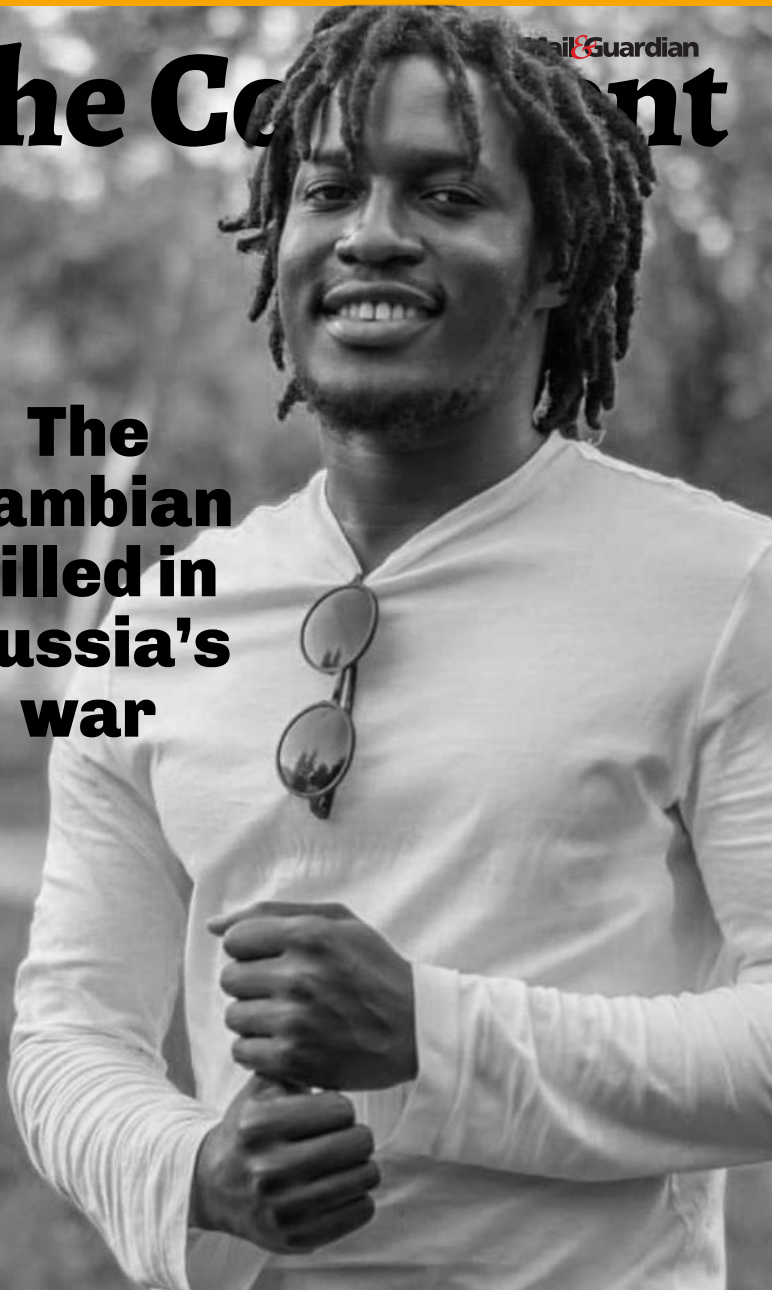


# The Co nt

**The  
Zambian  
killed in  
Russia's  
war**





**Cover:** Lemekhane Nathan Nyirenda called his parents in August to say he was out of prison, two years into a nine-year sentence in Moscow. Weeks later, the Zambian student was killed on the front line of Russia's war with Ukraine, alongside other prisoners pressed into fighting for Putin. His family only learned this week that he'd died. Nobody is saying what really happened. (p11)

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# Inside:

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- **Malawi:** Fuel protests at home force the president back from climate talks (p9)
- **Investigation:** Want a diplomatic passport? You just have to pay for it (p15)
- **Men's World Cup:** Five African teams, all coached by Africans. What are their chances? (p21)
- **Book review:** Alaa Abd El-Fattah has not yet been defeated (p27)

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## How you get *The Continent* is changing (a little bit)

Subscribers on WhatsApp might notice a little change this week: instead of receiving the paper directly to your phone, we are sending you a message and asking you to respond in order to get the latest edition. This is because so many of you have subscribed (thank you!) that we have had to upgrade our distribution system, which has meant making a few changes. We're still working out the kinks, so thank you for bearing with us. If you would like to subscribe on WhatsApp, please send us a message on +27 73 805 6068 and we will do the rest.



## REPUBLIC OF CONGO

### For the dolphins and fisherfolk

In response to unregulated industrial fishing that is decimating marine life in its Atlantic waters, the Republic of Congo has designated three sites as protected areas: Konkouati Douli National Park, Mvassa Bay and Loango Bay – home to Loango Slavery Harbour. These areas are important feeding and reproduction sites for endangered dolphins as well as humpback whales and four different species of turtle. The Congolese authorities also hope that protecting the sites will also protect the livelihoods of local fisherfolk from encroaching international fishing companies.

## CAPITALISM

### TikTok – just as bad as the rest of them

Colombia's government is investigating alleged abuse of workers at Teleperformance, a French company subcontracted to moderate content for TikTok. An investigation by *Time* magazine and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism found the subcontractor intimidated workers who tried to unionise, and paid just \$10 a day for work that often includes watching videos showing murder, sexual violence and child abuse. Teleperformance employs 42,000 workers in Colombia. Earlier this year, workers in Kenya were found to be similarly treated while moderating for Facebook.

## NIGERIA

## Still we die, still they shrug us off

The floods that swept Nigeria, Chad and Niger were 80 times more likely due to the climate crisis, according to research by the World Weather Attribution group. The floods left more than 800 people dead. Nigeria has used climate negotiations in Egypt as a stage to demand reparations from rich polluters for the known impact of their pollution but payment, or any meaningful acceptance of responsibility, has not come.

