

The Continent

with **Mail & Guardian**

**The country
where Covid
doesn't exist.**

**But Tanzania's doctors
tell a different story**





Inside:

- **A Nigerian** is set for one of the world's biggest jobs (p5)
- **Warlords on trial:** Dominic Ongwen (p7) and Gibril Massaquoi (p8)
- **Welcome to...Gaborone!** All hustle, no bustle (p19)
- **Comment:** The AU's sexual harassment problem (p30)
- **Not OK, computer:** Twitter vs *The Continent* (p35)

Cover story: Wakati Rais Magufuli anaaminisha watu kwamba Tanzania haina Corona, waombolezaji, wanaozika ndugu zao, viongozi wa dini makini na madaktari wanasema ipo (p13)

Tanzania has zero cases of Covid-19. Officially, that is. Unofficially, it's a very different story. We report from Dar es Salaam (p9), along with an op-ed from opposition leader Zitto Kabwe (p17)

The Week in Numbers



13.5mm

The length of the body of the male *Brookesia nana*, a species of nano-chameleon that was only recently discovered in Madagascar. It is the smallest reptile on earth.

5,492,525

The number of 60-kilogram bags of coffee exported by Uganda in 2020 – a 22% increase on the previous year's exports, made possible by conducive weather conditions. The crop is one of the country's primary exports, earning Uganda about \$515.94-million last year alone.

4

The number of former military commanders nominated by Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari for prestigious ambassadorial positions abroad. According to lawyers quoted in Nigeria's *Premium Times*, their diplomatic status would shield them from prosecution by the International Criminal Court.

50,000

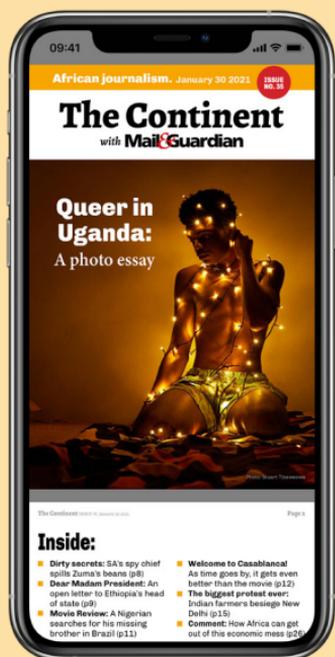
The number of civilians killed in Ethiopia's civil war in the Tigray region. That's according to an estimate from three Tigrayan opposition groups. The government says that casualties are much lower, but it is impossible to verify as journalists and humanitarian workers have been denied access to the conflict zone since the war began in November last year.

63 kilograms

The weight of rhino horns seized by police at Johannesburg's international airport on Thursday. The shipment was labelled "HP cartridges" but an X-ray revealed its true contents. The horns were destined for Malaysia, and are worth about \$3.5-million. This is the fourth such seizure at the airport since July. All trade in rhino horn is illegal.

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World



Okonjo-Iweala set for historic WTO appointment

Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is set to become both the first African and the first woman director-general of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) after her rival for the role, South Korean trade minister Yoo Myung-hee, dropped out of the race on Friday.

South Korea's trade ministry said in a statement that Yoo had consulted with the United States – her main backer – and other “major” countries and decided to “renounce her candidacy.”

The director-general of the global trade

regulator is appointed by the consensus of its 164-member nations. Okonjo-Iweala had the backing of the European Union, China and many African nations, but the former finance minister's appointment was vetoed by the Trump administration, which had been at loggerheads with the WTO. But with Yoo's withdrawal and the imminent appointment of a new US trade representative, Okonjo-Iweala's appointment is expected to be confirmed soon. The next meeting of the WTO's general council is on March 1 and 2. ■

Zimbabwe

‘Dem looters’ targeted on two fronts

Kudzai Mashininga

It’s been a bad week for senior politicians in Zimbabwe, who have been the butt of a social media stunt gone viral.

In *Dem Loot*, the journalist Hopewell Chin’ono – who has been arrested on multiple occasions after criticising the government – sings about the corruption that is allegedly rampant within the political class, to a reggae dance-hall beat.

Hospitals, no medication, dem loot / Ghetto youths no job, dem loot / No water to drink in townships, dem loot / Dem loot, dem loot, dem look, Lord have mercy.

The song has taken on a life of its own on social media with the #DemLootChallenge, with Zimbabweans videoing themselves dancing to the song or making their own versions.

“It’s the power of music as a tool and medium to deliver messages that relate to people and livelihood,” said music critic Benjamin Nyandoro, explaining the song’s impact.

But whereas Chin’ono’s song targeted the ruling elite en masse, an intervention from the British government had very

specific targets. The UK slapped sanctions on four senior officials, including state security minister Owen Ncube; spy chief Isaac Moyo; commander of the Presidential Guard Anselem Sanyatwe; and police commissioner Godwin Matanga.

This was for their alleged role in “a state-sponsored crackdown against protests in January 2019 that resulted in the deaths of 17 Zimbabweans and post-election violence in August 2018 in which six protesters lost their lives”, Britain’s foreign ministry said in a statement.

“It’s the power of music as a tool to deliver messages that relate to people and livelihood”

Zimbabwe’s government has rejected the new sanctions, accusing Britain of trying to destroy Zimbabwe’s economy. But civil society groups say that the government is doing a perfectly good job of destroying that economy by themselves.

“We feel [ruling party] Zanu-PF is the biggest threat to economic socio-economic and political advancement in the country. Zanu-PF is the biggest sanction against the will of the majority of Zimbabweans,” said Crisis Coalition in Zimbabwe spokesperson Marvelous Kumalo. ■

Uganda

Guilty.

Notorious LRA commander convicted in The Hague

Andrew Arinaitwe in Coorom and Eric Mwine-Mugaju

In the centre of Coorom, a village in north-east Uganda, hundreds of people are crammed into a single room, their eyes fixed on the television screen. Outside, on a large mat under a tree, sit those who couldn't squeeze inside, their ears glued to the radio.

This is the village where Dominic Ongwen – the Lord's Resistance Army commander, second-in-command only to Joseph Kony himself – grew up. Thousands of miles away, the fate of Coorom's most infamous son is being decided in a courtroom in the Netherlands.

"There exists no ground excluding Dominic Ongwen's criminal responsibility. His guilt has been established beyond any reasonable doubt," said International Criminal Court judge Bertram Schmitt, as he found Ongwen culpable on 61 of the 70 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity that had been brought against him, including murder, abduction and rape. A sentence will be handed down in April.



Mixed reception: Villagers in Coorom, where Ongwen grew up, listen anxiously to the verdict.

(Photo: Kelvin Kavuma/The Continent)

On the television screen, Ongwen is impassive as the judgment is read out, his reaction further obscured by a face mask.

In Coorom, the verdict is met with muted emotions. Some people are visibly confused. Ongwen was abducted from this village when he was just nine years old. Its residents consider him a victim rather than a perpetrator.

Kakanyero Joe was abducted alongside Ongwen all those decades ago. He told *The Continent*: "Those who are confirming him guilty didn't go through this situation and the insurgency." ■

NEXT WEEK: *The remarkable, tragic story of Dominic Ongwen's brutal abduction and subsequent rise through the ranks of one of the world's most feared militant groups*

Liberia

Alleged warlord on trial in Finland for war crimes

The trial of a man accused of committing serious war crimes during Liberia's second civil war has started in Finland.

Gibril Massaquoi, from Sierra Leone, is facing charges of murder, rape, cannibalism and recruiting child soldiers. Massaquoi denies all charges.

Finnish prosecutors allege that Massaquoi, 51, held a leadership position in the Revolutionary United Front, a Sierra Leonean armed rebel group that was involved in Liberia's civil war from 1999 to 2003 and directly or indirectly participated in the crimes he is now being accused of. More than 250,000 people were killed in that war. Prosecutors are seeking a life sentence for Massaquoi – typically 14 years in Finland.

Massaquoi gave evidence to the UN's Special Court for Sierra Leone that investigated war crimes in that conflict. He had been living in Finland since 2008 as part of a witness protection scheme that granted immunity for crimes committed



Held to account: Gibril Massaquoi on trial in Finland

in Sierra Leone but not Liberia. Massaquoi was arrested last March in Tampere, southern Finland, where the trial is now being held.

The court will temporarily relocate to Liberia and Sierra Leone later this year to hear evidence from about 80 witnesses and to visit the scenes of the alleged crimes.

