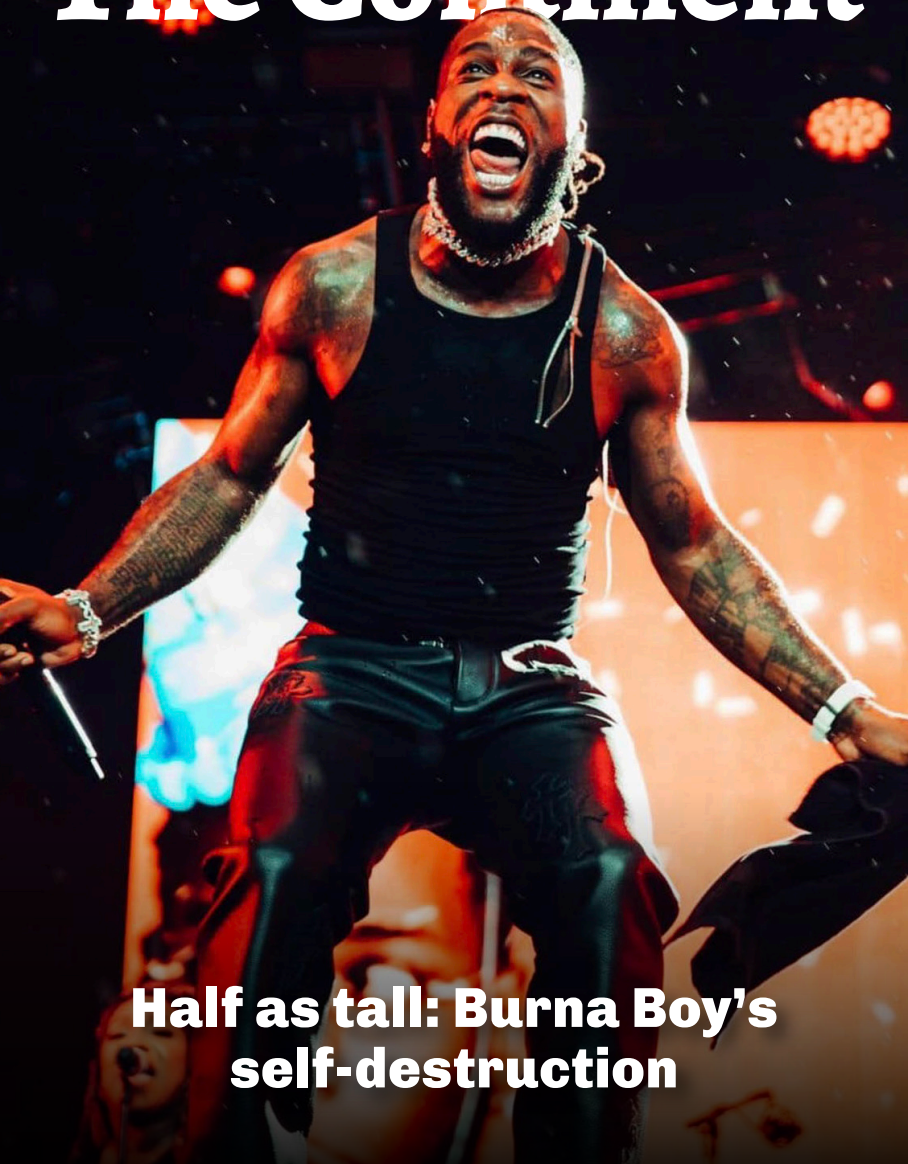


with Mail & Guardian

The Continent



**Half as tall: Burna Boy's
self-destruction**



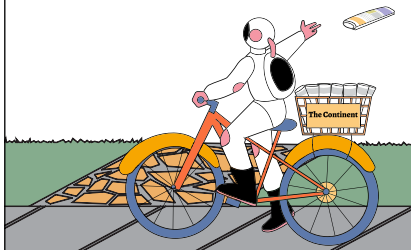
Cover: Burna Boy is Nigeria's biggest musical export since Fela Kuti, lauded by fans around the world for his performances and championing of Afrobeats. But his increasingly self-destructive behaviour is showing those fans what Nigerians have known all along: the real Burna Boy is not who they thought he was. And supporting him requires separating the art from the artist (p12).

