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The Continent



Tanzania's lingering gloom

ILLUSTRATION: GADO



COVER: A year ago, Tanzanians lived through what we reported in Issue #219 as the country's "darkest week". Today, that appears to have stretched into a despondent year. When unexpected protests broke out on election day last year, authorities responded with a curfew, an internet blackout, and deadly force. Since then, there has not been any genuine accountability – save for commissions of inquiry and a state narrative that continues to blame the violence on foreign interference. The fear lingers as abductions continue and armed police are stationed day and night at key intersections in major towns. Our resident cartoonist Gado – who also illustrated Issue #219 – says this week's cover has been one of the most difficult to illustrate in his time at *The Continent*. He has attempted to capture the dread of a country on the edge of – what? No one knows for sure.

Inside

7 **Ghana:** Accra looks to Moscow for an energy boost

8 **South Africa:** Local elections have the ANC blinking hard

18 **Basketball:** Politics comes calling for Rwanda's army team

19 **Photos:** A roaring start to the Youth Olympics in Dakar

24 **Nigeria:** Lagosians dip their toes into ferry circles

27 **Review:** An 'immensely revealing' look into the stigma and enigma of Robert Mugabe

29 **Quiz:** The Fiat Tagliero filling station is not necessarily the kind of place to rule by fiat



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THE WEEK IN BRIEF



PHOTO: JIM VONDRUSKA/GETTY IMAGES

Blue waive: *Democrats are ascendant in US politics now, but unlikely to rekindle USAid.*

UNITED STATES

Don't pop the champagne just yet

Democrats have won majorities in both houses of the US Congress in midterm elections, raising hopes of checking the whims of US President Donald Trump. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa even predicts "a new era in world relations". But analysts say US-Africa policy could be more of the same. Democrats might investigate last year's dismantling of USAid, although reviving it is unlikely. Instead, health and development funding will be channelled through the state department. A former US ambassador told *Semafor* "everybody's moved on" from traditional development aid.

TECH

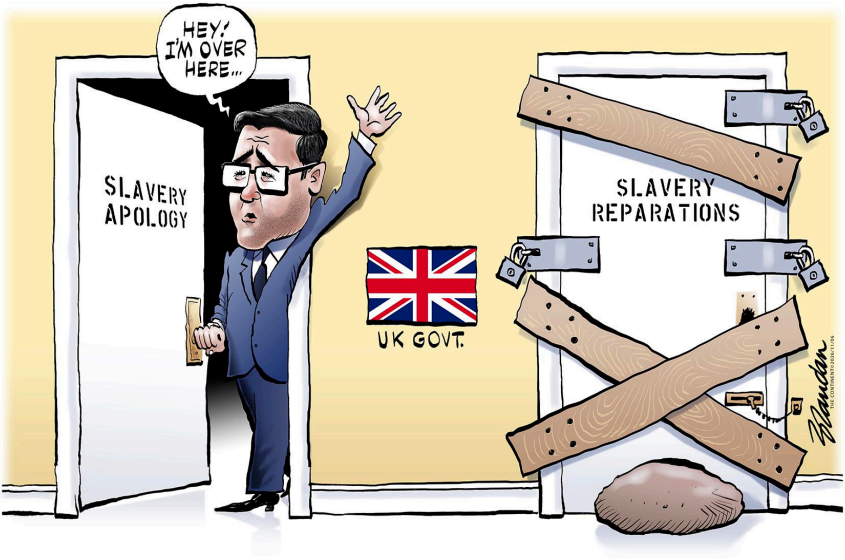
No unicorns here, just one ring to rule them all

African tech startups raised nearly $700-million in the first nine months of 2026, a 30% increase on the same period last year, according to research firm Tracxn. But the boom was largely the work of one outfit: Spiro, Africa's largest battery-swapping operator, which landed $215-million in a single funding round. Without it, overall funding would have been lower than last year. Some 200 startups worldwide were unicorn status – valued at least $1-billion. None were African.

UGANDA

Retired military chief arrested

The former deputy chief of Uganda's defence forces, General Peter Elwelu, was arrested on Monday for an alleged plot to destabilise a remote region in eastern Uganda. Security forces seized 15 guns, military uniforms, and two pickup trucks, a military spokesman said. The government has yet to provide evidence supporting the allegations. Army chief General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, President Yoweri Museveni's son, accused Elwelu of engaging in "treacherous activities".



ESPIONAGE

Contractor leaked intel to kill Tigray fighters

An Ethiopian-born American has pleaded guilty to leaking classified United States intelligence to Ethiopia, including information he hoped would help to target Tigrayan fighters during the country's 2020-2022 civil war, the *BBC* reports. Abraham Teklu Lemma, a former US contractor, admitted passing dozens of classified documents and photographs to senior Ethiopian officials over more than two years, sometimes through hand-copied notes, others as digital files. Lemma faces up to 22 years in prison under a plea agreement.

BILLIONAIRES

The rich get slightly less rich

Four African billionaires saw their estimated net worth fall by a combined $300-million on 4 November, according to the *Bloomberg* Billionaires Index. Egypt's Naguib Sawiris and Nassef Sawiris, as well as South Africa's Johann Rupert and Nicky Oppenheimer, each lost between $97-million and $50-million. The declines reflect a fall in spot valuations of their portfolios, particularly in gold and luxury goods. Meanwhile, Aliko Dangote's wealth has risen $8.84-billion this year on the back of his refinery's IPO and a continent-wide investment spree.

