

The Continent



**Back to South Africa,
despite everything**



COVER: This year's anti-migrant protests in South Africa drove tens of thousands of people to leave the country. One of the biggest groups to leave were Malawians, repatriated on dozens of buses sponsored by Lilongwe. Four months later, many are now travelling in the opposite direction. In South Africa, they risk being targets of Afrophobic violence but have a chance to earn a living. In Malawi, they may be safer but struggle to make ends meet. This cycle has played out through previous waves of Afrophobia. Right now, migrants are convenient political targets ahead of South Africa's local government elections. But once the ballots are cast, the votes counted, and the rhetoric dies down, expect more migrants to return. Bills need to be paid, families fed, and life must go on.

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A new(ish) newspaper

The world is a better place with more journalism in it. And we do love a good newspaper. So we've brought back *The Friday Paper*, our South Africa-focused sibling. For the next five weeks its fabulous team will focus on the country's pivotal local elections (and share gratuitous food photographs). Click [here](#) to subscribe.

Next week we'll also publish the latest issue of *The Atlas*, our international newspaper in partnership with Coda Story, dropshipped directly to you. Help us to build our media empire by sharing them, and *The Continent*, with all the people.

THE WEEK IN BRIEF

SOMALIA

Mass displacement on the horizon

The International Organisation for Migration warned nearly 874,000 people could be displaced in Somalia over the next three months because of heavy rainfall and rising rivers. As if that wasn't bad enough, flooding may also destroy crops, contaminate water sources, and disrupt access to healthcare, according to *Shabelle Media Network*. The migration agency called for international funding to ramp up warning systems and provide shelter and clean water.

HEALTH

Not our Ebola, insists Uganda

The first case of Ebola has been confirmed in Nigeria according to the country's health ministry. The patient, who had visited Uganda, entered Abuja with symptoms on 7 October. The woman is in isolation and 44 contacts have been identified as part of the process to curb the spread. Uganda, however, has denied having any cases of Ebola. The exposure location is still being investigated. There is no vaccine yet available for the Bundibugyo strain of the virus.

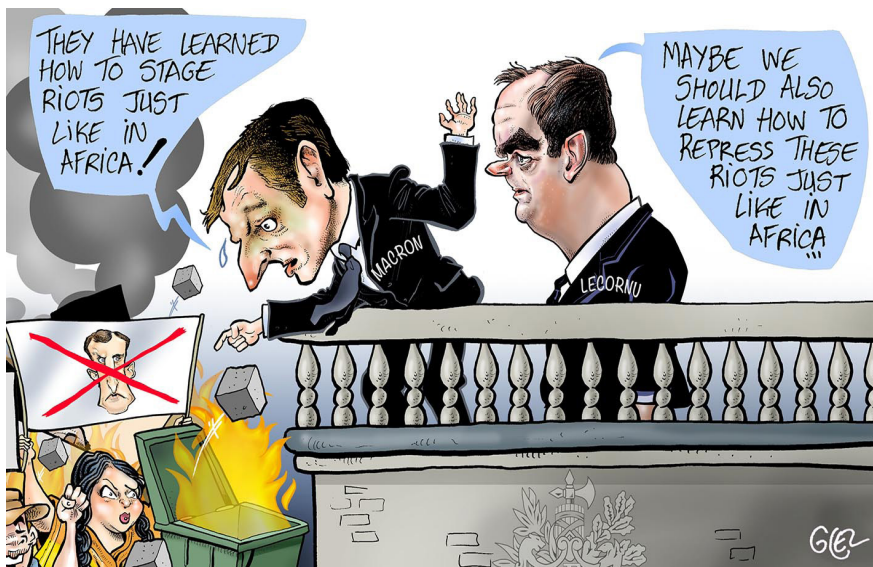


Freed: Eva Gretzmacher, 76, and Claudia Abbt, 69, were abducted in 2025.

NIGER

Swiss and Austrian captives released

Two women from Austria and Switzerland who were kidnapped in Niger and held for more than a year were freed on Thursday, *AP* reports. The Austrian woman was abducted in the city of Agadez in January 2025; the Swiss woman was kidnapped in the same city months later. The former had lived in Niger as an aid worker for more than 20 years. Niger has been battling terrorism for years. When the military junta took power in 2023, it said that bringing peace was a reason for the coup, but the situation has not improved.



RWANDA

Kagame critic beheaded in Uganda

Robert Kabera, a staunch critic of Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, has been found dead in Uganda. The former Rwandan army sergeant major was beheaded on the outskirts of the capital, Kampala, the *BBC* reports. Ugandan police say his head has still not been found. Kabera fled to Uganda after being accused of sexual assault, which he denied. Kabera is one of several Kagame critics who have been killed in Rwanda and abroad. The country is notorious for arresting and jailing dissidents, especially journalists and political opponents.

WHO

Shamonda virus infects patient zero

The first documented case of a human being infected with the Shamonda virus has been recorded in France. The patient has since died. Tedros Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the World Health Organisation, said the patient's immune system was compromised, leaving them vulnerable. The virus primarily affects animals and is thought to spread through midge bites. It is not clear how the virus was transmitted from animal to human, but the WHO said it is gathering information to understand if there is any wider danger or potential risk to public health.

EGYPT

Ready to defend Saudi Arabia

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi says the country's military is ready to help defend Saudi Arabia's territory if called upon, but has also clarified that any such operation would not include an attack on Yemen. Iran-backed Houthi rebels have escalated attacks against Saudi Arabia in recent weeks. Egypt's foreign minister, Badr Abdelatty, met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh, to whom he passed on a written message from Sisi to King Salman, *Reuters* reports. Sisi said this gesture also covers any other Arab country that needs its help with defence.

