

with Mail & Guardian

The Continent

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR

Illustrations: Nzilani Simu

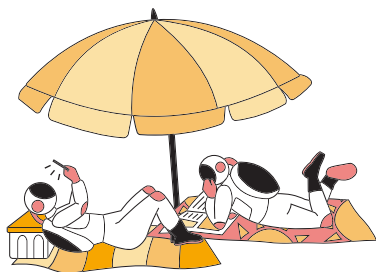


Your village people did not finish you – but you and me, we finished 2023!

All Protocol Observed. 2023 is the year when All Protocol Observed was officially born as the publishing company that makes your weekly issue of *The Continent*. We hope that despite everything, you too had a few wins like that. If not, you are welcome to share the wins (and fights) of the Africans of the Year selected by our editors and contributors (begins on p10).

Also inside:

- Our editors' review of the year in news (p3)
- Our critics' picks of 2023's best movies, music, books and photos (p9, p14, p19, p24)
- Missed anything? Continental Drift's A-Z has you covered (p32)
- A bumper edition of the Quiz (p37)



The newsroom is taking a break over the holiday season – your first 2024 issue will come on 20 January 2024.

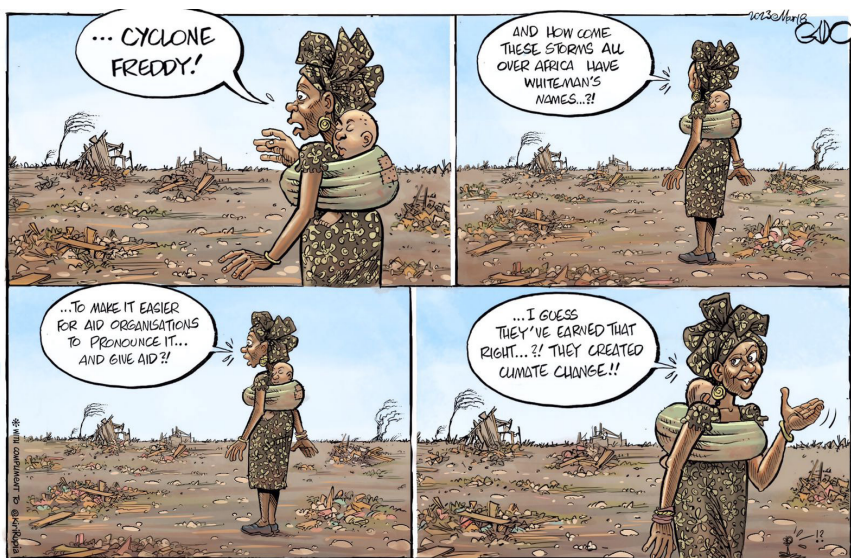


A VOTE OF THANKS

A big thank you to the hundreds of readers who have filled in our annual survey. If you haven't already, please do [complete the survey](#). This will help us improve where we need to, and attract support for our journalism. And [consider donating](#) if you are feeling festive and generous.

THE YEAR IN NEWS

Perhaps the best thing that we can say about 2023 is that it is nearly over. Our editors reflect on a year in which a lot went wrong – but which also offered a few glimmers of hope.



Lydia Namubiru – editor-in-chief
Simon Allison – international editor
Kiri Rupiah – communities editor

What was the biggest African story of the year?

LN: The continent's emerging or coalescing voice and common agenda in climate negotiations. That has the potential to change the game.

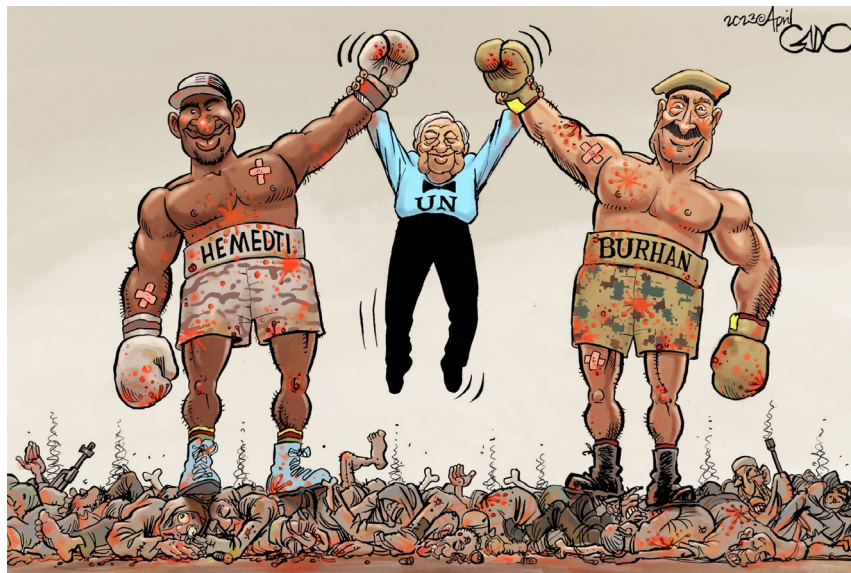
KR: In 2021, an *Al Jazeera* investigation found the United Arab Emirates provided extensive support to the Ethiopian army in the fight against Tigray forces. Now the UAE is at it again, supplying arms to the Rapid Support Forces, one side of the Sudan war, prolonging the carnage. For years, Africa's corrupt have stashed their wealth in Dubai. But this is the Emirates actively engaging in hostilities.

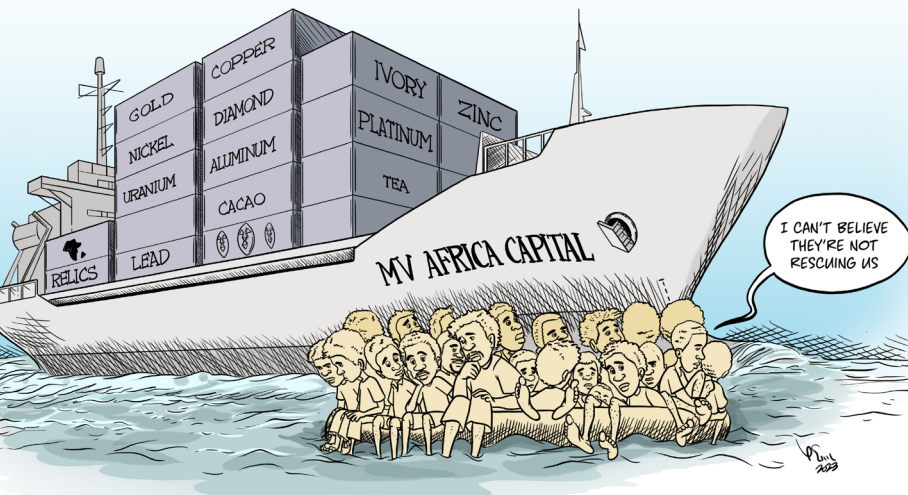
SA: The civil war in Sudan. This conflict has devastated the country and shows no sign of abating. In fact, things are only getting worse, with reports suggesting that a second genocide may be unfolding in Darfur. It's baffling how little international attention Sudan has received in comparison to the conflicts in Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Gaza. If we don't tell our own stories, no one will.