Massaquoi is the latest high-profile individual to face trial over crimes committed in the intertwining wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is serving a 50-year sentence in the UK and his son, Chuckie, is serving a 97-year federal term in the US. ■



The country where Covid-19 doesn't exist

Nothing to see here,
says Tanzania's president

(Photo: Daniel
Hayduk/AFP/
Getty Images)

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Reporting on the Covid-19 situation in Tanzania can be dangerous. Media houses have been discouraged from publishing information that contradicts the official narrative, and the country has a recent track record of intimidating and harassing journalists. A journalist is taking a real risk to bring us this story. For their own safety, we have withheld their name.

A correspondent in Dar es Salaam

The bars are open in Dar es Salaam. So are the markets, and the beaches, and the churches and concert venues and nightclubs. We may be living through a global pandemic, but no one is wearing masks or social distancing on the streets of the seaside commercial capital.

People are shaking hands in greeting,

as is tradition. Life here continues as normal – at least on the surface.

Officially, Tanzania is the only country in the world that has no active cases of Covid-19. Even in New Zealand, the tiny, remote island nation which has set the gold standard for how to respond to the pandemic, there were nine new infections this week.

But Tanzania has not recorded a single new case of the virus since May 2020.

“Tanzania is Covid-free,” says the president.

When the scale of the pandemic became apparent, most leaders on the continent turned to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation for help. But President John Magufuli called on an even higher authority: God.

He claims the virus was eliminated after three days of national prayer in June 2020, and has ordered authorities to stop sharing any data regarding the pandemic. The virus “cannot survive in the body of Christ,” he said.

Tanzania’s caseload remains frozen on 509 cases and 21 deaths in its 58-million population, as it was on May 9 last year. Meanwhile neighbouring Kenya, population 52-million, is on 101,000 cases and 1,769 deaths.

Something does not add up.

We are not an island

The earthly representatives of Magufuli’s chosen deity, the Catholic Church, do not agree with the president’s approach to the pandemic.

“There is corona,” said the headline of a Catholic church newspaper last month. In a statement, the Catholic secretariat of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference has urged believers to sanitise, wear face masks and avoid large gatherings. “We are not an island,” it said.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in its latest travel warning for Tanzania, says the country’s levels of Covid-19 are “very high”. It gave no further details, but urged against all

travel to the East African nation.

The discrepancy between the official narrative and the situation on the ground is most evident in hospitals in Dar es Salaam, where doctors and nurses are dealing with an influx of patients showing Covid-like symptoms.

Over the course of three days this week, *The Continent* visited four of the biggest hospitals in the city. All were trying to take the basic precautions necessary to prevent the spread of the virus – hand-washing booths have been set up, face masks are mandatory, and hand-shaking is forbidden – although compliance from visiting families is low.

And there are many visiting families, because beds in the intensive care units are full of patients on oxygen.

These patients may not be counted as Covid patients in official statistics, but doctors are in no doubt. The hospitals are conducting their own Covid tests – both molecular tests that detect the virus’s genetic material, and antigen tests that look for specific proteins – and are keeping their own numbers.

There were 19 “unofficial” Covid patients at the Aga Khan Hospital when *The Continent* was there; 11 at Hindu Mandal Hospital; and six at Rabininsia Hospital. Figures were not available from Muhimbili Hospital. Numbers have been increasing sharply in the last two weeks, the hospitals said.

Doctors would not speak to *The Continent* on the record. It is dangerous to do so. The Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA) has warned people against sharing information



Hospitalised: A man lies on a stretcher in a hospital in Zanzibar. (Photo: Marco Longar/AFP)

regarding the pandemic, saying it would take stern measures against anyone who contravenes the government position. Saying anything that suggests that Covid-19 may be prevalent in Tanzania is considered unpatriotic and may lead to legal action.

This includes diagnoses. Doctors are forbidden from writing Covid-19 on patient records or death certificates.

Instead, they write “acute pneumonia”.

“We tell some very few people, especially close relatives, the cause of death, if it is Covid-19. But it is not allowed. You lose your job and the government may impound your medical registration certificate. It is so dangerous now – we are all fearful,” said one doctor at the Aga Khan Hospital.

Off the record, doctors repeated the same refrain: Covid-19 is in Tanzania, and it is silently killing people at an alarming rate.

“The situation is dire because the sick are being turned away and there are not

enough medical oxygen masks and very few ventilators available,” said Maria Tsehai, a civil society activist. “The biggest challenge is that the government refuses to admit that there is a pandemic and that the hospitals are overwhelmed, so the medical staff try to cope. Some of them have fallen ill, with Covid-19 placing a toll on the existing overwhelmed system.”

When asked for comment, the Ministry of Health’s Permanent Secretary Mabula Mchembe said that the reports of patients requiring oxygen in hospital do not prove the presence of Covid-19. “Not everyone with respiratory system challenges or being on oxygen has Coronavirus,” he said.

‘Inappropriate’ vaccines

On Wednesday, the Covax facility – a mechanism established to get vaccines to developing countries – finally released its distribution plan.

About 337-million vaccine doses will be sent to 145 countries by the middle of

the year, in proportion to population size. This will not be enough to vaccinate entire populations, but should be enough for frontline healthcare workers to receive protection. Kenya is due to receive 4.2-million doses.

Tanzania is not part of Covax. It will not receive any vaccines.

Last week, at a gathering in his home village in Chato, in the northern Geita region, President Magufuli said that Covid-19 vaccines were “inappropriate”, and that their efficacy had not been proven. “If the white man was able to come up with vaccinations, then vaccinations for Aids would have been brought, tuberculosis would be a thing of the past, vaccines for malaria and cancer would have been found,” he said.

The World Health Organisation has urged Tanzania to reconsider its approach, urging the country to “ramp up public health measures such as wearing masks to fight Covid-19. Science shows that vaccines work and I encourage the government to prepare for a Covid vaccination campaign,” said Africa director Matshidiso Moeti.

Instead, the government has sanctioned 10 different herbal remedies made by local producers, which allegedly “cure” Covid-19.

No clinical trials have been conducted on these remedies.

“We’re tired of burying loved ones”

At a graveyard in the Dar es Salaam suburb of Wazo Hill, a sheikh is conducting a burial ceremony. *The Continent* did not get his name. “We are tired of burying our

loved ones, please take care of yourselves and protect others,” he said. “Corona is real.”

Mourners murmured to themselves about increasing numbers of deaths. On that day alone, three people were buried, which is much higher than usual.

In the absence of official statistics, it is anecdotes like these that demonstrate that something is very wrong.

Another one: A prominent radio station, Radio One, has a regular daily programme that airs death announcements. It is usually 10 minutes long. For the past month, the station has allocated 50 minutes to these announcements each day.

Despite the government’s restrictions on free speech, Tanzanians on social media have been describing their own experiences. Viral messages are asking people to listen to doctors rather than politicians if they want to survive the pandemic.

“With the restricted civic space, only the internet and social media is left, and that is where a few of us started pushing back on the narrative,” said Tsehai. “The first step was to make sure Tanzanians are aware that Corona is still around – it never left – and people are getting infected.” ■

Don’t miss: *In an op-ed for The Continent, Tanzanian opposition leader Zitto Kabwe explains why the government’s position on Covid is dangerous not just for Tanzania, but also for its neighbours (p18).*



Maisha yanaendelea kama kawaida. Wananchi eneo la Darajani, Zanzibar wakifanya shughuli zao bila wasiwasi wowote katikati ya janga la Corona. (Photo: Marco Longari/AFP)

Nchi isiyokuwa na Corona

Hakuna cha kuthibitisha, asema Rais wa Tanzania

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Ujumbe wa Mhariri: Kuandika na kuripoti kuhusu uwepo wa ugonjwa wa Corona (Covid-19) nchini Tanzania ni hatari. Vyombo vya habari vimetishwa na kuziwa kutangaza chochote na kwamba mwenye mamlaka ya kutangaza juu ya Corona ni serikali pekee. Kutokana na hali hiyo, jina la mwandishi limehifadhiwa.

Na Mwandishi Wetu, Dar es Salaam

Maeneo mengi ya mikusanyiko ya watu katika Jiji la Dar es Salaam, yameendelea kutumika. Yako wazi. Baa, kumbi za starehe, masoko, fukwe, makanisa na misikiti kumeendelea kujaza watu. Hakuna anayejali kuchukua tahadhari licha ya kuwepo ugonjwa wa

Corona.