SOUTH AFRICA

Mob beats migrant to death

A foreign national was killed during an anti-migrant protest in the port city of Durban on Thursday, *Africanews* reports. According to the police, the man was standing by the side of the road when two men accosted him. The initial assault degenerated into a mob attack and the man was later declared dead on the scene. Durban has become a flashpoint for anti-immigration violence over the past few months, forcing foreign nationals living and working in South Africa to flee back to their countries.



PHOTO: SIMON MAINA/AFP

Massacre: Paul Mackenzie was found guilty of murdering 191 people, mostly children.

KENYA

Aiming for heaven, but guilty as hell

Cult leader Paul Mackenzie has been found guilty of murder by a Kenyan court for the deaths of 190 children, the *Daily Nation* reports. Mackenzie was arrested in 2023 after a tip-off that led to the discovery of bodies in shallow graves in the Shakahola forest. The leader of the Christian doomsday cult had urged members to starve themselves and their children to death to go to heaven because the world was ending imminently. Mackenzie pleaded not guilty, claiming he did not force sect members to starve.



PHOTO: SUNDAY ALAMBA/AP

GAMBIA

Corruption puts money where its mouth is

Gambia's Reparations Commission has received \$2.5-million from the United States. The funds are from the sale of a property belonging to former president Yahya Jammeh, the *BBC* reports. The property was seized in 2022 because it was acquired from proceeds of financial misappropriation. Jammeh stepped down in 2017 after ruling Gambia for more than 20 years. He is alleged to have committed human rights violations and extrajudicial killings. Gambia has promised to use the funds to benefit victims of Jammeh's crimes.

Dodgy Jammeh: *Former Gambian president Yahya Jammeh, in a file picture from 2014.*

JOINING the DOTS

YUSUF OMOTAYO

French President Emmanuel Macron is expected to visit Nigeria next week, for unknown

reasons. What we do know is this is not the most auspicious time for Macron to be leaving France: his country is on fire – metaphorically and in some cases literally. Protests began in mid-September over teacher shortages and poor conditions at schools, led by high-school students. These spiralled into a countrywide crisis driven by anger over the high cost of living, energy

prices, and cuts to public services. Several buildings and vehicles have been set on fire. One wonders whether these economic challenges stem from several Francophone African countries turning their backs on France, resulting in dirt-cheap minerals from the continent no longer being up for grabs. Nigerian President Bola Tinubu has visited France nine times since 2023. Macron needn't worry about returning the gesture, particularly since Tinubu is probably already planning his next visit. We await the African Union's travel advisory: It may be a good idea to advise Africans to refrain from travelling to that volatile state. ■

NEWS

TUNISIA



PHOTO: FETH BELAID/APP

Protests rock Tunisia

POLICE-RELATED killings have sparked protests in Tunis and the southern town of Jebiniana. The protests in the capital are part of a wave of anti-government demonstrations, which have led to police clashes amid an economic, social, and political crisis.

Police have used tear gas and brutal force. One man reportedly died in police custody after he was detained on suspicion of drug dealing. His family called for an investigation into his death.

In Jebiniana, another man was

reportedly run over after he was chased by security operatives. His death led to further confrontations between the police and protesters, who blocked roads and set a vehicle on fire.

According to reports, more than 3,000 protesters marched in Tunis, led by civil society groups and political parties. It was one of the largest anti-government demonstrations in years.

Demonstrators accused President Kais Saied of undermining democracy and mismanaging the economy. ■

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Free healthcare, but at what cost?

YANNICK DJANHOUN IN ABIDJAN

A CHINESE naval hospital ship left Abidjan on Wednesday after a week providing free healthcare in Côte d'Ivoire. The visit forms part of a 200-day voyage offering medical treatment and health checks, calling on ports across Africa and South Asia.

In Abidjan, doctors provided more than 4,000 consultations, according to the Ivorian press agency. In a previous call to the Guinean capital Conakry, the queues were so long that some patients were told to return the next

day, *The South China Morning Post* reports.

But the mission has raised questions about patient confidentiality and health-data sovereignty.

Medical researcher Professor Patrick Woyo told *The Continent* there needs to be clarity over what will happen to the medical samples and personal data collected.

Côte d'Ivoire has a legal framework for protecting personal data, including health records. According to Woyo, “the main difficulty lies in the effective implementation” of these rules. ■



Snare shots:
A marching band welcomes the Chinese navy hospital ship Auspicious Ark to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on Wednesday.

PHOTO: CHINA FOCUS

ECOWAS

Nigeria extends olive branch to Sahel states

The AES exit from Ecowas has made co-ordinating regional responses to health, trade and other issues all but impossible.

YUSUF OMOTAYO IN LAGOS

NIGERIA is moving towards normalising relations with the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) through the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) after a meeting last weekend in Dakar, Senegal.

The three AES states – Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso – officially quit Ecowas in January 2025 after a series of coups. Their military juntas accused the regional body of strangling their economies with sanctions, and of enabling Western interference in the region.

These actions have had a ripple effect. The Multinational Joint Task Force is an intelligence-sharing system for Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad to collaborate on combating insurgency. When Niger quit this regional body, it worsened the security situation in Nigeria.

According to the Armed Conflict

Location and Events Database, the three months between April and June this year were the country's most violent quarter in the almost three decades since Acled began collecting data on violence in 1997. A sharp rise in armed banditry is driving the escalation.

But normalising relations might take some time, said political analyst Chris Ogunmodede.

"There has been a lot of bad blood between the regional states over the past three years," he told *The Continent*.

After the meeting, both delegations agreed to form joint working groups to explore what a new co-operation framework might look like.

"There has been a lot of bad blood over the past three years."

The Sahelian states are still under military rule, which further complicates the situation. Ecowas' own policies explicitly reject military coups and demand a return to constitutional and democratic civilian rule.

Ogunmodede, however, argues for a version of *realpolitik* – at least for the time being.

