

# The Continent

East Africa's  
battle  
against its  
own people



ILLUSTRATION: GADO



**COVER** State security forces in East Africa have been very busy lately. Reports of kidnaps, murders, extrajudicial renditions and torture are becoming commonplace. And too often, the perpetrators are those who are supposed to protect us. Taken together, these apparently isolated incidents show a sharp deterioration in basic human rights in the region – and instead of stepping up to protect their people, too many lawmakers are cheering on the persecution. (P11)

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## Photos

This season, seven photographers will each share their view of the city they call home, in a limited series called We Built This City. This week, we're in Lagos. Should we explore your city? Send your thoughts to [photos@thecontinent.org](mailto:photos@thecontinent.org)

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# THE WEEK IN BRIEF

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Harsh winter proves fatal

In the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, flooding has killed nearly 50 people. The country is going through an extreme winter replete with heavy rain and snow. Among the dead are six high school pupils, swept away when their bus was caught in floodwaters, *DW* reports. Four other pupils are still missing. Many homes are submerged or destroyed. Officials say the floods damaged at least 58 schools and 20 hospitals, and 500 people have been taken to temporary shelters.

## CHINA-AFRICA

### Zero tariffs for everyone! (Not you, Eswatini)

China has announced a zero-tariff policy for exports from 53 African countries, according to the *South China Morning Post*. As United States tariff chaos continues, this positions China as an attractive trade partner for African states – except for Eswatini, the only country on the continent that recognises Taiwan against Beijing's One China policy and is excluded from the deal. China is Africa's largest trading partner. Africa-China trade was nearly \$300-billion in 2024, compared to \$71.6-billion of US-Africa trade.



PHOTO: MICHELE SPATARI/AFP

**Djibouti call:** Djibouti President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh and Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed.

## HORN OF AFRICA

### Abiy aims for, and misses, another exclusive port deal

Djibouti has rejected Ethiopia's proposal for exclusive access to the port of Tadjourah and permission to build a naval base there. Ethiopia wanted to create a corridor from its border to Tadjourah, which it would control, *Jeune Afrique* reports. President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh said Ethiopia already has access to ports – Djibouti, Berbera, Assab, and Mogadishu. In 2024, Ethiopia signed a preliminary agreement for a naval base and exclusive access to part of the Somaliland coastline. This in turn led to a standoff with Mogadishu, which considers the self-governing Somaliland to be part of Somalia.





## SOUTH SUDAN

### Editor walks free six months after vanishing

Emmanuel Monychol Akop, editor-in-chief of *The Dawn* newspaper in Juba, South Sudan, was released without charge on Thursday following six months in detention by South Sudan's National Security Service (NSS), *Radio Tamazuj* reports. Arrested on November 28, 2024, at his office without a warrant, his whereabouts remained unknown until his release, even though the country's laws require that people are taken to court within 24 hours of their arrest. The reason for his detention is still unclear, though this was the second time that he had been arrested.

## BURUNDI

### Amazing clean sweep – what are the odds?

Burundi's ruling party, the CNDD-FDD, has won all 100 contested seats in legislative elections, securing 96.5% of the vote, according to official results. No other party met the 2% threshold required for parliamentary representation, *Africanews* reports. Opposition parties have denounced the polls as fraudulent, citing a climate of fear and widespread harassment. The leaders of the main opposition party, CNL, were removed ahead of the vote and some of its members detained. Civil society groups reported that opposition polling agents were arrested on election day.



## MALI

## Wagner leaves Bamako the worse for war

Russia-backed Wagner Group said it was leaving Mali on the same day Malian soldiers withdrew from a major base that was attacked twice by insurgents, according to the *BBC*. Wagner, which has supported General Assimi Goïta's anti-insurgency efforts for three years, claimed its "main mission is complete". But insurgency activity has soared under Goïta. Analysing data in the Armed Conflict Location and Events Database, *The Continent* found insurgents executed 103 attacks a month, on average, since Goïta's May 2021 coup, compared to 56 a month for the four years prior.