Hakuna anayevaa barakoa, watu wamebanana. Hakuna kuweka umbali kutoka kwa mtu mmoja hadi mwingine na wanaendelea kukumbatiana na kusalimiana kwa mikono – kwa furaha wakijuliana hali.

Hapa maisha yanaendelea kama kawaida. Hakuna hofu.

Tanzania ni nchi pekee duniani

ambayo haina takwimu endelevu za ugonjwa wa Corona. Haitaki kutoa taarifa za ugonjwa huo. Upekee huu wa Tanzania unaifanya nchi hiyo kupiku rekodi za New Zealand, taifa lenye taratibu na njia sahihi za kupambana na virusi vya Corona. Wiki hii, nchi hiyo ndogo – ikiwa ni kisiwa, imetoa taarifa za kuwepo maambukizi kwa wagonjwa tisa.

Lakini Tanzania, ambayo haichukui tahadhari, haina taarifa zozote za ugonjwa huo tangu Mei, 2020. Rais wake anasema “Tanzania hakuna Corona.”

Corona ilipopamba moto duniani, viongozi wengi wa nchi za Afrika “walijisalimisha” kwa taasisi zenye wataalamu wa magonjwa ya binadamu na Shirika la Afya Duniani (WHO), lakini Rais wa Tanzania, John Magufuli aligeukia “mamlaka ya juu zaidi-” kwa Mungu.

Rais Magufuli anaeleza kuwa kwa kufanya hivyo, ugonjwa wa Corona uliisha baada ya maombi ya siku tatu mfululizo aliyoitisha nchi nzima. Watanzania Juni, 2020 walifunga na kusali “wakimlilia” Mungu kwa ajili ya kuuondoa ugonjwa huo. “Kirusi cha Corona hakiwezi kuishi ndani ya Mwili wa Yesu,” alisema Rais Magufuli. Baadaye rais huyo aliamuru mamlaka kuacha kutoa takwimu za janga hilo.

Tanzania yenye idadi ya watu wanaofikia milioni 58, iliacha kutoa takwimu za Corona Mei, mwaka jana ambapo taarifa za mwisho zinaonyesha nchi hiyo ilikuwa na wagonjwa 509 na vifo 21 tu ndivyo vilirekodiwa. Nchi jirani ya Kenya yenye watu milioni 52, hadi sasa imerekodi wagojwa 101,000 na vifo 1,769.



Kutokujua kwa Magufuli (Illustration: sef Adeola)

Tanzania siyo kisiwa

Pamoja na msimamo wa Tanzania, hasa wa Rais Magufuli kuhusu ugonjwa wa Corona, bado kuna taasisi na watu wanaoamini janga lipo na kwamba hatua lazima zichukuliwe kulinda maisha ya watu.

Miongoni mwa taasisi hizo ni Kanisa Katoliki la Tanzania, ambalo yeye ni muumini wake. Kanisa halikubaliani na msimamo wa Rais Magufuli. Mwezi Januari, mwaka huu, gazeti la kanisa hilo la Kiongozi, liliandika “Corona ipo.” Mbali na hatua hiyo, waraka wa kichungaji uliotolewa na Baraza la Maaskofu wa Katoliki (TEC) hivi karibuni ulihimiza waumini wake na wananchi kuchukua tahadhari dhidi ya ugonjwa huo.



Mchoro huu wa kuhamasisha kuvaa barakoa, umechorwa na msanii Wachata. Ulikutwa kwenye moja za kuta Dar es Salaam. (Photo: Ericky Boniphace/AFP)

Kwamba ili kujilinda, wananchi lazima wavae barakoa, wanawe mikono kwa maji tiririka, kuumia vitakasa mikono (sanitaiza) na kuepuka mikusanyiko. “Tanzania siyo kisiwa,” ilieleza sehemu ya waraka huo.

Mapema wiki hii, Marekani kupitia kituo chake cha kudhibiti na kuzuia magonjwa, imeonya kwamba kiwango cha maambukizi ya Corona nchini Tanzania “ni kikubwa,” lakini haikueleza zaidi.

Ingawa Tanzania imekuwa ikikana kuwepo kwa ugonjwa huo, zipo dalili na uthibitisho kwamba Corona ipo na huenda imekuja kwa kasi zaidi sasa kuliko ilivyokuwa awali. Katika hospitali nyingi, hasa zilizoko Dar es Salaam, madaktari na wauguzi wanathibitisha kupokea wagonjwa wengi wenye viashiria vingi vya maambukizi ya ugonjwa wa Corona.

Katika kipindi cha siku tatu wiki hii – Jumatatu hadi Jumatano, The Continent ilitembelea hospitali nne kubwa zaidi

jijini Dar es Salaam na kubaini kuwepo kwa tahadhari kwa wagonjwa na ndugu wanaofika hospitalini. Uongozi wa hospitali hizo unahimiza wote kuchukua tahadhari ikiwamo kunawa mikono kwa maji yaliyowekwa, kuvaa barakoa, kupeana nafasi na kuhimiza kutoshikana mikono wakati wa kusalimiana.

Taarifa zilizopatikana zinaeleza kuwa katika hospitali nyingi, wagonjwa wengi waliopokelewa na kulazwa wamekutwa na dalili hizo na kwamba wengi wako katika mashine za kupumulia (oksijeni).

Pamoja na kwamba inawezekana kuwa na ugumu wa kupata idadi kamili ya wagonjwa wa Corona kutokana na makatazo ya serikali na usiri uliopo, madaktari wanathibitisha kuwa ugonjwa upo.

The Continent iliambiwa kuwepo kwa wagonjwa 19 wa Corona katika Hospitali ya Aga Khan wakati gazeti hili lilipotembelea hospitali hiyo wiki hii. Katika Hospitali ya Hindu Mandal

kulielezwa kuwepo wagonjwa 11; na wagonjwa sita katika Hospitali ya Rabininsia iliyoko Tegeta. Takwimu kutoka Hospitali ya Taifa ya Muhimbili hazikupatikana.

Madaktari na wauguzi wote hawakuwa tayari kuhatarisha ajira zao kutoa taarifa kwa gazeti hili kwa kuwa ni hatari kufanya hivyo. Wanaweza kufukuzwa kazi.

Hivi karibuni, Mamlaka ya Udhidi wa Mawasiliano Tanzania (TCRA) imeonya watu dhidi ya kushiriki habari kuhusu janga la Corona, ikisema itachukua hatua kali dhidi ya mtu yeyote anayekiuka msimamo wa serikali. Kusambaza ama kusema uwepo wa ugonjwa huo kwa njia yeyote, inaelezwa na mamlaka hiyo kuwa ni kukosa uzalendo na anayebainika anaweza kuchukuliwa hatua za kisheria.

Katika mazingira hayohayo ya kuficha taarifa za Corona, The Continent imegundua kuwa wagonjwa wenye kubainika kuwa na maambukizi ya ugonjwa huo, vyeti vyao vya tiba na hata kunapotokea kifo - huandikwa “homa kali ya mapafu (acute pneumonia).”

“Tunawaambia watu wachache sana, haswa jamaa wa karibu, sababu ya kifo, ikiwa ni Corona, lakini hairuhusiwi. Unaweza kupoteza kazi yako na serikali inakunyang’anya cheti chako cha usajili. Ni hatari sasa - wote tunaogopa,” alisema daktari mmoja katika Hospitali ya Aga Khan.

Kutokana na taarifa hizo, madaktari wengi wamekuwa wakisema kwamba Corona ipo na inaua kimyakimya kwa kiwango kikubwa.

“Hali ni mbaya kwa sababu baadhi ya wagonjwa wanakosa tiba, hakuna

mitungi na huduma za kutosha za kuwekewa hewa ya oksijeni na pia kuna vifaa vichache vya kusaidia upumuaji katika hospitali nyingi,” anasema Maria Sarungi, mwanaharakati na mtetezi wa haki za binadamu.

“Changamoto kubwa ni kwamba serikali inakataa kukubali kuwepo kwa janga na kwamba hospitali zimezidiwa, hivyo madaktari na wauguzi wanahemewa na kufanya kazi katika mazingira hatarishi, wapo baadhi wameugua kwa kuhudumia wagonjwa wa Corona, ni vyema serikali ikaeleza kuwepo kwa janga hili na kukubali namna nzuri za kudhibiti ili kuokoa maisha ya Watanzania,” anaongeza Maria.

