, then we don't have to worry about whether malls are obsolete. Rather, we should see if we have been looking at the wrong malls all along.

For South African investors with exposure to companies like Hammerson, here's food for thought: Are we underestimating the comeback of physical retail because we're thinking about it the way it used to be?



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Feast of the Resurrection for our times



N Barney Pitanya

One dares not remain silent in the face of the intolerable dehumanisation and genocide of the people of Palestine, which has led us to the brink of a world war. Nor should men and women of faith remain silent as truth is distorted to advance the purposes of the powerful

The God Edition

At a time like this, there are wars and rumours of wars. The international body of law has no sway in the conduct of national affairs.

This is a time of the loudmouthed, the powerful; and nations speak, act and form alliances with those who can advance their own national will.

The promises of our world since 1945 — the institutions set up then to assure nations would never go to war again but instead pursue peace and the comity of nations — have faltered.

Small nations no longer matter. We are back to rule by the jackboot of the powerful. South Africa has been a victim of just such a season of bullying of smaller nations. Dark clouds are gathering. Some even talk openly about the inevitability of the Third World War.

We can at least rejoice, as South Africans, that our Constitution guarantees not only freedom of religion but also freedom of thought, belief and opinion. Above all, the Bill of Rights guarantees that those who belong to religious or cultural groups may not be denied the right, with other members of that community, to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and form and join associations with like-minded religious communities.

On Palm Sunday, a disturbing historic event occurred. The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Custos of the Holy See of the Holy Land were prevented by Israeli police from attending the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to celebrate Mass.

They were stopped en route to the church and compelled to turn away from their spiritual obligations under force of arms.

In Iran, 160 schoolchildren were killed by Israeli missiles targeted at their school and, without a formal declaration of war, three generations of religious leaders of Iran have been murdered.

The world is on the brink of war. Reactions are muted and no outrage has been expressed by world leaders. At a time like this, there is no sympathy for the underdog.

Easter or the Feast of the Resurrection, is the oldest and greatest festival in the calendar of the Christian church.

Next to it is the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, or Christmas. But Christmas has become heavily commercialised and its Christian symbolism is bound to be lost.

Easter holds sway largely through its deliberate spiritual connotations and discipline. It is preceded by the season of Lent, which means that for six weeks, beginning on Ash Wednesday, Christians commit themselves to spiritual discipline: fasting, prayer, study of the Bible and undertaking good deeds.

The season culminates with a week of observing and sharing the Passion of Christ along the Via Dolorosa. On Maundy Thursday there is the Last



Son of Man: Jesus Christ was a maverick - an itinerant preacher, who attracted the ire of the Establishment for his unconventional ways, like healing the sick even when it was expressly forbidden on the Sabbath.

Supper, the trial of Jesus and on Friday the crucifixion.

This is considered the most solemn occasion for believers, who re-enact the brutality and cruelty that so many suffer in an unjust world.

The mystery of Easter is the Resurrection, by which hope is restored and trust in the promises of the living God is sustained — the great reversal of human fortunes.

In other words, Easter is more than just the day of the Resurrection because, without Good Friday, there would be no Resurrection.

The Resurrection of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a process preceded by Lent — a time of spiritual preparation for when God intervenes symbolically in human affairs.

It is important to note that this system of belief was unique in its time. It established a new community of believers who were avowed followers of a man called Jesus of Nazareth

This Jesus was a shaman, an itinerant preacher, a healer. However, he attracted the anger of the establishment in the temple — the leaders and the rabbis, the custodians of the law.

He was not known to be trained or learned in the law and the prophets, yet he was able to attract a following.

Of much more concern, perhaps, is that this community gathered around Jesus was operating in a subversive manner. They met in unusual places, not in the temple or synagogue; they were made up largely of common people who had no standing in society.

It was noticeable that, increasingly, the teachings of Jesus under-

mined the received teachings of the rabbis and scholars of the law: he did not obey the letter of the law; he healed the sick even when it was forbidden to do so on the Sabbath; and he exuded authority, though it was unclear where he received it and by what authority.

In other words, he possessed no recognised credentials to do what he was doing. He had the audacity to debate and contradict the learned. It is fair to say, then, that to the authorities — in the synagogues, temple and society — he was posing a security risk.

It is worth noting that Jesus's teachings both incorporated and went beyond the orthodox teachings of his time. He pardoned sinners and did not condemn them.

Judaism did not have a theory of resurrection or forgiveness in this sense. At best, Judaism knew the God of retribution and wrath. It was not normal for the dead to be brought to life, as in the story of Lazarus.

God's presence was known by God's retributive power and forgiveness was not the ordinary way by which God made Godself known. The worst and most unforgivable idea was that Jesus of Nazareth could define himself as the Son of God.

The belief in Judaism was that God would restore all creation as an eschatological imperative, when God would then restore the godly order with those who are the righteous elect. The hope of the elect was in the restoration of the divine ordinance at the

end of time.

It is important to make the point that the idea of the Resurrection was, for the reasons stated above, a strange one to Judaism, though from some eclectic sources there was evidence of suppressed social and philosophical teachings.

It is not surprising, therefore, that modern readings of the Biblical faith must be undertaken with an eye of faith. The Resurrection is not an event in time that is observable.

Testimonies of the Resurrection in the four Gospels fall far short of asserting an objective, physical or observable bodily rising from the dead, as was the case in the prophet Ezekiel 37 or in the case of Lazarus.

Instead, we are presented with unusual interpretations, such as the empty tomb. The appearances themselves are not always physical — as when the risen Christ appeared on the road to Emmaus, or entered a closed room before the disciples, and ultimately to Thomas, whom he invited to touch him.

However, there were also miraculous happenings. The Great Commission in Matthew 28 is thought to be the greatest demonstration of the Resurrection: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The lesson and preaching of the Resurrection is an important endeavour. It is to venture beyond the known, touching on the deeper reaches of being human.

It is the idea that truth does not lie

in power and might; it resides in the capacity of humanity to reclaim its own humanity, whatever the odds.

It also states that knowledge and being do not depend only on physical attributes, influence or even abstract thought and intelligence but equally on how humanity exercises its critical faculties to make judgments about the world that surrounds us.

Secondly, recognising that the event of the Resurrection is spiritual by nature and mystical, there must also be recognition not just of mystery but of the mysterious ways in which God dwells within the hearts of men and women. That indwelling under God lends itself to ethical judgment on all that we see around us.

It is, in itself, an exercise in judgment — a faculty we are always called upon to exercise because it is essential to decision-making. I cite the words of Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, who writes in his book *Resurrection* (1982:11): "Preaching the Resurrection ... is an invitation to recognise one's victim as one's hope."

When we recognise victims, we are endowed with empathy, a crucial element of ubuntu, without which we are not human.

Thirdly, the late New Testament scholar C.F. Evans argued that Resurrection faith is a call to assurance and hope. It marks the possibility of a new beginning — that nothing is simply at an end. In other words, writes Evans, "within the temporal order of being, a new beginning of life from God and living under God, is possible" (1983:503).

It is possible to anticipate that which, under God, is assured and by which God acts through the agency of others. Humanity is a creature of God and is bound to conduct itself in a godly and divine way.

What Christianity is confident about is that God's grace is universal and cannot ultimately be withheld by human action. "This," says Evans, "is cosmic in scope and reaches to the depths of human life and well-being."

That assurance has propelled me to devote my life to resisting oppression and fighting injustice. It also means that one must pronounce judgment on evil in the world and condemn those who pervert the purposes of God.

I am adamant that the prophetic calling requires that we pronounce judgment on the world.

One dares not remain silent in the face of the intolerable dehumanisation and genocide of the people of Palestine, which has led us to the brink of a world war.

Nor should men and women of faith remain silent as truth is distorted to advance the purposes of the powerful. The Resurrection is a call back to God. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

N Barney Pitanya is the provincial canon of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and retired principal and vice-chancellor of the University of South Africa.

Thought Leader

Mail & Guardian

Easter in the time of war

This time of year when believers begin their Easter pilgrimage, we publish the God Edition. This has been a tradition at the *Mail & Guardian* for 26 years.

Our young, dynamic team who produced this year's edition reflects our diverse religious heritage and our collective fears of a world imploding in real time before our eyes.

This year's edition lands in the middle of war. Literally. The theme, God of War, is a reflection of the times we live in today: a time of war. A time when, collectively, the world asks God for answers and prays for sanity to prevail.

The geopolitical shifts in the Trump era of renewed American hegemony has reached the Middle East, the birthplace of Christ, which is in turmoil after the US-Israel military attacks on Iran, which began in February.

The senseless US-Israel war has caused economic tremors across the world and sucked all of us into an unprecedented crisis characterised by soaring oil prices, the wanton destruction of infrastructure, killings, a humanitarian crisis and uncertainty.

Trump and his Israeli ally Benjamin Netanyahu's shambolic war has shut the Strait of Hormuz, creating a diplomatic fallout with US allies, among them Britain and others in Nato, who have refused to participate in his uncalculated and costly Middle East mission.

Trump's insatiable desire for war, which began with the abduction of Venezuelan president Nicholas Maduro in January and regime change in the oil-producing South American country, has ignited a global crisis in the Middle East. The crisis has reached nearly every nation, including South Africa.

The Easter pilgrimage will cost us more this year as thousands of believers travel to several destinations for the annual ritual. The fuel price hikes caused by the crisis in the Middle East will hurt our wobbly economy and send ripples across several sectors including food production. Several fuel stations have reportedly run dry. Some companies are urging their employees to work from home to save fuel in these uncertain times.

But the real impact of the war on many countries, particularly in Africa, will be felt long after the guns have stopped blazing and the missiles have stopped raining on Iran and its neighbours.

We don't know when the war will end, because the world has learnt not to believe a word that comes out of Trump's mouth. What we do know is that by the time it does, the world would have changed forever.

This Easter, we join hands with those calling for an end to the bloodletting and destruction of nations by those whose military budgets are being deployed to extend superiority over others.

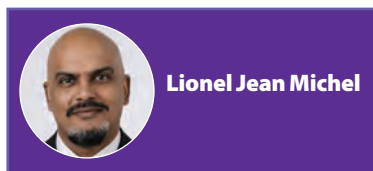
We call for peace.

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The church must grow up



Lionel Jean Michel

Christians being treated as cows to be milked is not an insult. It is an observation. The monetisation of fear, blessing, prophecy, oil, water, soil and access has turned pulpits into kiosks

The God Edition

The Chairperson of the South African Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Rights Commission, Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva, is not wrong. She is imprecise. And imprecision, in a religious climate already drunk on emotion, is easily weaponised.

What she is observing is not faith. It is theatre. And the church has been supplying the costumes.

When she says no one talks to God, she is not denying prayer. She is rebuking the idea that God chats to men through mobile phones, WhatsApp voice notes or impulsive inner chatter divorced from discernment and Scripture.

The Bible is unambiguous. God speaks by His Spirit to the spirit of man, not to his theatrics. Romans 8 makes that clear. Those who are led by the Spirit are sons. Sons are not guided by noise.

When she says those who claim God told them things should be examined, she is not mocking revelation. She is exposing spiritual fraud. Jeremiah 23 condemns prophets who run although God never sent them, who speak although He never spoke.

The psychiatric ward language is clumsy, yes. But the abuse of God's name to justify lies, manipulation and personal gain is far more offensive than her phrasing.

From points three to seven, she is largely correct, even if unintentionally prophetic.

The modern church has become a circus. Not ecclesia. Ecclesia is a governing assembly: called out, disciplined, accountable. What we have now is spectacle without submission. Performance without holi-



Faith: Chairperson of the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Rights Commission, Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva. Photo: Supplied

ness. Power without character. Jesus never called His body a church in the modern sense. He called it ecclesia. We changed the word and it lost its weight.

Christians being treated as cows to be milked is not an insult. It is an observation. The monetisation of fear, blessing, prophecy, oil, water, soil and access has turned pulpits into kiosks. The New Testament model of shepherding has been replaced by extraction.

Christianity is indeed a thing. A religion. And that is precisely the problem. Christ did not come to found Christianity. He came to indwell men. Paul does not say "I follow Christ". He says "Christ lives in

me". The gospel is not imitation. It is an incarnation. Sons do not follow. Sons abide. Sons are seated. Sons move from identity, not aspiration.

Her eighth statement about angels is silly and unnecessary. It distracts from the real indictment.

But nine and 10 land with uncomfortable accuracy.

Many believers are under spells. Not demonic spells necessarily but relational and psychological captivity to charismatic authority. The Bible calls this the fear of man. And it brings a snare. When pastors become ridiculous, it is not because God has lost His power. It is because accountability has been removed.

Now to the heart of the matter.

People are marching to defend pastors. Not the truth. Not holiness. Not repentance. But empires.

When Israel sinned, God did not organise a prayer march to protect the temple industry. He handed them over to Babylon. The temple was destroyed. The priests were silenced. The land rested. God did not defend religious infrastructure that no longer reflected Him.

This moment is no different.

God has allowed this exposure. Not because the state is righteous but because the church has become immature, selfish, unaccountable and arrogant. Salt that loses its savour is not persecuted. It is trampled. Jesus said so.

The golden calf must die. And it will not be killed by protest. It will be killed by repentance.

Judgment begins in the house of God. Not because God is cruel but because He is serious about His name.

Those who have distorted Scripture, commercialised grace, silenced correction and mocked holiness should not be shocked when protection is withdrawn. Babylon is not always punishment. Sometimes it is mercy.

The question is not whether the church is under attack.

The question is whether the church is willing to grow up.

Reverend Lionel Jean Michel is a Johannesburg-based journalist, Thought Leader and communications strategist. He writes on faith, leadership, politics and society, bringing biblical insight and public interest analysis to contemporary African conversations today.

Thought Leader



Decades-old temple: Hindus will queue to offer their prayers and penitence peacefully to the revered goddess, Mother Mariamman, at the 160-year-old Shri Mariamman Temple in Mount Edgecombe. Photos: Shri Mariamman Temple Society

Hindus also mark Christian piety



Marlan Padayachee

Hindus, the largest ethnolinguistic bloc within the 1.4 million South Africans of Indian origin, will join the deeply religious rainbow nation of multicultural racial groups in the pastoral period of the holy Easter long weekend.

Over a four-day spell, Hindus — a diverse range of Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and Gujarati-speaking Indians — will come together across the major cities to worship and pay homage to the gods of India.

The main focus, however, will be at a historic decades-old temple shrine established by Indian indentured labourers in their pioneering sugar-cane growing days across the expanse of sugar-cane plantations across KwaZulu-Natal.

While 1, 2million holidaymakers,

tourists and day visitors alike will be flocking to Durban's golden beaches, 100 000 Hindus would take time off over these religious days, beginning on Good Friday until Easter Monday.

They queue to offer their prayers and penitence peacefully to the revered goddess — Mother Mariamman — at the 160-year-old Shri Mariamman Temple in Mount Edgecombe, which overlooks Phoenix, one of the two largest Indian-dominated townships outside mainland India.

Across the city's CBD, Christians will respond to the ringing bells on Good Friday to re-enact the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in a poignant march from the centuries-old Roman Catholic Emmanuel Cathedral Church from the bustling Victoria Street market to the high streets, with church leaders carrying the iconic wooden cross in a large procession of the faithful.

Jews, too, will attend prayers at the synagogues.

The city's economically strong Muslim community will gather in prayers at the Grey Street mosque, Africa's largest and oldest place of

worship.

While Christians will be heading for Moria for the traditional Easter weekend religious jamboree, the 130-year fraternity of the Shembe Nazareth Baptist Church followers — mainly Zulu-speaking adherents will be heading for mountaintop vigils in KwaZulu-Natal.

Prince Ishwar Mabheka Zulu of the Sivananda World Peace Foundation said the religious weekend should bring all diverse groups together in social cohesion to face current challenges.

While the eThekweni Municipality, headed by mayor Cyril Xaba, gears up to welcome the one-million-plus traffic of visitors from Gauteng into Durban and from across KwaZulu-Natal cities and towns, for Indians, the Easter weekend marks a significant religious weekend of faith, rituals, repentance and offering of fruit, milk and sweetmeats to Indian gods and goddesses.