## RWANDA

## Kigali nopes out of regional bloc over DRC

For the second time since 2007, Rwanda is withdrawing from the Economic Community of Central African States (Eccas). This comes after Eccas leaders blocked Rwanda from assuming its rotational chairmanship of the bloc, *AP* reports. They previously accused Kigali of aggression and demanded the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda, which continues to deny that it has been backing the M23 rebels in the region, said it was leaving because the bloc was biased towards the DRC.

## WILDLIFE

## Rewildable rhinoceroses relocated to Rwanda

In the largest translocation of its kind, 70 southern white rhinos were moved from Munywana Conservancy in South Africa to Akagera National Park in Rwanda. The 3,400km journey involved truck transport in steel crates and a flight on a Boeing 747, *Al Jazeera* reports. Rwanda authorities say they plan to rewild at least 2,000 rhinos. The beasts were once abundant but large-scale poaching and hunting has thinned their numbers.



PHOTO: TONY KARUMBA/AFP

**Big steppe:** The rhino project aims to support plans for a new breeding stronghold in Rwanda.

## DJIBOUTI

## Deported US migrants locked up in containers

When a judge blocked a deportation flight of immigrants from Cuba, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Mexico to South Sudan, a country they had no ties with, the United States government flew them to “US soil” abroad: an American military base in Djibouti. The eight deportees and 13 immigration officers are now stranded there. In Djibouti’s soaring coastal heat, the deportees are held in a metal shipping container converted into a makeshift jail, *The Guardian* reports, citing court documents filed by the Trump administration itself.

## LIBERIA

## Ex-speaker charged with burning down the House

Three MPs and the former speaker of Parliament have been charged over a December 2024 fire that engulfed Liberia’s House of Representatives in Monrovia. The blaze, which caused damage estimated at \$8.6-million, erupted after protests against the removal of Jonathan Koffa as speaker amid graft allegations. Koffa, who resigned last month, has been charged with arson and attempted murder, alongside lawmakers Abu Kamara, Dixon Seboe, and Jacob Debee. They deny the charges.



PHOTO: LUDOVIC MARIN/AFP

**Back atcha:** President Déby, on his way to ask Donald Trump how he likes dem apples.

## CHAD

## We don’t like you either, Déby tells US

President Mahamat Idriss Déby has suspended visas for US citizens in response to President Donald Trump’s new travel ban affecting 12 countries, including Chad. The *Associated Press* reports Trump said that “deficient” vetting and refusal to take back citizens who overstay their visas were reasons for the ban. Déby, invoking reciprocity, said Chad values its dignity. Meanwhile, Congo-Brazzaville called its inclusion in the ban a “misunderstanding”, saying the Trump administration must have confused it for neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## NEWS

## NORTH AFRICA

# Civilian convoy in overland bid to break past Israel blockade

**With governments cracking down on pro-Palestine actions, a North African caravan aims to push through the seige.**

**INTISSAR GASSARA AT THE TUNISIA-LIBYA BORDER**

A SELF-FUNDED convoy of lawyers, doctors, farmers, students and families is winding its way overland across North Africa, heading east from Tunis to Egypt's Rafah border crossing. Their goal is to break Israel's siege of Gaza. In the Caravan of Steadfastness are over 1,000 Tunisians and nearly 200 Algerians.

"We will be joined by our brothers and sisters from Libya, Morocco and Mauritania, a Maghreb-wide initiative," Ghassan al-Hanshiri, a spokesperson for the group, told *The Continent*.

On the caravan's path, crowds lined the streets in Tunisia's M'saken, Sfax, Gabès, and Ben Guerane. In Sfax, the Red Crescent set up health posts. In Gabès, people sang and offered food and

fuel. When the convoy crossed into Libya on Tuesday, young people distributed water and dates. In Zawiya and Tripoli, local authorities and residents opened homes and municipal buildings to host the travellers and telecom providers handed out SIM cards. In Zuwara, residents helped refill their fuel tanks.

The festive welcomes mask the pain which motivated the caravan. "Inside the buses are more than backpacks and banners, there is grief, resolve, and the memory of every child killed in Gaza while the world watched," said one member of the travelling group.