## SOUTH AFRICA

## Miner defeat major win for SA activists

An Australian mining company has lost its defamation case against South African activists. The activists had said that Mineral Commodities Limited, which wants to mine in a sensitive ecosystem along the sand dunes of South Africa's east coast, was not following due process or looking after the environment, and argued that the lawsuit was designed to silence them. The court agreed. Defeat for western and Chinese mining companies in African courtrooms is rare.



## ALGERIA

## Russian troops join border exercises

About 200 Algeria and Russian soldiers are currently doing military exercises at a testing ground near the border with Morocco. The operation, code named

Desert Shield 2022, follows a similar exercise last October in the Russian region of North Ossetia. Russia's foreign minister has been careful to refute speculation that the drills have anything to do with Algeria's tense relationship with Morocco, saying that they were long planned and are not directed against any third parties.





## GRAMMYS

### Angélique Kidjo is queen forever

Iconic Beninese singer Angélique Kidjo has got her 12th nomination for the Grammy awards. She has won five. Burna Boy will also be returning to the Grammys. His chart-topping *Last Last* is nominated for best global music performance and the Nigerian will also once again compete with Kidjo for best global music album. Other Africans nominated for the 65th edition of the Grammys are: Rocky Dawuni (Ghana), Tems (Nigeria), South Africans Zakes Bantwini, Nomcebo Zikode and Wouter Kellerman and Eddy Kenzo, who is Uganda's first-ever Grammy nominee.

## INTERNATIONAL

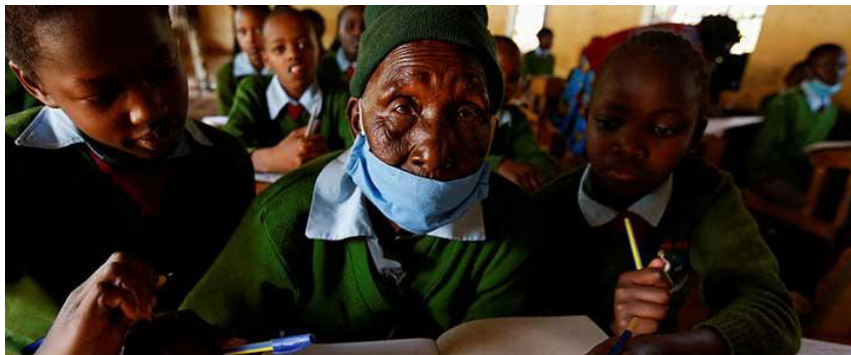
### The death penalty is alive and kicking

Despite international condemnation, Kuwait executed seven prisoners on Wednesday. Four Kuwaitis (one woman and three men), an Ethiopian woman, a Pakistani man and a Syrian man were put to death. Official executions are common in the Gulf region – Saudi Arabia executed 81 people on one day in March this year. But they are not unheard of elsewhere. Botswana, Egypt, Somalia and South Sudan have all executed people in recent years, as have Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, North Korean, the United States, Vietnam and Yemen.

## CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

### Abandon all hope, ye who negotiate here

As negotiations in Egypt drag past the Friday deadline, COP27 hangs in the balance. Rich countries refuse to pay for the damage of their pollution – a key demand of African countries, which emit nearly nothing. So the latter refuse to give the former what they want. The likely outcome is nobody leaves happy and not enough is done to keep the world habitable. The UN says even if each country does all it has promised to lower emissions, the world will still warm by a catastrophic 2.4 °C.

**KENYA****World's oldest pupil passes on in peace**

At the age of 90, after decades as a traditional midwife, Priscilla Sitienei Gogo decided to go back to primary school in Mosop in Kenya's Nandi County.

This made her the oldest student in the world. She said she wanted to inspire others who had missed out on education, telling the BBC in 2015: "They tell me they are too old. I tell them, 'Well I am at school and so should you be.'" After missing three days of school this week due to a chest infection, she passed away peacefully on Wednesday. She was 100 years old.

**VACCINE HOARDING****West's ruthlessness left millions to die**

The leaders of rich countries caused at least 3.3-million excess Covid-19 deaths, according to a research paper based on data from 152 countries. Globally, at least 1.3-million of these deaths happened because rich countries hoarded vaccines, says the paper, published in *Nature Medicine*. Bloated orders from countries like Canada and Germany prevented poorer countries from getting vaccines – even when they could pay.

**HUMANITY****Global population growth slows down**

The eight billionth person alive today was born this week. The rate of human population growth has exploded in recent decades but is now slowing down. It took 11 years to go from seven billion (hit in 2011) to eight billion, but the United Nations predicts it will take 15 years to hit nine billion. Africa is expected to make up most of this growth, with Nigeria overtaking the United States as the third most populous country in the world by 2050.

# THE AGENDA

◆ **Sampa the Great**, whose *Never Forget* is featured in *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, comes home with a show at The Music Club in Lusaka, Zambia on 25 November, completing a busy year that's seen her perform at Coachella, Glastonbury, Primavera, Roskilde and Vivid Festival.

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◆ *The Global Press Journal*, an award-winning international news organisation, is looking for a **regional editor for sub-Saharan Africa**. [Apply](#) by December 1.

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◆ Catch the last screenings, and the closing and awards ceremony, of the **Marrakech International Film Festival** today 19 November. Screenings are happening until 9pm at most festival venues.

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◆ The **Kampala International Theatre Festival** returns to in-person shows after a two-year pandemic break. The festival runs from November 23 to 25 at the Ndere Cultural Centre and the National Theatre, with shows from Uganda, South Africa, Germany, Spain, Russia and Switzerland.

◆ The **African Union Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification** is happening in Niamey, Niger from 21 to 25 November. The discussions will be informed by any climate change agreements that are concluded this weekend, because these will determine the amount and type of energy available for industrialisation.

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◆ The **Nigeria International Maritime Summit** is at the Lagos Oriental Hotel from 21 to 22 November. The event connects local maritime players with their international counterparts.