MOZAMBIQUE

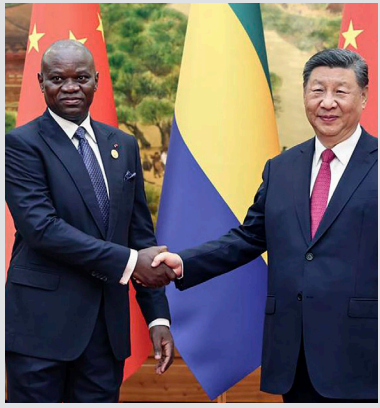
Displacement crisis worsens

More than 7,000 people have fled their homes in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province since late September after renewed violence by militants, according to the International Organisation for Migration. Most fled in the first three weeks, with 1,200 people displaced in the second half of October. Women and children made up nearly 80% of the latest arrivals. Many sought shelter in communities already struggling to accommodate families uprooted by years of insurgent violence, placing pressure on scarce resources and basic services.

FOOD

Now this is the real Pizzagate

An Italian chef in Australia was fired after refusing to put pineapple on pizza, calling it an "insult to his culture". Davide Tamburella lost his job at a Brisbane restaurant in May after several complaints about his conduct, including refusing to serve Hawaiian pizza. He challenged his dismissal before Australia's Fair Work Commission, arguing that culturally offensive instructions can be rejected. His case was dismissed owing to being filed late. He now works at another restaurant, the *BBC* reports. Pineapple is not on the menu.



Build-me-up butter-up: *Gabon's President Brice Nguema and China's leader Xi Jinping.*

GABON

Libreville wants more from Beijing

Gabonese President Brice Oligui Nguema is on his first state visit to China since taking office, beginning his five-day trip in Shanghai, *CGTN* reports. China has financed or built some of Gabon's most important public infrastructure, including its National Assembly and Senate buildings, broadcasting facilities, and hospitals in Libreville and Franceville. Nguema praised these projects, but he now wants Chinese investment to go further – creating jobs, processing minerals and timber locally, and building industrial capacity – rather than simply delivering more construction projects.



PHOTO: NARIMAN EL-MOFTY/AP

Umbrage over troubled water: *The banks of the Tekeze River, on the Sudan-Ethiopia border.*

ETHIOPIA-SUDAN

A diplomatic rupture in the Horn

Ethiopia and Sudan have shut each other's consulates near their border as relations deteriorate over accusations of interference in their respective conflicts, *Reuters* reports. Sudan says Ethiopia supports the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, and Addis Ababa accuses Khartoum of backing Tigray rebels. Both deny the allegations. The dispute has raised concerns that Sudan's civil war and tensions in northern Ethiopia could fuel a wider conflict. Sudan said on Sunday it had complained to the UN Security Council and African Union.

The (SUB)TEXT

CHRISTINE MUNGAI

In a letter signed by 625 religious leaders from more than 20 countries, African faith leaders are demanding reparations from the Gates Foundation for backing an industrial farming model that has not delivered better food security or improved farmers' incomes. Their campaign is supported by Sofia Monsalve, UN special rapporteur on the right to food. It's an unusual challenge to a foundation that has been a star of the development set. The foundation's Enock Chikava wrote in a blog post this week that: "As a longtime funder, we share responsibility." Now Gates Foundation chief executive Mark Suzman has offered to meet Francesca de Gasparis, who heads the faith leaders' organisation. De Gasparis told *The Continent* that in her letter to Suzman, she noted that his great-aunt (in African terms, grandmother) was anti-apartheid campaigner Helen Suzman: a pointed reminder that confronting unequal power and demanding accountability is part of his political inheritance. ■

NEWS

GHANA

Accra's energy drink of choice is too much vodka

The country is betting on Russian nuclear power, but financing and upkeep challenges could make for a nasty hangover.

CALEB AHINAKWAH IN ACCRA

GHANA says Russia's going to help it build a 2,000 MW nuclear power plant, but energy and policy experts are worried about how the country will pay for, maintain, and regulate the plant.

President John Mahama and Russia's leader Vladimir Putin announced the project at last week's Russia-Africa summit in Moscow.

South Africa is the only African country with a working nuclear power plant, which covers about 5% of the country's energy needs.



PHOTO: ANASTASIA BARASHKOVA/AFP

Nuclear family: *Russia's Vladimir Putin and Ghana's John Dramani Mahama in Moscow.*

Egypt has one in the works, being built by Russia's Rosatom, which should supply about 10% of national demand when it spins up operations in 2028.

Policy analyst Dr Eric Agyemang said paying for the plant would significantly affect Ghana's electricity tariffs and fiscal balance. He also questioned whether the reactor technology would suit Ghana's electricity grid.

Justice Ohene-Akoto of the Africa Sustainable Energy Centre welcomed nuclear power as a potential source of reliable, low-carbon electricity but warned against neglecting renewable energy, such as solar and wind.

He also questioned whether Ghana's existing maintenance capacity could support a facility requiring continuous technical oversight, citing maintenance challenges affecting existing power plants, transmission lines, substations, and gas facilities.