Despite nearly 55,000 dead Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry, authorities across the region have cracked down on people who have rallied in solidarity with Gaza, or criticised Israel's war.

On Thursday, the convoy was blocked by authorities in eastern Libya, forcing them to camp overnight in the desert in Sirte where they remained by Friday afternoon. Egypt's foreign ministry put out a statement saying that any delegation seeking to approach Rafah needs visas, and to co-ordinate with authorities. Israel's defence minister also said that if Egypt doesn't block the convoy, the Israeli army will. ■

This piece was published in collaboration with Egab



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# BENIN

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## In army's absence, traditional hunters provide might and magic

**RACHELLE SOKPEGANDE IN COTONOU**

IN NORTHERN BENIN, where state security presence is weak and insurgents spill over from neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger, a new protection force is gaining ground: traditional hunters.

Dressed in animal skins, wearing amulets and clutching handmade rifles, these men have become the only line of defence against cross-border armed groups, say residents in rural districts like Matéri, Tanguiéta and Kérou. They are not officially recognised, but they are respected in the community.

"I patrol every night," said Idrissou, a 55-year-old hunter from a village near Tanguiéta. "We don't get paid. We do it because the government isn't here, and our people are afraid."

"I'm no soldier but I know this forest better than any of them. When armed men approach, we don't wait for the police. We act," said Zachari, 42, as he twiddles with the leather charms hanging from his chest.

His group, a traditional brotherhood active for generations, operates at the intersection of the mystical and the military. They claim to use protective

potions and night-time rituals to "read the intentions of intruders".

Benin has deployed military units to Alibori and Atakora, regions that have experienced repeated insurgent attacks. But many remote villages are left to fend for themselves. The hunters have stepped into this vacuum but their growing role also breeds tensions.

There is no clear legal framework for regulating their actions. Where they are active, official mayors look the other way – or quietly collaborate.

In some areas, their authority has begun to rival that of state institutions which makes other local leaders, like village chiefs, apprehensive. "They are useful but ungovernable. What if one day they turn against us?" says a local official in Tanguiéta, speaking anonymously.

Still, few alternatives exist. For people living in zones where phone signals barely work and roads vanish into the bush, the choice is between trusting men they respect but also fear, or relying on a distant and disorganised state.

A young farmer in Kouandé says: "I prefer the hunters. At least they're here. The police only come *after* the attack." ■

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## DRC

# Uganda (officially) moves its troops into Congolese towns

The country has interfered in its resource-rich neighbour for decades, both on the side of rebels and the government.

PROSPER HERI NGORORA

LAST THURSDAY, a column of armoured vehicles, trucks and 4x4 pick-ups from the Ugandan army entered the towns of Tchomia and Kasenyi in the Ituri province of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

On his X account, a Ugandan military spokesperson tweeted: “We occupied it [Kasenyi] and Chomia to prevent inter-ethnic fighting and to protect the population.”

That word “occupied” set tongues wagging.

Ituri is just north of the two Kivu provinces that M23 rebels occupied in January and February. While Ugandan troops are operating there with permission from the DRC government in Kinshasa, many Congolese people, activists and politicians still view them through the lens of their previous activities in the country: occupation to plunder.

Between 1998 and 2003, Uganda and Rwanda fought against DRC troops in

the east in a war that drew in five other African countries.

Following the war, the International Court of Justice found Uganda guilty of many crimes including killing and torturing civilians, recruiting child soldiers, looting gold, wood and other natural resources, and violating the international law principle of non-intervention with other sovereign states.

Uganda is still paying court-ordered reparations to the DRC of \$325-million.

A senior Congolese army officer who requested anonymity told *The Continent* that DRC and Uganda army chiefs of staff met on Wednesday in Aru, Ituri to review joint military operations.

“Curiously, it’s the same army that is being brought in to supposedly help our army fight the militiamen,” says Luc Malembe, a Congolese politician living in Bunia, Ituri. He is one of many Congolese politicians, activists and residents who have been suspicious of Uganda’s new activities there, especially with the resurgence of the M23 rebels with Rwanda’s support.





