

The Continent



**Another exodus
out of Egypt**

Illustration: Yemsrach Yetneberk



Cover: Time changes everything – and often in ways that hurt. Cairo, long the beating heart of Arab culture, is getting anxious. Gulf states are throwing billions to whoever will help them evolve past ‘petrostates’ to cultural powerhouses, prompting Arab creatives to reinvent themselves, and iconic cultural symbols made in Egypt, to appeal to fans across the Red Sea. Is there an afterlife for passé cultural hubs? (p14)

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PHOTOS

This season in our pages, seven photographers will each share their unique view of the African city they call home, and what it means to them, in a limited series called *We Built This City* (p21). We would also love to hear from you. What would you like us to explore and share with the world about your city? Email your thoughts to photos@thecontinent.org

MAURITANIA

Locked-up leader to languish longer

A Mauritanian appeals court on Wednesday extended former president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz's prison sentence from five to 15 years and imposed a \$3-million fine, *Africanews* reports. Aziz became Mauritania's president in a 2008 coup and remained in power until an election in 2019. He was found guilty of money laundering and illicit self-enrichment at his 2023 trial, which he appealed. The prosecution also appealed, deeming the five-year sentence too lenient. Now, the higher court has increased it.



Washed out: Mauritania's former president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was convicted of money-laundering.

Photo: Lintao Zhang - Pool/Getty Images

ZAMBIA

Barbed ire over aid cuts and drug theft

Zambia's foreign minister has warned diplomats against interfering in the country's affairs, days after the United States ambassador raised concerns about the "systematic theft" of donated drugs, *BBC* reports. Mulambo Haimbe said there was a growing trend of envoys bypassing diplomatic channels. Last week the ambassador, Michael Gonzales, announced the US was cutting \$50-million in health aid to Zambia over the theft, saying he went public after more than 30 unsuccessful meetings with senior Zambian officials.

GAMBIA

'Max pressure' for Trump's sugar daddy

A *ProPublica* investigation has revealed that United States officials waged a campaign to push Gambia to accept Starlink, Elon Musk's satellite internet firm. The diplomats browbeat Gambian ministers as part of a "maximum pressure" campaign. Analysts say the departure from standard diplomatic practice reeks of crony capitalism. Musk spent \$300-million to get Donald Trump elected US president again. US officials also reportedly intervened on Musk's behalf in Djibouti, Cameroon and Lesotho.

NIGERIA

Do democracy, or else

The National Assembly is considering a bill that would make voting mandatory for all eligible voters in Nigeria. While controversial, the bill has passed its

second reading. Proponents argue it will instil a sense of civic responsibility in a country where voter turnout in the 2023 election was just 30%. Critics oppose the bill, saying it misses the real message — eligible voters who sit out the polls are expressing a lack of trust in the elite, which is political self-expression in itself.



Spoiled for choice: A voter in Port Harcourt casts her ballot in Nigeria's 2019 elections.

Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP

MOROCCO

Deadly measles wave sparks max vax drive

Since late 2023, more than 25,000 suspected measles cases and at least 184 deaths have been recorded in Morocco's worst outbreak in years. It began in the Souss Massa region but has since spread to all 12 regions of the country. Children under 18 account for nearly 70% of reported cases. To curb the spread, Morocco's health ministry launched a nationwide vaccination campaign, targeting all children and encouraging adults to get immunised, *Africanews* reports.

LIBERIA

Top doc is not even an actual doctor

Liberia's top doctors' association leader has been banned from practising medicine after regulators found no evidence that he had graduated with a degree in medicine. The Liberia Medical and Dental Council revoked Peter Matthew George's licence after a qualifications audit, saying he had failed to prove that he graduated in medicine from the United Kingdom's University of Hertfordshire as he had claimed, and noted that that university doesn't even offer a medical degree.

BURKINA FASO

Scores dead in insurgent attack

At least 100 people were reportedly killed by insurgents in the northern town of Djibo on Sunday. According to the *Associated Press*, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin claimed responsibility. The attack happened days after junta leader Captain Ibrahim Traoré returned from Moscow where he held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin who has provided military support since the country's breakup with France. Separately, Human Rights Watch has accused government forces of killing at least 130 people near the town of Solenzo in March.