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◆ Kenyan poet Brenda S Wanjira is launching her debut collection, ***Poems from the Heart and Soul***, at Nairobi's Alliance Francaise on November 26.

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◆ Five years after his death on the front line in South Sudan, the truth about what happened to Christopher Allen is still a mystery. ***Pig Iron***, a podcast from Tortoise Media and the team behind *Sweet Bobby* tries to detail the would-be war correspondent's last adventure.

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Please tell us if you or your organisation has something cool coming up (an event, a report, a product launch) that our audience should know about on [agenda@thecontinent.org](mailto:agenda@thecontinent.org)

# Sierra Leone

## West Africa's 'Athens' rises from the ashes

**A college that trained revolutionary leaders from across the region is trying to rebuild after Sierra Leone's economic woes and civil war**

**Francis Kokutse in Freetown**

**F**ourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone, claims to be the first university of its kind in West Africa. Set up in 1816 as a school to train missionaries, it morphed into a university in 1827. With its old building in the east of the city, the college began with just a few hundred students.

Freetown became known as the Athens of West Africa – because it attracted so many scholars from outside the country.

Joe Alie, a graduate and now a history professor at the college, says the first student was a foreigner. Ajayi Crowther – a slave freed from a Portuguese ship who then moved to Sierra Leone – went on to become the first African bishop for the Anglican church in West Africa. The

college continued to play an important role in training African leaders and intellectuals.

History professor Alie says the college thrived until the 1980s, when Sierra Leone's economy collapsed. The college lost funding as state budgets shrunk, and it had to make cuts. Then came 1991 and 11 years of civil war. "We lost a lot of colleagues who went out of the country," Alie said. "Not for greener pastures, but for their personal security."

The two decades lost to economic downturn and war meant that the college has effectively had to start again from scratch.

According to deputy vice chancellor, Brimah Bah, the demand for tertiary education is so high that there is an "exponential increase" in the number of students applying for courses. It now has 20,000 students, and that means trying to teach people despite having "inadequate physical infrastructure and equipment to cope with these numbers".

Collaborations with other universities on the continent, and a focus on publishing papers to get more funding as well as strengthening its investment, mean that they are hopeful about the future. With classes in a bigger campus, its original, colonial-era building is now a protected monument and its weed-gripped walls are being preserved. ■

# Malawi

## Fuel may be flowing, but oil's not well

**With its tobacco dollars going up in smoke, the country is struggling to keep its petrol-starved cars on the road**

### Golden Matonga in Lilongwe

**P**resident Lazarus Chakwera cut short his visit to Egypt for this year's international climate negotiations. In a social media post, Malawi's president said he had been moved by the chorus of booing and jeers that followed his convoy on the way to the airport to fly out to Egypt. The country's motorists, furious over having to queue for days to pump fuel, had had enough and were making sure he knew.

The fuel shortage began a month ago, driven by an acute shortage of foreign currency that meant fuel couldn't be imported. Malawi's main foreign currency earner – tobacco – has been tanking in line with the decline in smoking around the world. But tobacco is just the most prominent casualty of a long-term

economic malaise for a landlocked country that relies on imports. This has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and then Russia's war in Ukraine.

Petrol, officially \$2 a litre, has been going for \$5 a litre on the black market.

Frank Siyabi, a taxi driver in the capital, spent two nights at a filling station several times during the crisis. His vehicle, his livelihood, has run out of fuel on the road a number of times.

He accused the leadership of the country of lacking compassion. "We have a president who is travelling all the time. He is draining forex which should be used for the procurement of crucial imports."

Chakwera's return didn't immediately solve the fuel woes. But, a few days later, several tankers did arrive to ease the crisis. The National Oil Company of Malawi told *The Continent* the shortage of foreign currency meant the core problem had not been solved.

### **Petrol, officially \$2 a litre, was going for \$5 a litre on the black market**

On Tuesday, the government fired the oil company's chief executive Helen Buluma. She said she had been subjected to relentless pressure from senior officials in Chakwera's administration to grant fuel contracts to select companies, creating profitable monopolies. ■



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# Nasa

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## To the Moon, and beyond

**For better or worse, humans are going back to Luna**

**O**n Monday, Artemis I blasted into space, headed for the moon. It has been 50 years since people wandered around the lunar surface.

The current mission – headed by space agencies from the United States, Canada, European Union and Japan – will put a space capsule into orbit around the Moon as a test, before Artemis II does this with humans.

If all that works, and if there is enough money, Artemis III will put humans on the moon in 2025. They will spend nearly

a week on the surface. A space station, the Lunar Gateway, will then be put in orbit above the moon to work as the base for operations on the surface. That will then grow into a big base for scientists and mining operations, which can then support expansion to other parts of the universe.

The countries taking on this task are all from the G7 group of rich countries. There is no set agreement on how the moon, or any other planets, will be used or governed. ■

# Russia-Ukraine

## The Zambian student who died on the Russian front line

**Lemekhani Nathan Nyirenda was serving a nine-year prison sentence in Russia. So how did he end up dying in combat in Ukraine?**

**Mutale Pamela Kapekele in Lusaka**

**L**emekhani Nathan Nyirenda made a phone call to his family, who were at home in Zambia, on 31 August. That was the last time they heard from him.

Something was strange about the call. He said that he had been released from prison in Russia, just two years into a nine-year prison term. He would not say how he got out, or tell his family where he was.

His family were concerned, and informed Zambia's ministry of foreign affairs.

Three weeks later, on 22 September, Nyirenda was killed on the front line of Russia's war in Ukraine. He was 23 years old. His family was only informed last Sunday, 13 November. They still have not been informed of how he died, or how he ended up fighting alongside Russian soldiers.

"As a family, we have decided not to issue any media statements or offer interviews until we receive our son, bury

him and then, we might be able to talk," said family spokesperson Ian Nzali Banda on Thursday evening. "For now, we just want some time to come to terms with what has happened. Pepani mai [bear with us]."