Alipoulizwa kuhusu hali ya Corona nchini Tanzania na kuwepo kwa taarifa za ongezeko la wagonjwa, Katibu Mkuu wa Wizara ya Afya, Mabula Mchembe alisema kuwepo kwa wagonjwa wengi wenye matatizo ya upumuaji, siyo lazima iwe ni Corona.

“Kuwepo kwa wagonjwa wanaolazwa na kuwekewa oksijeni, haithibitishi uwepo wa Corona, hivyo siyo kila mtu mwenye changamoto ya mfumo wa kupumua au kuwa kwenye oksijeni ana Corona,” alisema.

Chanjo “zisizofaa”

Jumatano wiki hii, Taasisi ya COVAX – inayosimamia taratibu za kupata chanjo ya Corona kwa nchi masikini na zinazoendelea, ilitoa taarifa yake ya awali ya namna nchi hizo zitakavyopata chanjo hiyo.

Ilieleza kuwa ifikapo katikati ya mwaka huu, nchi 145 zitakuwa zimepokea chanjo

dozi milioni 337.2 na kwamba itatolewa kulingana idadi ya watu. Imeeleza kuwa pamoja na kuwa chanjo hiyo kwa awamu hii haitatosha watu wote, wahudumu wa sekta ya afya watapewa kipaumbele kupata kinga. Kenya itapokea dozi milioni 4.2.

Tanzania siyo sehemu ya mpango huo wa COVAX kwani inaeleza “kutokuwa na wagonjwa.” Hivyo haitapokea chanjo yoyote.

Wiki iliyopita, kwenye mkutano nyumbani kwake Chato, mkoani Geita, Rais Magufuli alisema kuwa chanjo za Corona “hazifai”, na kwamba ufanisi wake haujathibitishwa na kuomba wizara wa afya kuwa waangalifu na chanjo hizo.

“Ikiwa mzungu anaweza kupata chanjo haraka, basi chanjo za Ukimwi zingekuwepo, chanjo ya kifua kikuu nayo ingepatikana, chanjo za malaria na saratani zingepatikana, sasa hii ya Corona mbona imekuja haraka sana? Kuna nini?” alihoji.

WHO imehimiza Tanzania kufikiria upya msimamo wake kwa janga la Corona. Shirika hilo limeitaka Tanzania kuelekeza watu wake kujihadhari na ugonjwa huo kwa kuepuka misongamano, kuvaa barakoa, kuacha kushikana mikono na kutumia maji yanayotiririka kunawa mikono mara kwa mara.

Zaidi sana, WHO imeitaka Tanzania kujiweka tayari kukubali na kupokea chanjo hiyo ili kuokoa maisha ya watu wake. “Sayansi inaonyesha kuwa chanjo inafanya kazi na kuepusha vifo, hivyo ni muhimu kuitumia,” anahimiza Mkurugenzi wa WHO Afrika, Matshidiso Moeti.

Hata hivyo, Tanzania kupitia kwa Rais Magufuli imekuwa ikihimiza matumizi ya mitishamba na dawa zingine za asili, yakiwamo matunda – malimau na pilipili, kutengeneza dawa zinazodaiwa kutibu Corona. Dawa hizo hazijathibitishwa na taasisi za tiba za kimataifa wala WHO.

“Tumechoka kuzika watu”

Katika makaburi ya Wazo Hill, Dar es Saaam, hivi karibuni, ambako The Continent alihudhuria mazishi, Sheikh mmoja ambaye jina lake halikupatikana alisema wakati wa maziko kuwa; “tumechoka kuzika ndugu zetu, tafadhali kila mmoja achukue tahadhari na kulinda wengine,” na kuongeza; “Corona ni ipo.”

Waombolezaji wengi katika msiba huo wa mmoja wa waumini maarufu wa msikiti wa Tegeta, walisikika wakinong’onezana kuwepo kwa ongezeko kubwa la maambukizi na vifo vinavyotokana na Corona. Katika makaburi hayo, siku hiyo kulikuwa na maziko ya watu watatu.

Katika hatua nyingine, kituo maarufu cha redio, Redio One cha Dar es Salaam, kimebainika kutumia muda wa ziada kwa matangazo ya vifo; kutoka dakika 10 kwa siku hadi dakika 50 katika vipindi vya hivi karibuni, hali hii inaashiria kuwepo kwa vifo vingi, ingawa siyo lazima vitokane na Corona.

Pamoja na kuwepo kwa makatazo ya kusambaza taarifa za Corona, kupitia mitandao ya kijamii, hasa Twitter, Instagram na Facebook, watu wamekuwa wakihimizana juu ya kujilinda na ugonjwa huo na kusisitiza kutowasiliza wanasiasa katika hili. ■

As long as Tanzania denies Covid, the world is vulnerable

President John Magufuli's anti-vaccine rhetoric is dangerous for Tanzania and its neighbours, writes opposition leader Zitto Kabwe

On January 28, while in his home village of Chato in Geita region, Tanzania's President John Magufuli expressed doubts about the efficacy of Covid-19 vaccines, claiming they could be dangerous and warning the ministry of health not to rush to procure doses for the country. This statement was followed a few days later – on February 1 – by health minister Dr Dorothy Gwajima, who confirmed that the country had no plans to procure vaccines in use by other countries and that the focus should instead be on personal hygiene and traditional remedies.

Cometh the hour, cometh the Manto

Gwajima is a medical doctor by training. The late Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, also a doctor, promoted beetroot and other foods as treatment for Aids during her tenure as South Africa's health minister under President Thabo Mbeki. These dubious beliefs contributed to up 300,000 preventable deaths, according to a Harvard University study.

Tanzania's mishandling of the pandemic can now be compared to that era in South Africa. It began with denial,

then prayers which supposedly made Tanzania a "Covid-free" country. The new episode is to denounce vaccines.

This is just the latest act in the tragic comedy that has become Tanzania's response to the pandemic. Last year we became known as the country who believed it had defeated Covid. In 2021, it appears we will be known as the country that questioned vaccines that have been approved by the World Health Organisation.

The president's remarks on vaccines are dangerous, even by his standards. He not only ridiculed Covid-19 vaccines but he questioned vaccines overall, referring in his remarks to the concern that cervical cancer vaccines cause infertility amongst girls. These remarks will have long term consequences in a country that still invests considerable resources to increase the uptake of vaccines and to ensure that all children are provided with the basic protections against preventable communicable diseases.

My mother died of cervical cancer in 2014 and my younger sister is working on ensuring vaccinations for children

to prevent cervical cancer through her foundation, named after our mother. Magufuli's remarks could derail my sister's dreams of helping millions of girls.

The remarks show the president's determination not to lose face despite overwhelming evidence that Tanzania is being hit by a second (or is it third or fourth?) wave of Covid-19. If anecdotal evidence is anything to go by, this wave is worse than what we experienced last year. This time around, though, we don't even dare call it corona – we are diagnosed with “pneumonia” and left to figure out for ourselves what it really means.

An entire region at risk

Meanwhile, Tanzania's neighbours are jumping at opportunities to procure vaccines either through the Covax scheme or directly from the global market.

Kenya is a case in point, having procured four million doses that are expected to be delivered in the first quarter of the year. The Tanzanian government, on the other hand, does not believe that it has a duty to protect its own citizens from this virus; nor that it has an obligation to join hands with its regional neighbours in defeating a pandemic that knows no borders.

But Tanzania's neighbours need to understand that as long as Tanzania refuses to be a responsible partner in this battle against Covid-19, the entire region remains vulnerable.

The virus currently hitting Tanzania will not politely stay within the boundaries between the countries. The East African Community (EAC) and the Southern

African Development Community (SADC) should seriously take note of this. I implore Presidents Paul Kagame and Filipe Nyusi, the chairs of these regional bodies, that regional pressure is needed.

This time around, we don't even dare call it corona – we are being diagnosed with 'pneumonia' and left to figure out for ourselves what it really means

Years of refusing to act with the justification of “non-interference in internal affairs of the member states” are over. If Tanzanians aren't protected from Covid-19, then neither is the region – or, indeed, the world.

Tanzania is already alienating itself from the international community, not only through its response to Covid but also through its blatant rigging of the October 2020 elections and its general slide into authoritarianism.

Its stance on Covid-29 vaccinations is just one step further down that dangerous path, but with massive and far-reaching consequences for the nation's approach to public health, international partnerships, and scientific and data-driven decision making.