Putin it out there: Burkina Faso's junta leader, Ibrahim Traoré, salutes next to Russia's President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. Photo: Nao Mukadi/AFP

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Same old Thiam, just a new paint of Côte

Tidjane Thiam resigned as the leader of his party on Monday only to run unopposed for the same position on Wednesday. The move was meant to thwart a court ruling that annulled his leadership – and his eligibility to run in the October presidential elections – saying the former Credit Suisse CEO was a French citizen, not Ivorian, when he became party leader. Thiam took French citizenship in 1987 but renounced it in March 2025. Running in the Wednesday party election, Thiam was a citizen of Côte d'Ivoire. Only.

NIGER

French mine lawyers up over detentions

French uranium miner Orano has filed a lawsuit over the “arbitrary arrest, illegal detention” of its staff and “unjust confiscation of property” by Nigerien authorities. *Reuters* reports that security forces raided and interrogated staff at local Orano subsidiaries, detained a director, Ibrahim Courmo, and are blocking access to its offices in Niamey. The military government also took control of the Somair mine in December. Neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso have also tightened control over foreign mining operations in recent months.



Bill of wrongs: Anas Aremeyaw
Anas, with his face obscured during
an interview about his BBC exposé.
 Photo: Cristina Aldehuela/AFP

GHANA

Defamation award drops from millions to just a few hundred

While maintaining the finding that former Ghanaian legislator Kennedy Agyapong defamed journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas, a US court has reduced the damages earlier awarded from \$18-million to \$500. Anas told *GBC Online* that the ruling is still a victory for truth. Agyapong labelled Anas a “criminal” after his company did a documentary exposé for the *BBC* in which Ghanaian football managers accepted bribes from undercover journalists in secretly filmed sting operations. Anas sued the MP in Ghana (unsuccessfully) and in New Jersey where Agyapong owns a house.

SOMALIA

Voters to make their own mark, at last

Somalia has wrapped up its first national voter registration in 50 years. Up next are local elections later in June. For the first time in decades, Somalis will choose leaders in a one-person, one-vote election. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud pledged in 2023 to move Somalia away from clan-based voting. The country last held direct elections in March 1969 but six months later, Siad Barre took power in a coup and ruled until 1991 when his fall plunged Somalia into the decades-long civil war it is still recovering from.

GUINEA

‘Elections! We mean it this time (maybe)’

Guinea, where a military group led by Mamady Doumbouya seized power in a 2021 coup, will hold elections in December. So said the country’s prime minister, Amadou Oury Bah, at the Africa CEO Forum held this week in the Ivorian city of Abidjan. Earlier promises to hold elections – including a promised vote late last year – were not fulfilled. As a precursor to the elections, the country will hold a referendum on 21 September, *Reuters* reports, to decide whether Doumbouya can run for the country’s presidency.

DRC

Seizing is easy, ruling is harder

Ajabu Adolphe in Goma

Four months after seizing Goma, the M23 coalition is still struggling to take control of this city of nearly two million people. The city is awash with small arms and the thousands of former prisoners who escaped from Munzenze Prison in the chaos of Goma's fall to M23.

The result is a tenuous calm that is frequently interrupted by robberies, burglaries and raids by violent criminals. In the words of one Goma resident, Prisca Kanyere, living in the city is like a subscription that is "renewable every 24 hours" because "to sleep and wake up alive is a very exceptional grace in these times".

M23 military spokesperson Willy Ngoma acknowledges the insecurity but blames Kinshasa, claiming that the small arms flooding Goma were distributed or abandoned by the Congolese national army as they left their posts in January.

Ngoma told *The Continent* that M23 had organised cordon-and-search operations in several parts of Goma this week, and seized dozens of weapons and