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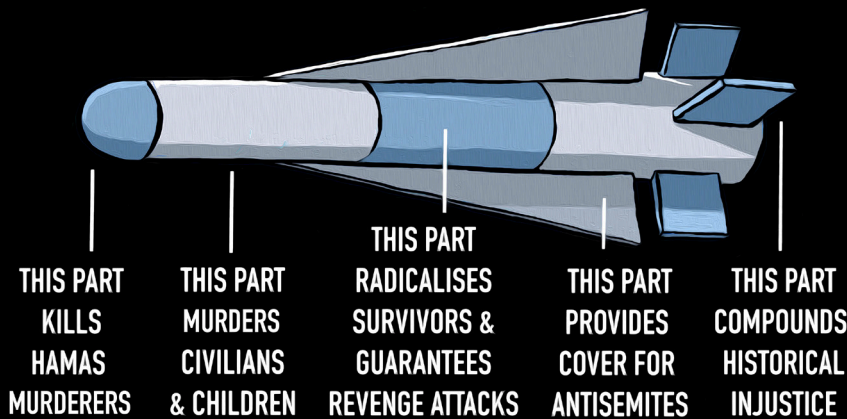
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ISRAEL'S MULTIFUNCTION MISSILE



WAR CRIMES

Murder of civilians, journalists continues

The death toll in Israel's current war on Gaza is now over 9,000. This week's deaths include that of Mohammad Abu Hattab, a journalist who was killed with 10 family members in an airstrike on his apartment. The Committee to Protect Journalists says that as of 2 November, 36 journalists and media workers had been killed in Gaza in the past three weeks. In retaliation for the murder of 1,400 people on 7 October by militant Palestinian group Hamas, Israel has continued its decades-long policy of committing war crimes.

GHANA

Too polite to say no to corruption

Former deputy finance minister Charles Adu Boahen says he accepted the offer of a \$40,000 cash gift so as "not to offend the sensibility of a potential wealthy investor". The offer was made in a sting operation by Tiger Eye PI, a collective of investigators and reporters, who taped him. He was fired when the footage aired last November. Prosecutors subsequently recommended law reforms, saying Boahen engaged in influence-peddling but that the country's laws don't specifically criminalise his actions.

DRC

Parental politics join presidential parade

Congolese businessman and politician Moïse Katumbi will stay in the running for the presidency after a court ruled against a suit questioning his nationality. Katumbi's father was Italian and Noël Tshiani, another presidential aspirant, wanted him disqualified from the December election. Tshiani also proposed a law to restrict the presidency to people with two Congolese parents.

ZIMBABWE

Hard lessons in how not to smuggle gold

President Emmerson Mnangagwa's niece, Henrietta Rushwaya, has been convicted of attempting to smuggle gold worth over \$300,000 out of the country. She was intercepted at Harare's airport on her way to Dubai in 2020, and gained international infamy in *Al Jazeera's* Gold Mafia investigation, which showed how government officials and their associates were shuffling the country's wealth away.



Siya soon:
Springbok
captain Siya
Kolisi holds up
the Webb Ellis
Cup. Photo:
Ann Christine
Poujoulat/AFP

RUGBY

The G.O.A.T.

The 2023 men's Rugby World Cup was meant to be hosted by South Africa. Some curious dealings meant it went to

France instead. But playing away from home couldn't stop the Springboks from defending their title and winning a record-setting fourth Webb Ellis Cup. They now stand as the most successful men's national rugby team of all time.

FOOTBALL

Money does get you shiny things

To distract from how it treats people, drives the climate crisis, and its war in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is pouring money into football. Its ultimate goal is to host a world cup. Like Qatar and others before it, it offered “investments” in return for support in their bid for the 2030 men’s world cup. That failed. But then Fifa narrowed 2034 hosting to Asia and Oceania. With Australia pulling out, Saudi Arabia were left as the sole bidders and will be formally announced as host at next year’s Fifa congress. We are so surprised.

HEALTH

We are closer to a sickle cell cure

Exa-cell, a drug that treats and cures sickle cell blood disorder by editing patients’ genes, may be cleared for general use as early as December. In its latest clinical trial results released by its US makers Vertex, 29 of the 30 people who got it didn’t experience a sickle cell crisis in the 18 months that followed. Sickle cells is an inherited blood disorder that causes excruciating pain and other complications when the patient’s blood cells clump up, clot and block their blood vessels. Most people who have it are black.



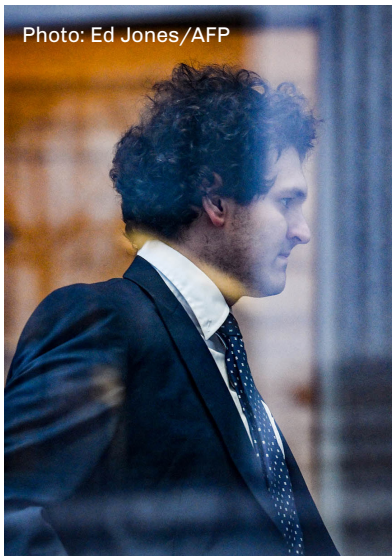
Homeward: Migrants returning home board a bus to the airport in Tripoli Libya. Photo: Mahmud Turkia /AFP

MALI

Tears as stranded migrants repatriated

Malian journalist Lucre Kante reports that “joy and gratitude were visible” on the faces of 146 migrants rescued from Libya and returned to Mali on a Tuesday flight chartered by Malian authorities and the UN’s International Organisation for Migration. Some prostrated, she reports for *lemalien.com*. The UN organisation is partnering with the West African government to help migrants stranded in North Africa to voluntarily return home. Last year, it helped more than 3,500 go home to Chad, and over 3,000 return to Nigeria.