I call on the WHO and other regional and international actors to aggressively engage authorities in Tanzania for the benefit of the world. ■

Zitto Kabwe is a Tanzanian politician and leader of the Alliance for Change and Transparency Party



Welcome to Gaborone

Just because the city is not known for its bustle, doesn't mean it's lacking in excitement and hustle, writes **Ewetse Khama. It's a diamond in the rough!**

Botswana's capital, Gaborone – Gaborone Maboneng, Gabs City, GC or Magheba – is the crowning achievement of a 50-something-year-old republic built on the fruits of diamond wealth.

A bounty used prudently to develop a nation and build a jewel in the heart of southern Africa.

Now let's take it to the streets for a minute and pretend we aren't in the era of Covid-19, and that we are free to meet, greet... and eat!

Getting around

Gaborone can be considered the grain of sand holding this Kalagadi pearl called Botswana together. The city, which was until recently mostly flat, now has a sense of a focal point because of the glittering array of new high rises in the new Central Business District. Everywhere in Gaborone is pretty much inside of a 20-minute drive, despite the weird traffic jams caused by too many cars and not enough well-maintained

roads. Getting around the city is best with a friend because you would immediately be disappointed by Google maps and the notoriously mysterious house numbering system. Rather consider taking a cab, their advantage is that they charge a standard rate across the city of about \$3-\$5 a ride, costing a little extra to go out to places like the airport (about \$8) or Phakalane suburb for about \$10. I'd forgo public transport – it's not worth the extra effort, unless you understand Setswana and want to enjoy combi-driver humour.

Restaurants, bars and attractions

Where to eat is really about habit and the path of least resistance in Gabs. For a sit-down affair every corner of the city has its place. Thapong Visual Arts Centre, in The Village, hosts No. 1 One Ladies Café, named after the extremely popular book series from Alexander McCall Smith.

The Café's simple yet delicious meals and laid-back atmosphere are made even more rustic by the picturesque (decommissioned!) prison across the street.

The Courtyard **(1)** is the restaurant at BotswanaCraft, the traditional arts and craft emporium, and the restaurant keeps the theme by serving mostly traditional cuisine. Seswaa (pounded meat – either goat or beef), mogatla (oxtail), Serobe (tripe), morogo (spinach), bogobe jwa lerotse (sorghum porridge flavoured with lerotse melon and sour milk) are



all on the menu here. The emporium also has the widest hand-woven basket range in the city **(2)**.

Mokolodi Private Nature Reserve, 25-minute drive from the centre, hosts a cheetah sanctuary where guests can have an up close and personal experience with nature's fastest cat.

Mokolodi's restaurant also makes the best pizza in the city, pizza and a cheetah ... who can beat that?

For a more worldly dining experience, we have Mahogany's (at Avani Hotel) and Basilico in a converted old house shouting distance from State House are memorable.

Then we have 267, ensconced in a bush behind Riverwalk Mall, Ate at Design Quarter and new kids on the block Setloa Village which is intent on

raising the bar for dining in Gaborone. The duck burgers at Ate are some quacking good eating.

What to do for those drinks and a chat with Gabs locals? For a view, Table52 (New CBD) has a basic menu and unremarkable drinks, a sin you will forget when you take in a sunset over Gabs from its highest point. There is Test Kitchen (Broadhurst) which doesn't serve meals but is great for its vibe. Corner Couch in Phakalane, a gentrified BBQ spot, has its moments ... it is difficult to speak about nightlife since it feels limited by the 11pm to 2AM closing times.

Vibe Check

The best thing about these early nights is that they give Gabs residents an opportunity to host their new friends for a night cap. Even if places are closed, everyone has a plug or two for some after hours drinks. BotswanaCraft also regularly hosts live music performances. You would be surprised who has killed on that intimate stage over the years. Everyone from Oliver Mtukudzi and Hugh Masekela to Salif Keita.

Favourite time of the year?

Gabs City is spoilt for choice with a cultural calendar graced by traditional dance, opera, theatre,

comedy, poetry, films and live music performances. These are staged at various venues across the city, with Maitisong being the leading performance venue.

However, the low-hanging fruit is the summer/festive season combination, December to January. Most people leave the hustle at home during this time and set out to make great memories. That involves cooler boxes, a hot BBQ, a view, sound system and friends. Gaborone Dam, Notwane Dam and Bokaa Dam are all great spots to chill.

What song encapsulates the city?

There is an artist called ATI, who has a signature runny mascara motif under his left eye. We might want to call him the enfant terrible of Botswana music, but I think he is just hyper-sensitive to what is going on around him. *Khiring Khorong* is a laid-back track telling a story of the hustling that goes on in life.

As the song says: "Ke tsile go betsa go utwala" – I am going to hit so hard it will be felt ... ergo – I'm going to make my mark. It speaks volumes about the capital, where we all hustle beside old traditions, new aspirations, old neighbourhoods and new high-rises.

Ewetse Khama is an independent communications specialist



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0-4

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

5-8

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

9-12

"Trivia is not trivial: we learn the facts to uncover the truth"

- Who was recently ruled the president of the Confederation of African Football?
- La Tchadienne* is which country's national anthem?
- Who, going by the nickname "The Lion of Zimbabwe", created and popularised Chimurenga music?)
- This year marks the 50-year anniversary of which former Ugandan leader taking office?
- What does Soweto stand for? (Bonus: Who initiated the naming of this Jo'burg area?)
- What is another name for the Congo African parrot?
- Which African island nation attracted international attention when in April 2020 it announced it was using a local plant to combat coronavirus?
- Which theory suggests that Homo sapiens developed first in Africa?
- In which country is the Giza Necropolis located? (pictured)
- True or false: Elon Musk was born in Zanzibar.
- What is the capital of the Central African Republic?
- Which Congolese former basketball player played 18 seasons in the NBA?

(Photo: Khaled Desouki/AFP)

Lights, camera, inaction

Samira Sawlani



When art imitates life: The closest a dictator has come to appearing on an actual red carpet was when Sacha Baron Cohen attended the 2012 Oscars in character to promote his new film, *The Dictator*.

Far, far away in the upside-down land of Hollywood, the Golden Globes nominations have been announced, signalling that the curious traditional ritual known as “awards season” has officially begun. And our leaders are looking over at them from across the pond with great envy.

Why, you ask? The glamour, of course! The glitz. The trophies, the attention, and the opportunity to give long speeches without having to deploy even a single security force or even dip into their crowd-suppression savings account.

Nguesso's coming to dinner

President Dennis Sassou-Nguesso of Congo Republic's decision to run for yet another term in the March 21 elections suggests he'd like an award, too. The 77-year-old is hoping to extend his 36-year rule and has proudly assured us that “the election will be held with complete transparency”.

With the main opposition boycotting the polls and church leaders expressing concern about fairness, Mr Nguesso seems to want to emulate Sidney Poitier, who won a Golden Globe in 1964 in the

category the Congolese president appears to be gunning for: Best Actor.

All the romance, all the drama

Over the border in the DR of C, it's been clear for a while now that the star-crossed romance of President Felix Tshisekedi and former president Joseph Kabila has not quite followed the path of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling, or even Kevin Hart and Ice Cube.

Like most of the couples who emerged from *The Bachelor*, these two were done with each other as soon as the honeymoon was over, with Mr Tshisekedi moving to end the coalition in less time than it takes a Hemsworth brother to run a mile.

If you thought celebrity divorces were messy, best buckle up because political splits are a wild ride: lawmakers had to pass a motion of no confidence in Prime Minister Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba, a Kabila ally, prompting him to resign.

Meanwhile, Tshisekedi had to arrange for his supporter Christophe Mboso to be voted in as president of the National Assembly, replacing another ousted pro-Kabila supporter, Jeanine Mabunda, and — if that was not enough — the senate has now filed a motion for the removal of another member of the Kabila camp as leader of the upper-house of parliament.

Phew, that's a lot of exposition. But there's been action too: Fists have flown, as MPs literally forgot to pull their punches in parliament.

Action, heartbreak, plot twists and suspense. I think we all know who's got their eye on the award for best (or possibly worst) drama.

Fantasy or horror remake?

Tanzania's minister for health, Dorothy Gwajima, has announced she has no plans to buy up any Covid-19 vaccines any time soon. And it's been confirmed that Tanzania isn't signed up to the Covax initiative to ensure vaccines are distributed equally around the world.

Instead, Gwajima has encouraged people to take home remedies, one of which she and her colleagues downed in front of the camera. A timeous remake of the old 2020 Madagascar classic, *Covid-Organic: You'll Still Get Sick But Now We Have Your Money*.