**Border border:** Ugandan troops (and a DRC soldier at the back) in Kivu.

“I have always said that Uganda has two different units in our country. There is a unit that is with the M23, and a unit that says it is working with our armed forces in Beni, Mahagi, Bunia, Djugu and Mambasa,” says Malembe.

Yet, even a potentially double-edged ally can seem better than the hundreds of other armed groups in the region.

“For some time now, there has been a degree of calm, even among certain local armed groups who used to frequently attack the population because we don’t have enough Congolese army personnel here in Ituri,” says Dieudonné Lossa Dhekana, a civil society activist in Ituri province.

“Uganda has supported several armed groups in the DRC for a long time, including the current M23, according to information I have heard on the radio. Perhaps the fact that the UPDF [Uganda’s army] is officially present in the country may change its intentions on our territory,” says Irene Zawadi, a resident of Bunia.

Speaking to *The Continent* this week, Felix Kulayigye, the top Ugandan army spokesperson, urged that “people should not worry about words.” He added, “The most important thing is action. We are not in the Congo forever.”

But the people in eastern DRC have seen many actions in the last decades. And all of them matter. ■

JUSTICE  
FOR  
ALBERT  
OJWANG

REPORT

SERIKALI  
YA  
WAUJJI!  
JUSTICE FOR  
ALBERT OJWANG

# State security is terrorising citizens at record levels across East Africa

More people are being disappeared, abused and killed for standing up for their communities. And countries are working across borders to ensure nobody is safe.

ROBERT AMALEMBA IN NAIROBI

OVER THE WEEKEND, Kenyans learned that a 31-year-old teacher and blogger, Albert Ojwang, had died in police custody. He was arrested in Homa Bay, a town on the Kenyan shores of Lake Victoria, transferred 400km to Nairobi’s Central Police Station – and then died.

Police initially said he died by suicide, allegedly by smashing his head against a cell wall – an implausible account that sparked national outrage. An autopsy says he suffered head injury, blunt force trauma, neck compression and multiple bruises. His family and human rights groups are calling his death a police execution.

Ojwang’s death comes amid escalating state violence against people in Kenya and East Africa in general. Across all eight countries that make up the East African Community bloc, that kind of

violence is nearly the worst it’s been in a decade, and has been escalating for longer, going by the reported incidents in the Armed Conflict Location and Events Database (Acled).

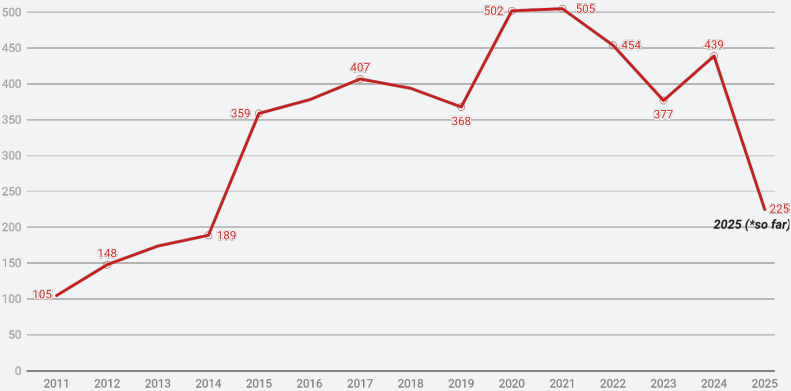
More violence in Ruto’s Kenya

The escalation has been particularly remarkable in Kenya. The bloc’s most prosperous country had been considered “sort of safe” as governments in Burundi, Somalia and Uganda ramped up violence against civilians, driving regional trends.

But reported incidents in Kenya have more than doubled during the 33 months of William Ruto’s presidency, compared to the 33 months right before, from 122 to 271. Abductions have quadrupled, from 22 to 100.

And all the recorded abductions – before and after Ruto became president – were attributed to the Kenya police

Recorded incidents of state violence against civilians in EAC bloc



Source: Armed Conflict Location and Events Database (ACLED) • Created with Datawrapper



force, not any other security agency.

Some sources paint an even worse picture.