"We cannot aspire to operate a world-class nuclear power facility while retaining a third-class maintenance culture," Akoto told *The Continent.* ■

SOUTH AFRICA



PHOTO: BRENTON GEACH/GALLO IMAGES

Drawing a line: *Voters in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, queue up to cast their ballot in the 2026 elections.*

Mzansi's looking for change 'cos it ANC nothing yet

ON WEDNESDAY, millions of South Africans drove or walked through pothole-filled roads to get to their voting stations, frequently in areas without reliable water or electricity. Some crossed rivers on makeshift bridges to get there.

That makes these local elections, in part, a verdict on a government that has failed many of its people.

Early results show the African National Congress (ANC) has lost full control of the major metropolitan areas.

The big winners this week are likely to be the Democratic Alliance and ActionSA, a newer party led by former Johannesburg mayor Herman Mashaba.

Turnout has recovered from 2021's record low, when fewer than half of registered voters cast a ballot.

This time, former ANC supporters are not staying home, says analyst Paul Berkowitz. They are voting for someone else. ■

A report from *The Friday Paper*, *The Continent*'s sister publication

AGOA

Trump boots South Africa, Rwanda from trade clubhouse

But his stick's not what it once was, and his carrot's compost.

YUSUF OMOTAYO

SOUTH AFRICA and Rwanda have been removed from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa) from January 2027.

The programme, begun in 2000, offers selected African countries duty-free, preferential access to the United States market. South Africa has been a big beneficiary, exporting $1.7-billion worth of duty-free goods to the US in 2025.

In a letter obtained by *SABC News*, dated 28 October, US President Donald Trump told South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa he intended to end the country's eligibility for Agoa trade benefits. He cited corruption, concerns about international security, and Pretoria's ties to governments of concern to Washington.

South Africa has been preparing to lose its Agoa benefits amid tensions over US tariffs and sanctions, as well as Trump's claim of a "white genocide" in the country, which Pretoria rejects.

In any case, much of South Africa's trade with the US is outside Agoa. In 2025, only 10% of South Africa's exports to the US were through Agoa, down from 28% in 2024.

Rwanda, meanwhile, has been the target of many sanctions for its involvement in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Political scientist Professor Loren Landau said although the US is not the major trade partner for either country, the decision sends a strong signal about the fragmentation of US-Africa relations.

"Under the current US administration, it is unlikely that there are possibilities for restoring warm relations," he told *The Continent*. "While we all await a new administration, I would suggest they diversify their partnerships." ■



PHOTO: EVAN VUCCI/AP

Cupcake in a cheesecake factory: *Donald Trump and Cyril Ramaphosa in the Oval Office in 2025.*

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TANZANIA

One year after the darkest week, the gloom lingers

President Samia Suluhu Hassan is 12 months into a five-year term, but the country is still reeling from the violence of last year's election. And although opposition leader Tundu Lissu has been acquitted of treason, he's been found guilty of incitement. It's unclear how Tanzania will move forward.



Vigilant: *A year after the election, government critics live in fear of arbitrary arrest.* PHOTO: TONY KARUMBA/AFP

SAMMY AWAMI IN DAR ES SALAAM

ONE YEAR ON, the mere mention of her sister's name brings tears to Sofia's eyes. Maryam, she says, was killed in October last year, on her way to their cosmetics kiosk at Kariakoo market in Dar es Salaam. Sofia promised to share more, but when *The Continent* called later to confirm the appointment, she had changed her mind.

"I can't speak about it. I'm too angry," she says over the phone. "I'm afraid I'll say something wrong that could anger the government and put the rest of my family in trouble."

There has been a general unwillingness to talk. Since 29 October last year – particularly in the weeks leading up to the first anniversary of the killings – getting analysts, journalists or, most importantly, victims to comment on the violence has been almost impossible.

Maryam was one of the hundreds – by some accounts, thousands – of Tanzanians killed by security forces in the days after the October election, in which President Samia Suluhu Hassan ran all but unopposed.

By official accounts, it was a shoo-in: Hassan was declared winner with 98% of the vote. The only surprise, it seemed, came from the streets, when protests broke out on election day.

Under the cover of an internet blockade and a five-day, countrywide lockdown, security forces met the protesters – and ordinary civilians – with deadly force.

Today, the fear lingers, stoked by continued abductions and serious charges against government critics. Even ordinary civilians with no history of activism have been targeted.

The repression crosses borders, too. Two weeks ago, a Tanzanian youth activist, Twaha Mwaipaya, was abducted on the outskirts of Nairobi. He hasn't been seen since.

Diana Kamara, a Dar es Salaam-based social affairs analyst, described the current national mood as "gloomy".

"We are jaded from having lived through the killings of 29 October, only for the state to continue deflecting responsibility by blaming foreign influence and hooliganism," Kamara said.

An island of peace?

Tanzanians have long regarded their country as an island of peace, surrounded by countries that have suffered election-related unrest or are still recovering from civil war.

Many people held on to the fallacy that what happened to their neighbours, as in Kenya in 2007-08, could never occur at home. What they witnessed on election day and afterwards was beyond anything they had imagined.

Speaking last November, opposition politician Zitto Kabwe described the massacre as Tanzania's own Tiananmen Square moment, likening it to the killing of protesters in China in June 1989.