We're not sure if director John Magufuli is in with a chance for most terrifying horror film, but we can't deny that it's one of the scarier releases currently screening. Or not screening, we should say.

International distribution

This week the United Nations announced that since the Central African Republic's controversial elections on 27 December, 200,000 people in the have been displaced, 100,000 of them crossing over to neighbouring countries.

Many are in hard to reach areas and have very little access to necessities. The UN has also expressed concern over the situation in Ethiopia's Tigray region, with a spokesperson saying "there is a grave humanitarian need in Tigray and, at this point, we're not able to reach the people who need to be reached."

Meanwhile the African Union looks on, passively. To culturally misappropriate a phrase from a Hollywood set... it's all lights, cameras, and inaction. ■



Defiant: Jemima and her mother protest against systemic racism in Germany

She's the best student in her class in Germany. Why won't her teachers recommend her for a top-tier school?

Kathleen Ndongmo

Imagine having your whole future determined at the age of nine. Being told that you can have that place at university, that respected job – or that you can't. Either you will excel, or you will always be second-best. Now imagine that there is nothing you can do about it. However hard you work, however intelligent you are and however impeccable your behavior, you are destined to be written off as inferior – because of the colour of your skin.

This is not an imaginary situation;

it is the reality facing nine-year-old Jemima Tiena in Hamburg. Quiet and intelligent, Jemima works hard at school and always finishes in the top one percent of her grade. She gets on well with her classmates, hands in her assignments on time, and even helps older children with their homework. You might say she is the model student. She is also my niece, and she is black, and it is this latter fact, rather than her abilities, that threatens to determine her future.

In Germany, children are educated together for the first four years of school, and then they are typically separated into

streams based on their potential. Children thought to be headed for blue-collar jobs go to Hauptschule. Average kids, who are likely to get middle-of-the-road white-collar jobs, go to Realschule.

Top-flight students go to the Gymnasium. With a diploma from a Gymnasium, students are guaranteed a place at university, and their future is rosy.

In theory, this is a choice-based system: provided the child has high-enough grades, they and their parents can apply to any school they like.

In reality, schools are unlikely to accept a pupil without a recommendation from their elementary school teacher – and that recommendation does not have to be based on academic results (even though the Hamburg School Law Book, in articles 17 and 44, state that assessment is based on the “written, oral, practical and other performances of the pupils”).

Jemima, a straight-A student, was recommended for Realschule (known as Stadtteilschule in Hamburg). When asked why she had recommended that the top pupil in her class go to a middle-ability school, her teacher justified it by saying that Jemima is an introvert.

This is a trait that failed to hold back Albert Einstein, Warren Buffet or even Chancellor Angela Merkel, but her introversion is not the point: had she been extroverted, the excuse may have been something else – aggression, perhaps, or talkativeness. The real reason, which cannot be admitted (which the teacher may not even admit to herself) is that Jemima is not a “proper” German because she is black.

A 2020 study (“Ethnic and Social Class Discrimination in Education: Experimental Evidence from Germany”) by the academics SE Wenz and K Hoenig found that the grades that teachers gave were not affected by their students’ ethnic background, but their predictions of future success were. And those predictions of future success, in the German system, become self-fulfilling prophecies.

It is no secret that white children in Germany are far more likely to go to top schools than their ethnic-minority classmates, regardless of socioeconomic background. The system of dividing young students into different types of high schools exists in Switzerland, Belgium and Austria, as well as Germany, and it is inherently vulnerable to perpetuating systemic racism.

In the US it is Black History Month, a time to celebrate the contributions of people of black heritage, past and present. Meanwhile, in Hamburg, Jemima and her mother are protesting continuing discrimination in the snow, trying to hold to account a system that tells her daughter that her best will never be good enough, because she is not white.

This is what systemic injustice looks like. It should make us angry. It crushes ambition, discards talent and diminishes the potential of society. In 2021, no one, not even one child, should have their future determined by racial prejudice rather than their real potential. ■

Kathleen Ndongmo is a leading African strategist and avid creative communications specialist focused on brands, business and digital media



New Broom: Gregory Meeks and other congressmen being sworn in to the 117th Congress last month

America must rethink its approach to Africa

Writing for *The Continent*, Gregory Meeks, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee in the United States, outlines the Biden administration's need for a new Africa policy – and consulates in Kano, Mombasa and Dire Dawa

This weekend, the African Union will convene its annual Ordinary Summit of Heads of State as a new US

administration begins to unveil its foreign policy. As the United States frees itself from the isolation of the last four years and emerges on the world stage under the administration of President Joe Biden, it is imperative that the United States reset our relationship with Sub-Saharan Africa.

Under the previous administration, the United States became a negligible player on the continent. In our absence, China, Russia, Turkey and the Gulf States have recognised the potential for engagement with the continent, making inroads through substantial diplomatic, financial, and cultural investments.

It would be a foreign policy miscalculation to view Africa simply through the prism of competition with other countries. Our approach must be shaped by an understanding that Africans not only have agency, but that our relationship is of mutual interest and should be collaborative. In short, we are interacting with Africa on its own merits

– not because we are in competition with other powers.

In light of recent events here in the United States, we must re-engage the world with humility, and our credibility in advocating for democracy and human rights abroad must start with a commitment to the same values here at home. This inflection point presents a unique opportunity for us to foster partnerships between US and African civil society organisations that transcend domestic and foreign policy.

This co-operation must be two-fold: government-to-government and people-to-people. Here in the House of Representatives, we should expand legislative partnerships with additional African democracies through the House Democracy Partnership (currently, the only African members of this partnership are Kenya and Liberia).

Both in Congress and in civil society, such partnerships could shape the discourse and plan of action on shared concerns such as: strengthening democratic norms, civic engagement, and anti-corruption measures; countering disinformation and violent extremism; promoting transparency, accountability, and respect for the rule of law; ensuring equitable economic growth and recovery; and addressing Covid-19 and other public health challenges.

While it will remain important for the US government to interact with African governments, we need to increase people-to-people exchanges to promote understanding and a shared respect for common values. It is important that

we strengthen African voices in the implementation of our foreign assistance programs. One way to do this is by ramping up African participation in US government exchange programs, and prioritising the employment of the alumni as lead implementing partners. We should also expand two-way academic exchanges between US and African universities, and encourage the establishment of US university campuses in Africa with full-time faculty, staff, and operations.

Beyond the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Power Africa and Prosper Africa initiatives, the US needs to think creatively about its economic relationship with the continent of Africa

On the issue of climate change, which is a shared national security priority, we should foster collaboration between the United States Conference of Mayors and the Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa to address climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. With African cities expected to absorb two-thirds of the continent's rapid population growth by 2050, it will be important to share lessons learned on how climate change affects food security, urban planning, and other cascading effects of a warming planet.

Beyond the African Growth and

Opportunity Act, Power Africa and Prosper Africa initiatives of previous administrations, the United States needs to think creatively about its economic relationship with the continent of Africa. As a start, we should wholeheartedly support the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by providing technical assistance to the secretariat, supporting trade dispute resolution mechanisms, and promoting opportunities to digitise cross-border trade.

We should be leveraging the African diaspora – the fastest growing immigrant population in the US

In order to formalise our support for Africa's emerging technology sector and startup environment, we should establish partnerships between US and African technology companies, incubators, and educational institutions to build the digital capacity of young Africans. Such an initiative could unlock boundless potential, create locally-generated wealth, diversify African economies, and promote sustainable job creation.

Here at home, we should be leveraging the African diaspora, which is the fastest growing immigrant population in the United States, growing by 50% between 2010 and 2018. We need to prioritise tapping into their entrepreneurial spirit, expertise, and transnational connections and facilitate the entry of their small and medium-sized enterprises into African

economies, including with the support of the US International Development Finance Corporation.

Naturally, these innovative economic, intergovernmental and social engagements will need to be paired with appropriately-scaled traditional diplomacy. Existing State Department, USAID, and commerce positions on the continent should be fully staffed, and we should explore adding positions as appropriate.