### A bright future

At the Hillcrest Technical Secondary School in Livingstone – a government school reserved for the best students in the country – Nyirenda's friends knew him as quiet and smart. He got top marks, and on graduating in 2018 he secured himself a government scholarship to study nuclear engineering at the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute.

"He was very intelligent. His dream was to become one of the best engineers in Zambia," said classmate Alice Chibulu. "He must have been very scared, all alone in a foreign country and being sent out to war. May God comfort the family."

To supplement his income in Moscow, Nyirenda started working as a motorcycle delivery driver. Then things went wrong.

In April 2020, he was delivering a package for a client when he was stopped by Russian police. They opened the package, which contained drugs. Nyirenda was subsequently charged with drug possession and sentenced to nine years in jail, which he was serving at a medium security prison on the outskirts of Moscow.

Nyirenda's family were in touch with him regularly, until that strange call in August. They believe that he was wrongly imprisoned – that he did not know the contents of the package. It is not clear whether Nyirenda had access to adequate legal representation.

## Casualty of war

Russia invaded Ukraine in February this year, on the orders of President Vladimir Putin. The invasion has not been going well. The ranks of Russia's regular army have been decimated by fierce Ukrainian resistance, forcing the government to issue partial mobilisation of 300,000 army reservists in September.

To secure more soldiers, army recruiters targeted prisons – offering freedom to those who agreed to fight. Mercenary firms such as the notorious Wagner Group have been deployed to assist the soldiers on the front lines, and they too have scouted prisons for recruits.

"If you serve six months, you are free," Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of Wagner Group, was filmed telling a group of prisoners earlier this year. But he warned: "If you arrive in Ukraine and decide it's not for you, we will execute you." At least one prisoner who accepted the Wagner



**Bereft: Lemekhane Nathan Nyirenda (right) with his father and twin brother. Last week his family learned he died in September.**

deal was subsequently executed in grisly fashion after saying that he would rather fight for Ukraine.

It is not known whether Nyirenda was offered such a deal, but his family have their suspicions. On Wednesday, Lemekhane's older sister Muzang'alu Nyirenda told journalists that the family wanted to know how Russia managed to recruit her brother into their army. She wondered if he was "coerced".

Dickson Jere, a prominent Zambian human rights lawyer, said on social media: "How did the Russian government pick an untrained convict and send him to the front line without the knowledge of his home country? A prisoner does not lose his rights and cannot be forced to fight in a war."



**Devastation: The train station in Seversk, Ukraine, after a Russian missile strike.**

Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP

## Questions remain

Zambia's minister of foreign affairs, Stanley Kakubo, said in a statement: "The Zambian government has requested the Russian authorities to urgently provide information on the circumstances under which a Zambian citizen, serving a prison sentence in Moscow, could have been recruited to fight in Ukraine and subsequently lose his life."

The Russian embassy in Lusaka did not respond to a request for comment.

Ukraine's ambassador to South Africa, Liubov Abravитova, said: "We call on the African Union and all African states to demand that Russia stop press-ganging

their nationals. No one, including Africans, should die for Putin's sick imperial ambitions."

Abravитova said that she was not aware of any other examples of African prisoners in Russia ending up on the front lines of the conflict.

According to a close family member, Nyirenda's parents, Edwin and Florence Nyirenda, will travel to Russia to identify the remains, amid concerns that the body has been badly damaged. ■

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*This story was reported jointly by The Continent and the Lusaka-based MukanDay Centre for Investigative Journalism*

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## Dishonourable diplomats

The honorary consul system has been abused to facilitate terrorism, arms trafficking and drug smuggling – with several African countries playing a central role

## Simon Allison

**M**ads Cortzen, a balding white man, arrived in Bangui a decade ago. There he presented his credentials as Liberia's newly-minted honorary consul – a kind of pseudo-ambassador – to the Central African Republic, and swiftly began to establish himself on the diplomatic circuit.

No one questioned his bona fides.

He threw lavish drinks parties, and did the rounds of ambassadors and dignitaries. He even met with the president's son, who was left with a sizeable "envelope of happiness", as Cortzen termed it. He secured premises for a new Liberian consulate, and started making contacts with diamond traders who could help him procure some cut-price gems, which he planned to smuggle out of the country.

At every turn, Cortzen's diplomatic credentials opened doors and provided camouflage for his illicit activities.

Those diplomatic credentials were real, obtained from Liberia's ministry of foreign affairs with the aid of a hefty bribe and a shady English intermediary. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the Nobel peace prize-winning former president, even signed his certificate of appointment.

But Mads Cortzen is no diplomat. In fact, he is a Danish journalist and filmmaker – better known as Mads Brügger – who had to leave the Central African Republic in a hurry before his ruse was discovered.

The resulting documentary, *The Ambassador*, detailed exactly how Brügger was able to obtain these diplomatic



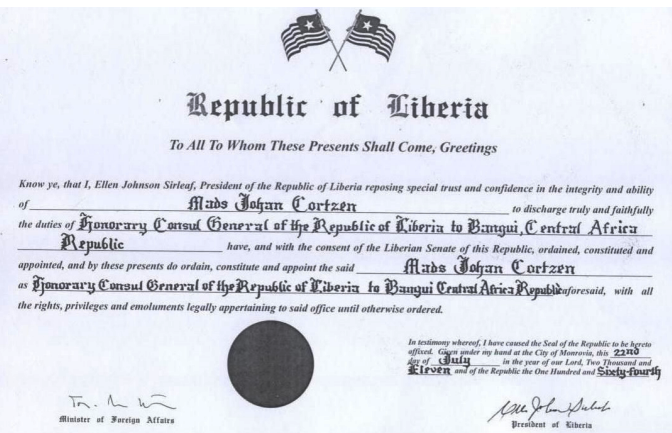
**Diplomatic cover: Mads Cortzen, Liberia's former honorary consul to the Central African Republic.**

credentials, and how easily they could be used as a cover for dodgy business.

A new global investigation can reveal that this was no isolated incident. Led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and ProPublica, with support from 50 newsrooms around the world including *The Continent*, journalists identified more than 500 current and former honorary consuls who have been accused of crimes or embroiled in controversy.