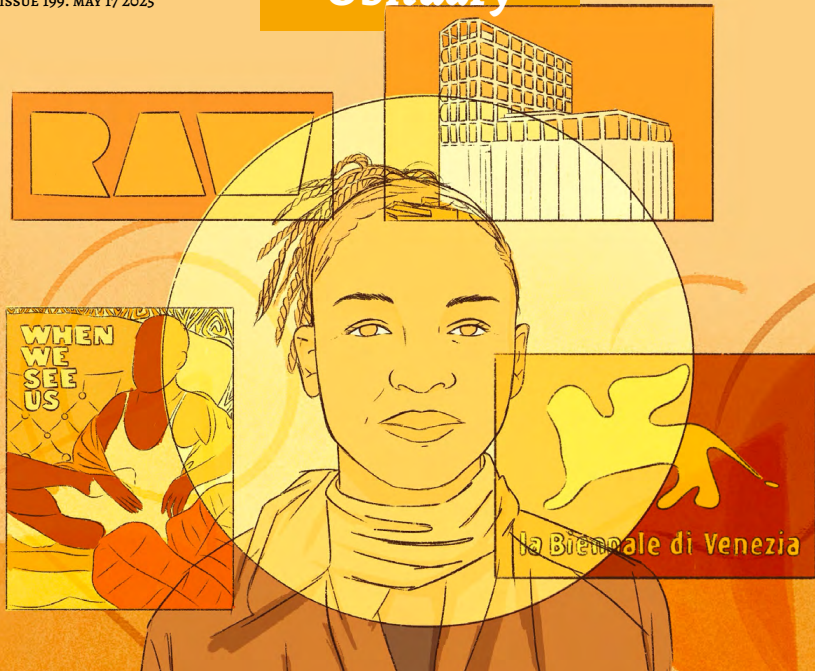
Turf war: An M23 soldier watches over a group of prisoners at a stadium in Goma. Photo: Jospin Mwisha/AFP

arrested several suspected criminals.

The closure of the airport is another headache for the residents of Goma. The last flights out of Goma International Airport were on 26 January, as M23 marched into the town. The airport's control tower, tarmac and other infrastructure were destroyed in the fighting, rendering it inoperable.

Goma residents are now forced to travel to neighbouring countries for flights – including what would be domestic DRC travel – incurring additional costs and complicated logistics.

"I had to take an Ethiopian Airlines flight from Kigali to Addis before getting to Kinshasa. I paid for the hotel in Kigali for two days. It was a long journey," said James Ushindi, a Goma resident. Before January, he would have flown directly from Goma to Kinshasa. ■



Koyo Kouoh, 1967-2025

Words and illustration: Wynona Mutisi

Curators, of all the world's storytellers, have a unique way of collating ideas, thoughts and experiences to give language to artists' work, in a beautiful and almost magical process.

With depth and academic rigour, Koyo Kouoh told the stories of our diverse, magnificent and culturally rich continent to the world. Whether it was through the art institutions she taught at or the events she curated, Africa was the centre.

Kouoh was a leader who made space to celebrate the continent's brilliant minds

and boundless creativity. From founding RAW Material Company, a Dakar art space and residency, to overseeing the world's largest museum of contemporary African art at Zeitz MOCCA in Cape Town.

The art community eagerly looked forward to seeing her vision for the Venice Art Biennale of 2026. She won't be here to curate it as planned. But she did spend her lifetime mentoring the next generation African artists, and her ideas did not die with her. Many will carry her torch and take Africa to the world. ■

United States

America's favourite Africans

Simon Allison in Johannesburg

In 1835, thousands of white settlers – the Voortrekkers – began what is known today as the Great Trek. This was the great migration of Afrikaners from the Cape Colony into the rest of South Africa.

On Sunday evening, 49 of their descendants embarked on what bemused South Africans are describing as “the Klein Trek”, or little trek: a charter flight from Johannesburg direct to Washington DC. Others are describing it as “The Great Tsek” – and the group of so-called refugees as the Voetsekkers (“Voetsek” translates loosely as “piss off” in Afrikaans).

In the United States, the travelling group was greeted with balloons and speeches by senior officials in President Donald Trump’s administration, which paid for their flight.

They are the first beneficiaries of Trump’s executive order to provide refugee status to Afrikaners who “are victims of unjust racial discrimination”.

This week, Trump clarified what he meant by this, claiming that there is a “genocide” of white people, in particular

Afrikaners, in South Africa.

This is news to most people in the country, where – three decades on from the end of apartheid – the average white person is still 20 times wealthier than the average black person. Rates of violent crime are high, but do not disproportionately impact white people.

Refugees from places like Sudan and Gaza are not being afforded a similar welcome in the US.

