

The Continent

**Holding
space for
eco-anxiety**





COVER: By now, the climate statistics are familiar, even as they grow more alarming. The World Meteorological Organization says we have just lived through the hottest 11 years on record, triggering extreme weather events that have killed hundreds of thousands globally. In Africa, nearly 41,000 people died in 700 such events, with more than 85% caused by storms and flooding. The world is going to breach the 1.5°C global warming limit a decade sooner than expected (p10). Even in this dire context, a Mauritanian filmmaker organises a 100km walk through the desert, immersing participants in the biodiversity of an often-overlooked country and holding space for eco-anxiety (p13).

Inside

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DEEP BREATHS ...

Right, a quarter of the year seems to have gone. Countries have been invaded or bombed. Everything costs more. Some people are making a lot of money out of this. The rest of us are paying the price. And all the while we keep heating the planet to unsustainable levels. But, life is beautiful because of the people we share it with. Our team is going to do some of that, while planning exciting future developments. *The Continent* will be back 18 April. Tell someone you love them. And share the newspaper.

THE WEEK IN BRIEF



PHOTO: ARNAUD FINISTRE/AFP

MUSIC

Congolese rapper Gims arrested in Paris for money laundering

French authorities arrested Congolese rapper Gims, born Gandhi Djuna, at Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris this week, *Le Monde* reports. The Kinshasa-born artist was France's biggest-selling recording act last year. He is now accused of being part of a network that used shell companies across multiple countries to avoid taxes and launder money from illegal activities. The network was uncovered in an investigation by France's organised crime prosecutor, which also implicated five former drug traffickers.

CAMEROON

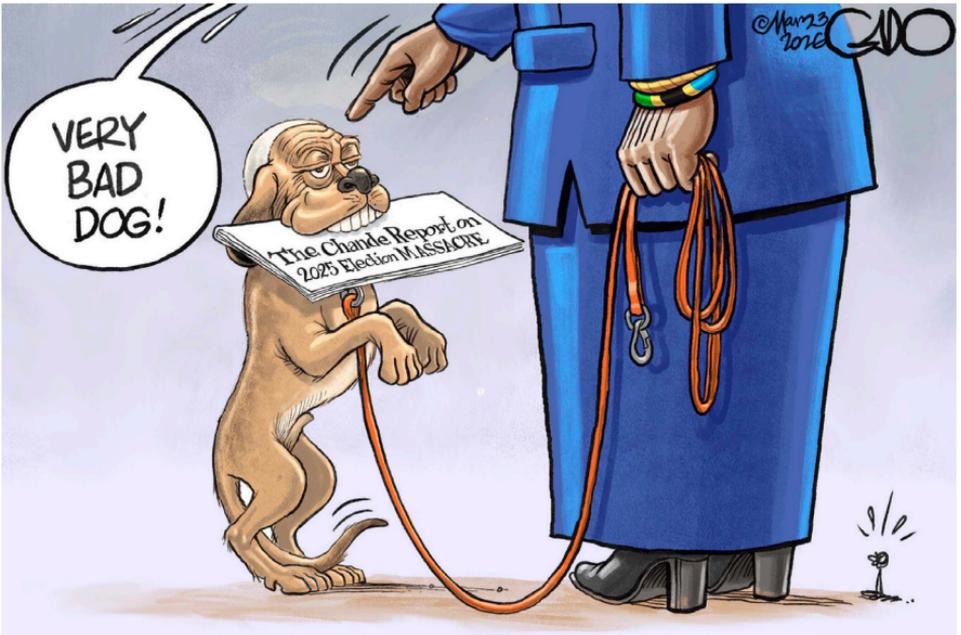
Secret deal to dump migrants in Yaoundé

The Trump administration pushed Cameroon into a secret deal last year to accept hundreds of migrants deported from the United States by withholding \$30-million in aid, *The New York Times* reports. Confidential documents show US diplomats stayed silent on protests after Cameroon's October election, believing it would give them leverage with President Paul Biya. Cameroon resisted the aid-for-deportations deal, calling it "blackmail", but later agreed, reportedly hoping the deportees might include Cameroonian dissidents.

WEST AFRICA

Don Kouyaté off to woo tilted coup club

Former Guinean prime minister Lansana Kouyaté will mediate between the Economic Community of West African States and Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, in the latest bid to bring the Sahel states back into the fold. They withdrew from the bloc in January last year, in protest against the sanctions imposed after military coups. The presidents of Senegal and Ghana have previously tried and failed to persuade the three states to return.



DIPLOMACY

West washes its hands as UN votes on slavery

A United Nations resolution, proposed by Ghana, to recognise transatlantic slavery as the “gravest crime against humanity” has been adopted despite pushback from the west. At a vote on Wednesday, 123 countries supported the resolution, which is not legally binding but carries the weight of global opinion, *Al Jazeera* reports. Three countries opposed it – the US, Israel, and Argentina – and 52 abstained, including the United Kingdom and European Union countries. Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama called for an apology and reparations.

TECH

Social media ruling hits Meta, Google impunity

A jury in Los Angeles has ruled that Instagram and YouTube are addictive and deliberately designed that way, finding their owners negligent in protecting children. The case targeted Meta and Google, which were ordered to pay \$6-million in damages to a young woman known as Kaley. She said the platforms contributed to her body dysmorphia, depression, and suicidal thoughts. The verdict against the tech giants marks a significant moment for Silicon Valley, and may be “the beginning of the end of social media as we know it”, the *BBC* reports.