They include convicted drug traffickers, murderers, sex offenders and fraudsters; as well as at least 30 individuals who have been sanctioned by the United States and other governments, some for terrorism-related offences.

At least 150 of these shadowy diplomats are, or were, either based in or representing African countries. Among their number are some high-profile names, including South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, who was until 2019 Iceland's honorary



**Signed & sealed:  
The certificate  
confirming 'Mads  
Cortzen' as an  
honorary consul  
of Liberia.**

consul in South Africa; and Africa's largest private arms dealer, Ivor Ichikowitz, who is Djibouti's honorary consul in South Africa.

### 'The best is Africa'

Nations have been appointing honorary consuls for hundreds of years, usually when it is too expensive to set up an embassy. Unlike ambassadors, consuls often work from their home countries to protect the interests of a foreign government.

In exchange, consuls get perks: these can include diplomatic passports; legal immunity in matters involving consular work; and the use of diplomatic pouches – bags, boxes and shipping containers of any weight and size that are protected from police searches. If you've got something to hide, these perks can be very useful indeed.

Hezbollah, the Lebanese political party that the US has designated as a terrorist group, is one of the most prominent exploiters of the honorary consul system, which helps them evade US sanctions. In

2012, a Hezbollah operative named Faouzi Jaber accompanied an international arms dealer – known simply as "Excellence" – to a meeting with potential buyers in Accra's Golden Tulip Hotel. At the time, Jaber did not know the entire conversation was being recorded by American federal investigators, and the "buyers" were actually undercover agents.

A transcript of the conversation was obtained by ICIJ and ProPublica. In it, to sweeten the deal, the Hezbollah operative promises to arrange honorary consulships for the buyers. "All the high people, all the rich people, [are] all consular. The best is Africa," Jaber said, adding that "many European white men work as [consuls] from their home countries when there are no embassies nearby".

In a separate conversation with the "buyers" a few months later, Jaber was even more explicit. "We go to any country in Africa. We make you consul of Equatorial Guinea [or] Guinea-Bissau ... You pay 200,000 dollar. You are the consul official



of the country. And you have another passport.”

Jaber was subsequently arrested and extradited to the US, where he pleaded guilty to conspiring to support a terrorist group.

In an interview with ICIJ from a federal prison in West Virginia, Jaber acknowledged offering honorary consul posts but said the US government doctored the transcripts of meetings to “entrap” him.

“Honorary consuls, I know how they work, I know how they are created,” he said. “Honorary consuls move drugs, money. I know many honorary consuls who get up to all kinds of foolishness.”

### Perks and privileges

Mads Brügger arranged his Liberian diplomatic credentials through a European diplomatic title broker – one of several companies who advertise such services. These brokers can charge hundreds of thousands of dollars for their services, and fees are usually paid in cash.

“No questions were asked,” Brügger told *The Continent*. “If they had done a thorough job of vetting me they would for sure have discovered I was a known journalist, and known for doing undercover stings.”

“It was highlighted and emphasised that I would enjoy the perks of having diplomatic immunity, protection from law, high status, and so on,” he said. “It was implied that having a diplomatic title, in a more or less dysfunctional African country, would be a perfect platform for involving myself in dodgy activities, such as dabbling in diamonds.”



**Stung: Backroom deals at an Accra Hotel.** Illustration: Matt Rota

In the wake of the documentary, Liberia’s government denounced Brügger as an imposter who had obtained the diplomatic credentials under false pretences, and called for him to be extradited from Denmark to face prosecution.

This response may have missed the point. Brügger’s documentary aimed to show just how easy it is for real criminals to obtain diplomatic protections – a point that is proven, 500 times over, in this new global investigation.

“It’s just amazing that you can become the honorary consul tomorrow, if you want to and you’re willing to pay the money,” said Bob Jarvis, a law professor at Nova Southeastern University, who has argued for overhauling the honorary consul system for almost 40 years. “People buy these things or get them as a reward for supporting a political candidate, and people have no idea what they are supposed to be doing. And no one is busy checking them out.” ■

# This World Cup hits different

**We're used to Fifa hosting football's premier event in countries that abuse and kill people. But with Qatar, have we reached the limit of what we'll put up with?**

**Tolu Olasoji**

Once again, football is front and centre. Every four years, with billions watching the top men's national teams knock each other out of its foremost tournament, the sport tries to unite the world. And, to a certain extent, it does.

This time feels different.

Where the build-ups to previous World Cups have been characterised by an almost unbridled glee, the lead into Qatar 2022 has been more about interrogating the moral dilemmas that have sprung up around the tournament.

For starters, Qatar – a socially conservative country with a jarring history of labour abuses – has little in the way of a football tradition. Its infrastructure had to be built from the ground up. It also prompted a change in the world's footballing calendar – when the tournament was awarded, nobody thought about the intense heat in June and July until after the fact. And Qatar's aggressive intolerance of LGBTQ+ people has drawn fierce criticism – though no actual boycotts.

Concerns like these ranked low on Fifa's assessment reports before voting in late 2010. After choosing Russia for

the 2018 tournament, Fifa's corrupt executives voted for the gulf nation. In interviews with press this week, the federation's former head, Sepp Blatter, said its executive team had wanted it to be awarded to the United States, but political pressure saw it go to Qatar instead.

The country then had to build seven new stadiums, a hundred new hotels, a new airport, roads and an entire host city.

Of the 2.6-million people living in the country, only about 15% are citizens. The rest are migrants, imported for work under strict permits. To build the World Cup infrastructure, they had to deal with scorching heat, inhumane labour laws, illegal recruitment fees, injuries, wage misappropriation, and deaths.

*The Guardian* newspaper has reported that over 6,500 migrant workers have died since Qatar won the hosting rights – an average of 12 deaths per week. And this number is based on data from just five countries with workers in Qatar. The rest either had no statistics, or chose not to share them in order to maintain bilateral ties. To cap it off, now that the tournament is about to kick off, workers have been asked to return to their countries.