"The AES is in no rush to return to civilian rule," he said. "Both sides will need to compromise." ■

Reading is resistance



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FEATURE

Home and back again: Malawians turn the bus around

Tens of thousands of Malawians were repatriated as they fled Afrophobic violence in South Africa. Now, many are returning, as economic realities trump the fear of being targeted.



ALL PHOTOS: MARCO SIMONCELLI

Weighing the risks: Travellers board a bus in Lilongwe, Malawi to take them to South Africa.

**BUSTER EMIL KIRCHNER AND
MARCO SIMONCELLI IN LILONGWE**

THE INTERNATIONAL bus station in Lilongwe is quiet in the late evening, even though there are dozens of passengers already at the terminus. The only sound is the crackle of plastic film

being wrapped around heavy suitcases.

Richard Banda is one of them. He's waiting for the 4am bus that will take him back to South Africa.

In May, fearing for his life, the Malawian carpenter fled Durban, a hotspot of the anti-migrant protests that swept South Africa. Malawians and



Turnaround: Richard Banda nearly died in South Africa. He says he has no choice but to return.

other African migrants in the country were targeted with persistent threats, intimidation, and violent attacks. At least five lost their lives. Others had their shops and places of work looted or set alight.

Now, Banda is going back to the country where he nearly died. He has no choice, he says, referring to Malawi's high cost of living and its weak currency.

"When the xenophobia has calmed down a little – like now – I can go back," he told *The Continent*. "I can't make money to survive here in Malawi."

He was one of at least 62,680 Malawians who fled or were repatriated from South Africa after the anti-migrant March and March movement set an arbitrary deadline of 30 June for all undocumented foreign nationals to leave the country.

Malawians made up the vast majority

of migrants who fled South Africa.

Today, four months down the line, buses from South Africa to Malawi are no longer full. It's the buses heading to South Africa that are now packed.

Since mid-September, ticket sales have skyrocketed, says Alepha Chimwasa. He's a sales manager at Ulemu Bus Service, which operates four weekly buses to South Africa. The primary passengers are young men, going to look for work.

The exact number of "re-returnees" is not known, but experts say the migration pattern is circular. This is not the first time Malawians have fled South Africa. In 2015 about 7,000 fled and in 2019 about 100 left. Many of them went back to South Africa after the xenophobic attacks had died down.

"In Malawi, the latest returns to South Africa have been an issue of growing

concern,” Maxwell Matewere, who is a national project officer for the UN focusing on human-trafficking, told *The Continent*. “But it’s not surprising Malawians are going back – it has always been like that.”

According to Fatma Said, the chief of mission at the International Organisation for Migration in Malawi, 86% of the returnees in the latest repatriation initially indicated willingness to stay in Malawi. That number, she says, is unusually high – in reality, it might be much lower.

The bus station in Lilongwe bears testament to the desire to return, rather than stay.

‘Abahambe’ follows them home

Migration from Malawi to South Africa has long been concentrated around Lake Malawi, in the country’s northeast. That pattern continues today.

Mangochi district has received by far the most returnees, at more than 40%, or some 26,000 people, of those repatriated. Migration from this area dates back to the colonial era, when migrants travelled to work in South African mines.

Today, people are leaving Mangochi for many of the same reasons, but also because making a living at home has become harder. Overfishing has damaged livelihoods around the lake and farming often brings barely enough to survive. This month, Malawi’s economic troubles deepened with a severe fuel crisis.

The links to South Africa are visible

everywhere in Mangochi Town, with money-transfer shops displaying the South African flag.

On the community football pitch, squeezed between tall palms and the Shire River flowing into Lake Malawi, about half of the players are recent returnees. Even their speech carries traces of South Africa, with some ending their sentences asking “neh?” – much like saying “right?” or “isn’t it?”

“The future looks dark. I see nowhere where I can find money to start a business.”

Returning to Mangochi hasn’t been easy, said 27-year-old Sarah Said, who lived in South Africa for six years. She was initially excited to reunite with her two children and mother, but soon realised the community viewed her with scepticism.

Many people shout “abahambe” when they see her. This is the same isiZulu anti-immigrant slogan – meaning “they must go” – chanted at migrants during xenophobic protests in South Africa.

To support returnees like Said, Malawi has launched a national reintegration strategy. This programme offers small businesses capital and agricultural inputs to help them to “restart their lives”, said Nelly Chimwemwe of the department of disaster management affairs.

But Chimwemwe cautioned that “the government alone cannot do it all at once”. She said external funding is

required to fully reintegrate the many returnees, particularly in Mangochi where public services have been “overstretched”.

This has directly affected Said’s prospects. “The future looks dark. I see nowhere where I can find money to start a small business,” she told *The Continent*.

The business of going back

It’s not just legitimate travel networks that are benefiting from the return journeys to South Africa. Criminal ones are booming too.

At Dedza Border Post between Malawi and Mozambique, Harry*, a bus driver who frequently drives the route between Malawi and South Africa, said

the whole corridor is corrupted.

“Passengers are asked by immigration authorities to pay R50 (\$3) at random, self-appointed checkpoints in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa,” he told *The Continent*. “People pay out of fear and, if you hold the black Malawian passport, you’re in trouble.”

According to the UN’s Matewere, the migration to South Africa includes an element of human trafficking. The networks are highly organised and active in Malawian districts prone to migration. They have increasingly adopted creative tactics, such as fake job adverts and AI-powered social-media scams to attract recruits, he says.

Matewere is now lobbying for a new Immigration Amendment Bill in



Shakedown: At border crossings, travellers are targeted by corrupt officials who charge them ‘extra fees’.

Malawi's parliament which, if voted into law, could curb those scams. The bill currently sits with the country's ministry of justice and is scheduled to be tabled during the next sitting of Parliament.

Local politics by other means

Many of the returnees interviewed by *The Continent* link the recent wave of xenophobia to South Africa's domestic politics.