A month after the election, Hassan formed a commission of inquiry to document the violence. Witnesses



Laid to unrest: *Mourners gather for the funeral of a victim of the post-electoral violence.* PHOTO: AP

recounted people being shot in the head, neck, and back by security officers and even snipers. One elderly woman described being shot in the leg in her living room, just as she was about to prepare lunch.

The violations didn't stop there.

Reports from major cities say police forcefully collected bodies from morgues. Families were prevented from finding bodies of their kin – some even had to bury only their photographs.

That commission concluded that 518 people had been killed and 715 were missing. The full report has not been made public. But opposition groups and human-rights organisations put the toll in the thousands.

Twelve months later, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have criticised the government for failing to investigate the security forces' role properly, despite substantial evidence from victims, families, and media reports.

"A year since the election violence, families of those killed or missing are still waiting for answers and justice," Oryem Nyeko, a senior researcher in the Africa division at Human Rights Watch said in a statement. "Hassan's government should stop targeting critics and instead ensure credible investigations into disappearances and security-force abuses and hold those responsible to account."

The government maintains what happened was not protests, but co-ordinated unrest aimed at disrupting the election, which could have led to a legitimate government being overthrown.

Hassan argued early on that the force used was appropriate and proportional

and suggested the unrest was funded and mobilised by foreign elements seeking to destabilise the country.

A new commission was formed in May to investigate the criminal aspects of the protests, their planning, and execution, as well as the excessive and unlawful use of force by security forces.

But this week, at an event to swear in new leaders of a separate, permanent Human Rights Commission, Hassan tasked them with responding promptly to criticism of Tanzania's human rights record from abroad, calling it "unfair interference in the country's internal affairs".

Hope fails

Among many victims and their families, hope of credible justice has faded. Calls for fresh protests have surfaced at least three times, but none materialised.

Frustrated citizens have increasingly shifted their grief and outrage to digital spaces. On social media, announcements of death of government officials or ruling party loyalists are met with taunts or even celebration. People view these losses as a rare moment in which the regime tastes the same anguish inflicted on the public during the crackdown.

Some civil-society actors believe the government had a real opportunity to deliver accountability and genuinely foster reconciliation, but that has been squandered.

"Tanzanians had the opportunity to genuinely engage in a process of transformation: politically, socially and economically," Anna Bwana, executive director at Twaweza East Africa told



PHOTO: AP

Path unclear: *Protesters on the streets after the election, as claims of electoral irregularities gathered pace.*



I'm watching you: *A portrait of Tanzania President Samia Suluhu Hassan looms over a campaign rally ahead of last year's general election.*

PHOTO: MARCO LONGARI/AFP

The Continent. "We have not used that opportunity. The courageous leadership needed has not been shown."

Meanwhile, the government has made clear it intends to nip any protest in the bud. In urban centres, including Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, and Arusha, police in intimidating gear and armoured vehicles with flashing lightbars are stationed at almost every key intersection – day and night.

"We walk in fear of being shot dead," said Kamara. "There used to be a police post in every ward, but now there are police vehicles all around the city."

But force has not been the only response. Barely two weeks after the violence, Hassan announced a stand-alone ministry for youth affairs, tying the move to her party's pledge of eight million jobs.

The government has since launched the Youth Development Fund, which offers loans to young people, and the National Vijana Platform, a single gateway to jobs and government financing. Bwana described these efforts as "commendable, but insufficient".

"The level of economic transformation needed ... requires a stable country, visionary leadership, and a governance system that listens, responds and is willing to be open and creative," Bwana said.

What is unclear is how the country will move forward. The government says it is waiting for the report by its second commission of inquiry, which should name perpetrators and recommend measures against them.

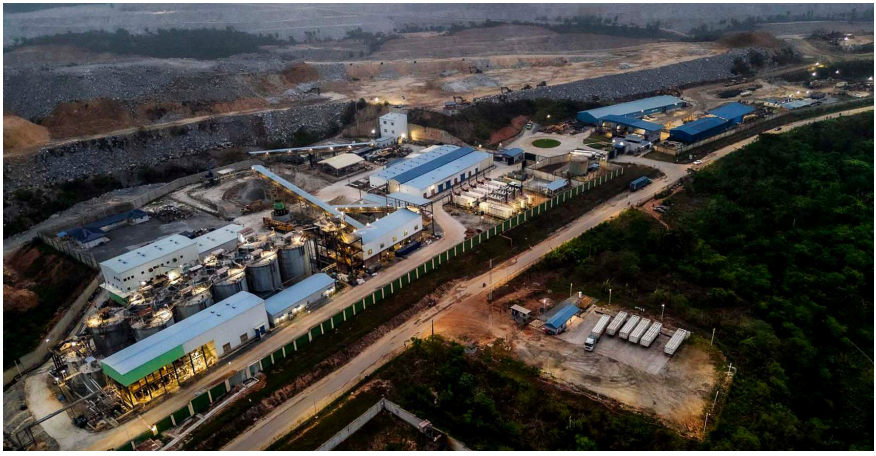
The main opposition party insists the release of its national chairperson, Tundu Lissu, is non-negotiable. Lissu was found guilty of incitement on Friday – though not of treason itself, which carries the death penalty.

Civil-society actors say much broader reform is necessary – a comprehensive criminal investigation; credible recognition of the people who lost their lives, livelihoods, and health; and a shift in the state's narrative away from vilifying foreigners – and the public. ■

FEATURE

Nigeria's biggest gold mine is making a killing

Community claims reckless blasting is damaging property. The company responsible says it's not its problem.