DRC

Countdown to the first census in 40 years

The population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is said to be 110-million but no one really knows for sure. In July, Kinshasa will start mapping the country for the first population census in more than 40 years. The last was conducted in 1984 and recorded 30-million people. A previous attempt in 2015 was abandoned after former president Joseph Kabila was accused of using it to manipulate and delay elections. The census results shape the distribution of resources and political seats, influencing regional power balances.

ZIMBABWE

Biti out of lock-up amid bid to block croc bloc

Former finance minister Tendai Biti spent last weekend in jail after he was arrested ahead of a rally in Mutare. Now out on bail, Biti had convened a civil society group, the Constitution Defenders Forum, to oppose proposed constitutional changes that would increase presidential terms from five to seven years and allow MPs, not voters, to choose the president. The proposals could keep President Emmerson Mnangagwa, whose shrewd tenacity begat his nickname “The Crocodile”, in power until 2030, a prospect opposed even by some within his own party.

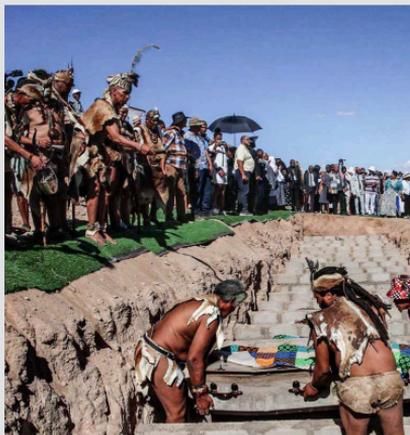


PHOTO: JAIRUS MNUTE/GCS

Rest, now: Khoi and San ancestral remains are interred in a traditional burial ceremony.

SOUTH AFRICA

Reburial reclaims dignity stolen from Khoi, San people

The remains of 63 Khoi and San people, whose bodies were shipped to Europe between 1868 and 1924 for pseudoscientific “research”, have been reburied in South Africa. Some of the remains had been held at the Hunterian Museum at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. Others had been housed at the Iziko Museums in South Africa since the 1920s. Traditional leaders called the repatriation and reburial a “restoration of dignity long denied”. The university also returned two plaster face casts and a smoking pipe taken from a burial ground.

NAMIBIA

The sky's off limits for un-Namibian Musk web

Starlink's application for a licence to provide satellite internet in Namibia has been rejected, reports *The Namibian*. According to the country's laws, at least 51% of telecom firms must be owned by citizens or local entities. Regulators said the Elon Musk-owned company failed to meet the ownership requirements. Similar rules blocked Starlink's entry into South Africa but authorities there are reportedly considering alternative arrangements for foreign firms that don't want to give up shares. Starlink is licensed in some 25 African countries so far.

SENEGAL

It wasn't secret, just, uh, too transparent to see?

Senegal has denied a *Financial Times* report that it secretly borrowed €650-million (\$754-million) last year to avoid default, insisting it followed transparency rules. The country secured the loans using sovereign bonds and derivatives known as total return swaps, increasingly used by financially strained countries and which can give these lenders priority over other creditors. The deals followed a 2025 audit that uncovered at least \$7-billion in hidden debt. The finance ministry says the latest borrowing was part of efforts to diversify funding.

MADAGASCAR

Polygraph to police post-putsch poli-graft grifters

Michael Randrianirina, the military leader of Madagascar, says prospective ministers will undergo lie-detector tests as part of anti-corruption vetting. He abruptly dismissed the prime minister and cabinet earlier this month. Randrianirina, who seized power in an October 2025 coup after youth-led protests, had faced growing discontent over appointments seen as drawn from the old elite, *The Guardian* reports. A new cabinet is



PHOTO: MAMRAEL/AFP

Coup-ruption cop: Madagascar boss Colonel Michael Randrianirina in Antananarivo.

expected to be announced next week. He told local media the polygraph would be part of the integrity checks.

NEWS

KENYA

Ruto bets his caboose to make sure rail prevails

Revenue from the key corridor is not yet enough to service railway debt, but leaders swear there's a way to make it work.

ROBERT AMALEMBA IN NAIROBI

PRESIDENTS William Ruto of Kenya and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda last week jointly launched construction of a critical 107km section of the Standard Gauge Railway. The new phase is expected to cost KSh500-billion (\$3.9-billion).

It will complete a 371km corridor from the town of Naivasha in the Rift Valley to the Ugandan border, potentially easing chronic congestion along one of East Africa's most important transport corridors. If completed as scheduled, key sections of the line could be operational by the middle of next year.

The two presidents were upbeat that the completion of the railway to the Ugandan border – and later, onwards to Kampala, Kasese, and the DRC – would make the region's transport significantly more efficient and competitive.

Moving cargo is the main function

of the already operational Mombasa-Nairobi section of the railway. In 2024, its passenger numbers fell 10.3%, but cargo volumes hit a record 8.16-million tonnes and revenue from this freight grew 9% to about \$150-million.

The Mombasa-Nairobi section was built with \$3.2-billion in loans from China in 2014. By June 2025, the debt stood at about \$3.18-billion. Kenya Railways paid nearly \$200-million in interest last year, posting a loss even though revenue grew. Criticism of the costly loan arrangement eventually prevented expansion beyond Naivasha.

But Kenya has since changed tack and will now finance the new phase domestically. The treasury allocated KSh30-billion toward the just-launched extension. Private investors have also been invited to provide locomotives and wagons through a freight-concession arrangement. ■



PHOTO: BRIAN ONGORO/AFP

Shunt care: Kenya's President William Ruto and Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, on track.

DRC

Grief in Goma as Congolese migrants die at sea

Young people from the eastern DRC are increasingly risking perilous ocean journeys as their prospects at home evaporate.

PROSPER HERI NGORORA IN GOMA

FAMILIES in Goma are in mourning after a boat carrying 46 people capsized off the Comoros Islands. Most on board were from eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Comorian authorities have confirmed at least 18 deaths, the majority of whom were Congolese nationals.