Research by the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria found surges in xenophobic violence correlate with election and campaign periods. Researchers from the University of the Witwatersrand reached similar conclusions, arguing that xenophobic mobilisation in South Africa is shaped not only by frustrated communities, but also by vigilante groups and by what the state does – or fails to do.

Political scientists Ivor Chipkin and Jelena Vidojević's research has found South Africa's violent protest waves have followed the rhythms of power struggles inside the African National Congress itself. The party's internal elite politics have been externalised onto migrant communities.

According to the International Organisation for Migration in Malawi, it is plausible more Malawians will soon attempt to return to South Africa, when the local government elections on 4 November have passed.

In fact, the flow of Malawian re-returnees is officially recognised. This month, Justin Saidi, the secretary to the government, said the state had done

its part and “will not be responsible for whatever challenges the re-returnees may face in South Africa”.

Meanwhile, xenophobic attacks across South Africa continue. As Malawians in Mangochi queued up for buses towards the promised land, the news filtered in that 24 cars had been set on fire in South Africa's latest wave of anti-migrant protests.

For Charles Junior, a young Malawian lighting a cigarette while waiting for an early-morning bus to Johannesburg – his first ever visit to the country – stories of xenophobic violence are not a deterrent. To him, staying in Malawi is the worse prospect.

“We just go there,” he said. “God gives us different chances. The others had their experiences and I'll have mine.” ■



Smoke signals: Charles Junior, a Malawian migrant, waits for his bus just before dawn.

* Last name withheld to protect privacy.

OBITUARY

Farewell, Gamal Nkrumah

A journalist remembers her colleague and friend,
who was more than his famous surname.



LINA EL WARDANI IN CAIRO

I KEPT staring at the placard with his name on it at the funeral in Manshiyet Nasser, Cairo but it just wouldn't register. Gamal Nkrumah.

Gamal was my colleague: my office mate for three years and my friend for more than 20. He passed away last week on 14 October, aged 68.

Gamal was the son of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's founding president, and named after Egypt's former president, Gamal Abdel Nasser. He carried that history with pride and made his father's dream of a united Africa, north and south of the Sahara, his own.

"Until Africa stood tall", he often said, its people "would never feel fully free".

But Gamal was so much more than

his father's son. For three decades at *Al-Ahram Weekly*, he edited foreign news, as well as writing eruditely about everything in the region: the Nile and the Horn, wars and elections, history and culture.

Gamal had a rare talent that turned words into poetry. He was never confrontational, never apologetic: he simply said things as they were.

Between 2002 and 2005, I shared an office with him at the *Weekly*. Our room was at the end of a long, narrow corridor and Gamal's booming laugh would fill it. Everything about him was loud: his colourful shirts, his big hair, his warmth.

And everything about him was slow. Slow to walk, slow to speak, slow to meet deadlines. He was always fashionably late – and always forgiven – because it all came with that irresistible smile.

A couple of years ago, he moved to Ghana with his sister Samia, but kept saying he wanted to return home to Egypt. His mother, Fathia, chose to lie beside his father in Ghana. Gamal rests in Cairo, his chosen home.

In the hospital room where he was being prepared for burial, I found myself looking for his two little boys, Youssef and Karim. Instead I found tall, broad men. Karim, the older, is the spitting image of his father. I still remember hearing him as a little boy in the background of a call with Gamal, pleading for a second serving of broccoli.

At the funeral, someone joked Gamal must have had no male colleagues. Most of us attending were the women of the *Weekly*.

I didn't even know Gamal was sick.

In my mind, it is still 20 years ago. I walk down that long corridor, open the door of our tiny office, and there he is: the big hair; the wide eyes; and that loud, joyful laugh ringing in my ears.

Farewell, Gamal, habibi.

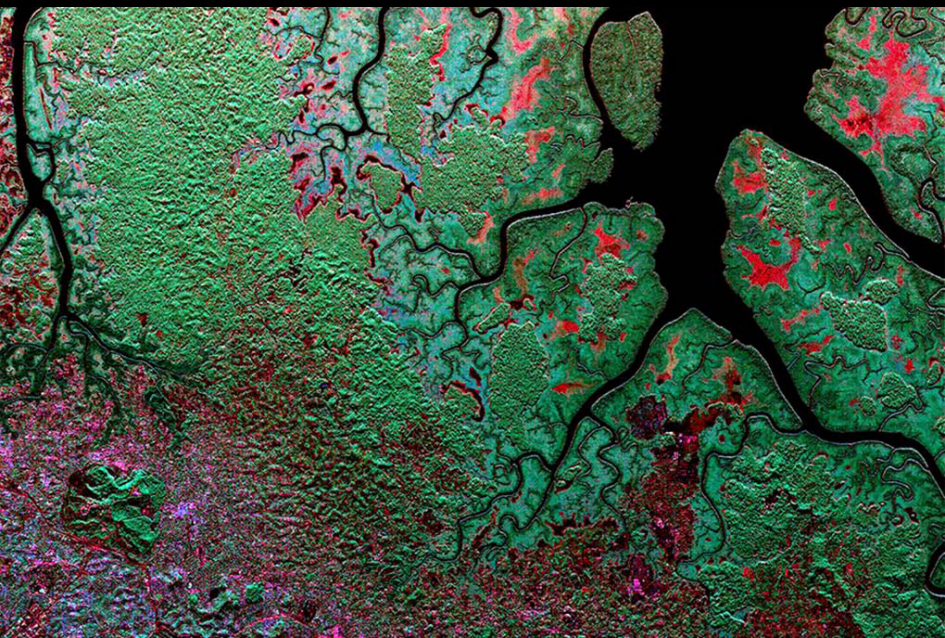
Rest in power. ■

Lina El Wardani is an editor at Egab. This story was published in collaboration with Egab.