The focal point is the ancient temple in Mount Edgecombe, once a communal barracks for semi-slave planters and croppers who worked from dawn to dusk, doing a back-breaking job under the searing African sun under the watchful whips of the sugar barons.

It was doubly a blow as the British used their sidekicks of sirdars — conservative labourers who worshipped the colonial farm lords for favours.

These so-called supervisors extended the White man's culture of cruelty to their fellow Indians, just to be in the boss's good books to garner status and privileges.

Many labourers resisted the punishment meted out to them, despite their toiling — only getting days off during the Easter weekend, Christmas Day and New Year's Day — hence the passion for prayers, penitence at this landmark temple

and shrines across Durban and elsewhere in KwaZulu-Natal.

"The ringing of the bells signalled the time when the labourers must get going to the plantations and return to their barracks each day. We therefore rejected the provincial government's decision to build a bell tower to honour the 1860 Indian indentured labourers," said Seelan Achary, chairperson of the Shri Mariamman Temple Society.

"The indentured community were only given public holidays off work. They turned to worship and prayed to the gods of their motherland. Hence, hundreds of thousands come each year to give their offerings to their spiritual icons and images.

Hundreds of poor and disadvantaged men, women and children queue for food while thousands queue to pray for a better life."

The festive weekend also provides a platform for stall owners to sell fruit, prayer goods, snacks and sweetmeats, beverages, traditional clothing, fast food, samoosas and music CDs.

Brilliant and melodic strains of traditional classical singing and music greet the droves of worshippers, devoted, dedicated to fulfilling their religious vows at one of the holiest shrines in the country outside the ancient temples across the length and breadth of India and Asia.

In the main hall, the Shri Mariamman Awards will be presented to high-achieving men and women in various fields.

In other temples, like the one in Isipingo, south of Durban, which attracted hundreds of thousands of worshippers since the 1960s, worshippers offered red roosters to the gods to appease their hardships and pray for good tidings and

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fortunes.

As South Africa enters the solemn rhythm of the Easter long weekend, Hindus will prepare to join a deeply spiritual, multicultural nation in a shared period of prayer, reflection and renewal.

Once again during this pastoral pause, throngs of colourfully dressed devotees will gather to offer worship and homage to their deities. Central to this observance is a historic temple built by their forebears in

homage to the 150 000 indentured labourers who built a religious legacy and cultural landmark that will continue over this holiest of public holiday weekends and many decades to come.

A young democracy gifted with diverse people protected constitutionally by the laws enacting freedom of religion and culture and breathtaking landscapes from the green valleys of swathes of sugar-cane plantations to golden beaches and skyscrapers, will go into prayers.

Prayers are needed to turn the bad tidings of a nation plagued by dark challenges of socioeconomic hardships, corruption, poverty, joblessness, crime and political tussles and filibustering on critical service delivery issues facing back-footed communities.

Marlan Padayachee, formerly a political, diplomatic and foreign correspondent, is a freelance journalist, photographer and researcher.

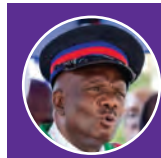


Decades-old temple shrine: For Indians the Easter weekend marks a significant religious weekend of faith, rituals, repentance.

Thought Leader



Time to reflect: Easter holy days call us back to the foundational values of tolerance, solidarity and shared humanity. Photo: AAC /MakanakaMedia



David Ramela

From holiday to holy day

Rediscovering the power of Easter in a wounded world: Easter reminds us that leadership is not confined to positions of authority. It is lived out in our daily choices, in how we treat one another, in how we respond to injustice, in how we carry ourselves in moments of difficulty

Easter comes to us each year with familiar rhythms: the long weekend, the gatherings with family, the journeys taken, the quiet pause from the demands of daily life.

Yet, if we are honest, we must ask ourselves: Have we reduced Easter to a holiday when it was always meant to be a holy day? Have we embraced its comfort but forgotten its cost? Have we celebrated its joy but neglected its meaning?

Easter is not simply a date on the calendar. It is a confrontation. It confronts our understanding of suffering, our relationship with sacrifice, our commitment to hope and our willingness to lead lives that reflect the values we profess.

At its heart, Easter tells a story that is as old as time and as urgent as the present moment: a story of betrayal and loyalty, of injustice and truth, of death and resurrection. It is the story of Jesus Christ, who chose the path of sacrifice over self-preservation, love over hatred and forgiveness over vengeance.

As the scriptures remind us in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." This is not a distant theological statement. It is a call: a call to each of us, in every sphere of life, to examine what we are willing to give of ourselves for the sake of others.

We live in a world where blood continues to flow. Across continents, conflicts rage. Nations are at war. Communities are divided. The images we see on our screens are often filled with destruction, displacement and despair. Closer to home, many of our young people are navigating a landscape marked by unemployment, uncertainty and a crisis of meaning.

In such a world, Easter cannot be a passive observance. It must be an

active awakening.

For what does it mean to speak of resurrection in a world that feels, at times, overwhelmed by death? What does it mean to proclaim hope in spaces where hopelessness seems to have taken root?

The answer lies not in words alone but in how we choose to live.

Easter reminds us that leadership is not confined to positions of authority. It is lived out in our daily choices: in how we treat one another, in how we respond to injustice, in how we carry ourselves in moments of difficulty. Every parent, every teacher, every community leader and every young person is called to lead in their own way.

I often say: "Leadership is not about standing above others; it is about standing with them, especially when it is hardest to do so."

The cross is perhaps the greatest symbol of leadership the world has ever known. It is a symbol of sacrifice, of choosing the greater good over personal comfort. It challenges a generation that is often taught to accumulate, to consume and to prioritise self above all else.

Yet Easter turns this logic upside down.

In Philippians 2:4, we are reminded: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others." This is the essence of Easter leadership: a leadership rooted in service, in humility and in a willingness to put others before self.

For our young people, this message is both timely and necessary. In a world driven by instant gratification and visible success, Easter invites a deeper reflection: What kind of life

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are we building? What values are shaping our decisions? What legacy will we leave behind?

I say to the youth: "You are not too young to lead. You are not too young to stand for what is right. The future is not waiting for you; it is being shaped by you, right now."

But Easter is not only about sacrifice; it is also about hope.

Hope is not denial. It does not ignore pain or pretend that suffering does not exist. Hope is the quiet, stubborn belief that even in the darkest moments, light is still possible. It is the courage to rise, even when the weight of the world feels unbearable.

Romans 5:3-4 teaches us: "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." This is a powerful reminder that our struggles are not without purpose. They are shaping us, refining us and preparing us for what lies ahead.

In a time where many feel disillusioned, where trust in institutions is fragile and where division often dominates discourse, Easter calls us back to the foundational values of tolerance, solidarity and shared humanity.

Tolerance is not weakness. It is strength. It is the ability to hold space for difference without resorting to hatred. It is recognising that our diversity is not a threat but a gift. Solidarity goes even further. It is

not enough to simply accept one another; we must stand with one another. We must carry each other's burdens. We must speak up when others are silenced. We must act when others are harmed.

As Galatians 6:2 reminds us, "Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ."

In South Africa, a nation shaped by struggle and resilience, these values are not abstract ideals. They are the very foundation of our democracy. Yet, we must be honest: they are also under strain. Inequality persists. Tensions simmer. Trust is tested.

Easter challenges us not to retreat into comfort but to step into responsibility.

I often reflect: "We cannot pray for a better world and then refuse to become better people."

This is the work of Easter: not just to remember but to respond.

It calls leaders in every sector — government, business, education, faith and community — to lead with integrity. It calls us to reject corruption, to uphold justice and to act with compassion. It calls us to be accountable not only for what we achieve but for how we achieve it.

It calls families to nurture values of respect and kindness. It calls communities to build bridges rather than walls. It calls each of us to examine our hearts and ask difficult questions.

Are we living in a way that reflects love or are we driven by fear?

Are we contributing to healing or are we deepening division?

Are we lifting others up or are we turning away?

Easter does not offer easy answers.

But it offers a powerful example.

The resurrection is not just about life after death; it is about the possibility of new life here and now. It is about transformation: of hearts, of minds and of societies.

2 Corinthians 5:17 declares: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" This is the promise of Easter: that change is possible, that renewal is within reach and that no situation is beyond redemption.

To move from holiday to holy day is to embrace this promise fully. It is to move beyond routine observance to meaningful reflection.

It is to allow the message of Easter to shape not just a weekend but a way of life.

Remember, Easter is not only something we celebrate; it is something we must become: a living testimony of hope, sacrifice and renewal.

In a world where blood continues to flow, Easter reminds us of a

It is to allow the message of Easter to shape not just a weekend but a way of life.

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others."

different kind of sacrifice — one that brings healing rather than harm, one that restores rather than destroys.

In a time where many feel lost, Easter points us back to purpose.

In a season where division is loud, Easter calls us back to unity. And in moments

where darkness seems overwhelming, Easter whispers — and at times boldly declares — that light will always have the final word.

So, as we mark this Easter, let us not rush through it. Let us not reduce it to convenience or tradition. Let us sit with it, reflect on it and be challenged by it.

Let us ask ourselves not only what Easter means but what it demands of us.

Because the true significance of Easter is not found in what happened then but in what we choose to do now.

May we rise.

May we lead.

May we love.

And may we carry the spirit of this holy day into every day that follows.

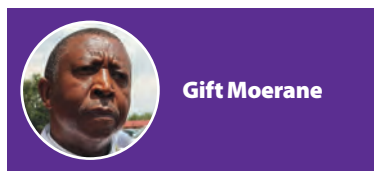
David Ramela is the Bishop of the African Apostolic Church.

Thought Leader



Power of the crucifix: The spirit of Easter and Resurrection should inspire people of goodwill to continue calling for world peace, says the writer.

Photo: SACC



Gift Moerane

“South Africans are the people of Easter”

Those who remain silent during this time risk undermining the meaning of the atonement. I call on all Christians and people of goodwill to draw courage from Christ’s sacrifice and challenge injustice, particularly the suffering of women and children displaced by war

Easter and the Jewish Passover are commonly misunderstood as being one and the same religious festivity called by the same name.

Easter is identified with Christianity. There is no Easter without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the one who died and rose again.

People with inquiring minds ask about the relevance and meaning of the Easter festivity. For Christians, Easter justifies the celebration of Sunday as a day of worship and the first day of the week.

For Christians, Easter is a source of inspiration, a magnificent period for spiritual reflection. It is a time for clergy to recommit themselves to their calling, listen to the Word of God and apply it to herald the message, “Whom shall I send?”

Christians from all walks of life come together to celebrate communion, marking the resurrection of Christ, who died and rose from the dead, according to Saint Luke (Luke 24:6-7).

The festivities of Easter are at the heart of the Christian faith.

On 4 July 1994, the former president of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the Right Reverend Dr Mgojo Khoza, once said: “... South Africans are the people of Easter and people of the resurrection.”

For Christians, the Easter message symbolises victory over death and the darkness that, in some inexplicable way, covered Calvary.

That darkness smothered the light. During that moment of agony, our Lord was on the cross, deeply involved in the struggles surrounding Him. To everyone’s surprise, during those hours of strife, Christ still spoke words of forgiveness for His crucifiers. Three hours later, the natural light returned. This miracle teaches us not to be swayed by temporary hardships.

The climax of darkness should not drive us to despair and pessimism, which currently affect many people enduring pain and suffering. All these will come to pass. The seven words became a turning point for the Christian faith. For Christ to grant a sinner paradise while enduring excruciating pain and anguish,

assuring him of a place of honour beside God’s throne in heaven, was a mystery.

The Easter message resonates and remains relevant to contemporary society as we continue to endure hardships in this world. A theologian and liturgist, Father Bruce Jenneker from St George’s Cathedral in Cape Town, reflected on what he called “The Great Vigil of Easter”. He draws from Egeria, where we learn that as early as the Fourth Century, the celebration of the resurrection in Jerusalem began with a candle lit in the Holy Sepulchre.

The candle was brought out during the night of Easter Eve with the words, “The light of Christ.” The ceremony was unique to the first celebration of Easter and soon spread throughout the Christian Church.

Early Christians continued the use of light in dark places as a symbol of the resurrection. Having learnt that Easter ushers in the light of Christ and rekindles Christian faith, there is a great need during this period for a new spirit of praise and worship to descend upon a Christ-centred church.

The church should continue spiritual warfare and give assurance to those who believe in the Word of God. By uttering words of forgiveness, the crucified Christ demonstrated that love is patient and kind. He showed that love should not demand its own way, is not irritable and keeps no record of wrongs.

We must use this period to seize the moral initiative and find creative alternatives to violence tearing society and families apart.

Love and forgiveness assert our

humanity and dignity as people of faith. The spirit of forgiveness should be rekindled, teaching us to respond to negativity and ridicule with forgiving hearts.

Imagine Christ on the cross for three hours, mocked and insulted. Yet He took control of the situation and led His persecutors towards repentance. He teaches His followers to remain resolute and stand their ground for what is right. His words of kindness broke the cycle of humiliation and taught us not to submit to the inferior standards of this world.

The spirit of Easter should encourage Christians to continue exposing injustice without fear or favour. Standing for the truth is a virtue in a world filled with turmoil. Those who believe they are powerful may be blinded by creed, yet through humility Christ used forgiveness to influence His crucifiers’ actions. The soldiers who mocked Him and divided His clothes did not cause Him to stoop to their level.

We read that the centurion was terrified (Matthew 27:54) and later beat his breast and went away (Luke 23:48). This demonstrates that, regardless of opposition, with Christ victory is certain. This miracle was reinforced by the empty tomb on the third day, Sunday morning, symbolising new life. It was mission accomplished.

As we prepare for Easter, we must acknowledge that many Christians around the world face perplexity, pain and fear caused by geopolitical tensions and advancing military technologies, such as drones and computerised artillery. The spirit of Easter should inspire people of goodwill to continue calling for world peace.

The God Edition

The risen Christ taught us not to allow suffering to dampen our spirits. The power of the cross should compel leaders to reconsider reliance on weaponry to resolve conflicts.

Christ gave us glimpses of the purpose of suffering. In Luke 22:24–38, Saint Luke continues his account of the Last Passover meal Christ shared with His disciples.

We celebrate the Last Supper, or Holy Communion, as the symbol of the new covenant established through Christ’s blood (Hebrews 13:20). Christ teaches that those who are faithful will inherit His kingdom, joy and glory. I wish all adherents of the Christian faith meaningful spiritual renewal.

Those who remain silent during this time risk undermining the meaning of the atonement. I call on all Christians and people of goodwill to draw courage from Christ’s sacrifice and challenge injustice, particularly the suffering of women and children displaced by war.

If we remain silent, we will be disobedient to the imperatives of our faith and compromise the message of Easter. Let us stand in solidarity with those affected by violence and conflict.

Reverend Gift Moerane is a South African clergyman, political figure and community leader known for his roles as the former executive mayor of the Emfuleni Local Municipality (appointed in 2019) and as a provincial leader of the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

25 YEARS AGO

The BBC has created an icon for the 21st century using computer images from the 1st century. “There is a Christ for every age,” wrote art historian and director of Britain’s National Gallery, Neil MacGregor. Now, with computer reconstructions from 1st-century Jewish skulls, the BBC claims to have come up with the best possible Messianic likeness for the third millennium. While Christian artists have depicted Jesus Christ in images that are far removed from his Middle Eastern Jewish origins — fair-skinned, long-haired, even blue-eyed — today’s image shows him as dark, swarthy and sporting a closely shaved beard. The image is the centrepiece of a new BBC series, *The Son of God*, which cost £1.5 million to make and is likely to prove highly contentious. Analysis of excavated skulls of 1st-century Jews and images from ancient Syrian frescoes, reveals that the traditional image — from that depicted on the Turin Shroud to Willem Dafoe’s blond-haired portrayal in *The Last Temptation of Christ* — is a fictitious construct based on centuries of erroneous impressions. By combining computer images of ancient skulls with 6th-century images of Christ, the series producers believe they have come up with a far closer likeness. - *Mail & Guardian April 6 to 12 2001*

VERBATIM

“If this was payment for a phone number, as suggested, this raises another set of ethical questions about why a journalist is selling people’s numbers. Offered money by a source, the journalist should refuse it or, at the very least, declare it to her editor”. - Anton Harber, a veteran journalist, believes journalists must refuse payments from anyone considered a source, even if a personal friendship exists, such as in the case of Sergeant Fannie Nkosi and Natasha Phiri.