What story should have received more attention?

LN: The Sahel as a place people live every day and not just during coups. How is it going with Burkina Faso's Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland? What next after Niger repealed Law 2015-16 ending its tenure as police state for Fortress Europe? What about the resource conflicts between indigenous peoples on

Illustration: Wynona Mutisi





this climate front line?

SA: A fifth of Zimbabwe. A tenth of Zambia. A tenth of Liberia. Eight percent of Tanzania. “Millions of hectares” of Kenya. That is how much land that Blue Carbon – a company in the United Arab Emirates that is advised by a convicted fraudster – claims to have secured for the purpose of issuing carbon credits. Details surrounding what this is going to mean in practice, or how much money has changed hands, are totally opaque. As the rich world looks to evade responsibility for the climate crisis that it caused, carbon credits are becoming a new gold rush. We’ve seen this movie before, and it didn’t end well.

KR: The \$11-billion case won by the Nigerian government against a vulture-fund backed Irish company. The company, P&ID, was awarded \$11-billion for a collapsed gas contract but that was

overturned this year after a judge in the United Kingdom found it had paid bribes to obtain the contract. A rare example of a Western company being held accountable for its corruption in Africa.

What was the biggest international story of the year?

KR: Big Tech provided the Israeli army with The Gospel, an artificial intelligence system to generate new targets at an unprecedented rate, allowing the military to go about the business of killing civilians more effectively. It hasn’t taken long for this revolutionary new technology to be weaponised against poor and vulnerable people.

LN: The Israel-Hamas-Palestine war. Its sheer savagery and destruction is unprecedented but so too is the extent to which it has shaken global power alliances such as Europe’s fidelity to United States positions at the United Nations.



SA: The war in Gaza has diverted attention from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But the latter is likely to have more long-term consequences for the rest of the world, given that Ukraine produces such a large portion of the world's food. The longer the war goes on, the hungrier the world gets, and that's a recipe for a lot more political instability.

What story gave you hope for next year?

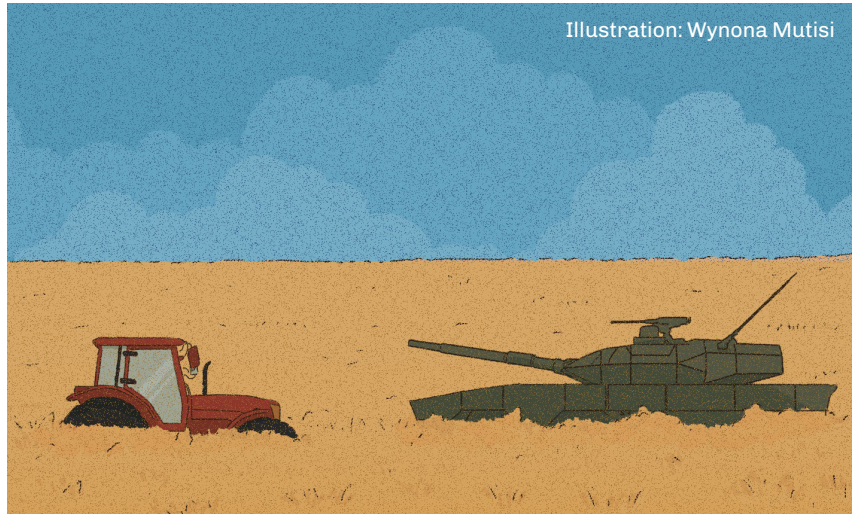
SA: Senegal's President Macky Sall really, really wanted to run for a third, unconstitutional term in office. That he won't is thanks to the ferocity and the consistency of public protests against his government, coupled with intense international pressure. Senegal's democracy lives to fight another election (scheduled for 25 February next year).

KR: For more than 60 years, the global

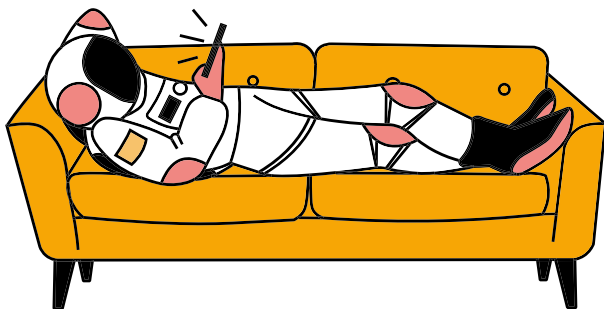
tax system has been dominated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – a group of mostly rich nations that write the rules to benefit themselves. Hopefully that will soon be a thing of the past. In November, the UN General Assembly voted to begin reforming the global tax system. The resolution, passed by consensus and given so much impetus by African countries, could see the authority for international tax rules pass from this club of rich nations to the UN.

LN: Millions of people marching in pro-Palestine protests around the world. Even away from their demand for a ceasefire in Gaza, these demonstrations were a resurgence of the important culture of public protest that seemed irrevocably chilled by the Covid-19 pandemic, which normalised severe state restrictions on mass gatherings. ■

Illustration: Wynona Mutisi



No money? No problem!



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2. Subscribe! And if you are already subscribed, then get your friends and family to subscribe. The more subscribers we have, the more funding we can raise. [WhatsApp](#) us on +27738056068 (the same number works on Signal and [Telegram](#)), or email read@thecontinent.org

But if you do have money (congratulations!) then consider spending a little bit of it on us. Good journalism is expensive, and cold hard cash helps a *tonne*. Our end-of-year fundraiser is [here](#).



Share real news.

The Continent

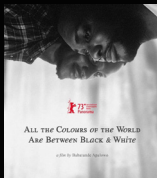


The year in MOVIES

As chosen by film critic and culture writer Wilfred Okiche

5. *All the Colors of the World Are Between Black & White* (Nigeria)

Two men are drawn to each other in a society that punishes same-sex relations. How much of their restraint is necessary caution, and how much is internalised homophobia? Babatunde Apalowo's ravishing Lagos-set drama is a probe into the pathology of these people and the city they call home.



as they re-enact passages from the lives of a Tunisian family broken apart when two daughters leave home to fight for the Islamic State in Syria. An intriguing docufiction experiment that will linger after the credits roll.