Fashionably late: Here rests the journalist Gamal Gorkeh Nkrumah in Cairo, his chosen home.

PHOTO ESSAY



Tropical forests in Gabon, West Africa. PHOTO: NASA

Earth, in stunning high-res

WORDS: PAUL BOTES

WHEN I was a child, before light pollution was a thing, my father would take me out to see the stars when I couldn't sleep. It was magical. He would describe different constellations and show me where to find them – and then explain how far away they were. I felt tiny, but a part of something so, so big.

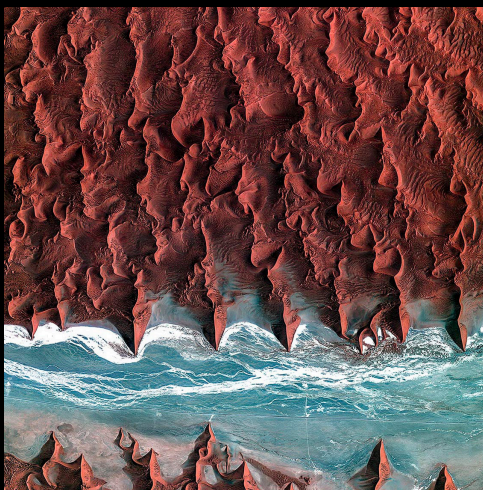
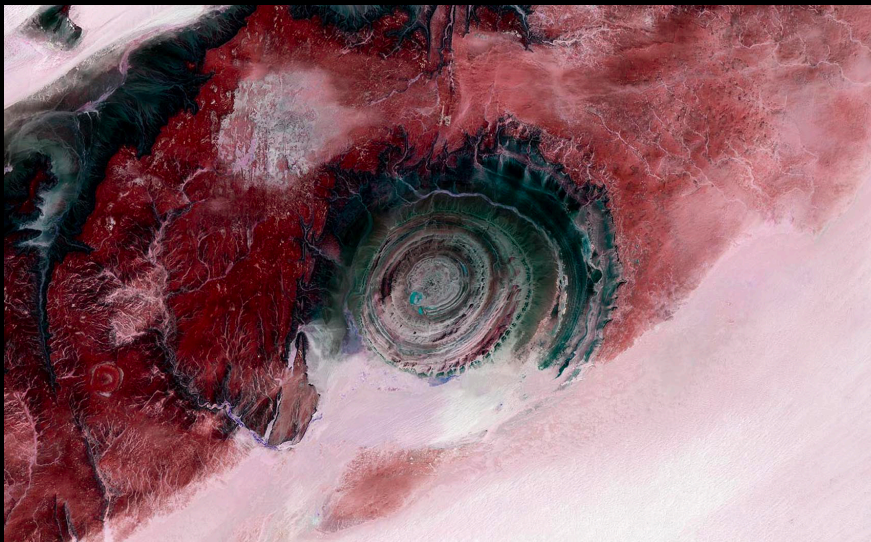
Years later, I saw an exhibition of photographs by Nasa astronauts, either taken from the moon's surface or as they flew by in their spacecraft. The photographs are breathtaking, particularly when they are printed. At high resolutions, the prints can be more than a metre wide.

As satellites have improved, so has their ability to showcase the Earth with

beautiful textures and colours. What makes these photographs work is their scale – they often show a snapshot of Earth that is more than 100 km².

Here are a few images of Africa from space I've selected for you. ■

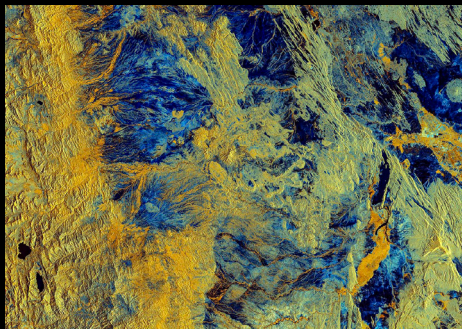
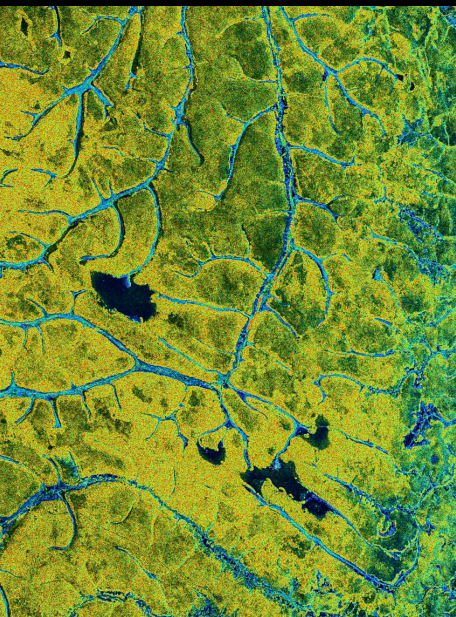
Paul Botes is *The Continent's* photo editor



Above: The Richat Structure (also known as the Eye of the Sahara or Eye of Africa), a prominent 40km to 50km-wide circular geological formation in the Adrar Plateau of the Sahara Desert in Mauritania.