A coalition of human rights organisations in Kenya have linked the police to 104 extrajudicial killings and 55 enforced disappearances in the state's brutal crackdown on last year's anti-tax, youth-led protests.

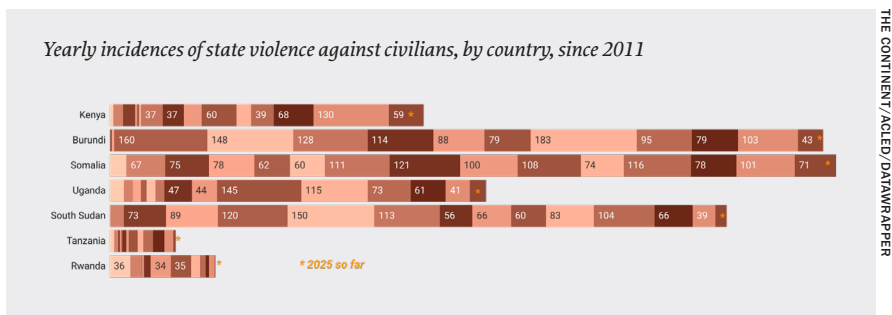
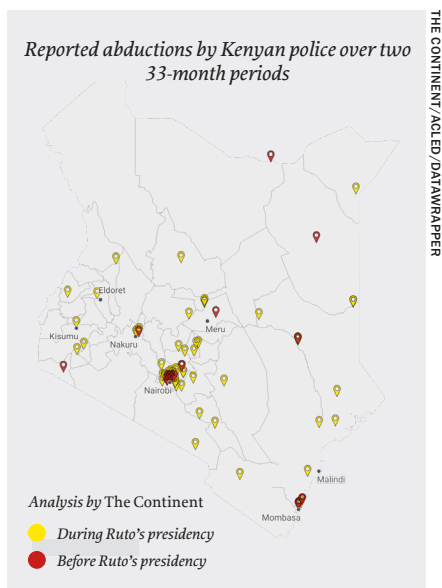
This year so far, Kenya has recorded more incidents of state violence against civilians than Burundi, the region's perennial worst offender, according to Acled data.

“We are aware that some police officers brutalise citizens,” said Kipchumba Murkomen on Friday. He is Kenya’s cabinet secretary for interior and national administration under whom the police fall. “But with a force of 120,000, the actions of a few cannot be used to generalise the entire police service. We will ensure that individual rogue officers are brought to justice while protecting those who are doing a good job.”

On Wednesday, President Ruto tweeted: "Police must protect Kenyans and their property from criminals, including those in uniform."

Protest movements are calling for the resignation of the deputy police chief Eliud Lagat who reportedly ordered Oiwang's arrest.

Last year, following similar calls after the anti-tax protests, Ruto replaced the force's then-head, Japhet Koome. But no other police officers have been punished since.



## Regional co-operation

Another trend has started to emerge: cross-border state repression. Politically vocal East Africans have been tracked, kidnapped, detained, and brutalised away from home, while visiting or living in other countries in the bloc. This has been met with mutual silence from governments in the region.

Earlier in the week of Ojwang's death, two activists – Kenyan Boniface Mwangi and Ugandan Agather Atuhairé – held a press conference to shed light on a saga that gripped the region for weeks.

The two were arrested at a hotel in Dar es Salaam during a visit to observe the treason trial of Tanzanian opposition leader Tundu Lissu. For four days, their whereabouts were unknown. At the Nairobi press conference, the activists described suffering horrendous torture, including sexual violence, during their detention and interrogation in Tanzania.

While Tanzania held them incommunicado, Kenya's foreign affairs minister, Musalia Mudavadi, appeared on *Citizen TV*, the country's most-watched station, and seemed to rationalise rather than condemn the action: "We have to be realistic. In Kenya, we tolerate some things that cannot be tolerated elsewhere."

"My government let me down," Mwangi said after the ordeal. "My government sided with [President Samia] Suluhu's government and said we were interfering with Tanzanian politics."