4. *The Bride* (Rwanda)

Myriam U. Birara's striking debut feature marks the arrival of a powerful new cinematic voice. A young woman's dreams of attending medical school are cut short when she is abducted in a forced traditional marriage rite called Guterura. *The Bride* goes to some difficult places and challenges its audience to stay the course.



2. *Milisuthando* (South Africa)

This personal documentary written and directed by Milisuthando Bongela is as stunning as it is inventive. Presented in five chapters, *Milisuthando* details Bongela's unique experience growing up in the Transkei, a rural, segregated region established as an apartheid-era experiment.



3. *Four Daughters* (Tunisia)

Kaouther Ben Hania's *Four Daughters* features professional actors – including superstar Hend Sabri – who share the screen alongside real-life subjects,



1. *Omen (Augure)* (DRC/South Africa)

Congolese-Belgian rapper-turned-filmmaker Baloji makes a major arrival with this dazzling debut that is artful, impressionistic and packs an emotional wallop. Borrowing elements of magical realism, Baloji unspools an entrancing meditation on magic, superstition and the traumas we carry across generations.



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Illustration: Nzilani Simu

FAITH KIPYEGON

FAITH KIPYEGON

This was Faith Kipyegon's year, no one could keep up

Samira Sawlani

To write about all of Faith Kipyegon's career wins would take a whole book: a chapter each on her two Olympic gold medals, for starters, and many more for her World Championships and Diamond League triumphs. But just when you thought she had done it all, the middle- and long-distance runner broke records this year in the way some Kenyan politicians break promises.

On the Diamond League track in Florence in June, Kipyegon won the 1,500m race in an incredible three minutes and 49.11 seconds – breaking the world record. The following week in Paris, she ran the 5,000m, a distance that she had not competed in for eight years. No one looked more shocked than Kipyegon herself as she broke another world record by finishing in 14 minutes and 5.2 seconds. Her 5,000m record has since been broken by Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay – who deserves an honorable mention in these pages – but Kipyegon was not done yet. Fifty days after Paris, she shattered the women's mile world record and in August, at the Athletics

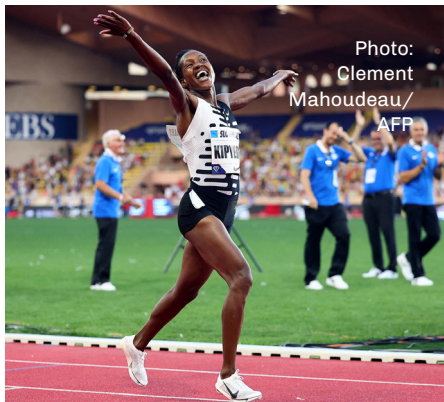


Photo:
Clement
Mahoudeau/
AFP

World Championships in Budapest, she won gold in both the 1,500m and 5,000m races, the first woman to achieve that feat at the World Championships. At just 29 years old, Kipyegon has already cemented her status as one of the greatest of all time.

Earlier this year, *The Continent* watched her commitment to the craft when we joined her on the training tracks in Nairobi. She spoke of the discipline it takes to show up for training multiple times a day, even when, as she said, “some mornings I just want to sleep”.

She also spoke of a conundrum that has many working modern women tied up in knots: balancing your career with parenting. The elite athlete is also a mother to five-year-old Alyn, and it takes at least as much discipline to leave her little one home and travel for sporting meets, as it takes to train for them. ■

Samira Sawlani is a Nairobi-based journalist and columnist for *The Continent*.

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Illustration: Nzilani Simu

TYLA

TYLA

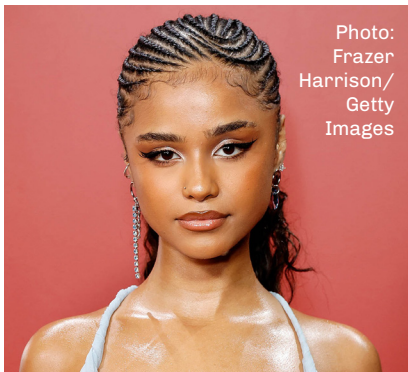


Photo:
Frazer
Harrison/
Getty
Images

For Coloured girls who can sing and dance

Should Tyla top the charts or stir up racial discourse in the United States? Both, obviously. Next question.

Tessa Dooms

Tyla is talented, beautiful, bubbly and confident. The 21-year-old singer burst onto the South African music scene in 2019, but 2023 is when she went global; breaking chart records and setting some of the biggest stages in the world ablaze.

In November, she won best female artist at the African Entertainment Awards and was nominated for best new artist in the Soul Train awards. And the South African sensation might be the

continent's next Grammy winner – she is nominated for the 2024 awards in the Best African Music Performance category.

Yet, it's not Tyla's massive talent and winning personality that is dominating talk on her American tour. It's her identity.

Tyla Seethal is proudly a Coloured South African. But she unwittingly stirred up a sociopolitical debate about race when she identified as such. Coloured, in the United States, is a derogatory and dated term.

For Tyla, identifying as Coloured is not controversial. Tyla, like many young South Africans in post-apartheid South Africa, has a more nuanced sense of identity than the black and white of American racial categories.

The Coloured identity signifies multiracial family histories. The cultural influences these communities embrace in clothing, hair and music are as diverse as their genetic backgrounds, just as much at home with choral traditions as with the music of Rihanna and the late Aaliyah.

As the potential new pop princess emerges, debates about Tyla's identity, while interesting, risk overshadowing the bright light her career already shines.

Hers is a story of a performer who is breaking streaming records, as millions access her music on audio and video streaming platforms. Tyla has shown that she is more than ready to take her place on the world stage. ■

Tessa Dooms is an author, development practitioner and activist

🎵 The year in MUSIC

As chosen by Darlyne Komukama aka DJ Decay, cultural organiser and a curator of the Nyege Nyege festival in Uganda

5. *Yallah Beibe* by MC Yallah

The title track from MC Yallah's 2023 album re-introduces you to this versatile, lyric-driven rapper. Yallah easily shifts between flows and languages, and in and out of the sparse rolling beat by Japanese producer Scotch Rolex. The whole album is worth a listen.



that's the correct translation or not, don't ask a Ugandan. Such is the infectious power of this song that it is crossing borders, and resonating with audiences in their own varying languages.

4. *Did I Die (Remix)* by Hatim And Dokey featuring Sheebah, Vampino, Feffe Bussi & D'Mario Legend

"Did I Die?" is a classic Ugandan question. Surviving each day by the skin of our teeth has lowered Ugandans' threshold for mistreatment to literal death. The song was such a hit that Ugandan pop Princess Sheba jumped on the remix, bringing it to an even larger audience.



2. *Water* by Tyla

This R&B, Afrobeats, and amapiano lovechild was inescapable. Pure joy! In places so remote from Tyla's Johannesburg, like underground queer parties in Kampala, when the song plays, everyone gets in formation, ready to do Lee-ché Janecke's Tik-Tok dance challenge.