The migrants were reportedly trying to reach Mayotte, a French territory between Mozambique and Madagascar.

“For the past three years, my older brother had been trying to leave the DRC and dreamed of settling in Europe to find work,” said Dieumerci Sabiti. “He died dreaming of helping our family survive.”

The funeral of Sabiti’s brother was held in Goma without the body, which was buried on the Indian Ocean island.

“I didn’t even have time to say goodbye to him since he left Goma in early March,” Sabiti said. “I will cherish fond memories of him as a selfless and courageous person.”

The North Kivu Youth Parliament said most victims were desperate young



PHOTO: IBRAHIM YOUSSEUF/APP

Out of the maelstrom: Survivors of the capsizing at a hospital in Mitsamiouli on Grande Comore.

people. “We are deeply saddened by this shipwreck,” said its head, Jordan Mugisha. “They were trying to escape poverty and the precarious socioeconomic situation in the east.”

Hervé Amani, a social activist, said many young Congolese are “at the end of their tether”, causing them to risk such journeys. “This is a sign of a growing loss of confidence in the state’s ability to offer young people meaningful prospects,” he told *The Continent*.

According to French authorities, more than half of asylum applications in Mayotte in 2025 came from the Great Lakes region, particularly Congolese fleeing conflict in the east. ■

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CLIMATE

Over 300,000 people dead in climate-crisis peak – so far

We've just lived through the 11 hottest years on record. Hundreds of thousands of people have not.



LYDIA NAMUBIRU

THE EARTH'S energy system is the most unbalanced it's been in at least 60 years, says the latest climate report from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). This imbalance means that our weather has become more extreme, according to Celeste Saulo, the organisation's secretary general.

The balance over the past 10,000 years has been relatively stable, allowing agriculture to take off and, with it, modern human civilisation. But over the last 250 years, humans have been pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere at an industrial scale. These trap heat and more heat means more energy. More energy means more extreme weather.

The report confirms the 11 years since 2015 have been the hottest on record.

During this time, extreme weather disasters – including floods, landslides, heat waves, super-cold spells and cyclones – have killed at least 306,000 people, according to statistics in Em-dat, the international disaster database.

More than half of these deaths occurred in Europe between 2022 and 2024, when heatwaves killed nearly 172,000 people, mostly in Italy, Spain, Germany, and Greece.

The number of weather-related deaths documented in Africa is lower in comparison, although still significant. Nearly 41,000 people died on the continent in 700 extreme weather events during these 11 years. More than 85% of the deaths were caused by storms and



PHOTO: RIJASOLO/AFP

Rising threat: Flooded streets in Toamasina, Madagascar, after cyclone Gezni hit in February.

flooding. And nearly 1.3-million people were displaced.

The most devastating event in Africa was Storm Daniel in 2023. Because of poor local governance, intense rain collapsed a poorly maintained dam outside the coastal city of Derna in Libya, killing more than 13,000 people.

For a stable climate, the Earth's system needs to release as much energy as it receives from the sun. But the WMO says greenhouse gases are at their highest level in at least 800,000 years.

Most of these gases are emitted by the industrial activities of "advanced" economies. The United States is the biggest polluter in history by far and has doubled down on that pollution in recent years.

More than 90% of that trapped heat goes into the oceans. Whereas temperatures over land change fast, the oceans are vast and take longer to show

the effects of that change. But when they do, these effects are profound, taking a long time to turn around.

This ocean warming has had a cascading effect, including escalating the frequency and severity of storms and droughts.

Ocean surface temperatures above 27°C fuel tropical storms, like those that flooded farmlands in Mozambique and Madagascar last year, affecting more than a million people.

They also raise sea temperatures, meaning storms do more damage to

coastal cities, particularly in West Africa, where the majority of the population lives near the coast.

There *was* a plan to slow this heating down. In 2015, in Paris, the world's governments agreed to do whatever they could to limit global heating to 1.5°C this century. This level was what African countries, together with small island states, deemed as the limit beyond which the threat became existential.

That number is about to be breached – a full decade sooner than scientists had expected. ■

Number of recorded extreme weather events by country | Africa | 2015-2025

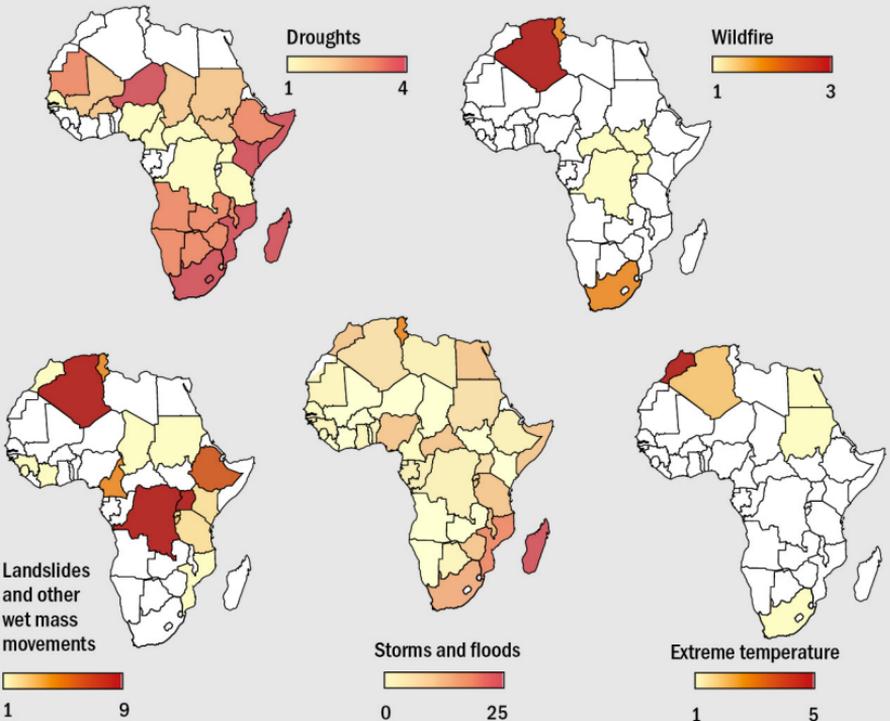


PHOTO ESSAY

The anxious echo of beauty

A walk through Mauritania's Banc d'Arguin national park demands that we witness the world we are changing.