South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa is scheduled to meet his American counterpart in the White House next week. Ramaphosa was involved in the struggle against apartheid, and in the negotiations that ushered in the new South Africa, so it will not be the first time that he has had to confront a president with white supremacist sympathies. ■



Resettlers: The first group of Afrikaner ‘refugees’ has arrived in the United States. Photo: Saul Loeb/AFP

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South Africa

Kill them with silence

Chris Sassman
in Cape Town

The US government has slashed its aid to South Africa, from which came as much as 17% of the country's funds for HIV care and prevention. Services are collapsing as a result. *Reuters* reports that viral load testing for key groups has fallen by 21% in the past two months. But President Cyril Ramaphosa and Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi appear eager to speak about anything except HIV, while infighting in the ruling coalition, between the top two parties, dominates national headlines. Ahead of municipal elections, politicians are focused on saving face – not lives.



Mozambique

Militants launch desperate raids on Cabo Delgado

Luis Nhachote in Maputo

Jihadist insurgents are escalating their attacks in northern Mozambique, with two incidents reported in Cabo Delgado and Niassa provinces in recent weeks.

One attack early this month targeted soldiers of the Rwanda Defence Force in Cabo Delgado's Ntotwe village. Three Rwandan soldiers were reportedly killed.

The Islamic State Mozambique Province (ISMP) claimed responsibility for this attack, releasing rare footage of the bodies of the dead on its propaganda networks. Local sources say that the insurgents also seized two RPG-7 rocket launchers.

Insurgent attacks are now extending further into the centre and south of Cabo Delgado, particularly the districts of Ancuabe and Balama.

In Niassa province, a South African-owned tourism resort on the banks of the Lugenda River was looted and some of its structures were razed. Militants took or destroyed fuel, food, protective clothing, vehicles, spare parts, communication equipment, water pumps and solar systems at the Chapungu-Kambako Safaris camp.

"It's devastating to see 20 years of

hard work and dedication turn to ashes in a single day," Jumbo Moore, one of the Chapungu-Kambako owners, told local press. Customers with bookings at the raided camp are being redirected to properties the company runs in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Insurgent attacks are now extending into the centre and south of Cabo Delgado, particularly the districts of Ancuabe and Balama.

The Niassa Special Reserve in which the raided camp is located is at the provincial border with Cabo Delgado.

The attackers killed two reserve inspectors and another two are still missing. Another camp in the reserve, Mariri Sport Hunting Camp, also reported an attack in late April.

"This episode represents a worrying expansion of the conflict that has ravaged the north of the country, now reaching one of Mozambique's most important conservation areas," said a statement from Niassa Carnivore Project, a group working to conserve African wild dogs and other large meat eaters in the reserve.



Torched: A house lies in ashes after an attack on Pule village in Cabo Delgado by militants last year that left nine dead. The Islamic State Mozambique Province has been venturing deeper into the region in recent weeks. Photo: Juan Luis Rod/AFP

The project recalled staff from the camp following the two attacks.

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Gas-rich Cabo Delgado has been facing Islamic State attacks since October 2017. In 2021, more than 2,000 Rwandan troops were sent into the province to fight back and secure the area where French oil giant TotalEnergies has a natural gas exploration

project. The recent attacks came just a few months after the Rwandan army sent a new contingent to the region, as reported attacks were increasing.

The ISMP is trying to raise funds through the renewed attacks, says Crisis Group, a non-profit which monitors conflict around the world. This push may be linked to Islamic State's setbacks in Somalia. The Somalia arm of the Islamic State distributed funds to affiliates throughout Africa, including to those in northern Mozambique. As Somalia financing dries up, the outcrops are resorting to looting and extortion raids. ■



Out of Egypt: Art flows where the money goes

Arab artists are leaning east towards the Gulf states, which are pouring billions of dollars into culture to push past their 'petrostate' image on the world stage. It's hurting feelings in Cairo.

Photo: Khaled Desouki/AFP

Fatma El-Zahraa Badawy in Cairo

T*aàraf Tetkalleem Baladi*, a classic song that debuted in a film by Egyptian director Youssef Chahine, says that “if you speak Baladi ... and live the modern dream, then you are definitely Egyptian”. When Tunisian singer Latifa and Egyptian poet Gamal Bekheit performed the song in Dubai last October, they kept the tune but not the lyrics. Most controversially, they changed “then you are definitely Egyptian” to “then you are definitely Arab”. Uproar about the “Gulfisation” of Egyptian art promptly ensued in Cairo.

A year earlier, Egyptian singer Mohamed El Helw had caused similar uproar when, at a concert in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, he replaced Alexandria with Saudi Arabia in a praise song. The Jeddah crowd was thrilled, but in Egypt he faced so much backlash that the musicians’ union

put out a statement defending El Helw’s right to change words in his own songs.