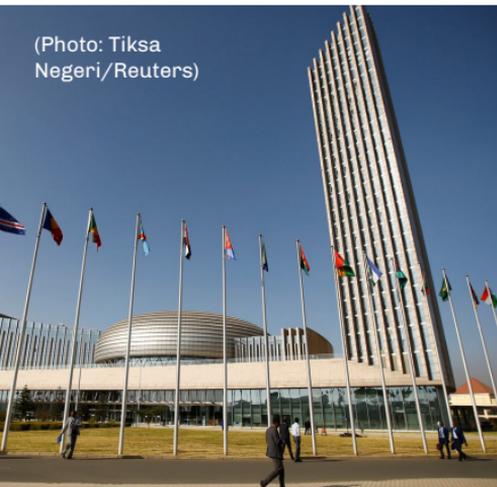
In order to ensure that our perspectives are also informed by populations outside of capital cities, we should consider opening consulates in places like Kano, Mombasa, and Dire Dawa. We should establish dedicated US Embassy country teams for the Regional Economic Communities, separate from the bilateral mission and staffed by representatives from the State Department, US Agency for International Development, the Department of Defense, and the Commerce Department. America will not be relevant if we're not present in these bilateral and multilateral fora.

As chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I will be working to emphasise that the United States is not simply developing its approach to the continent in an echo chamber.

I look forward to continuing the conversation in the months ahead with African governments, regional organisations, regular citizens, and the diaspora about what the United States relationship with Africa should look like.

We're listening, and welcome this exchange of ideas. ■

(Photo: Tiksa Negeri/Reuters)



What the African Union will *not* be talking about at this summit

There have been no consequences for the alleged sexual harassers and fraudsters who occupy positions of power in the continental body

COMMENT
Simon Allison

In 2018, several women working at the African Union risked their jobs to speak to the *Mail & Guardian*

about the sexism they had experienced within the continental body's Addis Ababa's headquarters. They described an environment where women were routinely passed over for promotion, in favour of underqualified men; where senior women were excluded from top-level decision-making; and where sexual harassment was commonplace.

The story, published in the *Mail & Guardian* in May 2018, documented these allegations. Its impact was immediate. According to one source, Rwandan President Paul Kagame – then-AU chair – marched into the office of Moussa Faki Mahamat, the head of the AU Commission, brandishing a copy of the article. Kagame demanded action.

A three-woman panel, led by Bineta Diop, the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, was established to investigate the allegations. So far, so good.

But their findings have never been made public.

Only a summary of the document was released – and even that was damning enough. The problem was far worse than we had reported. The panel documented at least 44 cases of alleged unfair labour practises, sexual harassment, sexual assault, fraud and nepotism. It even found that senior departmental staff had positioned themselves as “king-makers”, trading jobs for sex.

A document leaked later to the *Mail & Guardian* confirmed that Peace and Security Department head Smail Chergui was among those named in the report, although the exact nature of the claims against him are not known. Chergui

denies wrongdoing, and remains (for the moment) in charge of the AU's most powerful and well-resourced department.

After the report was presented to him, Faki promised to take "immediate action on urgent issues".

Two years later, however, no action has been taken against any of the individuals implicated in the report. Alleged sexual harassers and fraudsters continue to occupy senior positions within the AU, leaving the women who work there vulnerable.

It feels like a cover-up – and that's exactly how women within the commission described it when the *Mail & Guardian* followed up in 2019. "The commission promised to implement the recommendations of the report, but we have been sidelined and ignored," said one, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retribution. "Meanwhile, the culprits get to keep their jobs."

Faki promised to take "immediate action on urgent issues." Two years later, however, no action has been taken against any of individuals implicated in the report

This weekend, at the 34th AU Summit, Faki will run for re-election as chair of the AU Commission. He is unopposed, although his election will require votes from two-thirds of the heads of state in (virtual) attendance.



No action: Moussa Faki Mahamat has yet to implement the inquiry's recommendations. (Photo: AU)

There are some things Faki can be proud of, such as the leading role played by the Africa Centres for Disease Control, an AU agency, in combating the Covid-19 pandemic; and the deft diplomacy which brought the African Continental Free Trade Area into effect in record time.

However, his record on protecting the women in his employ demands scrutiny.

But this is not a conversation that Faki wants to have. His office did not respond to questions sent this week by the *Mail & Guardian* and *The Continent*, which asked him to explain why the inquiry's findings have never been made public; to outline what action, if any, has been taken against the individuals implicated in it; and to document what the AU has done to fix its culture of sexual harassment.

The AU claims to be committed to redressing gender inequality on the African continent. But how can we believe it when it has failed to do so within its own headquarters? ■

Morocco seek back-to-back Chan titles

Daniel Ekonde

Morocco will bid to win back the African Nations Championship (Chan) trophy when they face Mali in Sunday's final, following an emphatic 4-0 thrashing of hosts Cameroon in the semifinals on Wednesday.

A double from highly rated Raja Casablanca forward Soufiane Rahimi in both halves and two from Soufiane Bouftini and Mohammed Ali Bemammer secured a second final for the Atlas Lions.

Hosts Cameroon had begun the second semifinal of the day in Limbe well when keeper Haschou Kerrido mistakenly dropped a free kick on the legs of his opponents. Bouftini stumbled on it and bundled the ball into the net at 28 minutes to put the Atlas Lions 1-0.

Rahimi made the lead 2-0 from a well-worked counter attack, before breaking loose to steal possession from a defensive error in the second half to punish Cameroon 3-0. Bemammer scored the fourth goal at 82 minutes to seal the victory.

"We had it as a strategy to neutralise two or three of their [Cameroon] players but it was more of a collective game," said



(Photos: CAF Online/Twitter)

Morocco coach Houcine Ammouta, who also congratulated Cameroon's coach for reaching this far despite limited time to prepare.

It was the first time Cameroon reached the semifinals after reaching the quarterfinals in 2011 and 2016.

"It's true we have been beaten 4-0, but we have to understand, it's Morocco, the defending champions," admitted Cameroon defender Aurélien Etamé

Ngombe. “We played what we could but they were superior.”

But for a football-mad nation like Cameroon many fans see it as a huge humiliation. “I have never seen us lose like this. I don’t even know what to say,” 40-year-old spectator Fouda Robert lamented outside the stadium in Limbe.

The rout is blamed on the country’s local championship that has been unproductive since March because of endless fights among football stakeholders.

A more competitive game was played in the other semifinal, where Mali beat Guinea 5-4 on penalties after playing goalless in regular time.

What is Chan?

It is a tier below the Africa Cup of Nations but contested by players who ply their trade in their local leagues in Africa, and was instituted in 2009 by then president of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) Issa Hayatou to promote local talents on the continent. The Chan is held every two years. Its sixth edition has been played in Cameroon across the cities of Limbe, Buea, Douala and Yaoundé, and started on January 16 and will end on February 7.

The first-ever tournament was staged in Côte d’Ivoire in 2009 with eight participating countries, which later increased to 16. The Democratic Republic of Congo have the most titles of the tourney with two (2009 and 2016) while Morocco won the previous edition in 2018 on home soil, and hopes to repeat on Sunday.

The final: Second chance for Mali to win maiden title?

The Eagles of Mali will be attempting to win their first Chan title for the second time when they match-up against Morocco at the Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium in the capital. They made it to the final in Rwanda in 2016 but they lost 3-0 to DR Congo.

The West Africans have been the most solid side in the competition, having conceded just a goal and kept four clean sheets. Goalkeeper Djigui Diarra, who kept them in the competition by saving Guinea’s Morlaye Sylla’s penalty, was with the squad four years ago in Rwanda.

Yet they will have to face Morocco’s rigorous, energy-sapping and swift play which has earned them 13 goals; being the team with the highest goals in the competition.

Chan amidst Covid-19

It is purposefully tagged Chan 2020 in 2021 because it was supposed to have happened in April last year but was postponed due to Covid-19.

CAF cut the attendance of fans in stadiums to 25% and recommended high sanitation from all the delegations. Uganda coach Jonathan McKinstry, whose team was eliminated in the group stages this week thinks Cameroonian authorities have done a good job keeping the virus at bay during the competition.

“The hotels are doing a great job and also Fecafoot [Cameroon’s football association] needs credit for that because it is difficult to organise a tournament in these conditions,” he told *The Continent*. ■

The gendering of violence in Zimbabwe's body politic

Glanis Changachirere

Political violence in Zimbabwe is systematic and gendered. It is intentionally designed by the ruling party to keep women out of politics and intimidate political opponents, undermining citizens' political rights and civil liberties.

What is the evidence for this? Consider the treatment last year of Joana Mamombe, a member of parliament for the Movement for Democratic Change-Alliance (MDC-A), and two other women, also members of the opposition movement.

The women were abducted at a police roadblock after a demonstration; they were then assaulted and sexually violated before being dumped in a rural area. The ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) dismissed, then recrafted their narrative, claiming the women had staged it all.