PHOTOS AND WORDS: KANG-CHUN CHENG



Flutterby: A traveller tests the wind before setting out on Le Marche Bleue at the Banc d'Arguin.

WE HAVE just lived through the 11 hottest years on record (2015-2025), according to the latest climate report from the World Meteorological Organization. Few places on earth

have felt the heat more intensely than Mauritania, where temperatures are rising up to 1.5 times faster than the global average, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change.

Mauritanian film director Abderrahmane Sissako and his wife, screenwriter Kessen Tall, conceived an adventure that invites the world into their reality: an annual 100km walk in the desert and along the coastline in this often overlooked country.

The walk merges artistic curation with ecological initiative because “all things are a question of what you want to show; people and society and the environment are impossible to separate”, says Sissako, director of the acclaimed film *Timbuktu*.

The second edition of this tour, Le Marche Bleue, took walkers through Banc d’Arguin, one of just two national parks in Mauritania. The Unesco

World Heritage Site celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. The weeklong walk gathered policy makers, journalists, researchers, artists, students, nature lovers, and Mauritians living abroad, among others – immersing them in the country’s biodiversity and opening space for conversations about climate change and desertification.

Banc d’Arguin was a stunning setting for these conversations. Its location by the Atlantic Ocean means its sand dunes and harsh desert stand in sharp contrast with the marine zone whose astounding biodiversity includes fish nurseries that populate West Africa’s key fishing regions.

Yet beneath this stunning beauty,



Front-row seat: A sediment trap collects dust samples at the Banc d’Arguin.

an undercurrent was palpable – what Mauritanian psychiatrist Moktar Sissako describes as eco-anxiety or the deterioration of people’s mental health in response to environmental distress.

Rabi’a de Grange, a 24-year-old who grew up in Mauritania and is now studying film and drama at Harbin

Normal University in China, says she feels this eco-anxiety each time she returns to her home country and senses shifts in the environment. Every sign of environmental degradation reminds her of father. “He always said to me, ‘protect the environment as you would your own child.’” ■





Ebbing tides: *Cistanche tubulosa*, a plant said to boost testosterone, fecundity, and memory, is but one of the small miracles the desert keeps among its many secrets. Others might be the thin border of community that tracks the shoreline, or the unforgiving sands that wait for the wind to sweep away the scars of our journey.



Surf and turf: A boatman ferries travellers to the park's south gate near El Mamghar, where village children still manage to squeeze some life out the stark terracotta landscape.







ALL PHOTOS: PIERRA NYARUAI

Bees are for keeps in the mangroves of Lamu

Harvesting their dark, smoky honey has turned out to be a pretty sweet deal for hive-minded Kenyan islanders.

PIERRA NYARUAI IN LAMU

THERE is no farmland on Lamu Island – the ground is mostly coral limestone and sand, the air is salty, and there's not much fresh groundwater.

Most residents who wish to farm must commute by boat to nearby islands or to the Kenyan mainland, where they grow crops like maize and sesame and rear livestock. Others, like Lynnette Aloo, keep bees.



Aloo is a farmer, community organiser and director of the Lamu Women's Empowerment Network. Under her watch, women and young people have established apiaries on several islands in the Lamu Archipelago, including Manda, Pate, Siyu, Matondoni and Kipungani. The hives are strung along the edges of or within the mangrove forest that fringes much of the Lamu Archipelago.

Kenya Forest Service permits commercial activity inside mangrove forest only by registered groups. This has pushed Lamu's beekeepers to formally organise. It improved their legitimacy and visibility in a local economy in which women's contribution had long been informal and undercounted.

Summer time all year

Compared to inland apiaries, beekeeping in Lamu is much more productive. Inland, where flowers are seasonal, nectar runs scarce for months. In contrast, the mangrove forest is in near-constant bloom. Its year-long

floral calendar means Lamu apiaries can enjoy as many as three harvests a year.

The honey itself is dark, almost molasses-like in colour, with a deep, smoky flavour that has just a hint of the sea air. It is unifloral – drawn almost exclusively from just one type of flower, which gives it a consistency and character that sets it apart in a market hungry for artisanal products.

The honey itself is dark, almost molasses-like in colour, with a deep, smoky flavour that has just a hint of the sea air.

"When people taste it, they always ask what it is," Aloo says. "It doesn't taste like any other honey."

The bee species doing all the work is the East African lowland honeybee, smaller and more defensive than the bees found inland.

"They require a bit more care," says

Joan Kinyanjui, a consultant with Yatta Beekeepers, who has worked on several mangrove apiary projects. “You have to be attentive. But they are well adapted to this environment and they are productive.”

The honey is sold in Lamu, Mombasa, and Nairobi. Consumers are willing to pay a premium because they perceive it as rare and authentic. Mangrove honey can fetch up to 2,200 shillings (\$16) for a kilogram, compared to 1,000 shillings (\$7) for standard honey.