For days, Uganda's government remained silent about the disappearance

of Atuhairé, who is currently one of its most high profile critics. "For our government, it was: 'Good riddance. Someone else is getting rid of our headache'. Why would they care about that?" Atuhairé said.

After public backlash, Kenya formally protested to Tanzania. Uganda followed its example a day later. Mwangi and Atuhairé turned up shaken, hundreds of kilometres from Dar es Salaam – at the Lunga Lunga and Mutukula border posts respectively – hours after each formal diplomatic note.

## **'Good riddance. Someone else is getting rid of our headache.'**

Within Tanzania, Suluhu suffered little grief over the events. She justified them by saying that the activists intended to export "bad manners" and interfere with her country's politics.

In Parliament, Maryam Omar Said, a legislator from Zanzibar, suggested that Tanzania authorities should have done worse. She said that prominent Kenyan lawyer Martha Karua, who was deported shortly after arrival for the Lissu trial observation visit, should have "returned on a gas bed" – a hospital stretcher.

Outside Parliament, politicians from the ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), took the anti-Karua vitriol further. Marwa Daudi Ngichio, a district party chair, said he would have sexually abused Karua if given the chance: "I would have made her pregnant. Kenyans have failed to impregnate her."

Jesca Msambatavangu, a woman MP, denigrated Karua's looks: "Her face – without a hint of makeup – suggested mental instability. Our police were right to restrain her at the airport." Local media reported several other prominent CCM figures tearing into Karua.

Asked about the allegations made by Mwangi and Atuhairi, Dar es Salaam police commander Jumanne Muliro told *Citizen TV* that the torture did not happen – since the two activists did not file a police complaint about it.

"We now understand that as citizens we are on our own," said Atuhairi. "We only have each other. We have no governments, no police constitutionally mandated to protect citizens."

### An escalating pattern

The Mwangi/Atuhairi debacle was the latest episode in a pattern that has made regional news since July 2024 when Kenya deported 36 Ugandans and handed them over to Ugandan authorities, who charged them with terrorism. The young people are members of Uganda's Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) political party which said they went to Kenya for a training retreat on leadership and communication skills.

Months later, in November 2024, FDC founder Kizza Besigye was kidnapped in Nairobi. His spouse, UNAIDS secretary-general Winnie Byanyima, said he was visiting the city to attend Karua's book launch. Besigye was clandestinely taken to Kampala where he was arraigned days later and charged with treason together

with his aide, Obeid Lutale. Initially court martialled even though they are civilians, Besigye, like Lissu in Tanzania, remains in prison.

This January, Tanzanian journalist and activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai was also kidnapped in Nairobi. Handcuffed, she was driven around for hours and interrogated by individuals she suspected to be intelligence officers of the Tanzanian government.

"What we're witnessing in East Africa is the rise of dictatorship, the weaponisation of the police, and a steady erosion of democracy," Eugene Wamalwa, Kenya's former justice minister and now a lawyer who heads a political party, told *The Continent*.

Wamalwa added: "Regimes are increasingly using state institutions to silence dissent, trampling on the East African Community Treaty, the EAC Protocol on Peace and Security, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights." ■



PHOTO: TONY KARUMBA/AFP

**Tortured:** Boniface Mwangi embraces his wife Njeri after his release from detention in Tanzania.



## SERIES

# Lagos, unbound tempest beneath your feet

**WORDS AND PHOTOS: VICTOR ADEWALE**

EVERY STORY you have heard about Lagos is true. Every story you have not yet heard about Lagos is also true. You can live here all your life but if the city isn't surprising you every day, then it is shocking you instead.

Lagos is magic.

Each morning, the city redraws its own map: the route travelled yesterday is blocked today by a container that fell off a truck at midnight. Fate masquerades

as misfortune: if your wallet disappears, be grateful – someone else had their genitals stolen by a stranger yesterday. Is that so crazy? What makes you think it isn't true? Lagos is a fiction we write together. Or perhaps it is writing us.

Lagos is resilience.

Every day is a survival story. In a neighbourhood that hasn't had electricity for three months, kids dance their hearts out at a party powered by a generator, or play table tennis in a tournament lit with flashlights.