In Cairo, the two incidents were seen as part of an emerging and troubling trend: rebranding “iconic Egyptian cultural symbols in ways that obscure their origins and reassign their success to other nations, not just as patrons, but as original sources,” says writer and literary critic Hadeel El-Berry.

She speaks to a wider sense of Egyptian loss. For much of the 20th century, Egypt has been the beating heart of Arab culture. Today, however, it is increasingly overshadowed by the Gulf states.

New money trumps old

In the latter half of the 20th century, Cairo’s cinema and music ruled screens and airwaves in the Middle East. Egyptian luminaries like Umm Kulthum and Sayed Darwish inspired creators and listeners across the region. Egyptian literature, theatre and broadcast media shaped



Heyday: Posters of famous Egyptians
at the al-Azbakeya market in Cairo.

Photo: Mohamed El-Shahed/AFP

Arab identity. In the post-World War II era, Egypt welcomed Armenians, Greeks, Italians, and other exiled or persecuted foreigners whose diverse tastes and talents enriched its artistic scene.

“A relatively stable economy nurtured creativity and Cairo became a haven for artists from across the region, partners in a cultural renaissance spanning literature, cinema, and publishing,” explains contemporary visual artist Mohamed Abla.

Today, the Arab states across the Red Sea from Cairo are eager to diversify their own economies and international stature, beyond being linked to oil. They are pouring billions of dollars into their cultural and creative sectors, wooing Egyptian creators to their scenes and tastes.

Saudi Arabia – which didn’t have a culture ministry until 2019 – now has a mega culture development fund that includes at least \$20-billion to attract foreign collaborators.

Neighbouring Dubai introduced the world’s first long-term cultural visa in 2019 to encourage creators to settle there. Under the scheme, Arab and global creatives can get up to ten years of residency without needing a local sponsor. The Louvre Abu Dhabi opened in 2017. Floating on an island in the Doha harbour is the iconic – if just 17 years old – Museum of Islamic Art. At the site where Saudi Arabia found its first commercial oilfield now stands the Ithra (or the King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture). Opened just eight years ago, the 80,000m² complex includes a museum,



**Another night:
Tunisian
singer Latifa
in Carthage.
Photo: Ferhi
Belaid/AFP**

cinema, theatre, exhibition halls and a library which holds half a million texts.

The Gulf states want to build their creative economies to a level that Egypt has already attained: contributing at least 3% of national GDP. Saudi Arabia hopes that its cultural sector will generate \$20-billion in revenue by 2030 and create 100,000 jobs. In Egypt, an economy that is less than a third of Saudi Arabia, the culture ministry alone employs up to 39,000 state artists and cultural workers and the wider creative sector generates more than \$11-billion a year.

But Gulf states’ investment is big money flowing now, while Egypt’s is old money sunk in existing, and in some cases badly aging, cultural infrastructure and institutions. Cyclic political and economic crises mean that Cairo is not reinvesting enough to keep up. Last year, the Egyptian government cut public spending across all sectors by 15%.

So, creators are following the money – out of Egypt. Or at least tweaking lyrics.

What now?

Abla cautions against interpreting the talent migration as a cultural defeat for Egypt. “Art is not confined to its place of origin; it evolves with context. The movement of artists doesn’t mean Egypt is losing its place but reflects a natural interaction between cultures,” he says.

In his view, Egyptian creativity is going through a transformation akin that of other once-dominant cultural capitals like Paris. He also says that there is something to celebrate in the fact that the Gulf states are throwing money at Egyptian creatives. They recognise “the immense value of Egyptian artists” raised in a culturally rich tradition and are eager to incorporate that into their emerging initiatives, he says.

Not everyone sees the shift as a natural evolution rather than Egyptian failure. In recent years, inflation and cost-of-living pressures have slashed individual


spending on cultural and recreational activities. In early 2024, for instance, spending on cinemas fell to \$4.4-million from \$15-million a year earlier.

Literary critic Shaaban Youssef says the government hasn’t done enough to cushion the cultural sector from these dips. “The government doesn’t treat culture as a priority,” he says. “Writers and artists are left without real support.”

Even then, all is not lost yet, according to El-Berry, the writer and literary critic. Egypt “retains the essential ingredients for a cultural resurgence,” she says.