Aloo has her sights set even higher. “One day, when we are meeting local demand fully, we can begin to think about export,” she says.

Better work, biodiversity and income

The apiaries have a positive effect on Lamu biodiversity by increasing pollination. That means more flowers, more insects, and more life in the mangrove forest.

They also reduce reliance on octopus catching. Many women who have taken up beekeeping previously earned a living by harvesting octopus.

Harvesting them is back-breaking and sometimes dangerous work. The women used to wade through shallow waters and rocky coastline to harvest the molluscs, their incomes dependent on shifting tides and luck.

Then came the construction of a nearby port, which disrupted the seabed. That made the octopus even more scarce and the income of dozens of women harvesters fell.

With beekeeping, “you are not in the



water, you are not fighting the sea. You check your hives, you harvest. It feels different,” Aloo told *The Continent*. “Some [of us] say it is less stressful.”

Firdaus Loo’s group manages 30 hives. She says it’s a more profitable venture than any of the several informal business ventures she has tried before. A strong harvest season can earn her up to 80,000 Kenyan shillings (\$615). In a lean season, she still clears 20,000 (\$154). “With the other things I was doing, I could not make this money,” she says.

Still, the job still has its difficulties. Tidal changes can destroy low-set hives. The rains can be unpredictable, which disrupts blooming cycles and the bees’ rhythms. The mangrove forest is also used by crab fishermen, who wade the same waterways, and the overlap is not always peaceful. The women sometimes have to contend with their hives being vandalised and honey stolen. ■

INVESTIGATION



The Wagner adventure goes awry in Chad

Wagner infowarriors in N'Djamena pushed aggressively – and with questionable impact – just as they did in other countries. This time, however, their methods triggered local consequences.

A SHORT distance from Chad's National Museum, in the cool, hushed atmosphere of the Hôtel de l'Amitié, Chadian journalist Olivier Monodji met two men who introduced themselves as Belarusian journalists.

"They showed me their press cards and talked about advertorials, about collaboration," said Monodji, director of daily newspaper *Le Pays*. It was the beginning of an episode that would end with Monodji in prison.

When they first met in August 2024, the men said they were in N'Djamena to train journalists and launch a "communications house".

Weeks later, reporters in the city were invited to the inauguration of "Russian House".

The event, held at a two-storey house in the Farcha district west of N'Djamena, was actually the second attempt to launch a "Russian House" in Chad: a

more discreet opening had taken place a year earlier. This time, the inauguration was backed by Rossotrudnichestvo, Russia's cultural co-operation agency.

There were "canapés and the sound of Tchaikovsky in the air", recalls a *Radio France Internationale* correspondent who was present.

Andrei Denisevich, one of the men Monodji had met a month earlier, introduced himself to guests as a representative of Rossotrudnichestvo. He struggled to follow the exchanges, letting his bilingual colleague, Evgeny Tsarev, lead conversations.

Unbeknown to attendees, agents from Chad's state security service were filming from a nearby balcony. As soon as the ceremony ended, soldiers moved in and arrested the two men.

Denisevich and Tsarev would not have been entirely surprised by their arrest. At N'Djamena airport, two of

their colleagues – Maxim Shugaley and Samir Seifan – had been detained two days earlier. The four were linked to a Russian influence network tied to Yevgeny Prigozhin’s Wagner Group, which was later absorbed by Russia’s foreign intelligence service.

Authorities later detained seven individuals linked to the network, including journalists like Monodji. All were eventually cleared. “It’s because of the Russians that I spent four months in prison – I was set up,” Monodji said.

Manipulating fragile media

The Wagner Group had been present in the Sahel at least since late 2021, when it was first reported to be in Mali. By August 2023, its operatives were planning to support the creation of a “confederation of independence” in the Sahel that would become “the largest anti-Western

coalition in Africa” and “the centre of the future expansion of Russian influence”.

To sway public opinion, it published at least 700 articles in 35 French-language West African media outlets in 2024 alone. The articles castigated France, alleged Ukraine was supporting terrorists in the Sahel, and praised Russia and the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), which had been formalised in September 2023.

Internally, it reported paying outlets \$250 to \$700 per article. Several editors denied receiving such payments – and some said the pieces were published without their knowledge.

The system relied on a widespread practice in West African media known as *prêt à diffuser* (ready-to-publish content). For about \$120 to \$580, media outlets accept articles submitted via email or messaging apps. Sometimes, “the publication is arranged directly with a journalist, and the editor-in-chief may not even be aware,” Burkinabè journalist Harouna Drabo explains.

At Senegal’s *PressAfrik*, publisher Ibrahima Faye initially denied publishing such content – before discovering that at least 14 articles listed in the leaked documents had appeared on his site. He later removed them, calling their publication “fraudulent or inadvertent”.

Editors, journalists, and media owners interviewed described operating on high-volume publishing models that prioritise clicks and ad revenue from Big Tech platforms like Google AdSense. Publishing up to 10 articles a day, they are stretched too thin for rigorous verification of what is submitted.



Catching strays: Journalist Olivier Monodji was detained after interacting with the operatives.

Overreach in the field

The Wagner operatives' manipulative methods extended beyond the media – and sometimes backfired.

In September 2024, they organised a youth conference in Bamako, bringing together delegates from Senegal, Guinea, Togo, and Chad for a three-day gathering on “civic responsibility and patriotic spirit”. The discussions were “rich – it was a great initiative,” recalls Patricia Tourmadji from the Togolese delegation.

But the event took a political turn when organisers pushed participants to endorse their respective countries' possible accession to the AES.

“For us, it was unacceptable to approve a point that our authorities had not been informed about,” said Ousmane Sonko, vice national co-ordinator of the Patriotic Youth of Senegal, one of two Senegalese delegates at the conference.