PHOTO: EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

Left: Sand dunes meet the Tsauchab Riverbed, Namibia. The blue and white winding strip looks like water or foam, but is actually the dry, salt-crusted bed of the Tsauchab River. PHOTO: SOUTH KOREA'S KOMPSAT-2

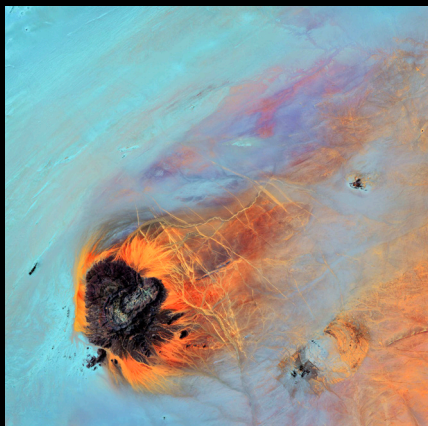


Above: Northeast Ethiopia, centered around Semera (capital of the Afar region) and the nearby town of Dubti. PHOTO: EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

Left: Gallery forests, formed along the river and wetland corridors of the Angola–Democratic Republic of Congo border. PHOTO: EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

Below: The Betsiboka River Delta and Estuary in northwestern Madagascar. PHOTO: NASA

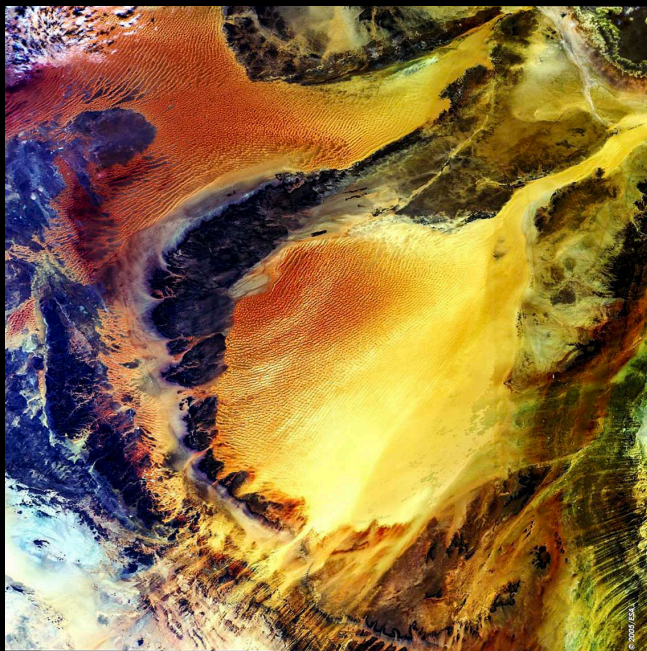




Taken for granite: Jebel Kissu, a solitary massif, rises above the dunes of the Sahara in Sudan.



The spice must flow: The Mulanje Massif towers over Lake Chilwa in southern Malawi.



Full fathom: Ubari and Murzuq sand seas, Libya. PHOTO: NASA

DATA

After the party

POLITICAL parties played major roles in the liberation of most African countries, whether as revolutionary guerrillas or boardroom brokers.

Post-independence, most countries on the continent were ruled as one-party states until the 1980s. Even some democracies (such as Botswana and South Africa) were dominated by a single party until recently.

Given this history, you might expect most Africans to feel deeply attached to a particular party. Not so, apparently.

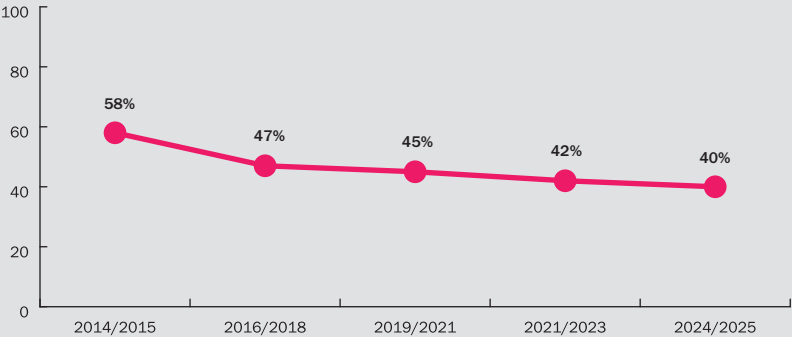
Looking at 27 countries for which we have consistent data over the past decade, there's a large drop in the

share of citizens who report feeling close to a political party – from 58% to just 40%. Half of that drop came between 2014/2015 and 2016/2018, but partisanship levels have continued to diminish since then.

Across all 37 countries in which we asked this question in 2024/2025, youth are less likely than their elders to feel close to a party (36% vs 42%), suggesting the slide may continue.

We also detect a lack of antipathy across party lines. Most Africans (81%) say they would not mind, or would like, living next door to people who support a different political party. ■

Feel close to a political party | 27 countries | 2014-2025



REVIEW

Felabration brings the Afrobeat icon's legacy into focus

It's been almost three decades since Fela Kuti passed on, but his music is more relevant than ever.

PELUMI SALAKO IN LAGOS

LAST Sunday, hundreds of revellers sang and danced along to Femi Kuti's energetic performance at the New Afrika Shrine in Lagos, Nigeria. Some of them were shirtless, lost to the music. Others smoked and drank in clusters, gyrating to the fast, jazzy tune of his Afrobeat.

It was the grand finale of Felabration, the annual music festival paying tribute to Fela Kuti's music, fashion, and activism. Fela was the progenitor

of the Afrobeat genre, an infusion of West African sounds, jazz, highlife, and American funk.

This year's Felabration featured more than 100 artists, including Fela's son Femi – a musician in his own right.

Across the vast hall, Fela's image hung next to the revolutionaries he admired – Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara, and others who imagined Africa differently. Banners carried the question “Who are you?” – one of his favourite refrains on stage. He would return to it again and again, less as a question than a



Who are we?
The issues Fela Kuti sang about still plague the country – and a new generation of Nigerians is turning to the Afrobeat icon's music for inspiration and courage.

ALL PHOTOS: PELUMI SALAKO

challenge: to look inward, name oneself, and recognise the struggles that shape one's life.

In the hall, marijuana smoke drifted through the crowd, an echo of the counter-culture life he embraced. Fela smoked ganja despite Nigeria's laws, most famously at his Lagos compound, Kalakuta Republic, which he declared independent from Nigeria.