“For South Africans it means higher fuel prices. By 1 April we are going to see prices of petrol and diesel going up, driven largely by the conflict that is going on. Now, as the ANC, we are saying we direct the government to address this matter to see how best we can address the challenges that South Africans are going to face as the price of petrol and diesel goes up”. - ANC President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the rise in fuel prices, effective 1 April, during the closing of the 11th ANC Limpopo conference

“We are committed to zero tolerance for corruption and any improper conduct. We want to ensure that all associations are treated fairly”. - CAF president Patrice Motsepe, speaking at a press conference after the Morocco-Senegal Afcon final chaos.

“The plan and the reason for the call were to get Matlala to sign an affidavit stating he doesn’t know Mchunu (Senzo). Apparently, Mkwashu told them to first show good faith by granting Vusi (‘Cat’ Matlala) bail. Vusi explained to me that Hodes (advocate Laurence) and Shamila (Batohi) are good friends and that Shamila and Mchunu are also very close, that is why Batohi is trying to help Mchunu”. - Allegations from Jermaine Prim, a former cellmate of Vusumuzi ‘Cat’ Matlala concerning suspended police minister Senzo Mchunu which the latter has denied.

Thought Leader

The Easter hope: A personal testimony



Malusi
Mpumlwana

Good Friday is the moment when Christ, in his pain, identifies with the pains of the people and atones for our sins

The Easter festival day, when Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, is as old as the resurrection faith itself – the very foundation of the Christian faith.

Christians believe that Jesus was sentenced to death and executed by crucifixion for the salvation of humanity and all creation, on the day we commemorate as Good Friday.

Good Friday is the moment when Christ, in his pain, identifies with the pains of the people and atones for our sins.

Believers surrender their sinfulness and place their miseries, pains and woundedness onto his outstretched arms. Christians also believe that he rose from the dead on the “first day of the week”, Sunday.

From about the middle of the first century, Christians were recognising Sunday as a holy day, the Lord’s Day, to celebrate Christ’s resurrection – the anchor of their faith. This is what made Sunday the day of Christian worship.

From about the second century, while the Christian faith was still underground and not legally recognised, Christians went beyond the weekly observance of the resurrection and began an annual observance.

The final fixing of the Easter festival protocol and its dating was done after the legalisation of Christianity at the Council of Nicaea in 325. This included the recitation, through scripture, of the known salvation history up to the Christ event and how it heals and restores the relationship between humanity and God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

My love affair with Easter was nurtured by my love for church choral music and some of the best hymns, for me, have always been Easter hymns.

But as I learned more from the Black Theology project of Black Consciousness about the theological claims of the human person created in the image of God, regardless of race and gender, I realised the blasphemy of apartheid, which undermined the fullness of the humanity of black people.

As I began to interrogate the relationship between the black experience under apartheid and the Christian faith, Easter became a point of focus.

I saw it as a celebration of a seminal event for the faith: the resurrection of Jesus. From this, I began to examine and more purposefully interpret my church experience.

I learned more about the idea of God as a God of love and justice and the death and resurrection of Jesus as the practical manifestation of that.

A core question for me, which ultimately led me to enter seminary and theological studies, was: “What does it mean to be created in the image of God if I am black in apartheid South Africa?”

Therefore, does the Easter celebration and the annual messages of hope associated with the resurrec-



Renewal: Faith celebrated at Easter is meant to honour, restore the relationship between humanity and God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Photo: Ayanda Tyali

tion mean anything for black people in South Africa?

I explored these questions as a theological student at the Federal Theological Seminary. This was a decidedly anti-apartheid institution, providing space for Black and Liberation Theology, as well as serious critical analysis of the Christian message contained in the gospel. I found the answer to my question and it brought me back to an interpretation of Easter as a liberating festival.

My studies revealed that the scriptures do not present God in physical terms that allow us to see God as black or white, male or female. Scripture states that God is love; therefore, love is a human fundamental, since humans are created in the image of God.

I began to gain a greater appreciation for the African love ethic of ubuntu, as it represents a living expression of the image of God in humanity.

Because God is described as Creator, humans must be creative as a function of their being in the image of God, the Creator.

From this, I began to see how Bantu Education, designed to kill the creative spirit in African children, was a blasphemous policy that sought to deliberately stifle the creativity that is the image of God in our children.

This revelation in response to my question about the image of God led to other realisations and a deeper appreciation of the attributes of God that all humans share and which the faith celebrated at Easter is meant to

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honour.

God is just and righteous and so we should be. Therefore, to stand up for justice is to stand up for the image of God in society. God is free, for nothing compels God. Thus, freedom is another human fundamental that we should claim, struggle for and defend.

Ultimately, we speak of Almighty God, for God is powerful. This means that power is another attribute of God’s image that humans possess. Power exercised without love is tyranny and power with love is justice.

All of this gave new meaning to me as one member of an oppressed people celebrating Easter. It brought renewed significance and energy to the meaning of Easter hope following the pain of the Good Friday crucifixion.

Thus, Easter and its resurrection faith mean that the pain of apartheid, akin to the painful and shameful death of Jesus on the cross, cannot be the last word. The resurrection faith celebrated at Easter is a call to new hope.

For me, the Easter resurrection hope became a fountainhead of struggle theology that informed pastoral ministry in a praxis of justice. As a priest in impoverished townships in the 1980s, this was important.

As I applied that understanding to each Sunday – the resurrection day – I began to communicate continuously the message of resurrection hope, moving people away from the despair of apartheid’s viciousness.

Because the image of God is alive in all of us, regardless of race and gender, I was able to appreciate the similarities between apartheid racism and patriarchal sexism in black society, which oppress women and girls and prevent them from applying the resurrection faith to transform their circumstances.

As a priest in Cape Town in the 1980s, I worked with young people in the Young Christian Students (YCS), where I served as chaplain, to conduct social analysis and identify instances where that resurrection hope was negated in our experience.

One of the gross violations of this hope was the necklace killings that became more prevalent on Friday afternoons (payday) in the border area between the townships of Nyanga and Gugulethu. We established a sentry system and saved no fewer than 30 people from certain gruesome death.

During the 1980s state of emergency, we were burying young people killed by apartheid soldiers every week.

We could not preach the hope grounded in the resurrection faith while leading funerals for those killed by apartheid forces and saying: “The Lord gave, the Lord has

taken, the Lord’s name be praised!”

We agreed, as township pastors, that this verse would be used only when people died of natural causes – not those shot by the apartheid army.

Because the resurrection hope underpinned my ministry wherever I went, I maintained the same approach when, in 1988, I was transferred to Uitenhage, where there were fierce hostilities between supporters of the United

Democratic Front (UDF) and the Africanists (AmaAfrika), led by Reverend Mzwandile Maqina.

From the same principle of Easter hope, we used a mediation model that helped the warring groups envision a “resurrected” life for the communities of KwaNobuhle.

We secured peace and ended the internecine killings, resulting in a public celebration.

This Easter outlook has continued to inspire my public ministry, for the “Good Friday” experience cannot have the last word.

Easter, through its resurrection hope, represents a call beyond the pain of the moment.

Because we are created in the image of God – the Creator, the Powerful, the Loving, the Just and the Free – there are no limits to what can be achieved through the Easter faith. And so, we pursue even what seems impossible.

Malusi Mpumlwana is the Bishop of the Diocese of Maropeng of the Ethiopian Episcopal Church.

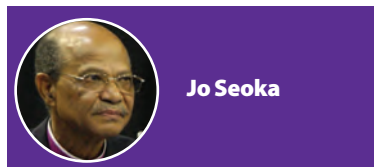
This Easter outlook has continued to inspire my public ministry, for the “Good Friday” experience cannot have the last word.

“What does it mean to be created in the image of God if I am black in apartheid South Africa?”



Salvation: The significance of Easter is that, through the death and resurrection of His son Jesus Christ, God saved the world. Photo: Garrison Gao

Easter people cannot ask, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” because Jesus, on Good Friday, died for all, not just the chosen few. Our brothers’ situations in Sudan, Palestine and Iran are our concern and we must stand with them when they are unable to stand on their own



Jo Seoka

God’s gift of hope for new life

The God Edition

Easter should not be limited to a holiday that people eagerly anticipate as a brief respite from their everyday labour but should be an opportunity to reflect on the human life experience.

In other words, Easter must be interpreted within the context of new life in which people find themselves.

In our situation, for instance, the context is defined by poverty resulting from joblessness and corruption, a result of greed that has produced thieves who undermine the justice system founded on constitutional democracy.

The American-Israeli-fuelled war on Iran is a practical testimony to human selfishness and greed for power and material possessions.

Easter, for those who embrace Jesus as their Saviour, serves as a profound occasion for deep reflection on the significance of resurrection after death.

It must be borne in mind that the significance of Easter is that God, through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, delivered and saved the world.

It is, therefore, a sacred time that invites believers in Christ to contemplate the transformative power of renewal, hope and the promise of new life that emerges from the depths of despair.

It is not just a time for rest but a time to reflect on the redemptive act of God for humanity.

Each person, individually and collectively, ought to engage in self-introspection and think about God’s purpose for humanity. The work of salvation is not complete without each person taking a conscious decision to be Christ’s presence in the world, which is corrupted by human sin, with humanity assuming the role of ‘God’ in control of its destiny.

We, the people, must live for one

another by working on values that define our humanness in our collective pursuit of the common good, in which the fruits of the Spirit — love, peace, justice, joy, kindness, goodness and self-control — are realised as life goals (Gal 5:23).

Therefore, Easter has to be a gathering of God’s people united in love as one, in the celebration of faith and the triumph over evil forces that undermine God’s purpose for humanity.

The song, “Count your blessings one by one ...” resonates when blessings are shared collectively. In other words, this means a transformative commitment to new life: an intentional refusal to be instruments of greed, corruption and war but instead to be workers of love and peaceful coexistence.

This belief and understanding remind us that Christ came so that we may all have life in abundance and that he taught his followers that “blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God” (Beatitudes). Sinful living deprives humanity of the privilege of being heirs with Christ.

At its core, Easter is the fulfilment of God’s promise in the resurrected Jesus Christ. According to the Gospels, Jesus died (God died) for

human salvation, despite the forces of darkness that embraced his death in times like ours.

Easter tells us that life is not destined to end in the dark tomb but that there is life in God’s marvellous light that cannot be extinguished.

This is the life to which we are called: to labour without giving up for the good of all, especially the vulnerable. Working towards the end of war, for instance, difficult and dangerous as it is, helps to recreate a better world.

Each one of us must be committed to dying to our sinful nature and ego so that the resurrection of new life is realised and celebrated.

The transformative power of Easter lies in the defeat of sin and death, because the strife is over and the victory is won. For me, this is the meaning of Easter — the message of renewal and new life defined by the goodness of God’s power, which makes all things new.

This resonates with the prophet Isaiah’s message when God told the Israelites to “forget the former things and not dwell on the past ... because he is doing a new thing” (Isaiah 43:18-19).

In today’s context, God, through the Easter experience, encourages humanity not to lose hope but to trust in a new future, because through renewed humanity, God will create a better world.

Easter services start with Palm Sunday, where Christians commemorate Christ’s entry into Jerusalem against the forces of darkness. The lighting of the Paschal candle and early morning prayers symbolise the newness of life through God’s grace.

Understood from this triumphant background, Easter calls each one of us to live a new life of resurrection by seeking the fruits of the Spirit, such as love and goodness for all.

We must work for peace and justice by serving the poor and the victims of human greed and bring hope despite hopelessness and the pain of poverty in a world torn by corruption and war.

Easter people cannot ask, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” because Jesus, on Good Friday, died for all, not just the chosen few. Our brothers’ situations in Sudan, Palestine and Iran are our concern and we must stand with them when they are unable to stand on their own.

As we gather as families, let us reflect on the goodness of the Lord and count our blessings by serving

those less privileged than ourselves — victims of war, corruption and oppression — inspiring hope and generating new life, as in the resurrection we celebrate at Easter.

It is to such a new humanity that “God himself will be with them and be their God ... for the old order of things will have passed away” (Rev 21:4).

Therefore, as the people of a new dispensation and transformed nation, I urge us not to lose hope for the future. This Easter, let us recommit ourselves to working towards a peaceful and just world where all of God’s people can coexist as a new creation according to His purpose.

We can achieve this by:

- Forming solidarity groups that advocate for justice and peace for the victims of war and want;
- Collecting material goods to distribute to those in need;
- Exposing corruption whenever it appears; and
- Praying continuously for the victims while taking tangible action within our communities.

I believe that only through such efforts will the ‘Alleluia’ chorus of Easter truly resonate, offering a renewed understanding of Easter that embodies hope and renewal for everyone.

This understanding of Easter, for me, completes the mystery of human salvation.

Blessed and happy Easter to all.

Right Reverend Dr Jo Seoka is a retired South African Anglican bishop.

“The transformative power of Easter lies in the defeat of sin and death, because the strife is over and the victory is won.”

Thought Leader



Nothing about us, without us: Despite claims to the contrary, key church bodies, like the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God insist they were not adequately represented in the CRL process. Photo: CRL

CRL and faith groups at odds



Brij Maharaj

Section 22 of the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic (CRL) Rights Commission Act empowers the commission to investigate problems within religious communities, foster ethical conduct and address inappropriate practices.

Between 2025 and the beginning of 2026, the controversy over section 22 of South Africa's CRL Rights Commission escalated, exposing a chasm between the commission and various national religious organisations.

On the one hand, the CRL claims that its section 22 procedure is an attempt to promote ethical governance and prevent abuses in a way that complies with the Constitution.

However, several religious leaders, civil society organisations and legal specialists argue that procedural mistakes, insufficient consultation and signs of state over-reach have tarnished the process.

The resignation of the section 22 committee chair, mass protests and multiple legal challenges have further fuelled concern about the initiative's legitimacy and intentions.

Section 22 of the CRL Rights Commission Act gives the commission the authority to investigate issues facing religious communities and to propose appropriate interventions. As a chapter nine institution tasked with defending and advancing cultural, religious and linguistic rights, the CRL views this mission as part of its constitutional obligation.

Commission chairperson Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva has argued that the section 22 process is intended to foster ethical conduct within religious and linguistic communities and to address harmful practices seen in past scandals involving certain religious leaders.

The CRL maintains that its approach is consultative, voluntary and geared towards strengthening internal self-regulation rather than imposing direct state control. This is presented as part of its broader effort to restore trust in the sector and protect congregants from abuse.

Despite the CRL's stated intentions, there have been several criticisms of the section 22 process. Major religious organisations argue that the CRL's public messaging is at odds with its internal documentation.

The South African Church Defenders (SACD) notes, for example, that while the CRL publicly denies pursuing legislation, clause

2.3 of its own draft framework explicitly calls for the development of a legislative framework for the Christian sector.

This contradiction has deepened mistrust between the CRL and religious communities. Additionally,

key Christian bodies, such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God, rejected claims that they were adequately represented in the process.

Hindu and Muslim bodies have echoed these concerns. The South African Hindu Maha Sabha (SAHMS) criticised the CRL for announcing the formation of a section 22 structure for the Hindu sector without any prior consultation, undermining both legitimacy and transparency.

The Hindu faith sector was neither

notified nor invited to comment on section 22, whereas the Christian sector was consulted. The South African Muslim Network similarly questioned the constitutionality of the process, raising alarm about selective engagement and exclusionary decision-making.

A major turning point in the section 22 controversy came with the sudden resignation of Reverend Professor Musa Xulu, the chairperson of the section 22 committee, in January 2026.

Xulu announced that he could "no longer serve as chair of a committee the processes of which I do not control, the outcomes of which I do not endorse", alleging that the committee was being used to advance a "pre-determined agenda of state control of religion".

Professor Xulu stated that section 22 meetings were frequently chaired by the CRL chairperson rather than by himself. In addition, the proposed Christian sector framework was pushed through quickly without his endorsement or sufficient consultation.