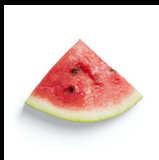
3. *Nakaba Ali Mu Loss* by Dope Boys Bapele featuring Zem Wood and Mil

Is this Zambia's answer to that same question? In Kampala, Nakaba is translated to "I died". Now if



1. *Voetsek Israel* by DJ Fora

African Artists Against Apartheid, an artists' collective, produced this surreal, unsettling track that is very much the soundtrack for our times. As Israel continues its brutal war on Palestine, the song's unequivocal message – "Voetsek" translates loosely as "get lost" – may explain its popularity.



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Illustration: Nzilani Simu

JOB SIKHALA

JOB SIKHALA

The hero of Harare

Several regimes in Zimbabwe have tried to shut Sikhala up. They've only made him a hero.

Kiri Rupiah

Plenty of African governments weaponise the law against opposition figures, anti-authoritarians and other irreverent chatterboxes. This is a tradition passed down from the colonial times: persecute; prosecute; perish.

In this tradition, the Zimbabwe government took a break from running one of the world's worst economies, presiding over massive brain-drain and mismanaging yet another cholera outbreak, to focus its attention on opposition MP Job "Wiwa" Sikhala.

Sikhala, of the Citizens' Coalition for Change party, has been enjoying the constrained hospitality of the Zimbabwean government since 14 June 2022, when he was arrested for obstructing its brand of justice.

Arresting Sikhala is itself a tradition. Authorities in Harare have been playing catch-and-release with him since he was a student activist in the early 90s. Yet, like the Nigerian activist Ken Saro-Wiwa who inspired his nickname, he refuses to stay silent. His more than 60 arrests have also included treason charges, which in Zimbabwe carry a life sentence.

His current detention in the Chikurubi maximum security prison began after he

attended the funeral of Moreblessing Ali, a political activist. Ali was found mutilated and murdered on 11 June 2022. It was through Sikhala's dogged investigation that her body was found.

Authorities in Harare have been playing catch-and-release with him since the 90s. Yet, he continues to be a man who refuses to stay silent.

The 51-year-old father of nine was convicted on 3 May 2023 on a charge of obstructing justice and given a suspended six-month sentence or a \$600 fine. But he remains in prison for another set of charges: incitement to commit violence and disorderly conduct. These charges may not stick but Sikhala is still at grave risk. He suffers from hypertension and the harrowing conditions in Chikurubi are well-documented.

But his fate so far has shown that the Zimbabwean government needs a crash course in African political history. There is a fine balance between shutting down dissent and elevating one's enemies to hero status. Look up Ken Saro-Wiwa. ■

Kiri Rupiah is the communities editor at The Continent.

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Illustration: Nzilani Simu

SUDAN'S NEIGHBOURHOOD RESISTANCE COMMITTEES

SUDAN'S NEIGHBOURHOOD RESISTANCE COMMITTEES

A radical new form of governance

As the Sudanese state collapsed around them, ordinary people had to make a plan. So they did.

Mark Weston

Over the past few years, the grassroots groups that make up Sudan's neighbourhood resistance committees, largely led by young people, have helped bring down a genocidal dictatorship; mitigated the impact of the pandemic; and delivered medical and humanitarian assistance to those wounded or displaced in the war that broke out between rival military factions in April.

They have also raised the possibility of a radical new form of governance, which promises to root out the corrupt old guard and replace it with a participatory democracy that draws on the skills, energy, integrity and creativity of the continent's often-neglected youth.

And they have done all this in the face of systematic repression and with minimal support from an international community that feels threatened by the committees' revolutionary nature.

During street protests in 2018 and

2019 against the venal regime of Omar al-Bashir, hundreds of resistance committee members were tortured and murdered by security forces. They continued to be hunted down – and their demands and recommendations for change ignored – after Bashir was replaced by the military junta that has now plunged the country into conflict. The protests they organised remained peaceful throughout.

When Covid-19 hit Sudan – whose health system Bashir had crippled – the committees mobilised to provide supplies, renovate hospitals, and distribute food and fuel during lockdowns.

After war broke out this year – a war they had warned of for years – they repurposed again. Although still targeted by the warring parties, they have set up emergency rooms where volunteers deliver medical assistance, used social media to coordinate the humanitarian response, and helped thousands of people, including foreign diplomats, to evacuate from the front lines.

As an example of young people in Africa coming together to effect change, Sudan's resistance committees are unsurpassed. If only the country's leaders (and those foreign diplomats) had listened to them. They should be considered not just for this Africans of the Year recognition, but for the Nobel peace prize. ■

Mark Weston is a researcher and author of The Saviour Fish: Life and Death on Africa's Greatest Lake.

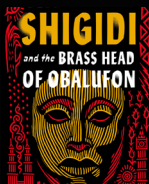


The year in BOOKS

As chosen by Jacqueline Nyathi, founder of *Harare Review of Books*

5. *Shigidi and the Brass Head of Obalufon* by Wole Talabi

In this fun romp through Lagos, Singapore and London, Shigidi – the humble nightmare god – is slightly meh about his place in life. On assignment, he bumps into the dangerous, beautiful succubus Nneoma, who offers him the deal of a lifetime. He takes it, but things don't go to plan. Delightful.



by poverty, trauma, conflict and oppression. These stories lay bare the ugly, steaming viscera of desperate lives, but find in that touches of humour, and a grim beauty.

4. *Ghost Season* by Fatin Abbas

Abbas's harrowing novel is set during the breakup of Sudan, and gathers diverse characters – a Sudanese-American filmmaker; a South Sudanese translator; a young boy; and a white aid worker – around a body that mysteriously appears. Not for the faint of heart – stories of war rarely are – but honest and poignant.



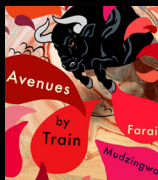
2. *Avenues By Train* by Farai Mudzingwa

In this coming-of-age story, Jedza moves through two worlds in parallel – the physical and the spiritual. He does so first as a lovable and irrepressible boy in the small town of Miner's Drift; and, later, as a young man on the fringes of the big city, Harare. A novel of hauntings beautifully executed.



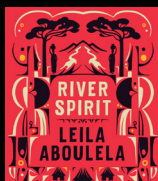
3. *Innards: Stories* by Magogodi oaMphela Makhene

Set in South Africa, this fever dream of a collection has rambling and unreliable characters, humans impacted



1. *River Spirit* by Leila Aboulela

Aboulela's love for Sudan comes through in this breathtaking story with well-rounded, sympathetic characters and a gripping plot. A contender for the Great Sudanese Novel, this historical novel – about an African country, written by a local – has great heft and profound emotional depth, and is sure to eclipse many others. Incredibly beautiful and deeply moving.