In her view, “through strategic partnerships with Gulf states, Cairo is attempting to recalibrate the regional artistic landscape while preserving its historical identity as the region’s cultural heartbeat”. ■

This article is published in collaboration with Egab



A new tune: Saudis attend a music concert in Riyadh.
Photo: Fayeze Nureldine/AFP



Step off: Malian police monitor the crowds as pro-junta and pro-democracy demonstrators gather in Bamako on 3 May. Photo: AFP

Goïta's silencing of political voices strains Mali's limits

Beverly Ochieng

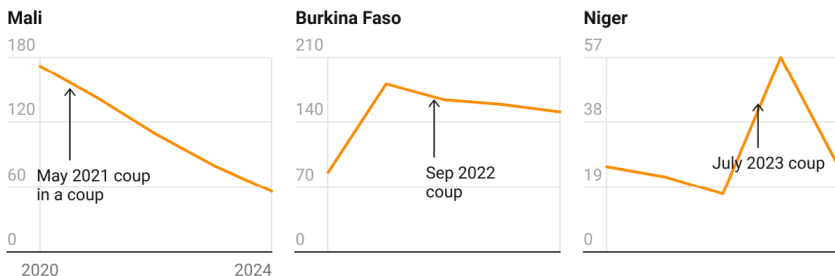
The jury is still out on what military rule has done for or to general life in Mali, but its effect is undebatable in one aspect: public displays of disaffection. Demonstrations – including non-political ones – have steadily fallen from more than 170 in 2020 before General Assimi Goïta came to power to just 56 last year. So, when hundreds of Malians held an explicitly political rally in Bamako on 3 May, it was a momentous occasion. The government's reaction proved that much.

The rally at Palais de Culture was only the third public protest to demand for a return to constitutional order since Goïta took power in May 2021. This was not for

want of protestable moments: elections initially scheduled for February 2024 never happened; military rule was extended to 2027; the junta cancelled a 2015 peace deal with separatists; and violent attacks by insurgents have expanded into west and south Mali. Bottled-up rage was palpable at the 3 May rally.

The protest was provoked by recommendations – from a rushed dialogue process that was boycotted by opposition parties in April – to dissolve political parties and elevate Goïta's status, without an election, from interim leader to president for a five-year renewable term. The recommenders claimed that this would align Mali with the transition charters in the Alliance of Sahel States,

Public demonstrations in Sahel countries under military rule



Source: ACLED | Created with Datawrapper

a coalition with neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger where military rule was extended to 2029 and 2030 respectively. The cabinet approved the measures but, at the time of the rally, Parliament had not.

Hard clampdown

Security forces and young people dressed in the colours of the Malian flag disrupted the pro-democracy gathering at Palais de Culture, triggering calls for further protests on 9 May. This time, the government reacted pre-emptively: State security agents carried out a series of arrests, a tactic they have used increasingly to quell protests before they take place.

Alhassane Abba – the secretary-general of a political party called Convergence for the Development of Mali (Codem) and a former member of Parliament – was arrested at his home on 8 May. El Bechir Thiam, a young member of another party, Yelema, was arrested at a market.

Another Codem activist, Abdoul Karim Traoré, was arrested on 11 May while organising protests against the arrests of Abba and Thiam. Two other activists said they managed to evade

security agents, while a leading figure of the pro-democracy movement, Chieck Oumar Diarra, who is already charged with “political disturbance”, was reportedly stabbed at his home.

On 9 May itself, the Parliament formally and indefinitely banned all political parties and their activities “to maintain public order”. Shortly afterwards, on 13 May, Goïta dissolved all political parties, effectively dismantling more than three decades of multi-party democracy.

Still, not everybody is sad about that. One activist group, Yerewolo, which campaigned for French and UN forces to leave Mali, has already acquiesced to the latest ban. Yerewolo is part of a new crop of activist groups that have sprung up during Gen Goïta’s time to lend authenticity to calls for prolonged military rule.

Another notable group in this category is the Collective for the Defence of the Military, or CDM. Many public demonstrations of the past four years have been organised by groups like these, to show solidarity with the military government, supporting measures to restrict the media, civic and political space.



A vicious cycle of elite fears

Until the ban on political parties, expectations were high that 2025 would be the year Mali held elections.