Ore-struck: *Satellite analysis by* Finance Uncovered *shows the Segilola gold mine, operated by Thor Explorations, has tested the limits of Nigeria's safety laws by blasting close to people's homes for years.*

OLAJIDE ADELANA IN IPERINDO

IN 2021, Segilola Gold mine opened in the Iperindo-Odo Ijesha Corridor, Osun State, in southwest Nigeria. As Nigeria's first large-scale commercial gold mine, it promised to improve the lives of the local people. A year later, a flying chunk of rock ejected during blasting killed Muyideen Adegboyega as he rode his motorcycle close to the town of Iperindo.

Since Adegboyega's death, residents have continued to live in fear. They are also at risk of losing their homes. The mine is less than 3km from Iperindo, and each blast sends shockwaves through the town, shaking houses to their foundations and leaving thick clouds of dust hanging in the air.

"I am sure within four years, if they do not stop this blasting, all the houses here will collapse," community leader Olanrewaju Olowookere told *The Continent.*

Adegboyega's death could have been avoided had Thor Explorations,

Segilola's parent company, operated within Nigeria's mining laws.

Part of the problem is Nigeria's ambiguous quarrying and blasting rules. The country's regulations state that quarries and blasting operations should not be located within 3km of an existing residential, commercial, or industrial area. But other clauses say that impacts from blasts should not cause discomfort to the public within 1,000m of the epicentre of a blast. Satellite analysis by *Finance Uncovered* shows Segilola has been blasting close to people's homes for five years.

Experts say regulations meant to ensure safe blasting distances are often poorly enforced. In Nigeria, the federal government is primarily responsible for mining oversight, with states playing a secondary role. Residents face the danger of flying rocks as well as noise pollution and potentially toxic debris contaminating the air and water. Nigeria's National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency, and the Nigeria Ministry of Solid Minerals, did not respond to requests for comment.

"The chemical they often use to blast, and the dust that often comes with it, are both destructive to people's health," said Chief Samson Aderibigbe Alayeni. He has been diagnosed with breathing problems, which he blamed on the particles released from explosions.

"When they blast, the whole of the atmosphere is filled with a white substance," said Iya Paraga, who sells drinks from her stall. "Whenever I inhale it, I cough, and I am not the only one."

Satellite images show Iperindo coated in a blanket of white dust that has settled over rooftops, roads, and farmland, blurring the outlines of houses and trees.

Thor Explorations denied its mine had caused adverse health effects and insisted all its operations "are undertaken pursuant to all applicable statutory approvals, including an approved Environmental Impact Assessment, and within the parameters approved by the relevant regulatory authorities".

The company maintained reported health symptoms did not reflect a causal relationship with its mining operations.

Since the mine opened, its operations have brought conflicting fortunes. The community is continually exposed to risk, but Thor has experienced massive financial success.

In 2025, the company's profits after tax more than doubled from a year earlier to $196-million. Its shares have soared on the Toronto Venture Exchange, rising 263% since the beginning of 2025.

Last year, Thor paid out $17.2-million in dividends to its shareholders.

As a result of this financial boom, Thor is now expanding across Nigeria. But in Iperindo, the company's success is not celebrated. Not when the blasting that underpins it hits so close to home. ■

This is an abridged version of a story supported by Finance Uncovered and the Investigative Journalism Bureau at the University of Toronto. The Pulitzer Centre provided a reporting grant

SPORT

DRC hoopla benched army ballers

Armée Patriotique Rwandaise vanished from the BAL league table– and now we know why.

REFILOE SEIBOKO

IN FEBRUARY, the Basketball Africa League (BAL) announced its 12 participating teams in the opening group play pool. Among them was Armée Patriotique Rwandaise, which is owned and funded by the Rwanda Defence Forces. The team holds the league's single-game scoring record.

Then, in March, the league announced the army team would not be participating after all. It was replaced by the RSSB Tigers, which went on to win the competition. They became the first Rwandan champions since the BAL's inaugural season in 2021.

The reason for the replacement has become clearer. Two weeks ago, United States senators Jeff Merkley and Marsha Blackburn wrote to National Basketball Association (NBA) commissioner Adam Silver. The BAL is an NBA affiliate league.

The letter questioned the NBA's continued involvement with Rwanda, despite repeated reported human-rights abuses, particularly Kigali's role in the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.



PHOTO: XXXX XXXXX

***Net win:** RSSB Tigers won for Rwanda anyway.*

The senators first raised these concerns in 2024. And both leagues have faced questions about their close relationship with Rwanda and their apparent indifference to the politics of that partnership.

This week, *ESPN* reported that NBA deputy-commissioner Mark Tatum had responded to the senators, saying the league "follows US policy in deciding where and how to operate" and "condemns human-rights violations wherever they occur".

The army team's direct military ties may have made its participation increasingly difficult to defend. This month, Washington sanctioned Rwanda's defence ministry, after earlier sanctions against its army and four senior commanders for alleged support for the March 23 Movement rebel group. Kigali denies backing the rebels. ■

PHOTO ESSAY

Thrills like teen spirit

THE YOUTH Olympics, first held in 2010, are under way in Dakar, Senegal right now – the first Olympic sporting event ever to be hosted on the continent. More than 2,500 teenage athletes from 205 nations are taking part.