For many festival-goers, the concert was as much about politics as music. Fela spent his life confronting corruption, police brutality, military dictatorship, and even Nigeria's political establishment, leading to his arrest and detention.

His defiance came at a brutal cost. In 1977, a year after the release of *Zombie* – his searing mockery of soldiers as men who obey without thinking – hundreds of troops stormed Kalakuta Republic. They beat residents, set the compound ablaze and threw his mother, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, out of an upstairs window. She later died from her injuries.

Salman Opeyemi travelled 288km from Ilorin to enjoy the last three days of the week-long festival at the New Afrika Shrine, built in 2000.

"We did not know Fela, but we met what he was saying and it still relates to our current reality ... That is the connection between his time and our time," Opeyemi told *The Continent*, his sentiment epitomising Fela's famous declaration that "music is the weapon for the future".

Although Fela died in 1997, nearly all

of the issues he sang about still plague Nigeria and younger citizens now turn to his music for courage. His musical invention also set a creative pace for a new generation to develop the popular genre Afrobeats, the popular.

Halfway through the performance, Femi, drenched in sweat, brought the music to a halt. The dancers and backing singers froze with him, the movement of their colourful costumes suspended. Femi scanned the crowd, then spoke about Nigeria's troubles – corruption, poor leadership, the upcoming general election – and urged people to vote carefully.

Then he lifted his saxophone to his lips. The band struck up again and the hall returned to a mass of dancing bodies. ■



For the future: Femi Kuti performs with his band, Positive Force, at Felabration 2026.

ATLANTIC
OCEAN

Africa

Mombasa

INDIAN
OCEAN

FERRY TALES

LIMITED SERIES

Curated by Gado | Story by Paul Kelemba

Likoni Ferry
Mombasa, Kenya

*Carrying capacity:
1,500 passengers, 62 vehicles*

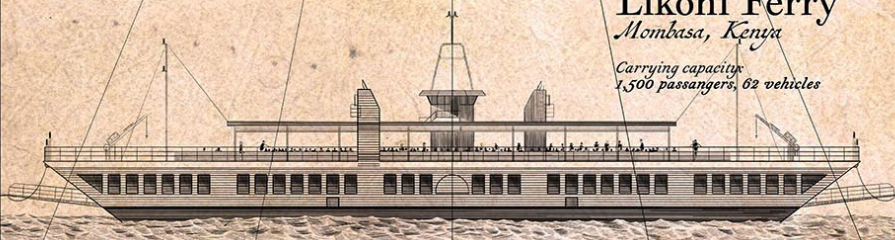


ILLUSTRATION: YEMSRACH YETNEBERK

INTRODUCTION

Africa's ferries cross myth with the mundane

GADO

WHENEVER I use a ferry in any African city or town, I'm always fascinated by the energy that surrounds them. The buzzing of commuters, fishermen, traders, tourists, and students mingles with the vehicles and luggage – even live chickens and goats.

That's what carries these vessels, boats, and wooden dhows along.

Travellers depend on these vessels to move across peninsulas, islands, and mainlands separated by fresh- and seawater.

But amid the hustle and bustle, ferries in Africa have fascinating histories, layered with monumental tragedies. Hundreds of people have died in ferry disasters, sometimes from travelling on

overloaded and dilapidated vessels.

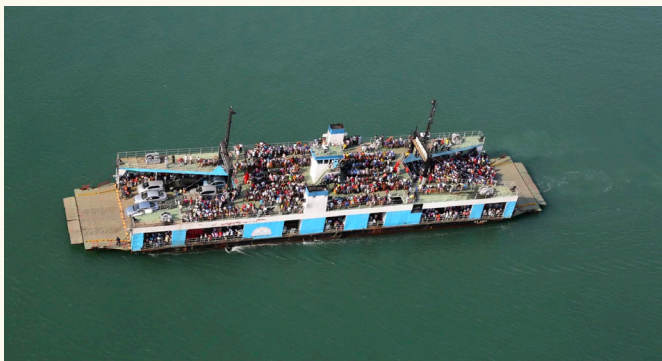
In some cases, these tragedies lie buried beneath treacherous waters – eventually resurfacing as myths and legends woven into popular culture.

In other cases, ferry services have been caught up in scandalous political dealings, whether linked to vessel procurement or the state's construction of bridges to link the landmasses.

Piracy haunts some routes, with military escorts deployed to secure their passage.

From Maputo to Dar es Salaam, Mombasa to Malabo, Abidjan to Lagos, *The Continent* invites you to sail with us on this journey documenting Africa's ferries. ■

Gado is The Continent's resident cartoonist



Bustle: Likoni Ferry.

PHOTO: MOMBASA TOURISM

For most, the ferry is still the better option

Likoni, Mombasa, Kenya

PAUL KELEMBA

BY THE 10th century, Mombasa, an island off Kenya's Indian Ocean coast, was already a trading port. Its indigenous Bantu-speaking communities would encounter merchants and settlers from Arabia, Persia, India, and, later, Portuguese and British colonisers.

Mombasa is separated from the mainland by deep channels and tidal waters. The Indian Ocean lies to the east, with the Kilindini, Tudor, and Port Reitz waterways encircling the rest of the island.

The Makupa Causeway connected the island to the mainland in 1929 and the Nyali Bridge replaced a pontoon crossing to the north in 1980. To the south, until recently, passengers relied on the Likoni and Mtongwe ferries.

At Likoni, channel-crossing is aligned with the business of Kilindini port. The ferry service runs a number of vessels, whose crossings are aligned with ships sailing in and out of port.

The ferries occasionally move through schools of dolphins and dog sharks. The latter are turned into the dried delicacy *papa*, sold at the ferry's exit ramp.

Vehicles have plunged into the channel, sometimes with fatal consequences. In 1950, one such

incident reportedly killed an entire family when a bus went into the water. It inspired the classic Kenyan song by Paul Mwachupa, *Dereva Kombo* ("crooked driver").