Some funds for the electoral process were allocated in the national budget last September, and several opposition activists were freed from jail in October. In February, the electoral commission completed its revision of the voters' roll. These were all signs that politics might return to normal. The latest star to align was in a March survey by Afrobarometer: nearly half of Malians said they would vote for Goïta if an election was held. What better time than now?

However, power struggles within Goïta's inner circle appear to be in a deadlock. The five coup leaders, including Goïta, seem unable to agree on who among them will vie for the presidency. Military setbacks in the north and the expansion of militant activity to the south and west have

added to the disagreements. And despite outward shows of unity, Goïta and his defence minister, General Sadio Camara, are said to be at odds.

When the putschists mark the fourth anniversary of Goïta's coup within a coup next Saturday, the air will be thick with suspicion. Not far from anyone's mind will be the possibility that a faction amongst them might exploit the current resurgence of pro-democracy demands to stage another "intervention".

That fear could then manifest as even more control of the political space.

Having cleaved the country from the political oversight of peers in the regional bloc Ecowas, the military government has only itself, its friends among the Sahel states, and perhaps this resurging pro-democracy movement to regulate its actions. ■

Beverly Ochieng is a Sahel and Francophone Africa analyst based in Dakar



SERIES

The strange sadness of Algiers

Words and photos: Fethi Sahraoui

Albert Camus, born in Drean, Algeria, is one of the world's most-read French writers. But in Algeria, where I went to school, his name was not on the curriculum. Censorship or denial? Life is absurd indeed.

I don't remember when I first came across Camus. Was it in the long conversations about cinema and literature that we had around delicious food growing up at my grandma's place?

It might have been through a photograph. That iconic Camus portrait by Henri Cartier Bresson.

Two years ago, during a residency in the Baltic Sea, the University of Corte gave me a simple yet very complex assignment: interpret Camus's essay *Nuptials* (Noces-L'été) through photography for its translation to the Corsican language.

I was tempted by the chance to photograph my adoptive city Algiers,

and the Roman ruins of Tipaza, which I had yet to see but had read about. But I also had many tormenting questions about the writer, myself and photography as a medium.

Camus didn't extensively discuss photography but his reflections on the illusion of absolute truth challenge us on the possibilities and limitations of the medium.

Photography works in the same way: showing us reality, but just part of it. How do we, for example, visually narrate a place like Algiers while away from it, homesick in exile or on a trip?

I had no intention of finding a satisfying answer, but asking the question was already an important step for my practice.

Reality is complex and constantly evolving. The intricacy of my mission resided in avoiding a contrast between

the past and present. It goes without saying that Algiers' social fabric radically changed after the country's independence in 1962. It felt irrelevant to chase nostalgia. I preferred to focus my visual narrative on the present.

In Tipaza, I saw joyful people, families, and couples on vacations under the burning sun of the ruins, but the image that stayed with me most was a moment for which photography was inappropriate: a man sobbing like a small child. Would you write about this or would it be just an insignificant life event to you?

In the end, this conversation with Algiers is a work in progress. A legitimate excuse to question my relationship with Camus, Algiers and photography itself as a medium.

An introspection that I have always fled from. ■

















We Built This City is a limited series of photo essays by *The Continent* on African cities. This season, seven photographers will each share their unique view of the city they call home, and what it means to them. We would also love to hear from you. What would you like us to explore and share with the world about your city? Send your thoughts to photos@thecontinent.org

Let's connect sometime

Many of us take our phones and their internet connections for granted. But just how connected is Africa as a whole? It's a pertinent question on World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (17 May).

Across 30 countries that Afrobarometer has tracked consistently since 2011, we find that daily or weekly internet use has tripled from 14% in 2011/2013 to 44% in 2021/2023. Cellphone use, however, is at the same level as in 2014/2015, perhaps suggesting that saturation has been reached.