Internally, the operatives reported that organising “a conference of Senegalese pan-African communities on the potential for cooperation with the AES” was one of their major successes in 2024. But when a follow-up forum was held in 2025, the Senegalese participants did not attend.

A miscalculation in Chad

In Chad, the first party to lose patience with their methods was the very regime the Wagner operatives sought to please.

During the 2024 presidential elections, Russian operative Shugaley showed up in N'Djamena with his translator during the final stretch before the presidential election. He crossed paths



House of cards: Maxim Shugaley at an event in Chad in 2024.

with Hilal Abdelkader Abdramane, the treasurer of Nouvelle Génération, one of the associations supporting President Mahamat Idriss Déby's campaign, and was invited to his office.

There, they gave Abdramane 20 polo shirts featuring Russian and Chadian flags and staged a photo: Shugaley sporting a cap bearing the president's image and Russian flags and pins lying on the table. When the image spread across social media and the press, Shugaley leaned into speculation that Russia was supporting Déby's campaign.

“The vote... is over. The winner is obvious, despite an attempt at American interference,” he posted.

Their internal documents also detail disinformation campaigns with which the network targeted Déby's opponent, Succès Masra. They alleged the United States had drafted Masra's manifesto and sent him advisers. They claimed he was linked to supposed contracts with US firms, including private security group



Victory lapse:
Supporters celebrate Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno's victory in the 2024 presidential election. Wagner operatives took it upon themselves to promote his campaign, but were later arrested and deported.

PHOTO: ISSOUF SANOGO/AFP

Bancroft. In addition, they claimed Masra wanted to trigger an international investigation into the president over the death of opposition figure Yaya Dillo in February 2024. Shugaley was also spotted at the public events organised by the president's team.

But Wagner's aggressiveness appears to have backfired. In court testimony, Abdramane later described Shugaley's involvement as exaggerated and manipulative rather than co-ordinated with the campaign.

Within months of the campaign, Chadian authorities arrested Shugaley on his return to the country and a broader crackdown followed on anyone linked to the network.

The episode underscored both the ambition and the limits of Russian influence operations in Africa. The Wagner infowarriors demonstrated an ability to exploit fragile media systems and political transitions, but their heavy hand also generated suspicion.

In response to this investigation, Chadian Information Minister Gassime Cherif said the government categorically rejected claims of foreign influence in the 2024 electoral process. ■

*This is the final story in *The Continent's* series on Wagner-linked Russian influence operations in Africa and Latin America. The leaked documents have been shared with partner outlets for ongoing coverage

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SUDAN CAN STILL BE REBORN

BY EDIZON MUSAVULI
MONA EISA YAGOUR



THE COLONISERS LEFT US A BROKEN COUNTRY...
THEY SOWED HATRED AND TOOK OUR WEALTH.

MY CHILDREN... SUDAN'S
SUFFERING DID NOT BEGIN
YESTERDAY. OUR PAIN GOES
BACK A LONG WAY.

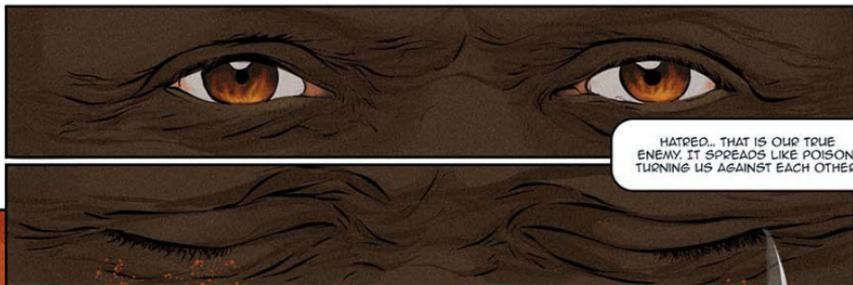


MOST OF THE DEVELOPMENT WAS IN KHARTOUM.
IN THE WEST AND EAST OF SUDAN, THERE WERE
FEWER SCHOOLS, FEWER JOBS, AND TRIBAL
ISSUES BEGAN TO SURFACE...

SO... THE WAR ALREADY
STARTED BACK THEN?



THE WAR OF
HEARTS.
YES... LONG
BEFORE THE
SUNS.



HATRED... THAT IS OUR TRUE ENEMY. IT SPREADS LIKE POISON, TURNING US AGAINST EACH OTHER.



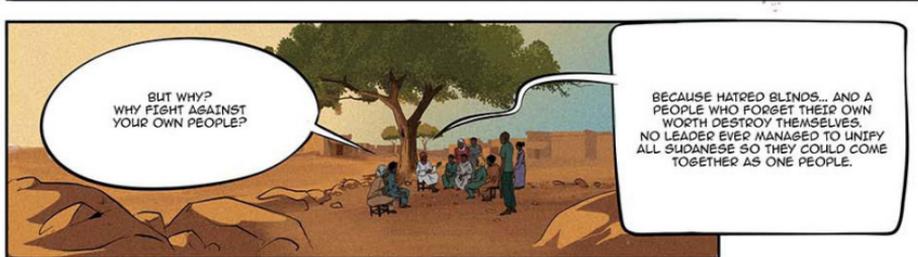
THE ARMY ON ONE SIDE, THE MILITIAS ON THE OTHER. OUR SONS KILL ONE ANOTHER, LIKE CELLS OF THE SAME BODY.

HEMEDTI HIMSELF IS THE CHILD OF MARGINALISATION, BORN FROM THE FORGOTTEN LANDS OF DARFUR AND RECRUITED BY THE REGIME OF OMAR AL-BASHIR TO CREATE THE RAPID SUPPORT FORCES.