Some rad new sports were introduced this year, like wushu – a style of Chinese martial arts – and ocean rowing. The games also included a youth refugee Olympic team for the first time. It's also the first edition of the games to achieve gender equality in all 73 sporting events.

In a remarkable feat, Kenya defeated favourites Australia to clinch a gold medal in the women's rugby sevens, after Michelle Chemtai scored the golden points in extra time. Madagascar won their first medal by bagging a bronze in the same event. ■



PHOTO: OLYMPICS.COM

Kenyan players celebrate after taking Australia to the cleaners in the rugby final.

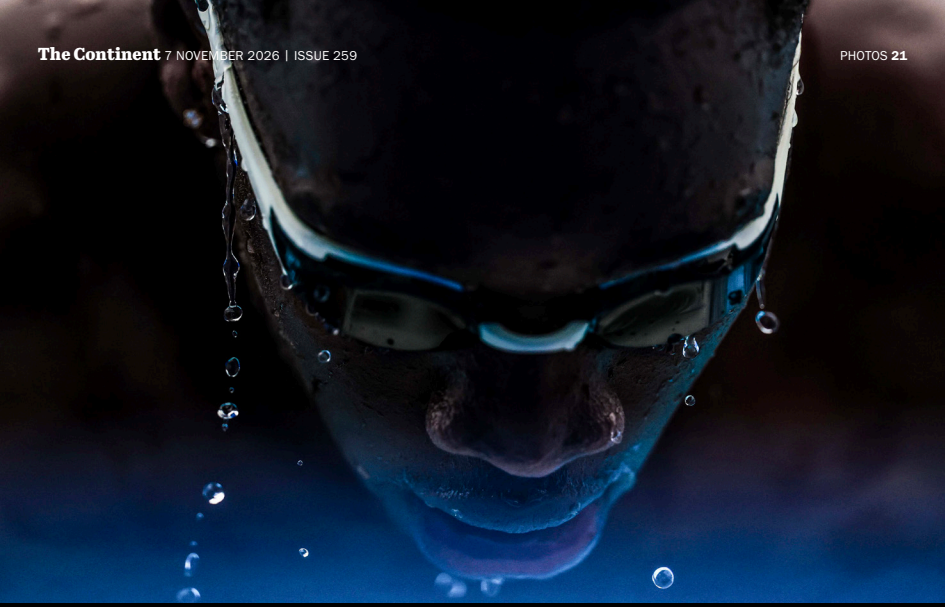




Above: *The opening ceremony of the Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games.*

Below: *Woreye Ndiaye of Senegal competes in the women's taijishan preliminary round of the wushu taijiquan combined event.* ALL PHOTOS: OLYMPICS.COM







Above: *An athlete swims during day four of the youth Olympics at CTO Dakar Aquatic Centre.*

PHOTO: FRANCOIS NEL/GETTY IMAGES

Left: *Senegalese surfer Cherif Fall surfs during an air show surfing exhibition held alongside the 2026 Dakar Youth Olympics at Virage Beach.*

PHOTO : LISA COULAUD / AFP



Left: *Ghana competes in beach volleyball.*

PHOTO: ATHLETE365



Francois Mugisha of Rwanda competes in the preliminary round of the men's changquan combined, a discipline of wushu taolu. PHOTO: FRANCOIS NEL/GETTY IMAGES



Spectators watch the skateboarding men's street final at Complexe Tour de l'Oeuf (CTO Skatepark) in Dakar. PHOTO: MARIE RUWET/AFP

DATA

What Africans think about abortion

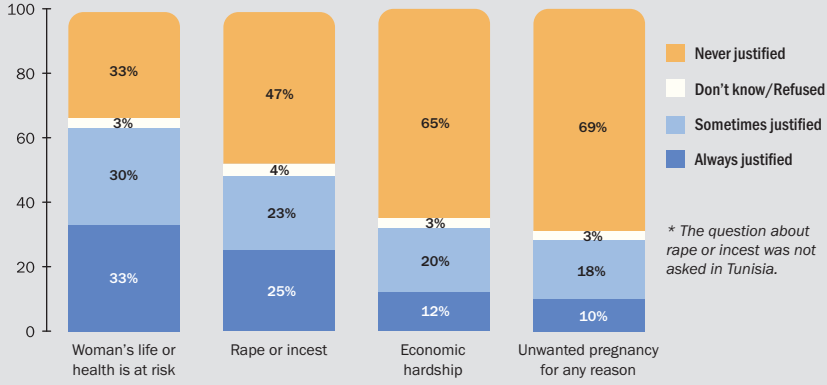
THE MAPUTO Protocol is the only international treaty that specifies a right to abortion in cases of rape, incest, or threat to a woman's life or health. Most African Union member states (46 of 55) have ratified it. Yet abortion is either outlawed or heavily restricted in most countries on the continent.

What do Africans think about abortion? A majority (63%) say abortion is "sometimes" (30%) or "always" (33%) justified if a woman's life or health is at risk. In the case of rape or incest, almost half (48%) say abortion is "sometimes" (23%) or "always" (25%) acceptable.