In neighbourhoods like Oworo, young people neglected by higher powers engage in performance art to keep their dreams alive, to push against the limits imposed upon them by the circumstances that shape their world.

Lagos is difficult.

If you are burdened by expectations of calm routine, if your resolve is too sorely tested by finding out that okadas have been banned or are on strike on the morning of your job interview, if you find yourself ill at ease on the edge of

chaos – maybe this city is not for you?

Lagos is a city of dreams.

It's for those who see in the city a blank canvas, calling out: "What do you want to paint on me today? In colours bright or dark?"

If you come, will you stay?

Will you prey?

Will you try to wrest our city from us, like you did to those in Tarkwa Bay?

Perhaps you imagine that you will shape my city, my Lagos?

My friend, Lagos will shape you. ■

















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**We Built This City** is a limited series of photo essays by *The Continent* on African cities. This season, seven photographers will each share their unique view of the city they call home, and what it means to them.

➡ **EMAIL US**

What would you like us to explore and share with the world about your city?  
Send your thoughts to [photos@thecontinent.org](mailto:photos@thecontinent.org)

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## SPORT



PHOTO: SAMEER AL-DOUMY/AFP

# You should be watching African women play basketball

They are knocking on the door of our collective attention and proving that they are a good investment.

**NANJALA NYABOLA**

FOOTBALL DOMINATES team-sport attention in Africa but the continent has also given the world some of the best basketball players of all time. Think Hakeem Olajuwon and Dikembe Mutombo. But African women hoop too. And they are having an international moment.

A sign of the game's growth was Team

Nigeria's incredible showing at the Paris Olympics. The only African team that played, Nigeria made it to the quarter finals and held the United States, the eventual winners, to their second-lowest winning margin all tournament.

The US is only now fully tuning into the social and economic value of women's sports. For the better part of nearly three decades, its women's basketball league, WNBA, was treated like a vestigial organ



of the men's NBA. As WNBA teams start to get more respect, an incentive to up their game, they are taking notice of African players – developed in the robust Afrobasket circuits and strong leagues in Europe and Asia. This year, 11 of 13 teams in the WNBA will feature a player who was either born in Africa or whose parents were.

With stars like Nneka Ogwumike, Arike Ogunbowale, and Satou Sabally, first generation players – children of migrant African parents – are not a new feature of the WNBA. What is more notable this year is the increase in women who play for African countries like Monique Akoa Makani (Cameroon) and Murjanatu Musa (Nigeria) playing for the Phoenix Mercury, Kariata Diaby (Côte d'Ivoire) for the Connecticut Sun, and Sika Koné (Mali) playing for the Washington

Mystics. Nigeria national team coach Rena Wakama is currently an assistant coach with the Chicago Sky.

Akoa Makani joined the WNBA as an undrafted rookie but has established herself as the person you want to pass the ball to in the final minutes of a close game. Scoring several clutch points against stronger teams, she has contributed to the Mercury's much improved standing even in the extended absence of many of the team's stars through injury.

You should be watching African women play basketball. The Afrobasket summer games restart in August in Namibia and Angola and will be livestreamed for free on the Fiba website. The WNBA league pass, which gives access to all games, costs \$35 a year and is available worldwide. ■



**Drive:** Phoenix Mercury's Monique Akoa Makani, from Cameroon.

DATA

# Public health takes a turn for the worse

AMONG the myriad problems that Africans want their governments to address, health ranks second, trailing only unemployment, according to Afrobarometer survey findings from 39 African countries.

Yet healthcare expenditures by African governments average 7.4% of their budgets – just half the 15% target that African Union members set themselves in the Abuja Declaration.