PEOPLE IN THE WEST SUFFERED FROM DISCRIMINATION AS THEY WERE DIRECTLY LINKED TO HEMEDTI.

LIFE BECOMES EVEN MORE CHALLENGING WHEN YOU CAN'T BE PROUD OF WHERE YOU ARE FROM.

AS PEOPLE WERE DISPLACED FROM KHARTOUM TO OTHER CITIES, MANY WERE AFRAID TO SHARE THEIR OWN TRIBAL IDENTITY WITH THEIR FELLOW SUDANESE.



BUT WHY?
WHY FIGHT AGAINST
YOUR OWN PEOPLE?

BECAUSE HATRED BLINDS... AND A PEOPLE WHO FORGET THEIR OWN WORTH DESTROY THEMSELVES. NO LEADER EVER MANAGED TO UNIFY ALL SUDANESE SO THEY COULD COME TOGETHER AS ONE PEOPLE.

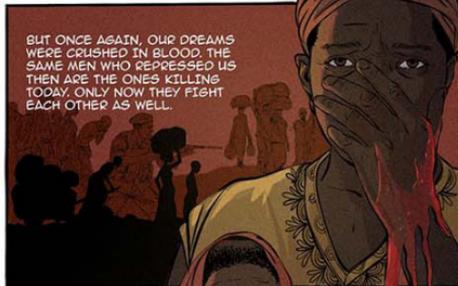
THEN CAME THE REVOLUTION OF 2018... A MARCH FOR BREAD, PEACE, AND DIGNITY. IT WAS A CRY FROM EVERY HEART, DEMANDING CHANGE FROM POVERTY AND INJUSTICE - AN AWAKENING TO THE MARGINALISATION AND THE SUFFERING OF DARFUR.



WE WAITED FOR HOURS FOR A LITTLE BREAD OR TO FILL OUR JERRYCANS. EVEN THE BANKS HAD NO CASH LEFT.



BUT ONCE AGAIN, OUR DREAMS WERE CRUSHED IN BLOOD. THE SAME MEN WHO REPRESSIONED US THEN ARE THE ONES KILLING TODAY. ONLY NOW THEY FIGHT EACH OTHER AS WELL.



YET, MY CHILDREN... WE ARE ONE BODY, ONE PEOPLE. IF WE HEAL THE HATE INSIDE US, WE CAN HEAL OUR NATION.



AS LONG AS WE REMEMBER, AS LONG AS WE LOVE, SUDAN CAN STILL BE REBORN.

DATA

A tale of two kingdoms

AFRICA is home to three monarchies: Morocco and Lesotho are constitutional monarchies, while in Eswatini the king holds executive sway over all branches of government.

In 2024/2025, Afrobarometer asked citizens from the two Southern African monarchies for opinions about their respective kings.

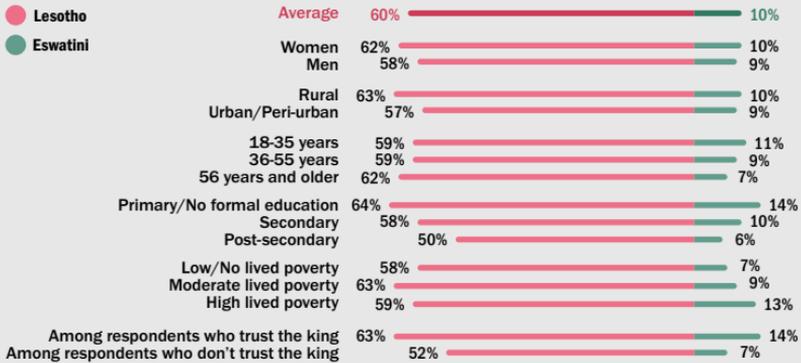
While only one in 10 Emaswati (10%) would welcome the abolition of elections and Parliament so that the king may govern the country on his own, six times as many (60%) of their Basotho cousins would approve of such a move. That's despite the fact that

support for democracy as the best form of government is stronger in Lesotho than Eswatini (63% vs. 45%).

These differences may be influenced by citizens' faith in their rulers: 73% of Basotho say they trust their king "somewhat" or "a lot", compared to just 41% of Emaswati. Indeed, in both countries, approval of government by a monarch is higher among those who trust their king than those who don't.

Education also seems to play a role: In both countries, citizens with higher education are less likely than their less-educated compatriots to endorse government by the king. ■

Favour abolition of parliament, government by king | by demographic group | Lesotho and Eswatini | 2024/2025





FILM REVIEW

BY WILFRED OKICHE



Breaking beats on the road to hell

This Cannes Jury Prize
winner and two-time
Oscar nominee needs
you to buckle up.

ACCORDING to Islamic cripture, *sirāt* – Arabic for “path” or “way” – is a narrow bridge that connects paradise and hell. For his third feature, French-born Spanish director Oliver Laxe puts his characters (and audiences) on this path, literally and figuratively. What emerges is one of the most transformative screen experiences of the year.

It’s hard to talk about plot details when it comes to *Sirāt* because Laxe’s

demand for total surrender is central to the experience. A father, Luis (Sergi López), and his young son venture into the Sahara in search of his missing teenage daughter, who is believed to have taken up with a bunch of Burning Man-style rave-seekers in the desert.

Father and son are determined to find her at all costs and to this end follow a band of five renegades (all non-actors). They are revellers, who have turned their backs on the world in search of a thrill that can be sated only by the explosive throb of loud speakers and a fellowship with strangers in the heat of the desert.

This is as much a film about living as it is about dying. Laxe infuses *Sirāt* with scenes that celebrate both.