Furthermore, he argued that important Christian constituencies had been excluded and that the draft framework was "not fit for purpose", lacking theological grounding and raising constitutional concerns.

He emphasised that remaining in the role would compromise his integrity as both an academic and an ordained minister and he described the working environment as increasingly "toxic" and "hostile".

The section 22 process has continued despite two high court challenges from SACD and the Muslim Lawyers Association, both arguing that the section 22 committee was unlawfully established.

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) has warned that the CRL appears to be accelerating the process, potentially to conclude it

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before courts can rule, which raises serious due process concerns.

Parliament received several "formal submissions, memoranda and representations from faith-based organisations ... regarding the constitutionality, inclusivity and conduct surrounding the establishment of the section 22 committee".

The government was concerned about the growing tensions between religious stakeholders and the CRL Rights Commission.

The speaker of the National Assembly, Thoko Didiza, reiterated that "the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa unequivocally guarantees freedom of religion, belief and opinion, while also affirming the responsibility of the state to protect all citizens from harm, including abuse that may occur within any sector of society."

The speaker requested that the portfolio committee on cooperative governance and traditional affairs engage with all parties, including the CRL and faith-based organisations, to restore confidence, promote inclusivity and ensure that all institutions operate within their constitutional mandates.

Given the reach and influence of the churches (83% of South Africans are actively Christian), there was widespread public mobilisation against the CRL's recommendations. Thousands of Christians marched in Durban and other cities, protesting what they perceived as creeping state intervention.

Those leading the protests emphasised that although accountability for any criminal act is essential,

the CRL's proposals could undermine the constitutional right to freedom of religion by encroaching on church governance and doctrine.

A balanced assessment acknowledges that the CRL's goals — protecting congregants, promoting ethical leadership and addressing harmful practices — are legitimate public interests in a constitutional democracy.

However, the section 22 process has been hampered by procedural irregularities, transparency issues, inconsistent communication and perceptions of hostility towards certain religious traditions.

A major issue is that the proposed structures may shift from self-regulation to quasi-state regulation, reinforced by the revelations by Reverend Professor Musa Xulu.

To restore confidence and trust, the CRL should consider halting section 22 processes pending judicial outcomes.

Perhaps most importantly, what is needed is the inclusion of all faiths in one consultative committee, so that the various religious organisations in South Africa can unite and build the much-needed integration in society.

Faith groups can play a powerful role in shaping South African society, whether through disaster relief, welfare support, prayer to give hope or guiding communities to live according to ethical values and to support society in upholding the rule of law.

Separate section 22 committees for different faiths keep each religion in separate silos, echoing apartheid-era divisions; this risks fragmenting the South African faith community and minority faiths may become further marginalised.

Additionally, key Christian bodies, such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God, rejected claims that they were adequately represented in the process.

Faith groups can play a powerful role in shaping South African society ...

Professor Brij Maharaj is the deputy president of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha

The Christians who many Christians forgot



Zukiswa Wanner

On Saturday 29 March, at the eighth Human Rights Festival at Constitutional Hill, I asked for signatures from those old enough to vote.

The petition called on parliament to push the executive to uphold South Africa's international obligations and to stop trade with a state committing crimes against humanity.

An older woman called me over to say she had not signed. When I reached her, she asked: "What am I signing?" I explained. She shook her head. "No. I am with Israel."

I stopped what I was doing and sat next to her, trying to understand. "I am Christian and stand with the children of Israel," she said.

My attempts to draw parallels between apartheid Israel and apartheid South Africa – including references to the infamous "Stop Nonsense" razor wire fence used by police during apartheid and seen again at Marikana when mineworkers were massacred for demanding a living wage – did not move her.

"God promised them that land ..."

I tried to explain the history of Palestine: that Judaism was the original religion; that, after Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross and, as many Christians believe, rose three days later, some inhabitants became Christian while others remained Jewish. Later, when Islam emerged, some residents converted to Islam. It was possible, I told her, for one family to include a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim.

I told her that, in 1911, in Mandatory Palestine, two Christian cousins, Issa El-Issa and Yousef El-Issa, founded **Falastin**, an anti-Zionist publication that became one of the most influential newspapers until its closure in 1967. This happened at roughly the same time that black South Africans, fearing the Land Act after the 1910 Union, began organising what would become the African National Congress.

She did not shift her position.

Nor did she when I described a Friday in Tunis, as I waited to board a flotilla to Gaza, where I broke bread with Jews, Christians, Muslims, agnostics and atheists at a Shabbat hosted by South African Jews for a Free Palestine. As Jo Bluen prepared to light a candle, a Palestinian man, Sharif – whose family had been exiled to Germany after being removed from their land in 1948 – took the light from her.

"What is happening?" Jo asked.

"My grandfather told me that in Jaffa, every Shabbat, it was the duty of Muslim neighbours to light the candles so Jewish neighbours would not break religious rules," he said.

I also told her of the Muslim family in Jerusalem entrusted with the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre,



In safe hands: A Muslim family was entrusted with the keys to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem because Christian denominations couldn't agree on who should take charge of them. Photo: Gerd Eichmann

because Christian denominations could not agree on who should hold them.

Still, she was unmoved. "I stand with Israel," she repeated.

I walked away, upset, realising this was not a battle I would win.

She reminded me of Ugandan justice Julia Sebutinde, who, in her dissenting opinion at the International Court of Justice, said: "The Lord is counting on me to stand on the side of Israel" – even when an Israeli judge agreed with the majority that Israel was committing war crimes.

Perhaps this has been one of the most heartbreaking aspects of this genocide: the extent to which it has been reduced to a religious issue.

Some Christians frame it as a conflict between Jews and Muslims. Others adopt a single-issue stance shaped by their own views about Muslims. Muslims, meanwhile, thank me for joining the flotilla and supporting the ummah.

In both cases, I find this troubling.

I want to tell Christians that a wall has been built in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus – not unlike those proposed elsewhere in the world, including in Cape Town, ostensibly for different reasons but ultimately to divide people. Churches in Gaza have been destroyed, just as mosques have been destroyed, because those who worship in them are Palestinian.

I want to remind them that Jesus – after whom their religion is named – consistently prioritised humanity, compassion and liberation over the dictates of an unjust, colonising Roman empire.

As it was then, it is now. Palestine

is a case of settler colonialism, much like apartheid South Africa, where religion was also weaponised. Afrikaners were told that the God of the Dutch Reformed Church was white, despite efforts by Reverend Allan Boesak to challenge this distortion.

I want to tell Muslims that compassion should not be limited to the ummah. Palestinians do not need charity; they need an end to apartheid and the return of their land.

It is inconsistent to speak for Palestine while abusing workers at the Oriental Plaza and then wonder why broader solidarity is lacking.

I want to remind Jews this Passover that Zionism is not Judaism and that anti-Zionism is not antisemitism. Theodor Herzl, one of Zionism's founders, was an atheist – not a religious authority.

South Africa's liberation was supported by many Jews of conscience.

The God Edition

To align with Zionism, or to ignore the suffering in Gaza and the forced displacements in the West Bank, dishonours that legacy.

It echoes figures such as John Vorster, a Nazi sympathiser, whom Yitzhak Rabin nonetheless welcomed to Israel in 1976.

After that visit, the apartheid government's yearbook noted that Israel and South Africa shared a position in "a predominantly hostile world inhabited by dark peoples".

Members of the Global Sumud Flotilla are currently en route to Cuba, which remains under a United States blockade. Their mission

reflects a simple truth: humanity is interconnected and it should matter more than profit.

Later in April, another flotilla will attempt to break the siege of Gaza, now in its 19th year. It will include South Africans of different races and faiths, as before.

One hopes it will be the last – that it will contribute to liberation and that people of all faiths will choose humanity over profit.

As Passover and Easter are observed, I am reminded of the words attributed to Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Those on the flotilla understand that their neighbour is anyone who suffers injustice.

May all who claim faith understand this too.

Perhaps this has been one of the most heartbreaking aspects of this genocide: the extent to which it has been reduced to a religious issue.



Mouthpiece: Issa El-Issa founder of **Falastin, an anti-Zionist publication.** Photo: @Xabueid

Thought Leader

Passover, a profound theological truth

Its ultimate meaning is found in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. To understand Passover through Him is to grasp the fullness of redemption



Lefu Maine

Passover, also known as Pesach in Hebrew, is one of the most important ancient festivals. It celebrates the victory that freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

It is not just a reminder or a historical remembrance but a spiritual observance rooted in divine intervention, covenant solidarity and the timeless message of liberation.

Its significance is preserved and conveyed through scripture, especially in the Book of Exodus, where its origins and instructions are clearly outlined.

The institution of Passover is clearly captured in Exodus 12, where God gives specific instructions to the Israelites before their deliverance.

God announces in Exodus 12:13: "The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you ...". This moment marks the beginning of Passover, where the blood of the lamb becomes an emblem of safety and divine compassion and mercy.

The urgency of their departure is further emphasised in Exodus 12:39, which describes how unleavened bread (matzah) was consumed: "They baked unleavened cakes ... because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait."

The deliverance is completed in Exodus 12:41-42, where we read that, after 430 years, the Israelites departed from Egypt and that night became one to be observed for generations.

Looking at Passover through broader lenses, in Exodus 3:7-8 God reveals His heart: "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt ... so I have come down to rescue them."

This scripture clearly shows that Passover is not merely about escape but about God's intentional act of salvation. In the later stages, in Exodus 13:3, the children of Israel receive an instruction from Moses: "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out." This passage makes remembrance central.

Passover holds special significance, which is further solidified in Deuteronomy 16:1-3, where the Israelites are instructed to celebrate



Remembrance: Moses implored the children of Israel never to forget the day they left Egypt, freed from the house of slavery. Photo: Vincent Malo

Passover each year: "Observe the month of Abib and feast the Passover to the Lord your God ... for in this month He brought you out from Egypt by night."

This positions Passover as a perpetual ordinance, connecting identity, memory and worship. This is not just a ritual but an ongoing affirmation of freedom and covenant.

Passover has a deeper prophetic and redemptive significance for Christians, especially in the context of Jesus Christ. In the Scriptures, Jesus' crucifixion was not an accident but symbolic. The New Testament ties Jesus to Passover symbolism. 1 Corinthians 5:7 states: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."

This identifies Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the sacrificial lamb whose blood delivers.

Finally, Passover addresses present-day realities. It is a testimony of God's power to deliver, as mentioned in Psalm 34:17: "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears

The God Edition

them; He delivers them from all their troubles."

It becomes a call for personal reflection and transformation. Just as the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, believers today are invited into a journey of spiritual liberation — breaking free from bondage and entering into redemption.

In summary, Passover is a scripture-based redemption narrative. It is an account of God's faithfulness, a remembrance of His saving power and a prophetic image of final deliverance through Christ. Its essence remains timeless: God sees, God saves and God calls His people into freedom.

The relevance of the Passover for the church today

Passover has played an important role in biblical history and remains a foundational observance. As instituted by God in the Book of Exodus, it commemorates the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt through the blood of a sacrificial lamb.

Despite its historical significance, Passover still carries theological weight that continues to influence faith, doctrine and spiritual understanding.

Whether it remains relevant or should be observed in a certain way invites deeper exploration of its origin, fulfilment in Christ and place within the life of the modern believer.

Passover begins in Exodus 12 when God commands the Israelites to sacrifice an unblemished lamb and apply its blood to their doorposts.

This action would cause the Lord to "pass over" them during the plague — the death of the firstborn child. This moment was not simply another act of divine deliverance; it established a covenantal sign declaring Israel to be God's redeemed people.

The instruction was clear: this event was to be remembered eternally. As written in Exodus 12:14: "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations."

Passover was both historical and liturgical — a memorial of identity and remembrance.

The New Testament reveals Passover as a prophetic sign of a greater redemption. The apostle Paul identifies Jesus Christ as its fulfilment in 1 Corinthians 5:7: "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

In this light, the Passover lamb reflects Christ — unblemished and sinless — whose blood saves humanity not from physical death but from sin and eternal separation.

The crucifixion of Jesus during Passover highlights the intentional connection between the old covenant and its new covenant fulfilment.

This transformation reaches its height during the Last Supper, where Jesus redefines the elements of the Passover meal. Taking the bread and the cup, He declares them His body and blood, instituting what is now

known as Communion.

This marks a theological shift from the old covenant practice to a new covenant reality — redemption no longer symbolised through animal sacrifice, but fully realised through Christ.

A balanced biblical position recognises that Passover retains spiritual significance. Observing it becomes a matter of conviction rather than command. Romans 14:5 affirms this: "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind."

The emphasis is on avoiding legalism while allowing space for meaningful spiritual expression. For those who observe Passover, it should be approached through a Christ-centred lens. Its significance today lies not in ritual preservation, but in revelation — reminding believers of their deliverance and identity in God.

In conclusion, Passover remains a profound theological truth. Its ultimate meaning is found in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

To understand Passover through Him is to grasp the fullness of redemption.

The believer's focus, therefore, should not remain on the shadow of the ordinance but on the substance to which it points: Christ, the Passover Lamb.

Its ultimate meaning is found in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.



Communion: The Last Supper redefines the elements of the Passover meal, where Jesus shared a meal with his disciples, declaring two of those elements as His body and blood.

Moruti Lefu Maine is a senior minister at the Healing House Ministries International.

The Future of Sustainability

The Future of Sustainability

Mitigating climate change through stronger environmental action



From left: Leanne Manas: Programme Director, Tlou Sebola: Collection and Training Manager Petco, Molatelo Motau: Sustainability Manager Heineken, Ntombizanele Makoko: Sustainability Programs Director GreenWay Africa

By Thabo Mohlala

Sustainability took centre stage at a two day conference that brought together deputy ministers, business leaders, water experts and environmental practitioners to examine how South Africa can respond more effectively to climate change and build long term resilience. Held from 24 to 25 March at the Indaba Hotel in Fourways, Johannesburg, The Future of Sustainability Conference 2026 was hosted by Topco Media.

Across the conference, one message came through clearly: sustainability can no longer be treated as a secondary concern. Speakers agreed that it must be built into the way organisations plan, operate and grow, while government must move faster in implementing climate adaptation measures. As a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, South Africa is under growing pressure to strengthen its environmental response and deliver practical results.

Deputy Minister of Forestry,

Fisheries and the Environment Narend Singh opened the first day with a keynote address titled Rebuilding Trust Through Coherent Environmental Governance. He spoke about the role of environmental governance in achieving sustainable development goals and said stronger institutional coordination, better policy alignment and clearer accountability are essential if South Africa is to make meaningful progress. He also outlined measures being implemented by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment to respond to climate related disasters.

Singh said the scale of the current crisis, ranging from climate change and environmental degradation to unsustainable production and resource scarcity, demands stronger international, national and local partnerships. He noted that the Sustainable Development Goals align with South Africa's National Development

Plan in their shared focus on poverty reduction, inclusive growth and environmental sustainability. Of the 17 SDGs, he said, the environmental sector is directly responsible for eight, while around 70% have a strong environmental dimension.

He described South Africa as standing at a critical point in its environmental journey. With its biodiversity, coastline and forestry resources, the country has significant natural advantages, but protecting them will require stronger governance, restored ecosystems and a more deliberate effort to link environmental protection with livelihoods and public trust.

Singh said that while his department is responsible for the regulatory framework, including the National Environmental Management Act, effective implementation depends on close collaboration with municipalities. Among the measures he highlighted were draft carbon budget and mitigation plan regu-

lations aimed at holding major emitters accountable, training for district municipalities to improve adaptation capacity under the Climate Change Act, and pilot projects in green hydrogen and low carbon steel supported by development finance institutions and private investors as part of the Just Energy Transition.

The corporate sector also used the conference to show how sustainability is being embedded into business strategy. Ayanda Nkosi, Sustainability Integration and Transformation Specialist at HEINEKEN Beverages, said the company supported the event because the issues on the agenda speak directly to its own priorities. With operations that span agriculture, manufacturing, logistics and sales, she said sustainability is not an abstract concern for the business but part of its day to day reality.