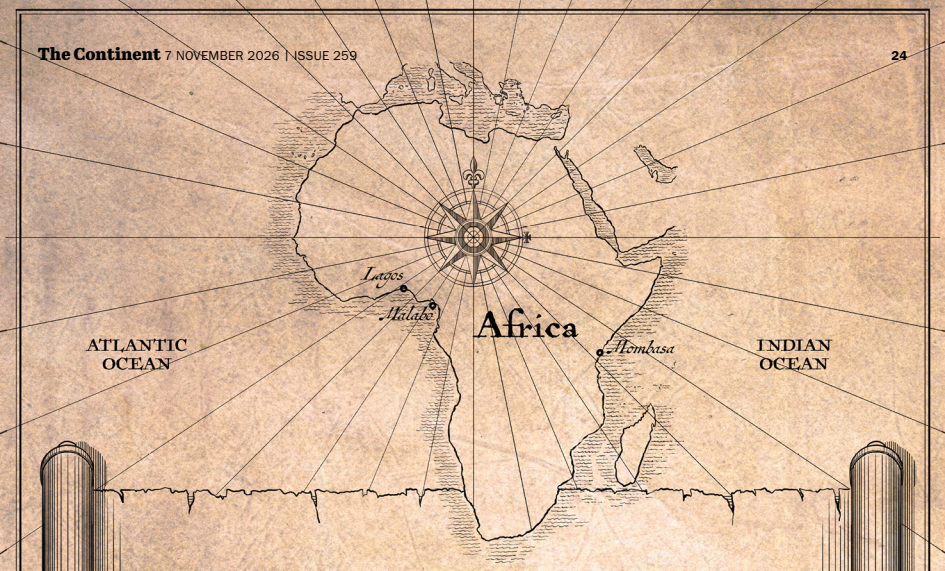
On the other hand, large majorities say abortion is "never justified" if the woman is suffering economic hardship and can't look after a child (65%) or if she doesn't want to keep the pregnancy for any reason (69%).

Surprisingly, women and men hold similar views. Respondents with post-secondary education are far more accepting of abortion than those with no formal schooling. This includes situations in which a mother's health is in danger (76% vs 51% "sometimes" or "always" justified) and rape or incest (59% vs 36%). ■

Is abortion justified? | 38 African countries* | 2024/2025



Source: Afrobarometer is a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.

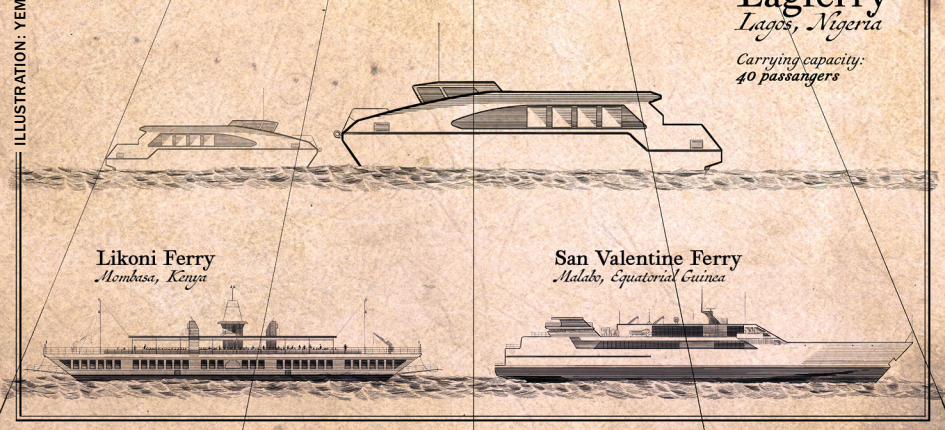


FERRY TALES

LIMITED SERIES

Curated by Gado | Story by Sodienye Kurubo

ILLUSTRATION: YEMSRACH YETNEBERK



Africa's biggest city spurns the water – but a new tide is rising

Lagos, Nigeria

SODIENYE KURUBO

FOR a city notorious for rush-hour gridlock, Lagos has been slow to embrace water transport. Ferries are expensive and infrequent. They are seen as unsafe and poorly connected to the rest of the transport system.

Lagos built its reputation on maritime commerce, yet in underserved water communities like Makoko, boats remain a necessity, not a choice. Wooden canoes paddle through aquatic streets lined with roughly hewn wooden houses and schools on stilts.

But acceptance of Lagferry, relaunched in 2020 as part of Lagos' century-old ferry system, is growing. Lagferry is a Lagos State government-owned company that runs passenger ferry services on the state's inland waterways.

At dawn, from terminals in Ikorodu, Ibeshe, and other edges of the lagoon, office workers, port hands, and traders make a queue towards the water, hoping to reach Lagos Island, Apapa, or the Marina, before the roads seize up.

Whereas the trip from Ikorodu to Ikoyi takes more than two hours by road, Lagferry's fleet crosses in about 30 minutes. But mass adoption still depends on trust. Until now, most of the crossings have been operated by private boats that lacked safety standards. In some cases, this has proved fatal.

At Falomo, after work on a typical weekday, the terminal hums with the release of Lagos' 9-to-5ers – ties loosened, suits and backpacks slung over shoulders, helmets tucked under arms.

They queue up to pay the fare with Lagos' Cowry Card, echoing an older currency of exchange along these routes. They write their names on a manifest, collect numbered tags, and wait in the air-conditioned hall. Before boarding, they put on their life vests. Nearby, the sleek boats of Lagos's nouveau riche and old money rub shoulders in the marina.