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Illustration: Nzilani Simu

SIYA KOLISI

SIYA KOLISI

Oh captain, my captain

Kolisi has never been allowed to just play rugby. His leadership extends far beyond the playing field.

Simon Allison

In October, on a wet field in Paris, rugby captain Siya Kolisi restored something that has been missing from South Africa's national identity for at least the last decade: leadership.

This used to be South Africa's thing. Our peaceful transition to democracy, after centuries of brutal colonial and racist rule, was only possible thanks to the enlightened direction of the country's new governors, who pursued forgiveness and reconciliation rather than justice and vengeance. This was a choice, and they could so easily – and with considerable justification – have made a different one.

To the rest of the world, these values were embodied by one man, Nelson Mandela; and in one image in particular – that of Mandela embracing Francois Pienaar, the white captain of an overwhelmingly white rugby team, to lift the 1995 Rugby World Cup. At the time, the image was fitting. Leadership and rugby: two things that South Africa was better at than anyone else.

The intervening years have sorely tested these qualities. Rising crime, corrupt leaders, failing infrastructure, a stagnant economy. South Africa has been through a lot. Even the rugby team

endured fallow seasons. We began to doubt ourselves.

Then came Kolisi.

Not only is he the first black man to captain the Springboks. Not only is he the first Springbok captain to win two World Cups, putting him among the most successful leaders the game has ever seen. But he has done it all with grace, dignity and diplomacy. Qualities we remember.

And he is doing this all in a sport that has a long, ugly history of racism. These days, rugby has become the sport of choice among Europe's right-wing movements – the ones who don't like immigrants, or refugees, or Muslims, or black people, or diversity, or change. It is seen to represent traditional, masculine, white values.

Kolisi stands for something different. After he lifted the trophy, in front of an audience of millions, he pointedly chose to give racists the metaphorical middle finger by celebrating everything they hate: "This team just shows what diversity can do, for our team, for our country as well. As soon as we work together, all is possible, no matter in what sphere." ■

Simon Allison is The Continent's international editor.

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Illustration: Nzilani Simu

JULIE MEHRETU

JULIE MEHRETU

The kid from Addis who became global art royalty

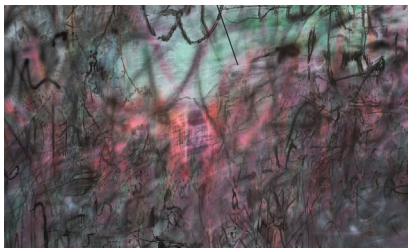
What's better than selling your artwork for seven figures? An eight-figure sale just one month later.

Lydia Namubiru

Julie Mehretu has been at the top of the American art world for a while. She had an entire floor of the Whitney Museum to herself in 2021, to exhibit 70 pieces of work that surveyed her entire career. Goldman Sachs commissioned her for a \$5-million mural, described in *Vogue* as “one of the largest and most successful public art works in recent times”.

But it was only this year that she truly got her flowers: selling an artwork in Hong Kong for \$9.3-million; then another for \$10.7-million just a month later.

The large abstract paintings that have made Mehretu so famous are, to the casual eye, a tangle of lines and acrylic marks. To her, those marks signify “characters that hold identity and agency”. Characters that “plotted, journeyed, evolved, and built civilizations,” she told curator Laurie Firstenberg 20 years ago.



Conjured Parts (eye), Ferguson, 2016.
Ink & acrylic on canvas by Julie Mehretu

On close inspection, we glimpse contours of her own identity and journey. Born in Addis Ababa to an Ethiopian father and an American Jewish mother, Mehretu moved as a child in 1977 to the United States where she is racialised black.

Like other black people in that country, she lives under the cloud of police brutality. This popped out in her 2016 work, *Conjured Parts, Ferguson* (pictured above).

Through its floating pink, grey and green colours are outlines of eyes, buttocks and body parts that surface its hidden genesis: a photo of an unarmed man, hands up, facing riot police.

But she is also a creative documentarian of universal history and community. She has painted those acrylic markings, the characters she has invented over time, against the cityscapes of Istanbul, Baghdad, Cairo’s Tahrir Square and 19th-century Berlin, taking them – and us – across time and space. ■

Lydia Namubiru is The Continent's editor-in-chief.

The year in PHOTOS

As chosen by award-winning South African photographer Paul Botes, whose work focuses on issues of social justice and inequality



5. Thousands gather each year to re-plaster the mud walls of the Great Mosque of Djenne in Mali. The men in the foreground, arms around one another as they surveyed the work, made for a great moment. Photo: Ousmane Makaveli/AFP



4. The 'voodoo' wrestler Panthere utters incantations above the altar of his shrine in Kinshasa. An intimate scene from the DR Congo, offering something different to the violence and trauma we are so accustomed to. Photo: Alexis Huguet/AFP



3. It was impossible to ignore the devastation in Morocco after the earthquake in September that killed nearly 3,000 people. This image was a powerful example of the loss and destruction in Marrakesh. Photo: Fadel Senna/AFP



2. John Wessels is one of my favourite photographers operating in Africa at the moment. His photograph of a man washing his horse at Hann Bay in Dakar, Senegal, in November is so beautifully quiet and has great intimacy. Photo: John Wessels/AFP



1. The cost-of-living protests in Kenya in March were dangerous for protestors and journalists alike. This image is a great example of how close photographers get to ensure the best image. Luis is a brilliant photographer. Photo: Luis Tato/AFP

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Illustration: Nzilani Simu

MADELEINE DIOUF SARR

MADELEINE DIOUF SARR

On the front line of the fight for our future

Sarr is the first woman to lead one of the most important groups in global climate negotiations.

Sipho Kings

This year's climate negotiations were meant to end at 11am on a Tuesday, Dubai time. But then a draft of the final agreement was released. A few hours later, Madeleine Diouf Sarr tweeted: "We cannot accept the latest text." That's more than just a tweet – it's an act of resistance.

Sarr is the lead negotiator for the Least Developed Countries bloc in climate negotiations. The 46 members are home to a billion people and emit just 1.1% of greenhouse gases. The draft agreement sought to lock the world into burning fossil fuels, and all-but wrote off the chance of keeping global heating to below 1.5 °C. For the countries in the bloc, this is a death sentence. They are already paying the price of pollution by others, and a hotter world could see some vanish between swirling ocean waves.

Sarr, a Senegalese, is the first woman to hold the role in 22 years. She spent a lifetime preparing for this moment. Now the head of all things climate in Senegal's government, she started out as a junior negotiator 20 years ago. The biologist and environmental engineer by training has spent that time trying to get better

representation in negotiations – in a 2022 interview she talked about the "struggle of being completely outnumbered by men" – and fighting for those with the least.