Some countries and their teams have threatened to protest against Qatar's





**Crowd control:**  
With little history  
of successful  
national football,  
Qatar had to build  
seven stadiums  
for the World Cup.

draconian policies and actions – while still taking part in the tournament. This prompted the head of Fifa, Gianni Infantino, to write to participating nations, urging them to avoid political and human rights issues and instead “let football take centre stage”.

To get around any human rights concerns, Fifa has long maintained that football is apolitical and that the tournament should not concern itself with the politics of its host country.

Not that Fifa is above dabbling in politics. A few days after his letter, Infantino asked leaders of the G20 group of rich countries to “think of a temporary ceasefire” in Russia’s war on Ukraine. This, he said, would be “a sign or a message of hope” for the duration of the tournament.

Under pressure from Western countries, Fifa earlier this year banned Russia from its tournaments. Ukrainian flags, which have become ubiquitous at football stadiums, will be flown in Qatar.

The same does not hold for anything that shows solidarity with dead workers,

or the LGBTQ+ community.

Denmark will have a drab range of jerseys (including a pitch-black third stripe called “colour of mourning”) as tributes to migrant workers and a subtle call to the atrocities in the host nation. But the Scandinavian country was forbidden by Fifa to train in jerseys that bear human rights messaging “for technical reasons”. Other forms of activism have also been banned – to “respect local culture”.

Fifa has plenty of form in this regard.

In 1978, Argentina’s bloody military dictatorship used the World Cup to launder its reputation – with football being played at the Estadio Monumental, a few kilometres away from a concentration camp packed with political prisoners. The United States hosted the tournament in 1994, despite its systemic racism and the regular killing of Black people by police. Russia hosted it in 2018, despite its invasion of Crimea, and of other regions.

As ever, Qatar will be a chance for Fifa to reap the enormous rewards that come with sportswashing. And we will watch. ■

## PHOTO ESSAY

# Africa – yet again – hopes for a fruitful men's World Cup

*Five African countries will be at this year's World Cup in Qatar. They will aim to overcome decades of missteps and misfortunes. With the exception of Cameroon in 1990, Senegal in 2002 and Ghana in 2010, no African country has made it as far as the quarterfinals, where the best eight teams left in the tournament compete. The Continent looks at the prospects for Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia. For the first time, each of those is led by an African coach.*

**Daniel Ekonde in Yaoundé**



## SENEGAL

The Teranga Lions are expected to perform better than any of the African hopefuls in the World Cup, despite the absence of the world's second-best player, Sadio Mané, who is out injured. They won their maiden Africa Cup of Nations trophy 10 months ago in Cameroon and have been the continent's highest-ranked side in the Fifa rankings since 2018.

Aliou Cissé's charges begin their Group A campaign against European top

seed the Netherlands on Monday, before meeting the hosts Qatar four days later and wrapping up with Ecuador on 29 November.

With Mané out, Cissé will bank on the defensive masterclass of Chelsea duo Édouard Mendy and Kalidou Koulibaly (pictured above right), the midfield experience of Everton's Idrissa Gana Gueye and Watford's Ismaïla Sarr, who are returning to the competition after the last World Cup in Russia 2018.



## CAMEROON

After becoming the first African team to win three matches at the World Cup and reach the quarterfinals in 1990, every other participation for the Indomitable Lions has ended in a group-stage exit. In their eighth appearance, Cameroon are led by two playing legends: Former skipper Rigobert Song, who played in four world cups and is now the coach of the Indomitable Lions, and four-time African Player of the Year Samuel Eto'o – as president of the Cameroon Football Federation.

Eto'o has told his players he expects discipline and teamwork in Qatar, admitting that they, the older generation, lacked that which is why they failed even when they had a solid team in 2002.



Cameroon will rely on the red-hot form of Bayern Munich's Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting (pictured top), as well as the deftness of Italian Serie A top stars André Onana and André-Frank Zambo Anguissa to progress in Group G – where they'll play Switzerland, Serbia and Brazil.

## MOROCCO

Walid Regragui – the former Wydad Athletic gaffer who won the 2021/2022 CAF Champions League with them – has been handed a herculean task: coach Morocco to their second post-group stage World Cup appearance in 24 years. They last came close in 1986 – a tough learning moment as the Atlas Lions couldn't win one game in a group of Portugal, Spain and Iran.

This term, they have a hotter group (Group F) to handle: Croatia, the runners up in the last World Cup; then Belgium, the second best team in the world rankings; and then Canada, who are ranked 19 places above Morocco.

Regragui will put trust in Paris Saint Germain right-winger Achraf Hakimi (pictured right), who is currently the best in his position internationally, and Chelsea attacker Hakim Ziyech, to inspire



the team to reach their first World Cup knockout round since 1986.





Photo: Glyn  
Kirk/AFP via  
Getty Images



## GHANA

If there's one thing Ghana's football stakeholders have learnt in the eight years their country has not been to the World Cup, it's not to mess with player bonuses. This issue forced the government to fly \$3-million in cash to Brazil in 2014 to extinguish a row over unpaid bounties. A team that showed much promise by reaching the round of 16 in 2006 and attaining the quarterfinals four years later in South Africa, shattered in 2014 by finishing with just one point in the group stage. Now the country has made \$14-million available as a participation fee for the Black Stars, right up to the semifinals. And it has sought help from the divine when it announced a "National Day of Prayer and Fasting" last month.

Along with Arsenal's Thomas Partey (pictured above), the Black Stars have

depth and quality that can see them through Group H – comprising Portugal, Uruguay and South Korea. New overseas recruits Tariq Lamptey, Iñaki Williams and Ajax's Mohammed Kudus, who have all chosen to play for Ghana rather than where they now live, will have the Ayew brothers, André and Jordan – the only players with World Cup experience – to play alongside. This may well provide the firepower coach Otto Addo needs.