Nkosi said the company's approach is guided by its Brew a Better World 2030 strategy,

which is built around three pillars: responsible consumption, environmental impact and social impact. She pointed to several examples of how that strategy is being put into practice, including recycling and collection systems that support entrepreneurs in the circular economy, and enterprise and supplier development programmes such as the Ukukhula Fund,

which help bring small businesses into HEINEKEN's value chain. "Buying local and building local is not just the right thing to do," she said. "It is how we build resilience."

She added that the company is also investing in water reuse and reclamation, as well as watershed support in the communities where it operates. On the energy side, HEINEKEN is expanding solar and other renewable solutions to reduce emissions, improve efficiency and respond to the realities of South Africa's energy landscape.

Sustainability can no longer be treated as a secondary concern

Buying local and building local is how we build resilience

Conference 2026

The link between sustainability and long term economic resilience also featured strongly in discussions from the financial sector. Kyle Durham, Commercial Head of Sustainability at FNB, said sustainability is ultimately about helping to build an economy that can endure for generations. As a major corporate and financial institution, he said, FNB views the success of the broader economy as closely tied to its own future.

For Durham, that speaks to the idea of shared prosperity. "It is not just about corporate social responsibility," he said, "but about how we change systems for good, and do so profitably and at scale."

Linda Cele, WesBank's Product Head for Key Accounts and Partnerships, said sustainability must also be reflected in the way businesses themselves operate. She said the focus is not only on helping customers adopt sustainable solutions, but also on ensuring that companies transition their own practices in ways that make them more durable over time. She pointed to offices such as WesBank's Fairlands site, which follows green building principles and uses renewable energy.

Nestlé's Director of Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, Connie Sethaelo, described the conference as an important platform for organisations across sectors to exchange lessons and practical ideas. She said it helps raise awareness about the need to scale environmental action and deepen sustainability in everyday operations. According to Sethaelo, sustainability has long formed part of Nestlé's shared value model and remains central to the company's work.

One of the projects she highlighted was Kudoti RE-Imagine Tomorrow, an initiative launched in Tembisa in 2021 to address plastic waste and strengthen the circular economy. The project also supports informal waste reclaimers through skills development, helping them become more self sufficient while contributing to environmental awareness. Sethaelo said Nestlé is also focused on supporting farmers through partnerships that give them access to technical guidance and training in newer practices such as regenerative agriculture.

The second day of the conference turned attention to water security, infrastructure and environmental protection through a keynote address by Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation David Mahlobo. His address focused on the complexity of water provision in South Africa, from ageing infrastructure and cli-

The current crisis demands stronger international, national, and local partnerships



Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Narend Singh



Linda Cele, Wesbank Product Head for Key accounts and partnerships



Ayanda Nkosi, Sustainability Integration and Transformation Specialist at HEINEKEN Beverages



Connie Sethaelo, Nestle Director of Corporate Communication and Public Affairs

mate pressures to population growth and weak municipal capacity. He said these challenges make collaboration across sectors and borders increasingly important.

Mahlobo stressed that sustainable water use and environmental protection cannot be separated from the broader question of public wellbeing. He said the Constitution is clear on the right to sufficient food and water, and that access to clean water is directly tied to dignity, health and livelihood. "This is not just about providing water," he said, "but

ensuring that the quality of the water is good. Because if the quality of water is poor, it may lead to disease outbreaks and destroy livelihoods."

He also spoke about the legacy of mining pollution, particularly in Gauteng, where underground water sources were severely affected after the discovery of gold. Poor regulation and weak enforcement at the time, he said, allowed widespread environmental damage that continues to affect water systems today.

Among the interventions he highlighted was work by the Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority, which has developed technology capable of treating contaminated water by removing heavy metals. Once

treated, that water can be used by communities or supplied to industry. He also referred to partnerships with companies such as Seriti and Exxaro in Mpumalanga to help clean water and rehabilitate environments affected by mining.

What emerged from the conference was a broad consensus that sustainability is no

longer a peripheral issue. It sits at the centre of how government, business and communities will have to think about growth, infrastructure, resilience and public accountability in the years ahead. The challenge now is not whether sustainability matters, but how quickly and effectively South Africa can turn commitment into action.



THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABILITY

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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

VICE-PRINCIPAL: STUDENT LIFE

PEROMNES POST LEVEL 1 | REF 26335

JOB PURPOSE

The Vice-Principal: Student Life is a senior executive responsible for providing strategic leadership and oversight across the University's student life portfolio including managing student affairs, residence affairs and accommodation, student governance, student development programmes and student services. The incumbent will work closely with the Vice-Chancellor, senior management and student leadership to enhance the student experience, promote student well-being and foster a vibrant campus community.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants are required to submit their applications online via the University's website at www.up.ac.za. To apply, navigate to "About UP," select "Career Opportunities," then click on "Browse Jobs" and choose the relevant job reference and attach the requisite documents as outlined in the advert. Applicants are required to read the Regulations and Procedure for the Appointment of Vice-Principals prior to submitting their application, and to confirm in writing that they have read and agree to the terms outlined in the Regulation and Procedure.

The Regulation and Procedure is available on the link below:

<https://www1.up.ac.za/cs/sf/UPPR017483>

Applications must be submitted by 12:00 noon on 30 April 2026.

ENQUIRIES

Jeovitah Chimhamhiwa

Tel: 012 420 6149, email: jeovitah.chimhamhiwa@up.ac.za,
for enquiries regarding the application process.

Nicolaas Wagner

Tel: 012 420 4091, email: nicolaas.wagner@up.ac.za,
for role-related enquiries.



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The University of Pretoria is committed to equality, employment equity and diversity. In accordance with the Employment Equity Plan of the University and its Employment Equity goals and targets, preference may be given but is not limited to candidates from under-represented designated groups. All candidates who comply with the requirements for appointment are invited to apply. All candidates agree to undergo verification of personal credentials. The University of Pretoria reserves the right to not fill the advertised position.

Academic Jobs

The University of Pretoria is one of South Africa's top research universities, dedicated to producing high-quality, impactful research that addresses complex contemporary issues. It is one of the significant producers of research and makes a major contribution to postgraduate and postdoctoral fellowship training as well as nurtures and supports researchers at different stages of their research careers.

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA | EXECUTIVES

VICE-PRINCIPAL: INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION, PLANNING AND RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

PEROMNES POST LEVEL 1 | REF 26336

JOB PURPOSE

The Vice-Principal: Institutional Innovation, Planning and Resources Management is responsible for providing strategic leadership, coordination, and oversight of the University's institutional planning and innovation, institutional performance, financial sustainability, and resource mobilisation and allocation. The incumbent will also provide leadership in aligning UP's long-term strategy, academic priorities, operational plans, and resource utilisation in support of the University's mission as a leading research-intensive institution. The Vice-Principal will also support the Vice-Chancellor and Principal in the leadership and management of the University as well as strategic leadership and direction in the following directorates: Institutional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, all institutional innovation initiatives of the institution and the resource allocation of the University as well as other appropriate functions as may be assigned to this portfolio, in pursuance of the vision and mission of the University of Pretoria.

APPLICATION PROCESS

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for role-related enquiries.



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UNIVERSITY OF THE
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Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment
School of Electrical and Information Engineering
Position: Professor / Associate Professor – Digital
Transformation Engineering

Description: The School of Electrical and Information Engineering invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for appointment at the academic level of Professor or Associate Professor in Digital Transformation Engineering. The successful candidate will contribute to teaching, research, curriculum development, and leadership in emerging digital technologies aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

Enquiries: Professor Cuthbert Nyamupangedengu: **Head of School:** Electrical and Information Engineering Email: Cuthbert.nyamupangedengu@wits.ac.za

To Apply: External applicants are invited to apply by registering on the Wits i-Recruitment platform located at <https://irec.wits.ac.za>. Internal employees may apply directly on Oracle Self-Service on the Wits Intranet by selecting "Apply for a job".

Note: applications that are incomplete and that do not meet job requirements will not be considered.

Closing date: 17 April 2026

By applying for this post the Applicant acknowledges that their personal information will be processed by the University. The Applicant, by their conduct in proceeding with an application for this position, gives their consent to the processing of their personal information as required by the University's Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy. Such processing includes logging their information on the University's recruitment systems, conducting necessary background and reference checks including disciplinary and/or criminal records, and disclosing their personal information to university employees identified to take part in the selection and recruitment process. The Applicant consents to any processing of their personal information as may be required. The confidentiality of the Applicant's personal.

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NOTICE



FORM JJJ

Notice is hereby given in terms of Regulation 68 of the Deeds Registries Act, 1937, of the intention to apply for the issue of a certified copy of Deed of Transfer ST3840/2006 passed by **GERRIT SCHLEBUSCH**, Identity Number 820617 5070 08 0, married out of community of property in favour of **ELIZABETH SOPHIA LOCK**, Identity Number 660417 0070 08 3, married out of community of property, in respect of certain Section No. 1 as shown and more fully described on Sectional Plan No. SS4/1997, in the scheme known as **KORHAAN PARK** in respect of the land and building or buildings situate at **ERF 1052 HARTSWATER, SITUATED IN THE PHOKWANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, DIVISION VRYBURG, NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE**, which has been lost or destroyed.

All interested persons having objection to the issue of such copy are hereby required to lodge the same in writing with the Registrar of Deeds: Northern Cape at Kimberley, cnr Knight & Stead Streets, Kimberley, 8301 within two weeks from the date of the publication of this notice.

Dated the ___ day of ___ 2026

ELIZABETH SOPHIA VAN SCHALKWYK (previously LOCK)

C/o Hannes Gouws and Partners Inc.

Attorneys, Notaries & Conveyancers
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Maine, Pretoria
Docex: 136 Pretoria/ P.O.
Box 4428, Pretoria, 0001
Tel: 012) 321 1008
Email: conveyance@hannesgouws.co.za

NOTICE

DEPARTEMENT VAN ENERGIE

Kennisgewing ten opsigte van 'n lisensie aansoek ingevolge die **Wet op Petroleumprodukte, 1977 (Wet nr. 120 van 1977)** Hierdie kennisgewing dien om partye wat belangstel / geaffekteer word in te lig dat **FUEL LINK TRADERS (Edms) Bpk** hierna genoem die aansoeker, 'n aansoek ingedien het vir 'n **GROOTHANDEL** lisensie met aansoek nommer **F/2026/03/ 27/0002**.

STAND 335

CHAVANI VILLAGE

LOUIS TRICHARDT

LOUIS TRICHARDT

Die doel van hierdie aansoek is dat 'n lisensie aan die aansoeker toegeken word petroleum groothandel aktiwiteite te onderneem soos uiteengesit in die aansoek. Reëlings kan getref word om die aansoek dokumentasie te besigtig deur die Kontroleur van Petroleum produkte te skakel by:

*Tel: (015) 230 3600

* Faks:

* E-pos: Siyabulela.Magobongo@dmre.gov.za

Enige beswaar teen die uitreik van 'n lisensie ten opsigte van hierdie aansoek, wat duidelik

die aansoek nommer hierbo moet aanhaal, moet ingedien word by die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte binne 'n tydperk van twintig (20) werksdae by die ondergenoemde fisiese op posadres

Fisiese adres

Die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte
Departement van Minerale Hulpbronne en Energie
18A Landros Mare Straat
Polokwane

Posadres

Die Kontroleur van Petroleumprodukte
Departement van Minerale Hulpbronne en Energie
Privaatsak X 9712
Polokwane 0700

OPENBARE KENNISGEWING

Aansoek vir derogasie vir die beperkte gebruik van landbouchemikalieë geïdentifiseer as sorgwekkende middels.

Hierdie kennisgewing het ten doel om die algemene publiek in te lig van die administratiewe aksie onderweg in verband met die goedkeuring van landbouchemikalieë onder die Wet op Misstawwe, Veevoer, Landbouchemikalieë en Veemiddels, 1947 (Wet Nr. 36 van 1947). Die volgende maatskappy, met hul meegaande registrasiebesonderhede, lig die algemene publiek hiermee in van die voorneme om aansoek in te dien vir derogasie vir hul geregistreerde Glufosinaat-ammonium bevattende landbouchemikalieë met aktiewe bestanddele inhoud van 200 g/L of 280 g/L soos hieronder gelys:

Naam van Maatskappy met registrasienommer	Handelsnaam en registrasienommer	Webwerf
UPL South Africa (Edms) Bpk. (Mpy. Reg. Nr. 2009/019713/07)	Lifeline (L10151) Fascinate (L10931) Glufosinate 200 SL (L11412)	www.upl-ltd.com/za

Die aktiewe bestanddele Glufosinaat-ammonium is geïdentifiseer as 'n sorgwekkende middel weens klassifikasie as reprodutief toksies Kategorie 1B volgens die "Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals" vir die volgende eindgebruike in Suid-Afrika:

'n Onkruidodder vir die beheer van onkruid in gewasse soos wingerde en/of boorde, soos uiteengesit in die Toksikologiese Risiko ontleiding vir elk van die gelyste produkte.

Soos vereis in die "Regulations relating to agricultural remedies" van Augustus 2023 is toksikologiese risiko ontleidings onderneem vir die voorgestelde eindgebruike vir elk van die produkte soos gelys. Die betrokke risiko ontleidings, voltooi deur Infotox (Edms) Bpk. bevel aan dat, indien derogasie toegestaan word, die onderstaande aanwysings ingesluit word by die onderskeie produkietiketete om maksimum veiligheid te verseker tydens die gebruik van gelyste produkte:

- Onkruidodder nie te koop vir of gebruik deur huistuiniers.
- Voorbereiding van die spuitplossing moet streng volgens etiketaanwysings geskied.
- Aanwysings vir persoonlike beskerming soos aangedui op die SDS, onder andere behoorlike was van hande, voorarms en gesig na hantering van die produkte moet nagekom word.
- 'n Minimum vereiste vir beskermende oorklere wat die volgende insluit, kleding wat arms en bene bedek, toe skoene en chemies-bestande handskoene, moet tydens toediening nagekom word.
- 'n Herbetredingsydeperk van een dag na toediening moet nagekom word voordat die behandelde area betree kan word.

Meer inligting rakende die voorgestelde aansoek en administratiewe proses kan verkry word in die (Government Gazette Notice #7308) of deur kontak te maak met:

Mnr. / Mr David Motloi

Hoof van Administrasie: Wet op Misstawwe, Veevoer, Landbouchemikalieë en Veemiddels, 1947 (Wet Nr. 36 van 1947) / Head of Administration: Fertilizer, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947

Departement van Landbou, Grondhervorming en Landelike Ontwikkeling, Privaatsak X343, Pretoria, 0001 / Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, Private Bag X343, Pretoria, 0001

Landbougebou, Steve Bikostraat 20, Arcadia, Pretoria, 0002 / Agriculture Building, 20 Steve Biko Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, 0002

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INSPIRING GREATNESS



BOTSWANA POWER CORPORATION

VACANCY – EXTERNAL JOB ADVERTISEMENT

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY AT BOTSWANA POWER CORPORATION

Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) invites applications from suitably qualified, visionary leaders to drive its transformation as a competitive commercial power utility in the region. Qualified and seasoned individuals with customer focus, strategic acumen, and proven transformation success are encouraged to apply for the position below no later than **11th April 2026**.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

I. CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER – GABORONE - FIVE (5) YEARS FIXED TERM CONTRACT

Job Purpose

To provide strategic leadership and oversight of the Corporation's financial management through establishment of a financial strategy, effective financial planning, monitoring and risk management, enhancement of business controls and governance for long-term stability and growth. The position will oversee budgeting, forecasting, financial reporting and ensure compliance with all relevant statutory and regulatory requirements, standards and practices as well as provide guidance in investment strategies and optimisation of the Corporation's capital structure.

Additionally, the role will lead the structuring, mobilisation, and optimisation of large-scale capital across domestic and international markets, positioning the Corporation as a bankable, investment-grade utility capable of attracting institutional capital, development finance, and strategic investors.

The Chief Financial Officer will play a central role in energy infrastructure financing across generation, transmission and distribution, including tariff modelling, financial sustainability frameworks, and long-term capital planning.

Position Requirements

Qualifications

- ACCA/CIMA/CA and work in professional accounting environment, and full membership of professional body.
- Additional qualifications in Finance, Investment Banking or Corporate Finance (CFA, MBA Finance or equivalent) is necessary requirement of the role.