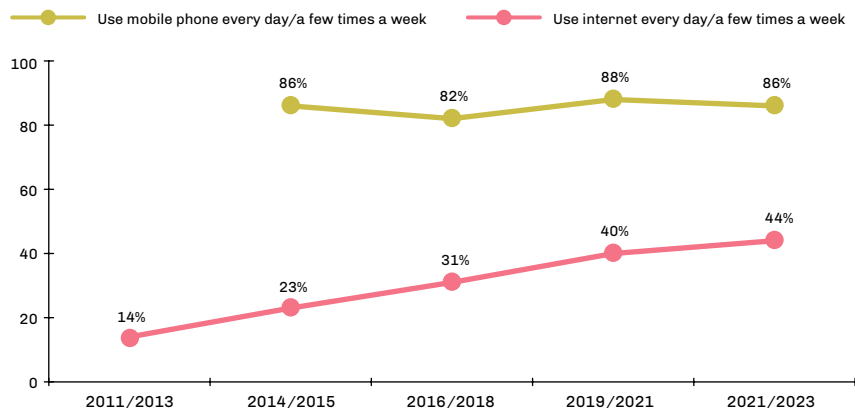
Some countries are more connected than others: 81% of Mauritians regularly

go online, more than four times the share of Ugandans (17%), Malawians (19%), Nigeriens (19%), and Tanzanians (20%).

Internet use also shows large discrepancies across demographic groups. Fewer than three in 10 frequently access the internet among rural residents (29%), the elderly (29%), and the poor (24%), compared to majorities among urban residents (62%), youth (52%), and the well-off (72%). Gaps in mobile use are much smaller.

All told, it means that *The Continent* isn't readily available to more than half of adults on the continent. We'll keep the home fires burning 'til they get here. ■

Use mobile/internet at least a few times a week | 30 African countries | 2011-2023



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 to 2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.



Music Review

Wilfred Okiche

Fifth time's the charm

Davido's latest album *Five* is packed with vibes, delivering a (mostly) fun ride into Afropiano, the new, hybrid genre du jour.

Nigerian pop star Davido is arguably the least forward-thinking of afrobeats' big three (or four – let's get Rema in there). He certainly is a strategic gleaner who can put his own spin on established pop culture to craft the perfect hit. But he is a less sure bet for making a significant album length body of work. That said, his latest album promises a good time and mostly delivers.

Departing from the chronology theme of the last three records (*A Good Time*, *A Better Time* and *Timeless*), Davido's fifth studio record is unsuitedly titled *Five*.

It's a solid, invigorating record that plays on Davido's strengths as a charming man of the people. (His exuberant personality has always helped him connect with the man on the street, despite coming from a background of immense privilege.)

Two of the singles (*Awuke* and *Funds*)



preceded *Five*'s April release and pointed to the sonic direction of the record. It is all afrobeats log drums and bouncy synths but by way of amapiano's basslines and slinky piano melodies. "Afropiano" is what the streets are calling this subgenre these days.

The South African connection is strong here. *Funds* with ODUMODUBLVCK and Chike samples Brenda Fassie's classic *Vulindlela* and the result is extra pleasant, delivering the catchy line, "mismanage my funds on you". Musa Keys, who worked with Davido on 2023's hit *Unavailable*, is invited back to join Davido and Victory on the flirtatious *Holy Water*, one of the album's more experimental entries.

Holy Water is perhaps bettered only by the closer *With You* which blends fiery electric guitar strings, some highlife swing and a brooding Omah Lay verse to stunning effect.

Clocking in at a manageable 49 minutes *Five* never overstays its welcome, even while holding space for the odd clunker like the Chris Brown duet *Titanium*. ■

THE QUIZ

0-3

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

4-7

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

8-10

"Mogadiscio is great spelling, but Mogadisco would really get the party started."



- 1_** Cattedrale di Mogadiscio (pictured) is found in which country?
- 2_** What is Botswana's official language?
- 3_** The Kingdom of Merina, a precolonial state, formed part of which present-day country?
- 4_** Les Léopards is the nickname of which country's men's national football team?
- 5_** Colonel Mamady Doumbouya is president of which country?
- 6_** In which country

was art curator Koyo Kouoh born?

7_ Laurent Gbagbo served as president of which country from 2000 to 2011?

8_ French Sudan was a colonial territory that became which present-day country?

9_ True or false: Zimbabwe's former president's full name is Robert George Mugabe.

10_ Which artist released the hit song *Ojuelegba* in 2014?

HOW DID I DO? WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to [+27 73 805 6068](tel:+27738056068) and we'll send the answers to you!

THE BIG PICTURE

Could he be loved: Rastafarians, in their characteristic colours, stand up for Rasta icon Bob Marley – playing drums and singing as they march in a parade in his honour in Goma in the DRC on 11 May.

Photo: Jospin Mwishu/AFP



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