Last year, then the hottest year on record, she said: "Extreme weather events demonstrate precisely why rich, high-emitting countries must acknowledge what they owe the rest of the world."

But the polluters have power. And the 46 she negotiates for aren't rich, don't have vast delegations, and exercise little hard power. So she needs a unified front. In September, this meant getting negotiators from the Least Developed Countries to her home city, Dakar, to get on the same page. That set out their position for Dubai.

They did not get exactly what they wanted. On Wednesday morning, a new COP deal was agreed by nearly 200 countries. It is weak and means countries like Senegal will suffer.

But – crucially, and for the first time – the text said that fossil fuels have to be on the way out, offering a glimmer of hope for the future – and that is thanks to the efforts of leaders like Sarr. ■

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR



Illustration: Nzilani Simu

KOYO KOUOH

KOYO KOUOH

Here be dragons: Mapping black geographies

Curating exhibitions and nurturing young cultural practitioners, Kouoh is building across borders.

Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti

Koyo Kouoh is fundamentally pan-Africanist. “I belong to the entire continent and the entire continent belongs to me,” she told the *Financial Times*. Her vision of an expansive Africa, stretching beyond political boundaries to include global “black geographies”, shines through her work.

In 2008 the Cameroon-born curator founded the RAW Material Company in Dakar, Senegal. Some of the most innovative curators on the continent today have spent time at this independent art institution. Its seminars and publications are crucial to art education in Africa and beyond. Its creative residency programme has welcomed many African artists and has exhibited the work of even more.

Kouoh works just as hard to meet artists in their own space. In September 2015, Kouoh came to the University of Cape Town as a guest curator, teaching curatorial studies. This was just months after a prominent statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the university had been torn down and decolonisation was top of mind for students. In that week I learned more about Africa and what it means to be an

African than I had since childhood.

With her 2019 appointment as the executive director and chief curator of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town, she took on a broken and dysfunctional institution dominating the news for all the wrong reasons. Incredibly, she turned around the museum’s fortunes in a short time, adding “fixing broken ones” to her reputation for building institutions.

In the week she spent with us, I learned more about Africa and what it means to be an African than I had since childhood.

Through the museum fellowship programme by Zeitz MOCAA & University of the Western Cape, now in its second year, Kouoh is educating a new generation of art and museum professionals. And she still curates some of the best conceptualised exhibitions at the museum she leads, in which she places black collectors and women artists in the centre of the stage. ■

Barnabas Ticha Muvhuti is a postdoctoral fellow in art history at Rhodes University.

AFRICANS OF THE YEAR

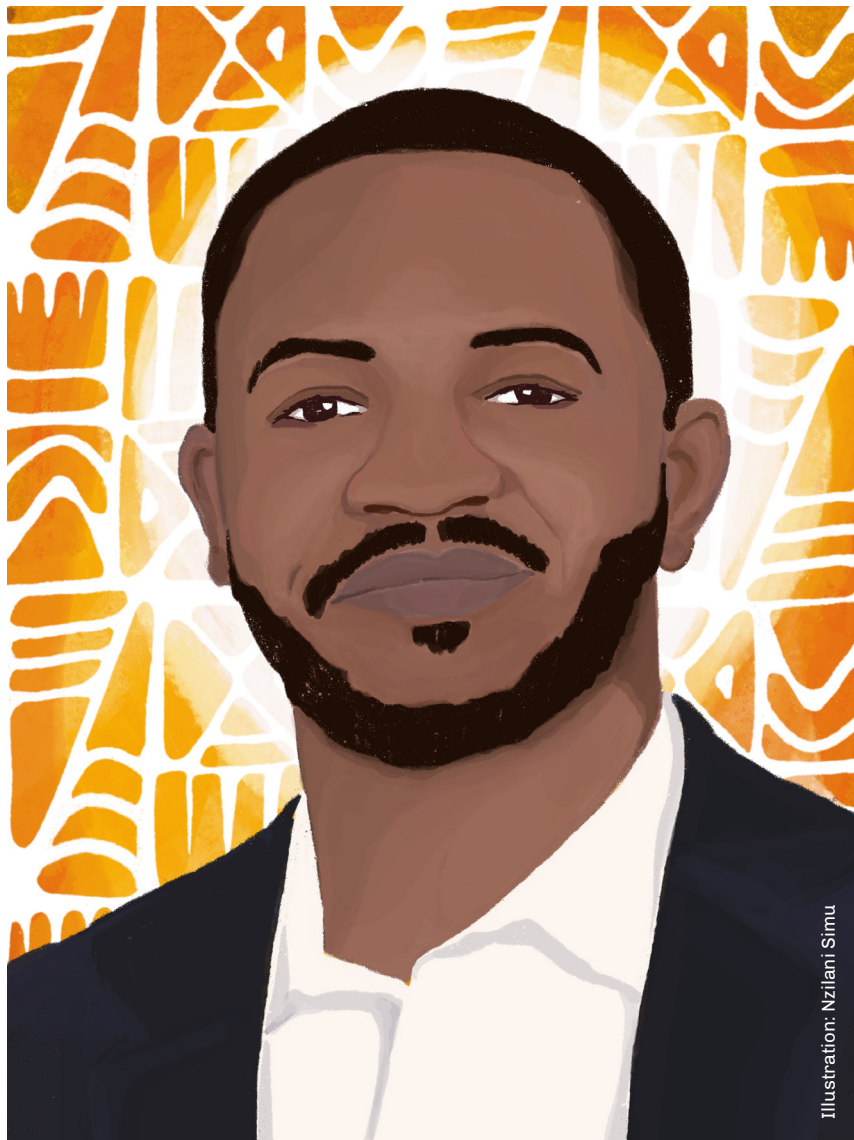


Illustration: Nzilani Simu

STANISU BUJAKERA

STANIS BUJAKERA

Don't shoot the messenger

The worse a government treats its journalists, the more it has to hide.



The Continent's editorial team

Prosecutors in the Democratic Republic of Congo appear blind to the irony of charging Stanis Bujakera, one of the country's most respected journalists, with "disseminating fake news" and "spreading false rumours". Bujakera was arrested in September, and remains in detention with the prospect of a 10-year prison sentence hanging over his head.

Bujakera worked for the news website *Actualite.cd*, where he is the deputy director of publication, and reported for Reuters and *Jeune Afrique*. It was in connection with a story on the latter platform that he was arrested – even though there was no byline on the story and *Jeune Afrique* said he did not write it.

The story related to the mysterious death of a close ally of President Félix Tshisekedi, and was based on a leaked intelligence report, which the government says was forged. Prosecutors claim Bujakera made the forgery.