Experience

- A minimum of fifteen (15) years post-qualification experience in a large commercial setting with complex financial accounting and reporting systems.
- Proven experience in statutory reporting.
- Extensive Capital Markets & Investment Banking experience.
- Proven track record in capital-intensive energy infrastructure projects, including structuring debt/equity financing.
- Proven experience in raising financing from DFIs, ECAs, commercial banks and capital markets.
- Experience in developing bankable power projects financial models and tariff frameworks.
- Proven track record in leading and managing a large Finance Division in infrastructure investments/management organisations, including the Procurement function at strategic level.
- Experience in engaging and managing regulators, lenders, government

and investors.

- Experience in financial restructuring or transformation programmes is an added advantage.
- Understanding internal and external controls and Audits.

Competencies

Key Competencies include, amongst others;

- Financial Management Reporting
- Public Reporting
- Leadership & Governance
- Commercial Orientation
- Strategy Orientation

Interested candidates should submit their applications through the link below and attach the following:

1. A cover letter addressed to The General Manager Human Resources, P O Box 48, Gaborone, indicating the position applied for.
2. A comprehensive and up-to-date Curriculum Vitae (CV).
3. Certified copies of certificates and
4. Their National Identity card (Omang) or Passport.
5. Certified professional membership certificate.
6. Valid drivers license.

The application link is <https://careers.bpc.bw/>

Important Applicant Information: Botswana Power Corporation is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Applicants are reminded that they are responsible for ensuring their qualifications are properly evaluated where required. Such educational certificates must be accompanied by an **Evaluation of Qualification Report** issued by the **Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA)**.

By applying for positions at Botswana Power Corporation, applicants consent to the lawful collection and processing of their personal data solely for recruitment and employment purposes, in accordance with the Botswana Data Protection Act, No. 18 of 2024. All information received will be treated with strict confidentiality and security and may be shared only with authorized internal departments and approved third-party service providers directly involved in the recruitment process.

NB: Applicants must clearly indicate the position applied for in their cover letter. Correspondence will be limited to shortlisted candidates only. If you do not hear from us within two (2) months after the closing date, please consider your application unsuccessful.

CLOSING DATE: 11th April 2026



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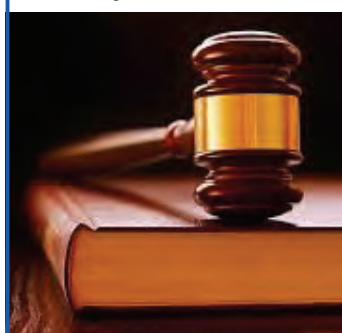
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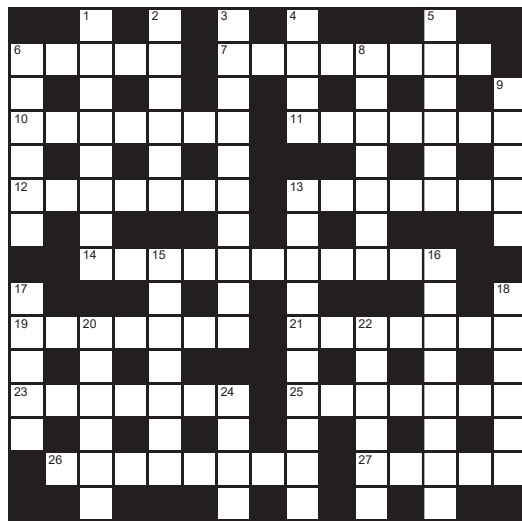
Puzzles

THE ORIGINAL SOUTH AFRICAN CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

JDE 524
by George Euvrard

- World class — and also from our perspective, not that of the UK or US
- Multilingual — every crossword has one Afrikaans (marked ^A) and one isiXhosa (marked ^X) word
- Fresh & unique — compiled the previous week especially for the *Mail & Guardian*

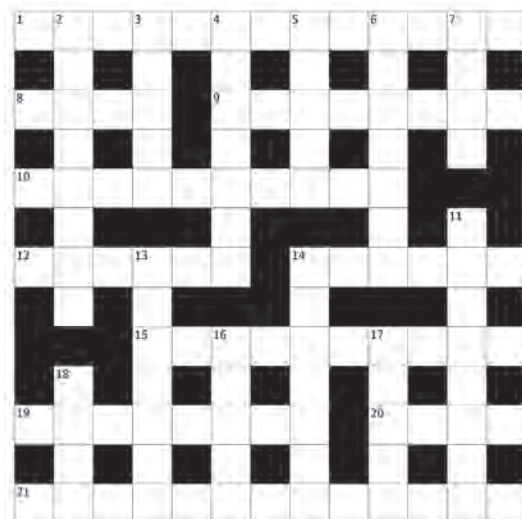
- Across**
- 6 Young dog and aged oddity — they're in metamorphosis? (5)
- 7 Parts with unhealthy pies and does exercises (8)
- 10 Die or leave succour to doctor (7)
- 11 Freezing transport return with nothing (7)
- 12 Baby gets a cape (7)
- 13 Make love to one gent in play (3,2,2)
- 14 Throw new perfume ingredient for action man (5,6)
- 19 Come into popular woman's glitzy heart (7)
- 21 Final concession in promising one money (7)
- 23 Put out by bar with "Length is height" (7)
- 25 Takes back tears about Cape Town (7)
- 26 Meet Olive — put everything into a spin (4,2,2)
- 27^X Not all grasp a zany township shop (5)
- Down**
- 1 Particular small muscle provided one change initially (8)
- 2 About to go or come back? (6)
- 3 Spoilsport knew tablet wasn't working (3,7)
- 4^A Very angry? Very — and that's ultimately disastrous (4)
- 5 Occasionally breed fast with ease (6)
- 6 Part of flower faces back in sunlit sips (6)
- 8 She goes around it in bedraggled robe, with resistance (7)
- 9 Bounce sound off bin, and go (5)
- 13 Beneficial because well done (4,3,3)



- 15 Country attacked another country, poured drones at first, left (7)
- 16 Nan is with low, crooked family member (3-2-3)
- 17 Cool pin-up, pretty on the outside (5)
- 18 She is a female entertainer i.e. shag is improper (6)
- 20 Arrogance at heart is assuming right (6)
- 22 Most delightful but taboo if First Couple swap places (6)
- 24 Expect to manage if cold changes to hot (4)

QUICK CROSSWORD

- Across**
- 1 Out of favour (2,3,8)
- 8 Europe's highest active volcano (4)
- 9 Sexual purity (8)
- 10 Stare superstitiously believed to cause harm (3,4,3)
- 12 Convulsions (6)
- 14 Biblical book — group escape from a hostile environment (6)
- 15 Court game (4,6)
- 19 Compelling (8)
- 20 Trickle — weakling (4)
- 21 Compassionate (6-7)
- Down**
- 2 No chance at all! (3,1,4)
- 3 Drag (5)
- 4 Starched white shirt fronts (7)
- 5 Solemn — burial place (5)
- 6 Very busy (2,3,2)
- 7 Drunks (4)
- 11 Runaway (8)
- 13 Wed (7)
- 14 Immoderate (7)
- 16 Composer of Der Freischütz, d. 1826 (5)
- 17 All-time low (5)
- 18 Burden (4)



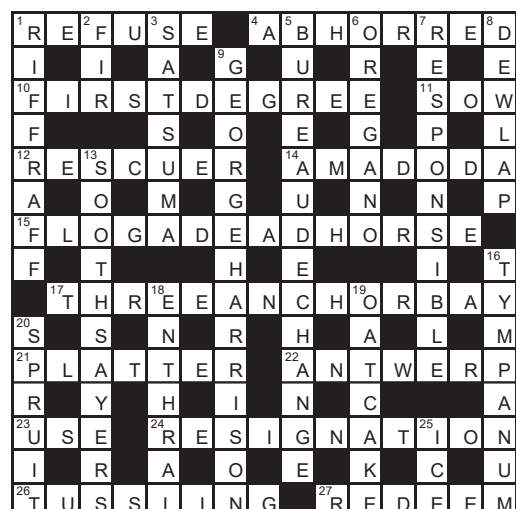
Quick Crossword courtesy of ©The Guardian 15 005

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

Quick Crossword 15 004

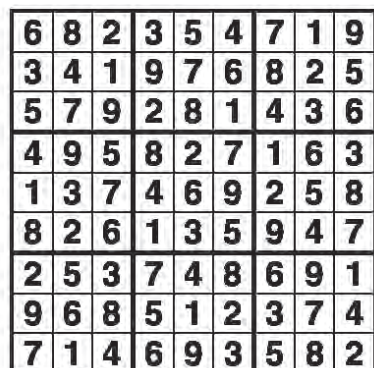


Cryptic Crossword JDE 523

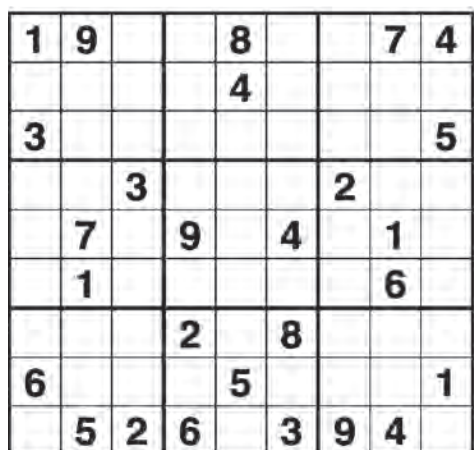


How to play Sudoku: Place a number from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION



SUDOKU



What's Up



African rhythm: Pele Pele is a feel-good groove built for the dance floor. Photo: Supplied

S'BO GYRE drops sultry 'Pele Pele' visuals

waSthenjwa Records has released the official music video for *Pele Pele*, a disco-kwaito infused dance track from entertainment specialist and musician S'BO GYRE. The single continues to define his emerging sound, Zulu pop rap, a blend of hip hop cadence, pop ease and distinctly South African rhythm. Produced by SiyaCee, the track leans into nostalgic pop textures, with shimmering disco elements, warm horns and 4buoyant kwaito

influences that echo the spirit of classic local acts. It's a feel-good groove built for the dance floor. The video matches that energy. Shot partly inside the historic vault of Johannesburg's Natal Bank Building, it pairs sultry choreography with sleek, stylised visuals. Directed by J-Word Audio and GYRE, the clip features a cameo from Mr NT and striking costume design by Natasha Kwinjo.

Relebogile Mabotja channels faith and memory

This Easter season, acclaimed South African artist Relebogile Mabotja returns with *Mmamagoai's Prayer*, a deeply personal medley of gospel favourites and spiritual hymns. Following her February release *Still Me — Live*, the new single sits at the emotional core of the project, weaving together songs like *Jehovah Re Tshepile Wena*, *Maatla Sona* and *Lion of Judah*. Inspired by her late grandmother, the medley revisits the sounds that shaped Mabotja's



earliest experiences of faith, family and storytelling. Anchored in nostalgia and reverence, the live recording carries a quiet intimacy, echoing the warmth of hymns once sung in the kitchen. For Mabotja, this is more than a release, it's a tribute, a moment of gratitude and a spiritual offering. Available across streaming platforms, *Mmamagoai's Prayer* is an invitation to reconnect with memory, music and belief.

'KiND' platform brings Kwaito legacy into focus

A new cultural platform is set to reignite South Africa's love affair with Kwaito. *KiND (Kwaito Is Not Dead)*, hosted by Sbu MaLawyer, launches on 1 April with Kwaito pioneer Joe Nina as its first guest. More than a podcast, *KiND* positions itself as a movement, blending storytelling, music and digital culture to reconnect audiences with the township-born genre

that defined youth identity in the '90s and 2000s. It bridges generations, inviting both those who lived Kwaito and those discovering it anew to engage with its roots. Through candid conversations, the platform explores Kwaito's origins, language and lasting influence on today's soundscape. With Joe Nina setting the tone, *KiND* opens as both archive and celebration, a space where nostalgia meets cultural preservation, asking a simple question: *Waar was jy?*



Bridging generations: With Joe Nina setting the tone, KiND is a space where nostalgia meets cultural preservation. Photo: Supplied

Friday

Kibo Ngowi

There's a version of *Project Hail Mary* that you might think you're getting when you walk into the cinema. A high-concept, hard science-fiction survival story in the mould of *The Martian*.

One man, alone in space, using intellect and ingenuity to stay alive against impossible odds. And to be fair, that film does exist here. But it's only part of the story.

What *Project Hail Mary* actually reveals itself to be is something far more disarming: a surprisingly warm, often funny and quietly emotional film about companionship, even in the most unlikely of circumstances.

Ryan Gosling stars as Ryland Grace, a middle-school science teacher and former molecular biologist who awakens aboard a spacecraft with no memory of who he is or how he got there.

It's a clever narrative device that allows the audience to piece together the stakes alongside him. As fragments of his memory begin to return, Grace learns that Earth is facing an existential threat tied to a mysterious organism affecting the Sun. His mission, it becomes clear, is humanity's last roll of the dice.

That premise alone would be enough to sustain a compelling sci-fi thriller. But directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller take the story in a direction that gives it a distinct personality.

Without veering into spoiler territory, what begins as a solitary survival narrative gradually evolves into something closer to a buddy comedy. Albeit one set light-years away from Earth.

The dynamic at the heart of that shift is easily the film's greatest strength. It injects humour, tension and genuine emotional weight into a story that might otherwise have felt clinically procedural.

There's a sense of curiosity and

Lost in space, found in connection

Project Hail Mary delivers spectacle and science but its real strength lies in its emotional core and an unlikely interstellar friendship

playfulness in how the film explores communication, trust and cooperation across fundamentally different forms of life. It's here that *Project Hail Mary* finds its soul.

Gosling, for his part, does a remarkable job carrying the film. For long stretches, he has little to work with beyond his own performance and the technical wizardry around him, yet he never lets the energy dip.

He leans into Grace's everyman qualities including the confusion, the fear and the occasional panic while still maintaining the kind of charm that has made him one of Hollywood's most bankable stars. It's a delicate balance and one he handles with ease.

The film also benefits from a strong supporting turn by Sandra Hüller as Eva Stratt, the no-nonsense government official orchestrating the mission back on Earth.

Hüller, best known for *Anatomy of a Fall*, brings a steely resolve to the role, grounding the film's more speculative elements with a sense of urgency and pragmatism. Her scenes provide a useful counterweight to the isolation of space, reminding us of

what's at stake.

Visually, the film makes a strong case for the big-screen experience. The scale of space is rendered with an impressive sense of grandeur and the design of the spacecraft and surrounding environments feels both imaginative and believable. It's the kind of film where the extra cost of an IMAX ticket doesn't feel like a luxury so much as a recommendation.

That said, *Project Hail Mary* isn't without its flaws. For all its strengths, the film does begin to overstay its welcome in the final stretch. It's not simply a matter of runtime. There are longer films that feel far more economical. The issue here is pacing.

The narrative reaches a natural conclusion point, only to continue unfolding through a series of extended epilogues that dilute some of the emotional impact built up earlier.

There are also moments where the science, while central to the film's identity, asks for a degree of suspension of disbelief.

For some viewers, that may prove distracting. But for others, it's a small price to pay for a story that is ulti-



mately more interested in hope than strict plausibility.

Because that's what lingers long after the credits roll. Beneath the equations, the astrophysics and the ticking clock, *Project Hail Mary* is a film about connection.

About the idea that even in the vast emptiness of space, cooperation and empathy can bridge seemingly insurmountable divides.

In an era where blockbuster film-

making often leans heavily on familiar intellectual property, there's something refreshing about a film like this. It's ambitious, original in spirit and willing to take tonal risks. It doesn't get everything right, but it gets enough right to make the journey worthwhile.

If you're willing to embrace this blend of science, sentiment and spectacle, *Project Hail Mary* is well worth the trip.

Lesego Chopape

Easter Week in South Africa is unlike anywhere else. It arrives softly, almost imperceptibly but insists on being noticed. The roads fill up, the air smells of braais and spring and the streets hum with the quiet energy of long weekends.