The ruling party's more coercive elements then continued their persecution through re-arrests, and even subjected Mamombe to psychiatric examination.

In doing this, Zanu-PF sought to reinforce stereotypical notions of politics as a male domain, punishing women who were threatening to disrupt patriarchy by joining a political movement that challenges those who run the state.

As part of this process, the women's bodies became perfect tools of objectification, projecting Zanu-PF's desires of domination over the MDC-A opposition: their bodies used as weapons of political conquest to the contesting party.

Thus the young women are also targeted by their ascribed collective identity as MDC-A: the violence is aimed beyond their bodies to their party.

In this way, Zanu-PF seeks to depict itself as the strong masculine conqueror of the weak and feminine MDC-A, a logic typical to toxic hegemonic masculinities.

Such practices are deeply misogynistic and authoritarian, and derail the efforts of the Institute for Young Women Development to accelerate gender equality for young women in politics.

They also flout Zimbabwe's 2013 constitution, and should be resisted. ■

Glanis Changachirere is the Director of the Institute for Young Women Development and the founding Co-ordinator of the African Women Leaders Forum. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa. An earlier version of this piece was published by African Arguments



Algorithm & Blues

The Continent's Twitter account was arbitrarily suspended last Saturday, highlighting Twitter's lack of transparency about its moderation policies

COMMENT

Aanu Adeoye

It began, as all things do in 2021, with a tweet. To promote our 35th issue on 30 January, *The Continent* put out a tweet teasing three big stories in that weekend's edition: an explainer on vaccine nationalism; the efficacy of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine against rapidly spreading Covid-19 variants; and South Africa and India's proposal to the World Trade Organisation that pharmaceutical companies drop their patents on Covid-19 vaccine manufacturing.

In the latter story, we reported that the patent proposal was rejected at the WTO by wealthy countries ... and was not supported by Bill Gates, the world's most influential non-state actor in global health.

So far, so innocuous. That's what we thought – until Twitter intervened.

“Hi *The Continent*, Your account, @thecontinent_ has been locked for violating the Twitter Rules,” Twitter wrote in an automated email to us. “Specifically for: Violating the policy on spreading misleading and potentially harmful information relating to COVID-19.”

For reasons best known to them, our



The Continent

@thecontinent_

Vax the pax: We explain what vaccine nationalism is, why Bill Gates won't support calls to remove patents from Covid vaccines, and look into how Johnson & Johnson and Novavax have the potential to work against the infamous South African variant.
<https://t.co/ukuCiE40oP>

Jan 30, 2021, 12:35 AM

Innocuous: The tweet that triggered Twitter's algorithms

tweet about Bill Gates's refusal to support patent removal had been deemed a violation of the “Twitter Rules”. Access to our Twitter account would only be restored if we deleted the offending tweet.

It was an outrageous decision for a variety of reasons but mostly because the story being promoted included a conversation with Bill Gates himself.

Simon Allison, our editor, published a thread on Twitter announcing the temporary suspension. It was widely shared by many, including Malawi-based journalist Jack McBrams. Within hours, Twitter had also locked McBrams's

account over his tweet condemning the action against *The Continent*. The accounts of journalists Sammy Awami and Daniela Becker were also locked when they raised the same issue.

On Sunday, Allison's account met the same fate. On appeal, he got his account back without having to delete the tweet; we and McBrams were not so lucky — we had to delete before regaining access.

A Twitter spokesperson told *The Continent* “the enforcement action was taken in error and has been reversed”.

“We want to be clear: while we work to ensure our systems are consistent, they can sometimes lack the context that our teams bring, and this may result in us making mistakes. We appreciate your patience as we work to get it right.”

Reporters Without Borders, the international non-profit promoting access to information, faulted Twitter's decision to suspend *The Continent* and other journalists' accounts.

“This series of suspensions targeting a prestigious newsweekly and several journalists is unprecedented and dangerous,” Arnaud Froger, the organisation's Africa head, said in a statement. “It speaks to Twitter's total lack of transparency about its moderation policies and to the very real threat that this social media platform poses to the freedom to inform by assuming the role of apprentice news and information regulator while lacking the required legitimacy, especially regarding journalists and media outlets that report the news professionally.”

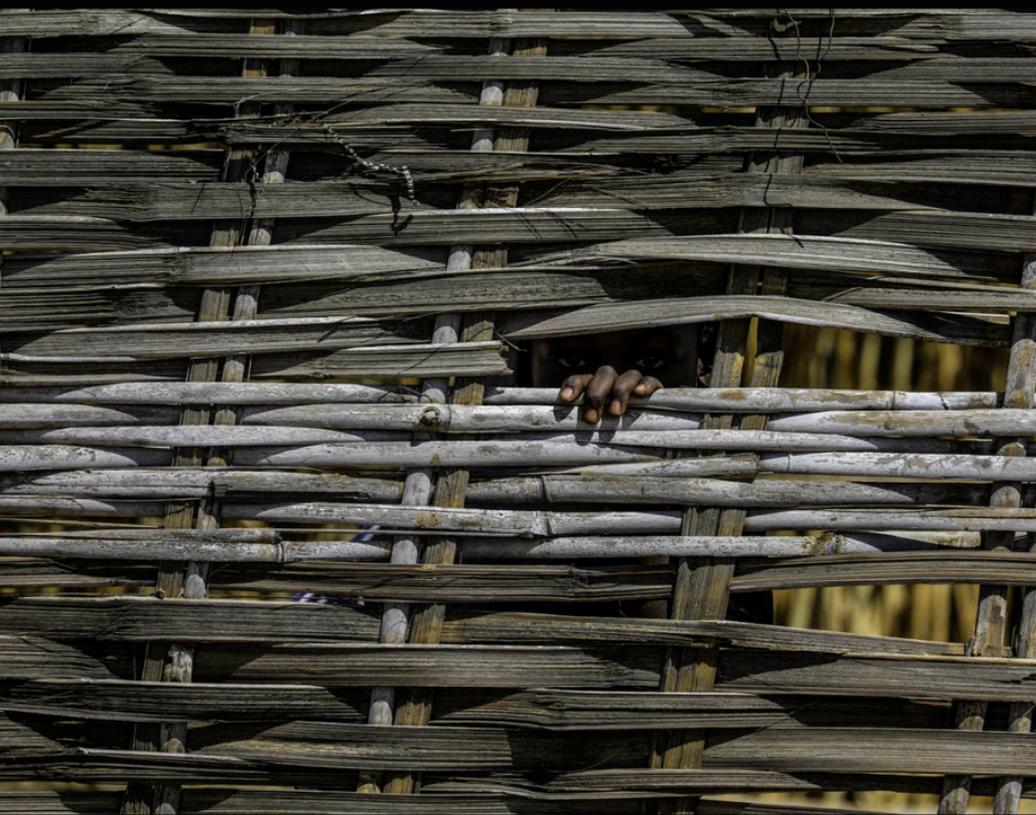
Andrew Stroehlein, the European

media director at Human Rights Watch, also questioned Twitter's actions. He tweeted: “If Twitter doesn't like journalists reporting on India and South Africa's proposal to waive some aspects of global intellectual property rules to enable large-scale manufacturing and make vaccines affordable for all ... well, Human Rights Watch has called on governments worldwide to support that proposal. We stand by that call. So, @twittersupport, are you going to suspend us next for this? Or for criticising your bad call on @thecontinent_ & @simonallison?”

Social media is awash with lies and misinformation, and this has gone up several notches since Covid-19 took over the world. Conspiracy theories abound, some linking 5G to the disease, others promoting dangerous vaccine scaremongering, and, of course, the science fiction fantasy of Bill Gates trying to insert chips into our bodies so that he can track us for some reason.

Policing this disinformation is undoubtedly a herculean task for social media platforms. But it is one thing to safeguard against false information; it's another thing entirely to silence journalists asking valid questions about the powerful. It also raises questions about Twitter's fact-checking process.

As a start-up publication purposely designed to be read and shared on social platforms, Twitter is an important means of distribution for *The Continent*. The idea is to combat misinformation and lies on the very platforms where they are disseminated. We are part the solution — not the problem. ■



The Big Picture

Clinging on: A displaced Sudanese child peers through a wooden fence in Otash, an internally displaced people's camp on the outskirts of Nyala in South Darfur. More than 100,000 people have been displaced due to fighting between two rival militia groups in the region. (Photo: Ashraf Shazly/AFP)

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