The government's evidence to support this claim has been thoroughly debunked by a consortium of media outlets, including *Jeune Afrique*, *Le Soir* and *Actualite.cd*. "In this case, the prosecution has not only made serious, unfounded accusations but has also used a clearly bogus expert report that no serious specialist could endorse," concluded Reporters Without Borders.

Journalism is an inherently dangerous profession. Those in power rarely appreciate being held to account. 521 journalists are currently in jail around the world, and 45 journalists were killed on the job this year. Among them was John Williams Ntwali, who died in a suspicious road accident in Kigali in January this year; and Martinez Zogo, who was found dead in Yaoundé after being abducted, also in January. Ugandan journalist Andrew Arinaitwe was arrested and imprisoned for several days while on assignment for *The Continent*, and spent months fighting bogus charges.

As the internet collapses under the weight of fake news and disinformation, the role journalists play in curating and verifying information has never been more vital. Journalists like Stanis Bujakera should not have to risk their freedom, and their lives, to do their jobs. ■

All Change for Archange: The Central African Republic held a constitutional referendum earlier this year, which, among other things, would allow President Faustin-Archange Touadéra to run for a third term. Quelle surprise: results of the vote showed that 95% of voters were apparently in support of the changes. Rumour has it that he can now sit on the table with the big kids at the African Union!

Bye Bye: There were a fair few goodbyes this year as Muhammadu Buhari's two terms as Nigeria's president came to an end and Bola Tinubu took charge. Liberia's George Weah also exited the pitch following his election loss. We urge all former leaders to set up Instagram accounts and post "a day in the life" videos to inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

Coup, coup and attempted coups: Successful in Niger and Gabon, failed in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. The kind of events that we're sure had our leaders crying for their mummies. Word on the street is that the group therapy sessions at the African Union have been

very busy this year. If any of our leaders are reading this, we love you, stay strong!

Drama: Niger accused France of planning a military intervention following the Nigerien coup. In Kenya, Raila Odinga and William Ruto traded barbs as the opposition leader called for protests. Mali demanded the UN withdraw its peacekeeping mission. Chad expelled Germany's ambassador for being "disrespectful". This year was a *lot*.

Escape attempts: Niger's ousted leader Mohamed Bazoum has been under house arrest since the July coup that saw him removed from office. In October the junta announced that Bazoum was caught trying to escape with his family – and two

cooks. No offence to Mr Bazoum but, bro, maybe just pack a sandwich next time?

ABC? That was just '23



CONTINENTAL DRIFT
Samira Sawlani

F **reflex:** After taking power, Niger's junta ordered the expulsion of France's ambassador, revoked military agreements with Paris and basically told the French to "foot the camp". A sulky Paris duly began withdrawing its troops, and recalled its ambassador. Burkina Faso also demanded

withdrawal of France's troops and have over the year suspended the distribution of French publications *Le Monde* and *Jeune Afrique*, and the broadcast of *France24*. Cousin Manny Macron was not impressed, but ... Frexit means Frexit!

Gabon but not forgotten: Having inherited the presidency from his daddy in 2009, Ali Bongo decided to run for a third term and was declared winner. Then the most embarrassing thing happened – a military coup! Soon a video of him began to circulate on the internet, in which he called on people to “make some noise” because “the people here have arrested me”. Interesting that he looked to the internet for help, the same internet he had blocked during his own election.

Hello again: While some leaders made an exit, others are not going anywhere. Julius Maada Bio secured a second term as he was declared winner

of Sierra Leone's elections, a result rival candidate Samura Kamara rejected. Put your hands up in the air for Madagascar's Djing President Andry Rajoelina, who also secured victory in polls boycotted by the opposition. And least surprising of all, Zimbabwe's Emmerson Mnangagwa snapped up a second term.

In our hundreds, in our millions, we are all Palestinians. As Nelson Mandela said, “our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians”.

Jet setting: Kenyan President William Ruto has received much criticism for his frequent trips abroad. Perhaps being awarded the title of the Dora the Explorer of African Presidents, which was last year given to George Weah, will cheer him up. Billy says he is taking these trips as part of his plan for the country and is not just out there being “a tourist” (except perhaps in Kenya).



**Nelson Mandela:
'Our freedom is
incomplete without
the freedom of
the Palestinians'.**

Photo: Rune
Hellestad/Corbis
via Getty Images

K*ee*ping Up With The Coupdashians: Two new cast members joined the show this year. From Gabon we have General Brice Oligui Nguema, and from Niger we have General Abdourahamane Tchiani. They, like the gang from Mali, Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea, have made promises about transitioning back to civilian rule, but will they be kept? Move over Kim, Kourtney, Khloé, Kendall and Kylie; Mamady, Assimi, Ibrahim, Brice and Abdourahamane are in town.

Love: Tired of being rejected by regional blocs, the Coupdashians have come together with the kind of love that rivals our adoration for our Nairobi bae. Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso announced they would work together for the lifting of sanctions against them. Then, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger signed a military pact, stating that an act of aggression against one of them counts as an act of aggression against the others. We at *Drift* are waiting for them to do a podcast together. And we expect an invite!

Music: It's been another year of seeing African artists take the world by storm. Tyla, Asake, Joshua Baraka, Burna Boy, Bensoul, Maya Amollo, Tems, Blinky Bill, Libianca Fonji, Roseline Layo, there is not enough space to add the names of all our favourite hit-makers!

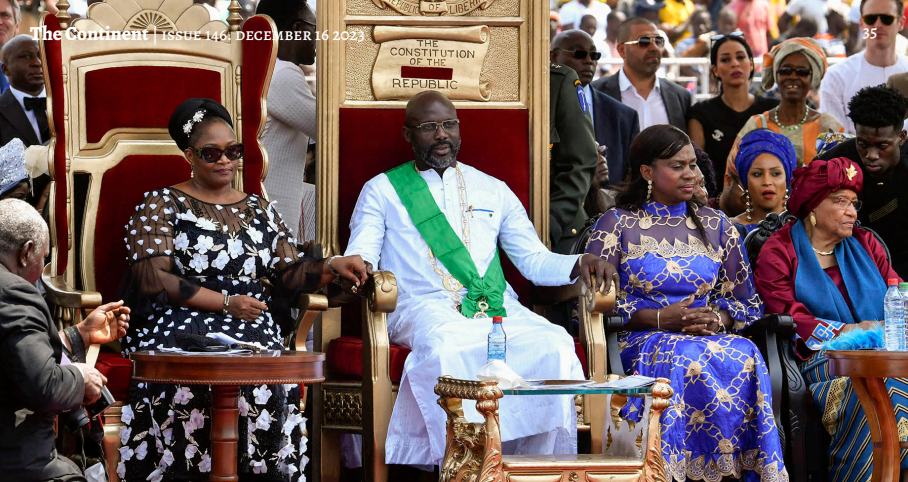
Natural disasters: Or perhaps unnatural. This year has seen our continent be hit by extreme weather conditions. Between the droughts, floods and cyclones, lives have been lost, livelihoods

destroyed, homes swept away, and entire communities destroyed or displaced. Meanwhile, the climate change scene is filled with speeches and summits, but is anything really being done?