Underinvestment in healthcare may be one reason why two thirds (66%) of respondents say they went without needed medical care during the past year. Among those who did obtain care at a public facility, majorities report long wait times (80%), shortages of drugs or other supplies (73%), facilities being in

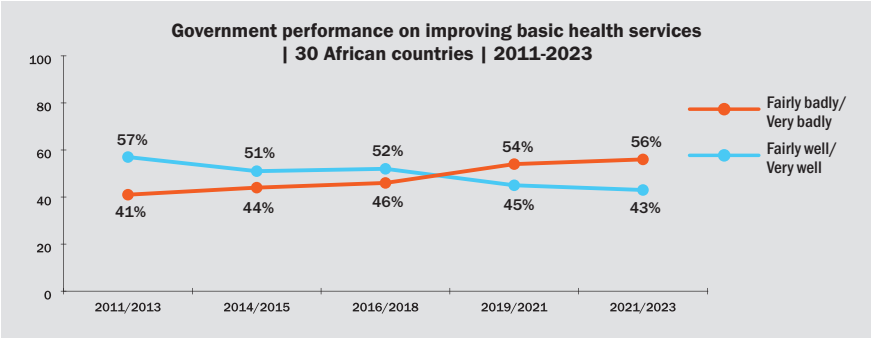
poor condition (61%), and/or absent staff (56%).

No wonder Africans are increasingly characterising the government’s efforts as unhealthy.

On average across 30 countries surveyed consistently since 2011/2013, disapproval of government performance on improving basic health services continues to climb, from 41% a decade ago to 56%.

More than three quarters say that their government is doing a poor job on health in Sudan (89%), Congo-Brazzaville (80%), the Gambia (79%), Liberia (78%), Angola (77%), Gabon (77%), and Tunisia (76%).

Four of these spend even less than the continental average on health. ■



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





# ALBUM REVIEW

WILFRED OKICHE



## Personal is political

Femi Kuti journeys sonically through both his life and his nation's history.

THE COVER of *Journey Through Life*, the latest studio album from Afrobeat's most essential nepo baby, Femi Kuti, is a collage of photos of the superstar at different phases of his life.

The Kuti legacy has always been as much about family as it has been about activism. So naturally, Femi (62) – first son of Afrobeat originator Fela – also includes photos of his father, his influential grandmother Funmilayo, his son Made as well as his band, The Positive Force.

For the Kuti clan, the personal has always been political and, on this record, Femi is a family man surveying the past

and present of Nigerian sociopolitical life while reflecting on his own place in the world.

*Journey Through Life* includes fresh material as well as updated recordings of older songs (*Shotan*, *Corruption na Stealing*) which concert-goers will be familiar with.

Self-produced (a first for Kuti) in Lagos, *Journey Through Life* is vibrant, alive and unrelenting. The instrumentation is rich and layered, with rhythmic percussion and bruising horn sections paying tribute to Afrobeat's unique stylings as well as its funk and jazz influences.

The Kuti family's commitment to the common cause earned Femi the right to mount the soapbox and preach to the people. He certainly does plenty of that on songs like *Chop and Run* which opens with the line, "Nothing for Nigeria fit shock me again oh" before recalling a half century's worth of government crimes against its people.

*After 24 Years* is a damning state of the nation address that surveys Nigeria's latest attempt at democracy (the 1999-2023 years) but finds little to celebrate.

What makes this record different, though, is Kuti's willingness to do some self-introspection. On songs like the title track *Journey Through Life* and *Work on Myself*, he is older, wiser and perhaps more accepting of his own limitations. ■

# The Quiz

- 1 Which country does Faure Gnassingbé lead?
- 2 How many absolute monarchies are there in Africa?
- 3 The Dahlak Archipelago (pictured) belongs to which country?
- 4 True or false: Tanzania is part of the Southern African Development Community regional bloc.
- 5 Which country did Jay-Jay Okocha play football for?
- 6 What is the capital city of Cameroon?
- 7 Cabo Verde is located off the coast of which country?
- 8 What is Botswana's currency called?
- 9 Lobamba is one of two capital cities of which country?
- 10 Who was elected president of Zambia in 2015?



## 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

"Some presidents dine in restaurants, Gnassingbé orders his to go."

# Big Pic

**Wade and found wanting:** Two fishermen set off at dawn in handmade dugout canoes on Lake Dembel, one of Ethiopia's Central Rift Valley lakes under threat from pesticide pollution from nearby farms.

PHOTO: MARCO SIMONCELLI/AFP



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