The crossing takes barely five minutes. Getting onto a ferry takes much longer because of congestion and long waits.

Constructing an alternative to cross this deep channel of water has for years been a priority for Mombasa leadership – and a perennial local demand.

Over the decades, more bridges, causeways, and bypasses have been built to better connect Mombasa. The Dongo Kundu Bypass, completed in 2024, gives motorists a route to the South Coast that avoids the ferry entirely.

But for the thousands of workers, traders, and students who live in Likoni and travel into the city each day, the ferry remains the shortest, cheapest, and most practical crossing – for now.

The Japanese International Co-operation Agency has financed the Mombasa Gate Bridge project to link Likoni to the mainland. Construction is currently in the tender and procurement phase. Once ground is broken, it will take at least three years to complete. ■

Paul Kelemba is a visual journalist and worked in Mombasa early in his career

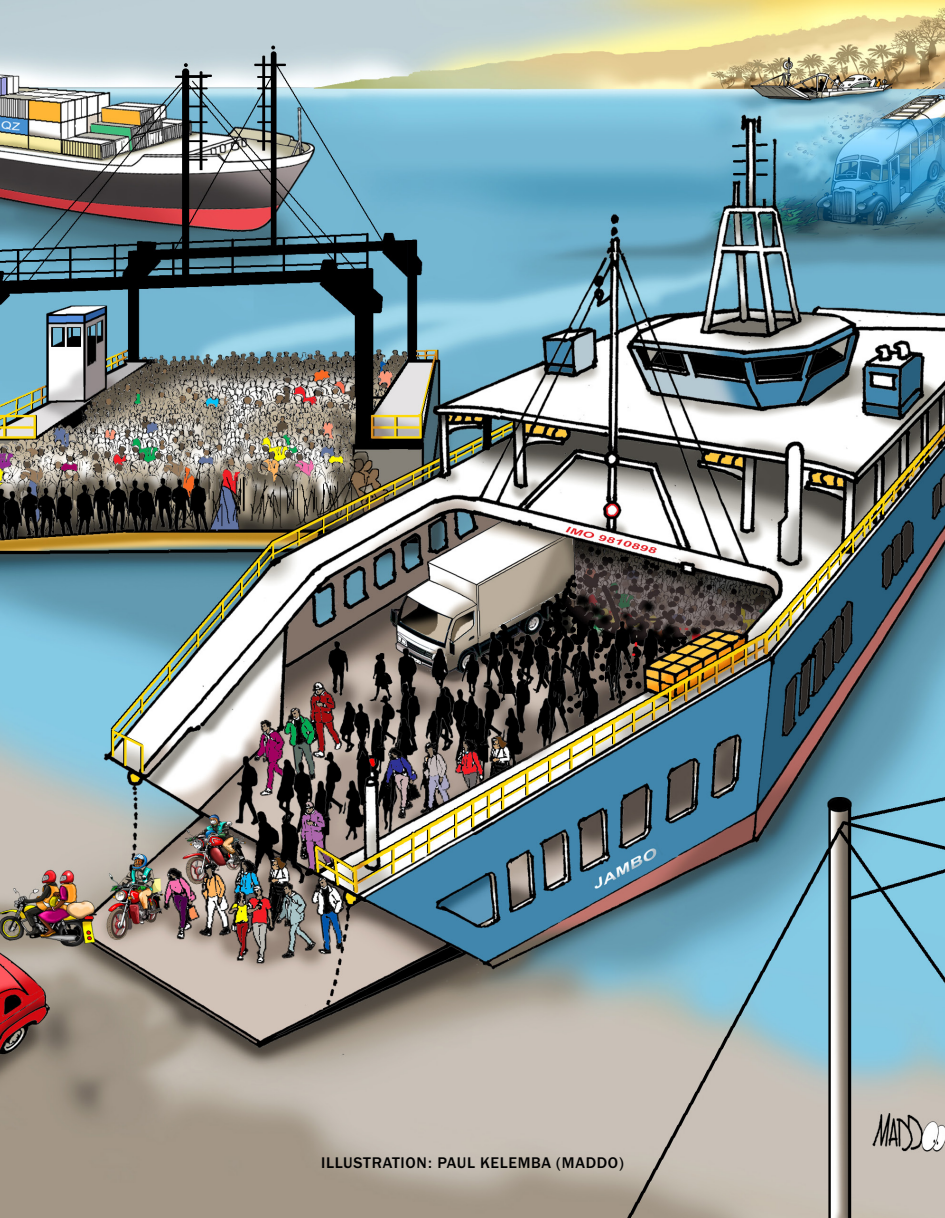


ILLUSTRATION: PAUL KELEMBA (MADDO)

The Quiz

- 1 Which country, once part of the pre-colonial Maravi Empire, was named Nyasaland by the British at one point?
- 2 At 93, the president of Cameroon is the oldest head of state in the world. What is his name?
- 3 What is the name of South Africa's national currency?
- 4 The constitution of Mauritania recognises several national languages, but what is its sole official language?
- 5 What is the name of Gabon's largest city?
- 6 Porto-Novo is the capital of which country?
- 7 Adama Barrow is which country's president?
- 8 Pointe-Noire is a port city in which country?
- 9 True or false: Malabo is the capital of Equatorial Guinea.
- 10 In which country is the Great Mosque of Niamey (pictured) located?



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

"The mosque is beautiful from any vantage point, but the view from the minaret has to be the most inspiring."

Big Pic

Frontal tack strategy: Libyan men in traditional garb ride horses in ornamented tack during the Lammata Watan (A Nation's Gathering) equestrian festival in Souq Al-Khamis Emsihel, approximately 53km south of Libya's capital Tripoli.

PHOTO: MAHMUD TURKIA/AFP



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