Petrol prices are capped for now so everyone is calculating, planning, plotting short trips that feel like mini-adventures. It's the week when time seems both slower and heavier, when life demands pause and indulgence in equal measure. If you're looking for a guide to navigating Easter without losing your mind or your chocolate, here are five things to keep in mind:

1. Food is sacred, indulgence mandatory

Easter in South Africa comes with its own flavour soundtrack: sizzling boerewors on the braai, the aroma of potato salad mingling with grilled meat and chocolate eggs hidden in plain sight like treasures. Hot cross buns appear on every corner and nobody judges if you eat three in one sitting.

This week is about celebrating abundance, not restriction. Braai with friends, host a family lunch or sneak a solo feast at home. If you're lucky, someone will bring a pavlova. And yes, sharing is optional though secretly, we all enjoy watching the

From braais to short trips and chocolate heists, here's how to survive and savour Easter Week



struggle over the last chocolate egg. Easter food isn't just nourishment; it's ritual, comfort and a reason to laugh at how much we love to eat.

2. Dress like you mean it (even if you don't leave the house)

Easter isn't just about what you eat; it's about how you present yourself to the week. In South Africa, long weekends are a chance to show up, not for anyone else but for yourself. Pastels, crisp linens, sneakers or a dress that sways in the wind.

Even if your plans are a simple walk in the neighbourhood or a drive to a nearby nature reserve, dressing with intention transforms the ordinary into something memorable. A good outfit says, "I acknowledge this moment, I am here, I am part of it." And yes, Instagram may benefit but the real reward is feeling good in your own skin.

3. Skincare and make-up are essential survival tools

Sun, wind, and braai smoke are a dangerous trio for the skin. Easter Week is an official invitation to care for yourself: SPF is mandatory, face mist is non-negotiable and indulging in a little extra hydration is perfectly acceptable.

Make-up can be fun but it's more than aesthetics; it's ritual. A swipe of colour, a little shimmer, a bold lip, these are small acts of celebration, tiny rebellions against the mundanity of everyday life. Easter reminds us that self-care doesn't have to be complicated, even a simple routine can feel like luxury when done with intention.

4. Short trips are the real treasures

Long road trips may be off the table with capped petrol and traffic queues that feel eternal but short,

carefully chosen escapes can feel like full-blown adventures. A drive to the coast, a hike in a nearby reserve or a picnic in a quiet corner of your town can feel like discovering a new world.

South Africa is full of these hidden pockets: riverbanks where the water runs clear, little-known nature trails, secret picnic spots and tiny towns with coffee shops that smell like nostalgia. Pack snacks, your favourite playlist and a few friends or family. Even a few hours away from the city streets can recalibrate your mind and remind you that the world is bigger than the daily grind.

5. Rest is not optional

Easter is a week about resurrection, renewal and rhythm. Yet in the rush to celebrate, it's easy to forget the simplest act of all: rest. Nap. Read. Scroll mindfully. Call your auntie. Sit in silence with a cup of tea. Slow down intentionally.

South Africa never stops moving, traffic, WhatsApp messages, work deadlines and Easter is one of the rare moments that asks you to pause. Rest is radical. Rest is medicine. Rest is part of the celebration. Let the body and mind take the break they deserve, even if it's only for a few stolen hours.

6. Chocolate is serious business

We can't talk about Easter in South Africa without acknowledging the

true holiday hero: chocolate. From milk to dark, from eggs to bunnies, chocolate is both ritual and reward. Hide it cleverly, share sparingly or hoard it like a seasoned strategist. Chocolate during Easter isn't indulgence; it's cultural participation.

7. Make memories, not just plans

Easter is about connection. The table, the fire, the shared meal, the laughter over burnt wors or too-salty potato salad, these are the moments that last.

Take pictures if you want but don't let the lens replace the memory. Talk, joke, argue gently, hug. The week isn't about productivity; it's about presence.

8. Small acts of joy count

Sometimes, Easter isn't grand gestures but small, quiet acts: lighting a candle, swapping playlists with friends, adding a dash of colour to your living room or even taking a solo walk to watch the sun set. These small acts are the quiet celebrations of life and reminder that renewal often comes in subtle ways.

Easter Week in South Africa is a patchwork of ritual and indulgence, of reflection and play, of food, fashion, sun and wind.

It's about chocolate and braais, pastels and sunscreen, short trips and long naps. Mostly, it's a reminder that even small gestures, sharing a meal, taking a drive, resting intentionally can transform ordinary days into something meaningful.

So this Easter, eat well, dress intentionally, protect your skin, plan short adventures and rest like the week depends on it, because it does.

The God Edition

Friday

A journey through the Abrahamic Family House becomes a quiet reckoning with centuries of conflict and the uncertainty of the present moment

Kibo Ngowi

Last year I visited Abu Dhabi and apart from the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the place I most wanted to see was the Abrahamic Family House.

The concept of a compound containing places of worship from all three Abrahamic religions standing side by side fascinated me.

I was raised attending the Catholic Church, so Sunday Mass and Saturday catechism classes, working toward my first Holy Communion and later my confirmation, were fixtures of my childhood. But I had never set foot inside a mosque or a synagogue.

It was a typically hot day in April when I visited. The heavy humid heat of the Abu Dhabi spring can climb to more than 30°C, so it was a relief to be greeted by the cool air of the visitor pavilion.

The coolness extended into the houses of worship, thanks to the inspired design of British-Ghanaian architect David Adjaye.

The three buildings are of equal stature, size and materiality, deliberately eliminating any sense of hierarchy. They border an elevated landscaped garden, a shared space for gathering and connection.

Each structure is oriented according to its tradition: the mosque towards Mecca, the church towards the East and the synagogue towards Jerusalem.

The structures are different but the human impulse behind them feels the same.

The desire to search for meaning beyond our finite existence and to commune with others who share that search.

I found it especially compelling that the spaces are not just symbolic or aesthetic; they're active, regularly used places of worship.

According to its website, the Abrahamic Family House "is dedicated to the pursuit of peaceful coexistence for generations to come", a place that seeks to bridge our common humanity through dialogue and the practice of faith.

But as I explored the compound, I couldn't help thinking about the sheer amount of conflict the same faiths have been used to justify in the



Shared space of faith: The entrance to the Abrahamic Family House. Photo: Kibo Ngowi

A house of peace in a region at war

region. And I found myself questioning: Is it really the religions themselves? Or is that too convenient an answer?

History offers easy examples. The Crusades, centuries-old campaigns waged in the name of Christianity to reclaim Jerusalem, left cities burnt and populations massacred. Later, empires rose and fell across this same geography, from Ottoman

The three buildings are of equal stature, size and materiality, deliberately eliminating any sense of hierarchy

expansions into Europe to colonial powers carving up the Middle East, with little regard for the people who lived there. Religion was always present but rarely alone.

Then there's the present, which feels less like history and more like a wound that refuses to close.

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is often framed as ancient and inevitable but so much

of it is rooted in the 20th century: the collapse of empires, the creation of Israel in 1948 and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

Since then, cycles of war, occupation and resistance have hardened into something that feels permanent.

In Gaza, even in moments that are supposed to resemble ceasefire, airstrikes and shortages persist and civilians continue to bear the brunt of a conflict they did not choose. More than 680 Palestinians have been killed in recent months alone despite a declared truce, as

The God Edition

humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate.

Again I wonder: Is this religion? Or is it land, borders and the machinery of the modern state?

Because layered over the conflict is something even larger.

In February 2026, the US and Israel launched a massive coordinated assault on Iran, striking military infrastructure and leadership in what quickly escalated into a regional war. In just the opening phase, nearly 900 strikes were carried out, killing more than a thousand people and triggering waves of retaliation across the Middle East.

Iran responded with missiles and drones. The conflict has since drawn in other actors, from Hezbollah in Lebanon to Houthi forces in Yemen, threatening global trade routes and widening the scope of destruction.

It's tempting to see this, too, through a religious lens. Israel versus an Islamic republic, alliances framed in civilisational terms. But the closer you look, the more familiar the underlying motives appear: Western hubris, regional dominance and political gamesmanship.

Maybe religion is less the cause and more the language through which older, more human instincts are expressed. Power. Fear. Territory. The need to belong and the equally strong need to define who does not.

Which is it? A force for division or a framework for coexistence?

Standing in that carefully balanced space in Abu Dhabi, it was possible, if only for a moment, to believe in the framework for coexistence. But outside its walls, the evidence feels overwhelming in the other direction. Cities reduced to rubble. Families displaced.

A death toll that continues to climb across multiple fronts, numbers that risk becoming abstract precisely because they're so large.

And that's where the uncertainty settles in. Not in the past, where we can trace causes and assign meaning but in the present where bombs are falling, where alliances harden and where the line between faith and power becomes almost impossible to distinguish.

Maybe that is the uncomfortable truth the Abrahamic Family House cannot resolve, only quietly resist: that the same human capacity that builds spaces of coexistence is also capable of sustaining conflict.

And for now, both realities exist side by side.



Facing East: St Francis Church at the Abrahamic Family House.



Facing Jerusalem: Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue at the Abrahamic Family House.



Facing Mecca: Eminence Ahmed El-Tayeb Mosque at the Abrahamic Family House. Photos: Kibo Ngowi

Friday



Cultural platform: Mbalenhle Ntuli, the commissioning editor for unscripted content. Photo: Mzansi Magic

The women behind the ceremony

A heartfelt reality series, 'Mgidi Moms' explores Xhosa initiation through mothers' eyes, celebrating culture, family and the emotional journey into manhood

Rolland Simpi Motaung

A cultural extravagance is one way to describe Mzansi Magic's new coming-of-age show, *Mgidi Moms*.

A first-of-its-kind, the original reality series explores the formative journey of Xhosa boys as they transition into manhood through initiation, seen through the eyes of the mothers or *zibazana* who support them every step of the way.

Similar to the Jewish Bar or Bat Mitzvah, the Hispanic Quinceañera and the American Sweet 16, *Mgidi* is a Xhosa homecoming celebration. It honours the return of young men who have completed *uwaluko*, the traditional rite of passage into manhood.

Like these other cultural milestones, it is a joyful event that brings together family and community through music, dancing and feasting, as the initiates — now known as *amakrwala* — are welcomed back as adults.

"We need to go back to celebrating and being happy in the midst of everything that's going on," said Mbalenhle Ntuli, the commissioning editor for unscripted content at Mzansi Magic.

Speaking on the sidelines of the show's launch at MultiChoice in Johannesburg last week, Ntuli said that when she first experienced the cultural event, she realised it was something the country needed.

"We can't keep watching all the

bad news and ignore something like this. So, for us as a channel, it was important to give that platform, to say: 'Here's something beautiful for everyone to see and experience'."

A mother's love for her son

During the show's initial call-to-action trailer late last year, some viewers assumed it would reveal sacred practices of the Xhosa initiation processes.

While the show offers some educational elements on Xhosa culture, it is not an exposé of the rituals' intricacies, as portrayed in the South African drama film *Inxeba: The Wound* for instance.

Mgidi Moms is centred on the love between mother and son. In each episode we follow the emotional journey of mothers who feel anxious and fearful about their sons undergoing a significant traditional rite of passage. Viewers not only witness the unconditional love but also the great lengths mothers go to in preparing for their sons' homecoming.

For instance, in one episode a mother budgets more than R500 000 for the *Mgidi* event.

This includes R100k worth of meat entailing two cows, 20 sheep and a couple of pigs for good measure. Unlike the channel's previous shows like *Our Perfect Wedding* or *Date My Family*, the amounts of money spent were not overtly beamed on the screen.

Ntuli said the choice to highlight the financial expenditure was not intended to emphasise the amount of money but rather to showcase the commitment and dedication a parent makes towards their child's celebration.

The series showcases a diverse range of mothers. Some go all out to mark the occasion with elaborate celebrations, while others choose a more traditional and understated approach.

"It was just to show that a mother will go to great lengths to give her all. For this particular episode her all was R600 000 and somebody else's all maybe R50 000 or R20 000 but that is your all that you are giving towards your son."

As such, the focus is on the act of giving one's all, rather than the specific monetary value or comparison of amounts spent.

Family and festivities

Hosted by Moshe Ndiki, the 2020 DStv Viewers' Choice Award winner for Best TV Presenter, the show is also about family and reconnecting communities.

The host's involvement in most aspects of the *Mgidi* preparation is rather deep compared to other shows of this kind. In one scene, for instance, Ndiki was part of an



Commitment: A mother's love in *Mgidi Moms*. Photo: Mzansi Magic



Moshe Ndiki, host of *Mgidi Moms*. Photo: Mzansi Magic

intimate family meeting. Initially I thought the host's immersion in family activities was the producer's or director's brief.

As a Xhosa man who has gone through the same rite of passage, Ndiki said he understood the tradition and milestone.

"It wasn't the director's call. I deeply understand this tradition, hence I ended up fitting in like an uncle or older brother. Sometimes I am also the *zibazana's* younger sister or maid of honour. So, there was no way I could not help but feel welcomed by the families."

Ndiki's family-oriented nature and respectful approach therefore helps evaluate the show's relatability.

Arriving as a genuine person rather than a celebrity, Ndiki said that had led to the families feeling comfortable and inclusive. As a host, he felt special when asked to take part in certain customs; the families attributed that to how he treated them.

"I love closeness. I love the close-knit unit that is family. I am one of those people who will literally adapt anywhere I go."

In the previous months leading to

the premiere of the show, there were some prejudiced reactions on social media, including questions about having a gay man as a host.

Ndiki said that in spite of his sexuality, he too went through the same rite of passage as others.

However, he acknowledged that perhaps many cynics were people who had not experienced the tradition and festivity.

"I think the negativity comes from not knowing. It's just a matter of fear of the unknown because viewers don't know what is going to be shown."

Instead of fearing what they would see, Ndiki encouraged viewers to watch and witness the beauty of the cultural celebration.

Ndiki expressed pride that he was involved in telling such stories, contributing to a historical record of culture.

His desired takeaway for viewers is the understanding that the show is a preservation, celebration and honour of culture.

Coming-of-age celebrations mark the transition from childhood to adulthood through cultural, religious or traditional rituals.

The Xhosa culture is no different. Such cultural practices are typically headed by the men in the family and surrounding communities in the villages. The homecoming celebrations, however, are a chance for the son's mother to go all out.

Mgidi Moms is a heartfelt celebration of identity, tradition and community highlighting the vital role of mothers in preparing, honouring and celebrating their son's milestone.

Mgidi Moms premiered on 29 March on DStv Mzansi Magic Channel 161, with new episodes airing every Sunday at 6pm.



Homecoming: Celebrations scenes from *Mgidi Moms*. Photo: Mzansi Magic

Goodman Gallery at 60

Kibo Ngowi

On a weekday afternoon in Johannesburg, the doors of Goodman Gallery are open in the way they have been for decades. Inside, a new exhibition by Hank Willis Thomas fills the space. For Liza Essers, it is a familiar kind of milestone.

"He's actually the first artist that I took on when I took over the gallery," she tells me. "We've been working together for about 17 years."

There's something fitting about that continuity. As Goodman Gallery approaches its 60th anniversary, the story is not only about longevity but about the accumulation of relationships, decisions and positions taken over time. These relationships have shaped what the gallery has become six decades into its existence.

Founded in 1966, amid apartheid, Goodman Gallery opened at a time when South Africa's cultural institutions were largely segregated.

From the beginning, it refused that logic, exhibiting artists of all races and creating a space that challenged the exclusions of the moment. Over time, it became associated with artists who would come to define 20th-century South African art.

The history anchors the gallery today, even as its footprint has expanded far beyond Johannesburg.

For Essers, who took over the gallery in 2008, the legacy was something she encountered first as an outsider. "It was this amazing space to imagine, a space to dream, a space to learn, a space to grow," she says, recalling her early visits.

"Every time I walked into the gallery and had the privilege of seeing a show, it transformed me in that moment in a way that I had never experienced from anything else."

What followed was less a gradual extension of that experience outward. If the gallery had once been primarily focused on South African artists, Essers' tenure has been marked by a deliberate broadening of its scope geographically, intellectually and commercially.

Today, Goodman Gallery operates across Johannesburg, Cape Town, London and New York. Its programme includes artists from across Africa and the wider Global South, alongside established international figures. The shift, however, was not simply about scale.