Photo: Stephane De Sakutin/Getty Images





## TUNISIA

The Eagles of Carthage are positive they can reach the round of 16 of the competition this time. They have played

five other World Cups and have never made it further than the group stage. But in the 2018 tournament in Russia, they won their first match since their first appearance in 1978, scraping past Panama.

Facing Denmark, Australia and world champions France in Group D in Qatar for a place in the knockout stage, Tunisia must squeeze out the utmost points from their first two matches before confronting the wrath of the latter.

Coach Jalel Kadri – just like the other four local gaffers – has a case to make for African football associations to start trusting and hiring their own. He has retained 10 of the 23 players that went to Russia four years ago, including veteran keeper Aymen Mathlouthi. There's also much expectation that 19-year-old Manchester United loanee Hannibal Mejbri (pictured left) will inject some exuberance into the squad. ■



# The singular luxury of owning a toilet

**D**o you have a toilet in your house? For those of us who can say yes, World Toilet Day on 19 November reminds us that we're part of a privileged minority.

On average, across 34 African countries that Afrobarometer surveyed in 2019/2021, only a third (34%) of households have a toilet in the home, while a majority of people use a toilet or latrine elsewhere in their compound (37%) or outside their compound (15%). About one in seven (14%) lack access to toilet facilities altogether.

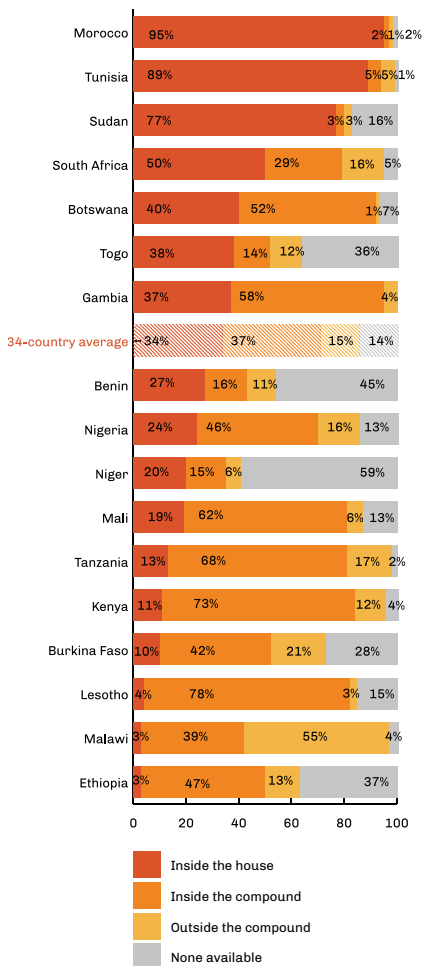
People who have to leave their compounds to do their business make up a majority in seven countries, led by Niger (65%), and Malawi (59%).

Among rural residents and poor people, it's just as common to have no access to a toilet at all (21% each) as it is to have a toilet in the home (19% and 20%, respectively).

Considering the deadly consequences of poor sanitation, you might expect to see urgent progress toward the sixth Sustainable Development Goal (which includes "sanitation for all" by 2030).

Instead we've recorded an increase of five percentage points over the past decade in the share of citizens who have no access to toilet facilities of any kind.

**Access to a toilet**  
**34 African countries | 2019/21**  
(Selected countries shown)



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

# Alaa El-Fattah: 'The ghost of spring past'

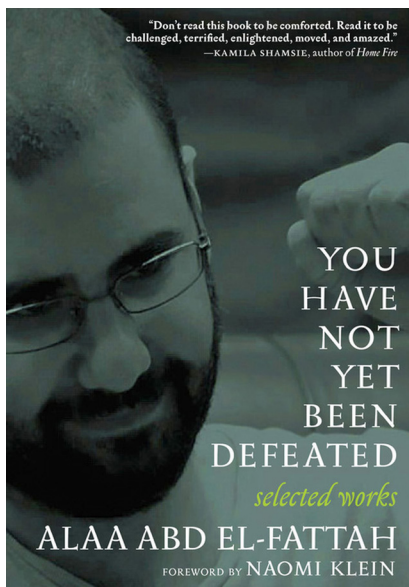
**COP27 brought renewed focus to the writing of the imprisoned activist, covering the trajectory of Egypt and the wider world**

**Theresa Mallinson**

**T**he Egyptian writer, technologist and activist Alaa Abd El-Fattah may be known, reductively, as an “Egyptian revolutionary”, but both his subject matter and thinking extend far beyond a single country or political persuasion.

*You Have Not Yet Been Defeated* comprises a selection of his writing and interviews from during his decade-long imprisonment on trumped-up charges.

In addition to his thoughts on Egypt's trajectory since 2011 – including the intensified shrinking of space for dissent since the Rabaa el-Adaweya massacre in 2013 (there are about 65,000 political prisoners in the country) – Alaa writes about constitutionalism, social movements, imprisonment, the birth of his son, the death of his father, Silicon Valley, the gig economy, the environment, the pandemic and, of course, Palestine. Even as he situates events in Egypt within



their national and historical context, he teases out connections between struggles for social justice around the world.

Alaa remains in prison. He recently ended his latest hunger strike after 220 days, which he escalated at the beginning COP27, not drinking water for six days.

In *You Have Not Yet Been Defeated*, Alaa cautions against both hope and despair, advising instead a focus on protecting limited human rights, such as revoking the protest law and releasing political prisoners.

With the attention drawn to his case during COP27, inshallah this approach will bear fruit – for him personally and the tens of thousands of other political prisoners in Egypt. ■

# 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**

"When it comes to dynasties I know who's Muhoozi in the zoozie."



**1\_** Muhoozi Kainerugaba is the son of which president?

**2\_** The earliest history of coffee is chronicled in the oral traditions of which country?

**3\_** The bell bean flower is which country's national flower?

**4\_** In which country was COP27 hosted?

**5\_** The Chevrons are which country's national cricket team?

**6\_** Name the solo African artist who has been

nominated for 12 Grammy Awards and won five?