Once the boat pulls away, the bargain becomes clear. The engine growls, spray taps the windows, the wind rushes past, and Lagos' vista opens up, dominated by a dimming skyline. The ride is usually smooth, although smaller boats ask more of your nerves.

More ferries, routes, and trust could restore something precious: time to leave home later, get back earlier, and see the children before bedtime. ■

Sodienye Kurubo is a screenwriter and storyteller who also writes and edits prose. He divides his time between Port Harcourt, Lagos, and London

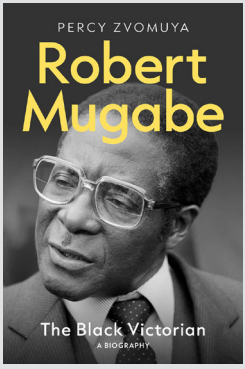


ILLUSTRATION: SHEED SORPLE



TC BOOK REVIEW

BY JACQUELINE NYATHI



Bob's his uncle

For all Mugabe's reticence, the shape of his true self emerges in a deep reading of the man by a writer from his own community.

ROBERT Mugabe: *The Black Victorian* by journalist Percy Zvomuya chronicles the life of Zimbabwe's former leader, from his humble beginnings as a goatherd at Kutama to the dramatic events that ended his rule and, ultimately, his life.

Mugabe was a freedom fighter who spent 11 years in detention for his nationalist activities. He became prime minister in 1980 and then ruled the country as an authoritarian president for more than three decades.

He was a man of contradictions who constantly reinvented himself based on the exigencies of whatever was going on around him. The real Mugabe is someone we may never truly know, as the man himself did not seem to want to be known, but Zvomuya has made a heroic attempt to unravel the enigma.

Mugabe's life is intertwined with the history of Zimbabwe. Although the book doesn't cover every aspect of these two parallel stories, it provides a valuable sketch.

It is only unfortunate that Zvomuya doesn't explore the point made by the book's title in these pages more explicitly – that Mugabe was a noted Europhile, a "Black Victorian" – although his portrayal does support this assertion.

Instead, Zvomuya places most of the focus on how Mugabe was shaped by Eurocentricity in the way he spoke and carried himself – a demeanour that tended to impress everyone who met him, Black or white.

Robert Mugabe: The Black Victorian is both immensely illuminating and an absolute pleasure to read. And for a Zimbabwean reader, the questions at its heart are deeply compelling.

How did that studious goatherd and later itinerant teacher become

such a polarising leader and obdurate enemy of the West? Why did he kill so many people along the way? Did he mean any of the things he said in his famous reconciliation speech in 1980, on winning the election that freed Zimbabwe? How did he maintain his aura of absolute power?

Was he really a Marxist? What was he like in private? What led to the coup that removed him from power? Was he lonely in his final days? Why did he become somewhat erratic? These are some of the questions Zvomuya interrogates.

Zvomuya had what looks to be unprecedented access to Mugabe's surviving relations, friends, enemies, former colleagues, former counsellors, and many more (though not his widow).

It's notable how much Zvomuya has managed to extract and write down for another reason: for decades, Zimbabwe has been a place of secrets. Zimbabweans learned that certain topics were off-limits and talking was sometimes punishable by death.

Some of Zvomuya's interlocutors would have been quite nervous to reveal what they did. Perhaps for this reason, the people who would and should have written Zimbabwe's history down – including the nationalists who made it – mostly did not.

Mugabe was a slippery and famously reticent character who left no memoirs through which we might peer into his soul. And yet Zvomuya's book is immensely revealing.

It also has the advantage of cultural knowledge. Zvomuya not only belongs to the same community as Mugabe, the Zezuru, but grew up in a rural area neighbouring Mugabe's Zvimba. His deep cultural knowledge, including the sharing and explanation of Zezuru customs and idioms, is brought to bear in his analysis.



Stiff upper lip: *Robert Mugabe, then the prime minister of Zimbabwe, and his first wife Sally ahead of a reception with Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in London, in May 1982.*

This is a book that must take a well-deserved place among the world's most important biographies. Zvomuya has done admirable and comprehensive work.

Again, we will likely never fully understand Robert Mugabe, but Zvomuya's biography is the first to reveal a much clearer, more rooted picture of this forever controversial figure. ■

The Quiz

1. Burkina Faso is a coastal country: True or false?
2. Which country was known as "Portuguese Guinea" in colonial times?
3. What is the demonym for people from Mali?
4. Which country was known as "French Guinea" in colonial times?
5. In which country is the Fiat Tagliero filling station (pictured), completed in 1938, located?
6. Which two countries will be excluded from Agoa from 2027?
7. Which city is currently hosting the Youth Olympics?
8. Who is the president of the DRC?
9. True or false: Lagos is Nigeria's second largest city.
10. What is the capital of Tanzania?



HOW DID I DO?

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

0-3

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

4-7

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

8-10

"It's true that this country is ruled by fiat but that doesn't *necessarily* mean it's run from this petrol station."

Big Pic

Heavenly holiday home: At 70m long by 30m wide, the Temple of Zeus at Cyrene on Libya's northern coast, built in roughly 500 BCE, is larger than the Parthenon in Athens and the Temple of Zeus at Olympia in Greece. But who's counting?

PHOTO: ABDULLA DOMA/AFP



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