On track and on the field: South Africa's spectacular Rugby World Cup win, Banyana Banyana's brave performance in the Women's Football World Cup, Kenya's Faith Kipyegon smashing record after record. Ethiopia's Tigist Assefa set a new women's marathon world record in Berlin. The names are endless, the accolades too.

Protests: Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Sudan, Guinea, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo are just some of the countries where people took to the streets this year. In most cases they were met by police brutality, tear gas, violence, and arrest. The right to protest is enshrined in the constitutions of many of these countries. But then, if all you have is a hammer, then everything looks like a nail.

Questionable results: Zimbabwe's elections saw Emmerson Mnangagwa secure a second term, but not everyone was convinced. Even regional bloc SADC, who never say anything about anything, noted that some aspects of the polls "fell short". The European Union said it would suspend financial support to Zimbabwe's electoral commission due to concerns about its management of the process, and the opposition called foul. But on the southern banks of the Zambezi the crocodile simply smiled. And burped.



Throne in the towel: George Weah is giving up his seat with relatively good grace.

Photo: Issouf Sanogo/AFP

R*ed Card:* That's what Liberians gave George Weah in a closely fought electoral playoff that saw him lose the presidency to opposition candidate Joseph Boakai. George's failure to tackle corruption, plus his frequent trips abroad, may have lost him the election, but we'll give him points for accepting defeat with a modicum of grace.

S*uperstars:* The writers, the activists, the actors, the creatives, the poets, the journalists, the lovers, the dreamers, the Kermit the frogs, the people who work hard every day to make this continent a better place. We salute you all. May your jollof be perfectly spiced, your avocados always ripe and your pockets full!

T*rials and tribulations:* Some come in the shape of humans (real talk, hon: it's the end of the year, please stop messaging that person who will not text you back). Others in more serious forms.

Insecurity in the Sahel region continues to take lives. War in Sudan rages on. Conflict in the DRC has led to a record 6.9-million people displaced. The death toll from the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon continues to rise. When you see the figures regarding number of people killed and forced to leave their homes, a reminder that these are not just statistics, these are whole human beings.

U*nexpected announcements:* Senegal's president, Macky Sall, announced that he would not be running for a third term in the 2024 elections. His supporters claimed that the Constitution allowed him to run again, an argument critics disagreed with, leading to opposition-led protests. Congratulating him on not defying constitutional praxis feels a bit "bare minimum" as the kids say, but here's hoping for peaceful elections when Senegal heads to the polls at the end of February.

Vision: You're going to need the special kind of night-vision goggles to get around after sunset in some parts of this continent. Kenya had three nationwide blackouts this year, plunging the nation into darkness. The country's energy cabinet secretary Davis Chirchir said he too was wondering what the heck was going on. Bit awkward, that. If he wants some tips on how to deal with outages, he should pick up the phone and give South Africa a call. As the locals are wont to say, with over a decade of loadshedding under their belts already: they've been having it.

War and the search for peace: In April war broke out in Sudan, and the ongoing consequences of it have been devastating. More than 12,000 people killed, 6.6-million people displaced inside and outside of the country, and the violence continues. Brave Sudanese journalists, activists, citizens, and members of the diaspora have done all they can to keep Sudan in the news. But are we paying attention?

Xtravagance: A number of our leaders attended the coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla the Patron Saint of Sidechicks. Unnecessary really considering the Star of Africa (aka the Cullinan Diamond) was already there to represent. Chuckles and Camz then made a visit to Kenya where they did everything except say sorry, or mention the word reparations. Not that it bothered the leaders cosyng up to the royals. Might be time to read a few history books, lads.

You: Thank you, dear reader, for your support. For sharing the work we do here at *The Continent* with your friends, colleagues, fellow students and your family; for your generosity and the donations you've sent us to help us keep this strange, wonderful publication going; and for always picking up what we're putting down. It's you. It's always been you.

Zakayo Ruto: A new name for the Kenyan president, inspired by Zacchaeus, the sycamore-climbing tax collector of the Bible. New taxes he proposed have gone down like a lead balloon. Billy is a staunch Christian, so perhaps he thinks Jesus will redeem him like he did Zacchaeus. Or maybe he'd just tell him he's out of his tree. ■



Gimme: Kenya's William Ruto enjoys the 'Render unto Caesar' bits of the Bible.
Photo: Luis Tato/AFP

THE QUIZ



0-7

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

8-14

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

15-20

"Who eats at a table that big? Oh wait, their Parliament's right there."

- 1_ What colour is the star on Ghana's national flag?
- 2_ Name the Ethiopian-born artist whose work set the record for highest sale of an African artwork this year.
- 3_ Félix Tshisekedi is which country's president?
- 4_ True or false: Laurent-Désiré Kabila was president of the DRC from 2001 to 2019.
- 5_ Where are Beninois people from?
- 6_ Entebbe is a city in which country?
- 7_ The Africa Climate Summit was held in which country this year?
- 8_ Which country is SSC Napoli football star Victor Osimhen from?
- 9_ Bissau is the largest and capital city of which country?
- 10_ Which country is considered to be Africa's smallest?
- 11_ Which country is considered the smallest in *continental* Africa?
- 12_ Which country is the United Kingdom frantically trying to send asylum seekers to?
- 13_ The "Kaunda suit" is named after which former president?
- 14_ Which country is bordered by Mauritania to the north, Mali to the east, Guinea to the southeast and Guinea-Bissau to the southwest?
- 15_ Marrakesh is Morocco's capital city. True or false?
- 16_ Which country will be hosting the men's Africa Cup of Nations 2024?
- 17_ Which country will be hosting the Women's Africa Cup of Nations 2024?
- 18_ True or false: Burkina Faso is a coastal country.
- 19_ Botswana and Zimbabwe have the highest populations of which animal in Africa?
- 20_ In which country is the flat-topped mountain called Table Mountain (pictured) found?

HOW DID I DO? WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

THE BIG PICTURE

Cleared for take-off: Runway models drop drip by Kenyan designer Morgan Azedy during the main show at Africa Fashion Week, at the Delight Technical college in Nairobi last weekend. Please don't ask the model on the left to buckle up or else we'll be here till next year.

Photo: Simon Maina/AFP



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