**7\_** Who were the defending champions of the CAF Women's Champions League?

**8\_** Who dethroned them in last week's final?

**9\_** The Fifa World Cup has only been hosted once on the continent. Which country hosted it?

**10\_** Which archipelago (pictured) has the United Kingdom and Mauritius had a sovereignty dispute over: Chagos or Faroes?

## HOW DID I DO?

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

# Life's a journey? Best get packing



## Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

We at *Drift* are experiencing some serious holiday blues after spending a wonderful weekend away at Nakuru National Park in Kenya. The trip involved lounging around a lovely hotel overlooking Lake Nakuru, indulging in tasty delights, soaking in the silence and most importantly have a chance to look

at all the animals, and for once they were not the type you often find in parliaments around the world.

Our return has us wishing we could have the kind of job that would let us travel wherever we want, whenever we want. Alas it would seem we don't work hard enough to deserve such a luxury, but you know who apparently does? Our favourite leaders!

The latest individual to join the jet-setting gang is Liberian president George Weah. The former footballer has been catching flights and leaving his populace to catch feelings as he zooted off to Egypt for COP27, then on to France for the Paris Peace Forum and, according to reports, is now set to spend nine days in Qatar to watch his son play for the USA in the World Cup.

His travels have led to criticism from some quarters as the country grapples with trying to hold a census that has been repeatedly postponed amid allegations of mismanagement at the organising body, alongside a food crisis.

According to the BBC the country's finance minister revealed that President Weah is entitled to a \$2,000 allowance per day when on his travels, while "his people" say his travels will be of benefit to the country.

But, to borrow a football turn of phrase, we think all these trips may end up being something of an own goal.



**On my mind: Liberia prez George Weah is Qatar-bound to hang with his heir.**



## Comings and goings

While some of us were going places, others will be leaving. This week's episode of *Keeping Up With The Coupdashions* takes us to Mali, although it seems we are among the few heading there. Earlier this week the British government announced it would be withdrawing its troops from the United Nations Peacekeeping force in the country "earlier than planned".

In what we are sure was a deep, heartfelt and emotional statement delivered with great pain, the country's minister for armed forces told parliament that the United Kingdom was "saddened by the way the government in Bamako has made it difficult for well-meaning nations to remain there."

Isn't it sweet how when the UK want to be somewhere they are "well-meaning", but when people from the countries they want to mean well in try to come to the UK they are treated as trespassers with criminal intent.

Soon after this, a letter sent by the government of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations began to circulate, saying that the Ivorians would gradually be withdrawing their own contingent, made up of military personnel and police, from the UN force in Mali too. While they offered no explanation, relations between both countries have been tense since Malian authorities detained 49 Ivorian soldiers who had landed in Bamako earlier this year, branding them mercenaries – a claim Abidjan denies. Three have been released, the rest remain in custody, and negotiations seem to be at a standstill.

Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports coming through suggest that Germany is also planning to end its participation in the peacekeeping mission in Mali.

Travel is often about the journey, but that will be small consolation for those travelling to the job centre in Guinea, where *Keeping Up With The Coupdashions* star Colonel Mamady Doumbouya flexed his biceps this week and fired his minister of infrastructure and transport, Yaya Sow, and seven other officials over corruption allegations.

Or in Ghana, where President Nana Akufo-Addo sacked the minister of state for finance, Charles Adu Boahen, after a media exposé implicated him in a corruption scandal. While this may be a welcome move, it is unlikely to take the heat off Akufo-Addo amid demonstrations on the streets of Accra by angry protesters demanding the president himself take responsibility for the economic crisis and step down.

## Represent

In Sierra Leone, lawmakers have agreed on a bill that will see women make up at least 30% of cabinet, parliament, civil service and local council positions. We would love to see the actual proportion rise to 50% – but progress is progress! All that remains now is for President Julius Bio to sign it into law. Your move, Jules.

And so we get to the end of the week finding that even though we have to stay put for a while, elsewhere on the continent some things really are travelling in the right direction.

Fancy that. ■

# 'No Peace, No Election': Will insecurity undermine Nigeria's 2023 general elections?

**For democracy to be preserved, Nigerians need to be assured of their safety as they vote**

**Idris Mohammed**

**A**s Nigeria looks ahead to general elections in February 2023, there is growing concern that insecurity will undermine the process, making it dangerous for voters to attend rallies and polling stations, and preventing elections from even being held in some areas. Much of the focus so far has been on the northeast of the country because it is home to the notorious Boko Haram movement. But these concerns also apply to other regions such as the northwest, the largest geopolitical zone of the country, which is battling banditry, kidnapping and terrorism.

Efforts to stem the tide of banditry have not gone well. The decision of some governors to engage with the armed groups in negotiations failed as they lack centralised leadership and clear demands. Instead, the resulting amnesty agreements have generated greater distrust when either the authorities or the bandits fail to abide by them.

The region is also suffering from the resurgence of the Ansaru terrorist group,

which is succeeding because it is doing what Nigeria's democratically elected leaders have not: providing agricultural products such as fertilisers to local farmers, while promising to protect rural communities from armed raids. This represents a particular challenge to the 2023 polls because Ansaru has warned residents to shun political gatherings that aim to promote democracy.

Leaving aside the threat of insecurity, many residents from conflict affected communities believe that no political activities should take place until peace is restored. In Katsina and Zamfara young people were seen in August carrying placards with messages such as, "No Peace, No Election". When these conditions are combined with a backdrop of widespread hate speech and misinformation, the potential for unrest becomes clear.

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*Idris Mohammed is a journalist, researcher and a member of the*

*United States Institute of Peace Network of Nigerian Facilitators. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa*



# The Big Picture

Photo: John Wessels/AFP

Diamond in the rough: A worker from Sierra Leone sits in his bunk in Diamniadio. With the huge demand for labour to build Senegal's new hub, men from across West Africa have come in search of work, living 20 to a room, working for just \$4 a day. Diamniadio will host state ministries, United Nations offices, a conference centre and housing for those making the move from Dakar, 30km away.



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