"It was about opening the conversations," Essers says. "Allowing the space to open for broader conversations."

The conversations have been structured, in part, through three long-running curatorial initiatives that shape the gallery's programming.

The first, Working Title, functions as an incubator for emerging artists, offering a platform without necessarily folding them into the gallery's commercial roster. It is, in many ways, an attempt to preserve something of the gallery's earlier identity as a cultural institution rather than a purely market-driven entity.

"It's a space for young artists to maybe have their first shows and to springboard them into the international art world," Essers explains.

The results are visible in the trajectories of artists who have passed through the programme, some of whom have gone on to exhibit internationally, including at major biennales. The emphasis here is less on immediate return and more on long-term development; a slower, less predictable kind of investment.



Facilitating dialogue: The Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg.

Liza Essers reflects on Goodman Gallery's legacy, its global ambitions and the challenges of sustaining a space for art, conversation and community



Liza Essers. Photo: Anthea Pokroy



Shared narrative: The Goodman Gallery in Cape Town.

If Working Title looks forward, the South South initiative looks laterally, connecting artists and ideas across regions that share post-colonial histories. "It's been my life's ambition to open the conversation of the Global South," Essers says.

"Not just the South African art world or the Brazilian art world but to really think about the broader conversation around shared histories and narratives."

The third initiative, In Context, turns inward, focusing on the dynamics of place. How identity, geography and history intersect.

Previous exhibitions under this banner have explored themes of diaspora, belonging and race, often through collaborations that extend beyond a single location.

Together, the strands form the intellectual backbone of the gallery's programme but they also reflect a broader tension that has defined Goodman's evolution: how to expand globally without losing a sense of grounding.

"I don't know what an African perspective is per se," Essers says. "But I think it's a broader global majority perspective."

That framing is deliberate. While Johannesburg remains the gallery's base, its programme resists being confined to a single national identity. Instead, it situates itself within a network of artists and ideas that move across borders, shaped by shared conditions rather than fixed geographies. The expansion into international markets, including London in 2019 and New York in 2023, has been part of that strategy but it has not been without risk.

"It's very risky, financially. But it felt important that we brought our artists into the main conversation of where art history is being written."

That "main conversation" tends to be centred on Western institutions, a reality that continues to shape the global art market. For galleries based in the Global South, participation often requires a physical presence in those centres, even as they seek to challenge their dominance.

Goodman's approach has been gradual, growing "as we've been able to self-grow", as Essers puts it, rather than through rapid expansion.

If the gallery's outward growth has been measured, its internal relationships have been notably enduring. Alongside newer names, it maintains long-standing ties with artists such as William Kentridge and Sue Williamson, as well as the estates of figures like David Koloane and David Goldblatt.

"They really are partnerships," Essers says. "Long-term relationships and friendships."

Sustaining the relationships involves building careers over time, connecting artists with curators, institutions and collectors, ensuring that their work enters public collections and critical discourse.

"It takes a big team, a lot of effort from the gallery to push those careers forward," she says.

That work, largely invisible to the public, is what underpins the gallery's presence in major exhibitions and museum shows across the world. At any given moment, multiple Goodman artists are exhibiting internationally, a reflection of both the gallery's reach and its network.

Yet the gallery's role is not only to promote artists but to hold a certain kind of space. One that has, at times, placed it in tension with political and social pressures. In 2012, Goodman Gallery resisted calls to censor an

exhibition, a moment that Essers frames less as a dramatic stand and more as an application of principle.

"We do not believe in censorship," she says. "Freedom of expression is fundamental to our constitution and for a democracy."

The position extends to the artists. Whether engaging with political issues directly or indirectly, they are afforded the autonomy to take their own stances, even when the positions are contested. "The gallery is not a political platform," Essers notes. "But we provide the space for many different perspectives."

This distinction, between platform and position, is central to how Goodman navigates its role in relation to social change. Rather than advocating a singular viewpoint, it facilitates dialogue through exhibitions, talks and collaborations.

Over the years, that has included conversations on topics ranging from migration and identity to environmental concerns and public health.

Parallel to this, the gallery and its artists have supported various social initiatives, including healthcare projects and infrastructure development in underserved communities.

The efforts, while not always visible within the gallery walls, form part of a broader understanding of what it means to operate as a cultural institution in South Africa.

As Goodman approaches its 60th anniversary, the multiple threads including historical, commercial and cultural are being drawn together through a series of projects that look both backward and forward.

An archival timeline, set to launch this year, will map key moments in the gallery's history, offering a way to navigate six decades of exhibitions, collaborations and milestones.

A new digital platform reflects a shift in how audiences engage with art.

"The art world has shifted significantly," Essers says. "People are consuming things very quickly, online."

The challenge, she suggests, is to create digital spaces that retain some of the depth and immersion of physical exhibitions. To "bring back the space to imagine and the space to think" even through a screen.

At the centre of the anniversary programme will be a major exhibition later in the year, spanning the gallery's various locations. Details are limited for now but Essers describes its guiding idea simply: A gathering. "It's about coming together," she says. "Shared voices, shared perspectives."

It's a modest description for what is, in effect, a summation of the gallery's trajectory from a single space in apartheid-era Johannesburg to a networked institution operating across continents. And yet, for all the expansion, the core ambition remains relatively unchanged.

"I hope that we will continue to be a site of assembly, a catalyst, a collaborator," Essers says. "A socially conscious platform."

In a cultural landscape increasingly shaped by speed, scale and visibility, that kind of continuity can be difficult to maintain. Institutions evolve, markets shift, audiences change. What remains are the choices made along the way about what to show, who to support, when to speak and when to hold space.

Sixty years in, Goodman Gallery's history is not a single narrative but a collection of these decisions, layered over time. Some were shaped by circumstance, others by conviction. Together, they form a record not only of an institution but of the contexts in which it has operated. And the conversations it has chosen to enter.

The anniversary, then, is less a conclusion than a pause. A moment to look back, to take stock and to consider what it means to continue.

Friday

'I feel the ancestors'

– Fatoumata Diawara

Blending Malian heritage with high-energy pop, Fatoumata Diawara used the CTIJF stage to honour her roots and confront female genital mutilation, proving that heritage and modern activism are inseparable

Busi Lethole

It's a warm Saturday afternoon in Cape Town. Music lovers are beginning to trickle into the CTICC hosting the Cape Town International Jazz Festival (CTIJF).

I'm in the media centre, excited for my next interview of the day.

In walks Fatoumata Diawara, the artist I have been looking forward to speaking to.

She immediately greets everyone, then turns to look at me and says: "I love your hair." I'm donning my Afro curled-wig. Surprised with a big smile on my face, I respond with a "Thank you!"

As the Malian singer-songwriter and actress takes a seat, I notice the four traditional white dots painted down her forehead. She is wearing traditional beads around her neck. I notice the white bead headpiece beginning from her forehead to the top of her head.

I notice that her hands and fingers are a different colour than that of her skin tone. They seem to be painted in a brownish/maroonish colour.

Diawara is in tune with her Malian heritage, so she is known to use artistic, visual and symbolic elements on her body.

The artist deeply connects with ancestral energy. This is evident in the type of music she makes – one that blends traditional Malian sounds.

Arriving in South Africa for the second time, the musician felt a powerful ancestral presence. As she set out to perform for the first time in the Mother City at CTIJF, for her, the ancestral energy was palpable.

"Being here, the energy is so strong in a good way. And the first thing that I really feel. It's my second time now in South Africa, I feel the ancestors. That's strange. In the hotel, I feel a lot of dead people," she says.

"Sorry for telling you about the crazy part of my life," she giggles.

"It happens to me only in South Africa, not even in Mali, so strongly, I don't know. When I get out, I wonder if people in here feel the same energy. That's my questioning.

"It's like I look at people and say: 'Okay, they know about this, that it's so strong, you know, and that the ancestors are still with us, even if they're from a different period of time.' And that's one thing.

"And the second thing is that I feel people are very calm and very peaceful. You see a lot of love coming from them. You know, you get this connection with people that is incredible. I feel at home."



Powerful presence: Fatoumata Diawara performing at the CTIJF 2026. Photo: Armand Hough

Remaining rooted in her African musical identity while speaking to an international audience is effortless for the artist. She makes the balance look easy, maintaining a fierce loyalty to her Malian roots.

"How to be still in touch with our connection, between us and our ancestors and our roots? It's quite easy in Mali because there we have many artists before me, like Toumani Diabaté, Salif Keita, Ali Farka Touré," she explains.

"They won the Grammy as traditional artists. So for us, they are our example. We don't see other people as an example. So we start with the experience first, then we open the same experience to the rest of the world.

"But we can always combine the traditional with the modern, you know, contemporary music. But we need to keep their roots because in

Mali it's the way it is and we grew up like that. They did it all. They've been famous for being themselves.

"For us, it's totally normal to sing in our native language. There is no doubt. For me, it's normal because the native language has a lot of energies that the world needs to feel.

"Every word that I will be speaking tonight to my audience, for sure, it will take them, their soul to another place. And that's what music's about also. The diversity. The native language is stronger and beautiful."

During her energetic performance at the CTIJF, filled with high-notes and dancing, Diawara honoured her ancestral roots.

She donned a mask which she typically wears when performing. The mask-wearing segment of her performances has become a much-anticipated moment for

her fans. The singer wears the mask towards the end of her performances, specifically the Gouro Zaouli mask from Côte d'Ivoire, as a way to embody her African artistic expression while celebrating ancestral history.

The mask also serves as a way in which she merges West African tradition with an electric, contemporary edge.

At the heart of Diawara's craft is a commitment to storytelling and activism.

She is intentional in using her platform as a form of activism and her work often carries strong messages around identity, women's rights and social justice.

Diawara is a prominent activist against female genital mutilation (FGM). Having survived the procedure herself as a child, she uses her

music to shed light on the inhumane and harmful practice.

"Being this way is like ... that was normal. When I started to sing, I decided to share my own story," she says. "And it wasn't that easy. It's never easy. You live with your past. It will stay. You adapt yourself on how to live with it.

"My aim ... the fact that I was an actress at the beginning and when I started to introduce myself to the music industry, I said: 'Okay, you come with your truth, then you will save time. Don't try to pretend. Be yourself. Then you will catch up with people right away.' And the best way for me to be myself was to open my spirit to the people."

The musician addresses the harms of FGM in her music. Her song *Sete* and its accompanying video serve as a stark, necessary indictment of FGM, emphasising her belief that breaking the silence is the first step towards healing and reform.

For Diawara, storytelling is not just an artistic choice but a lifelong process of reckoning. She speaks about her experiences with a quiet resolve, framing them as fragments of a much larger narrative unfolding.

"The best way was to tell my little experience as a woman from Africa coming from a very strong tradition and how I could struggle," she says, situating her journey alongside those of other FGM survivors.

It is not a story she treats as finite or resolved but one that continues to evolve in real time. "Like tonight, I'm still fighting ... It's like telling my story. It's gonna be forever because every year is a new story to share."

She likens this process to writing a book. Each performance, each song adding another page. Through that lens, her music becomes both archive and testimony, a space where personal memory meets collective experience.

When she turns to the issue of FGM, her tone sharpens. She challenges the framing of the practice as inherently African, pushing back against narratives that obscure its complexity and origins. For Diawara, confronting FGM through music is not optional; it's a responsibility.

"Those kinds of sensitisations ... through the music, I think it is our duty to bring the change," she says, positioning art as both a cultural mirror and a tool for reform.

That sense of purpose extends to how she understands music. For Diawara, it exists far beyond entertainment. It is spiritual, communal and deeply political. She speaks of it as "the voice of God", a universal language capable of carrying difficult truths across borders and generations.

In her view, the weight of the stories she tells is not an act of complaint but of affirmation. By sharing them, she hopes to reframe how African narratives are understood, not as deficit but as depth and richness. "We are not poor people ... we are even too rich," she says, reframing struggle within a broader context of cultural abundance.

Ultimately, her work circles back to a call for dialogue. One that is both introspective and collective. She advocates for a careful balance: preserving what is meaningful within tradition while interrogating what is harmful.

"It's good to keep some stuff ... the respect between each other and many things that our ancestors have been building for us," she reflects.

She is equally clear about what must be left behind. Practices such as FGM, violence against women and arranged marriages, she insists, have no place in the future she is helping to shape.

"Those kinds of things that our generation doesn't name," she says. "We don't need those things."

Friday

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Fatoumata Diawara bridges **tradition** and tomorrow

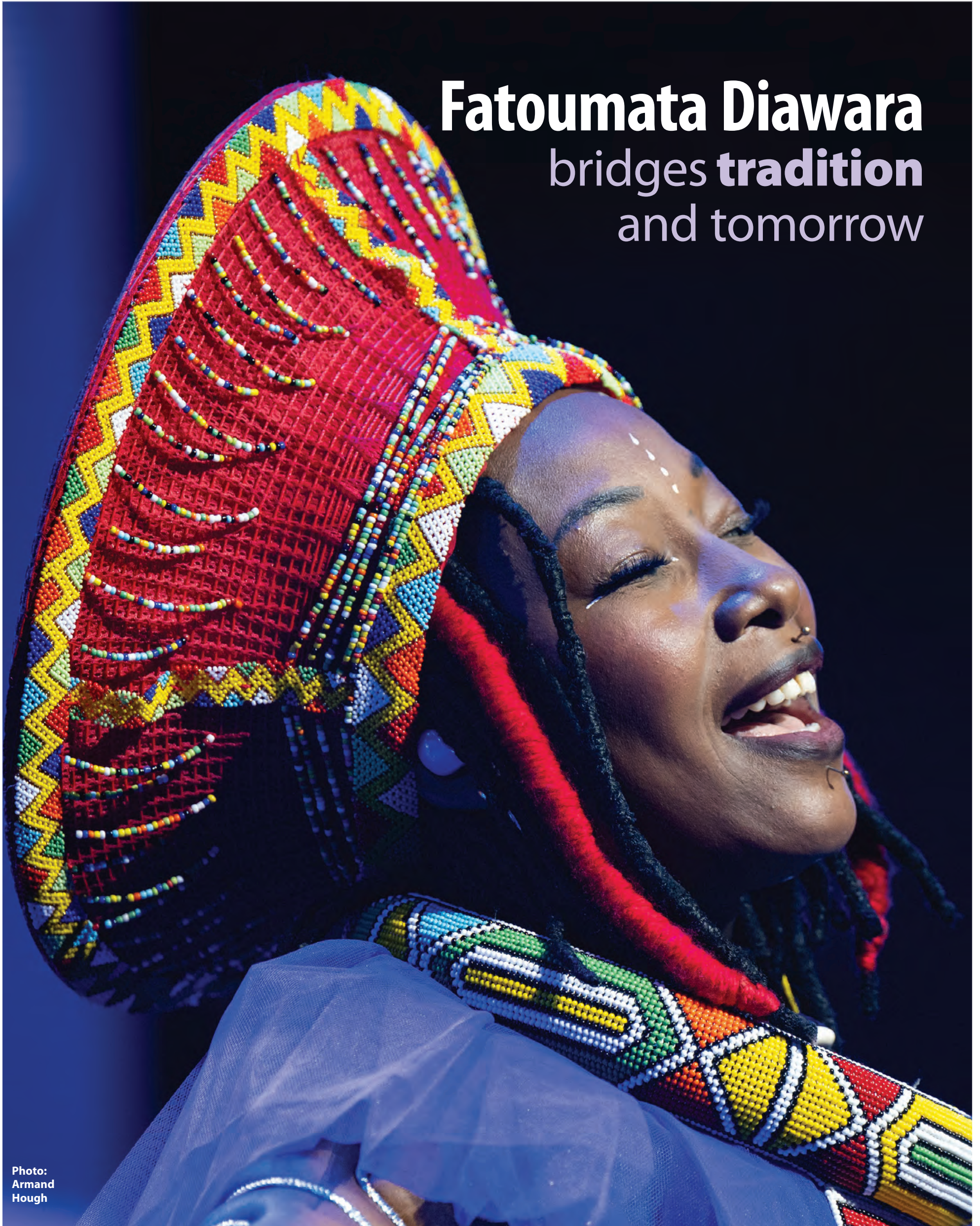


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