There is something fatalistic but also unsurprising about nomadic European rave-seekers in search of the next high in this region of southern Morocco hurtling fast into civil war.

Laxe delineates the privilege of moving in the world this way but withholds judgment even as his characters realise everything is interconnected. In any case, the desert operates by its own rules.

To see *Sirāt* is to be enthralled by a unique vision that is as sensory as it is existential. The pleasures are vast, the traumas are deep, the music is transfixing, and the questions linger. Isn’t that what we want from cinema? ■

COMMENT

Anglo-ing, Anglo-ing, gone

Golden goose cooked, a fallen giant uproots its toxic beanstalk.

DUNCAN MONEY

THE MINING company Anglo American was once synonymous with southern Africa. It was the world's biggest gold producer and also mined coal, copper, diamonds, lead, and zinc. The company owned newspapers, a bank, steel mills, sugar plantations and, at one time, was the biggest landlord in central Johannesburg.

The company owned so much in the early 1990s that when one researcher claimed Anglo controlled 50% of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the company's rebuttal was that this was a ludicrous exaggeration, clarifying it controlled only about 30%.

All this is in the past for Anglo. The company that was founded in Johannesburg in 1917 is moving on to Canada. In 2025, Anglo agreed to merge with Canadian company Teck Resources but the Canadian government threatened to block the merger unless the company was headquartered in Canada and invested its billions there. When African governments do things like this, it's worrying resource nationalism; when Canada does it, it's legitimate protection of national interests.

When the company's founder Ernest Oppenheimer commissioned offices in

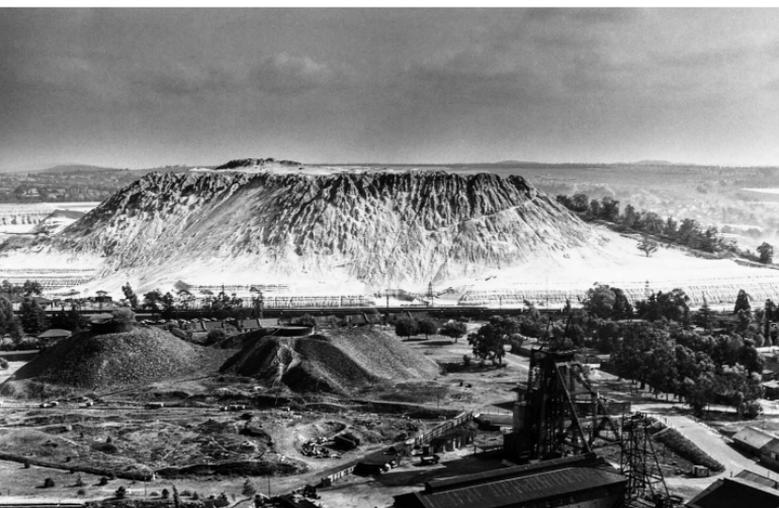
downtown Johannesburg, he told the architect to build something between a bank and a cathedral. Anglo vacated these cavernous offices in 2024. Current chief executive Duncan Wanblad has claimed that the company is "not leaving South Africa at all", but future correspondence to him will be directed to the new offices in Vancouver.

This is the culmination of a long process. The company shifted its main stock exchange listing to London in 1999. Downsizing began soon after.

Gold went first. Anglo organised its gold mines into a new company, AngloGold, and then sold it. AngloGold subsequently sold all its mines in South Africa and left the country. This became the model in the following years: AngloCoal was sold and became Thungela Resources and Seriti Resources, then AngloPlat became Valterra Platinum.

Next to go will be diamonds. Anglo is trying to sell De Beers amid what may be a permanent slump in diamond prices. Angola, Botswana, and Namibia, all of which mine diamonds, have sought to buy De Beers. So have a group of former De Beers executives.

Once it is sold, Anglo's entire operations in Southern Africa will comprise only an iron ore mine in South



King of the heap:
A gold mine in Johannesburg in the 1950's. Anglo American controlled 30% of the Jo'burg stock exchange in the 1990s.

PHOTO: HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

Africa's Northern Cape, and a minority stake in two manganese mines. A generation ago, this would have been unthinkable.

What's been left behind

Across southern Africa, there is a legacy of polluted mine sites, toxic dumps, and many thousands of former Anglo employees whose health was crippled by tuberculosis and silicosis contracted while working underground at their mines. It's possible that one reason Anglo so comprehensively sold off their mines in the region is because the potential environmental and health liabilities could have exceeded the value of any future profits from mining.

Some of these sites are worse than others. Kabwe in Zambia is often termed the world's most polluted town. Decades of lead mining resulted in severe contamination of water, soil and extremely high levels of lead in the

bodies of the town's residents. Anglo ran the mine for 50 years, although Zambia's state-owned mining company hardly did any better when it took over.

The Mining Affected Communities United in Action movement responded to Anglo's move to Canada with its 100-Year Debt Campaign. The group is calling for a parliamentary inquiry in South Africa into environmental liabilities, capital flight, and reparations for mining communities.

Anglo American insists it is not leaving the country because it will retain a listing on the JSE, "providing direct investment access for our substantial shareholder base in South Africa". How many former Anglo employees and communities around Anglo's old mines are included in this "substantial" base is unclear. ■

Duncan Money is a historian and researcher who focuses on the mining industry

The Flag Quiz

Can you name these (African and non-African) flag lookalikes?



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

"In the quiz biz,
flag-spotting is
where I really
earn my stripes."

Big Pic

Nile by night: An Egyptian street vendor sells hot drinks along the al-Gamaa bridge, which crosses the Nile to connect the Egyptian capital Cairo with its twin city of Giza.

PHOTO: KHALED DESOUKI/AFP



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