Photo: Ed Jones/AFP



CAPITALISM

King of pretend cash is going to real jail

Global capital is helped along by thieves who pay politicians to make supportive laws. Sam Bankman-Fried wasn't so smart. The once-lauded wonderboy of the crypto finance world was found guilty of fraud charges brought against him in relation to the collapse of his two crypto companies: FTX exchange and Alameda Research. He faces 115 years in prison. Bankman-Fried ran a platform on which people traded digital assets like bitcoin, and a fund that managed the same for others. Billions in crypto fraudulently moved from the exchange platform to his fund and then to him, raising his net worth to \$26-billion.

KENYA

Nothing says I'm sorry quite like not saying you're sorry

In the 1960s, Britain tried to delete its colonial past, burning documents that would have shown how it killed and tortured 90,000 people in Kenya. It worked: this week Kenya's leaders wined and dined Britain's latest monarch, Charles Windsor, and his wife Camilla. Along with local fixer William Ruto, they gadded about feeding elephants, watering plants and dancing out of step with local performers. Charles also came *so* close to apologising for Britain's colonial past, but couldn't quite bring it over the line. Oh well, maybe next king.

BORDERS

You won't even need the UK to deport you!

Rwanda could join Gambia, Benin and the Seychelles in allowing visa-free entry for all African passport holders. President Paul Kagame announced the plan in Kigali this week. Kenya's President William Ruto, who announced a similar plan in September, said this week that visa-free travel for Africans into Kenya will start by the end of the year. But borderless Africa plans have not always materialised. The AU's pan-African passport that was launched in 2016 is still non-existent for most Africans.

DRC

New law, same old corrupt deals

A mining company run from someone's home in Canada won a natural gas contract in the DRC.

In 2015, the Democratic Republic of Congo passed a law to increase transparency in how contracts to exploit that country's natural resources were awarded.

The DRC has vast reserves of many raw materials key to modern society. But the first natural resource contract awarded under this new law went to a month-old startup run from a private home in Canada, an investigation by the UK-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism shows. The contract, awarded last year, is for extracting natural gas from Lake Kivu, a venture that has a very high risk of explosions.

The start-up, Alfajiri Energy Corporation, was set up by DRC-born Christian Hamuli, three weeks after the auction of the licence was announced.

Bureau journalists say that they have

seen a report, produced by the DRC's ministry of hydrocarbons, that judged Alfajiri's bid as lacking crucial information like a work plan and feasibility study. The company, which scored lowest of the three bidding companies in the initial report, had only three staff committed to the project (but said it had 20 overall) and didn't have the required three years of financial statements. However, the same panel later revised its report and Alfajiri came out on top.

The investigation names hydrocarbons minister Didier Budimbu as having interfered with the bidding process, but he denied these allegations.

Experts judged Alfajiri's bid as lacking crucial information like a work plan and feasibility study

The journalists say they also uncovered court documents that show that Budimbu was previously sentenced to two and a half years in a Belgium prison for fraud and money laundering.

When small and unqualified entities bid for, and win, major public contracts, it is usually so they can hold them and sell them to another more qualified company at a huge mark-up. It is a very common practice among politically connected individuals on the continent. ■

Wildlife

Dead ellies' case closed – but it's also still open?

We now have a better idea of why nearly 400 elephants in Botswana and Zimbabwe died suddenly. But it doesn't end here.

Refiloe Seiboko

A recent paper published in the journal *Nature Communications* solved a mystery that has confounded conservationists and scientists for three years: two sudden mass deaths of elephants in Zimbabwe and Botswana in 2020.

Elephants are known to live long lives (up to 70 years for African ones) and generally die of starvation when they can no longer eat. But in May and June 2020, 350 elephants of all ages were found dead. Those seen prior to their sudden deaths would walk around in circles before falling on their faces.

Three months later, 35 more died in neighbouring Zimbabwe. The incidents

startled conservationists and scientists and left them confused.

In the paper written by 15 scientists, a previously unnamed bacteria “*Bisgaard taxon 45*” is named as the cause of a “fatal septicaemia” infection that killed the elephants.

These are the first recorded cases of elephant deaths from this bacteria. Professor Falko Steinbach, who was involved in the investigation, has said that climate factors like drought and food shortage could have weakened the elephants' bodies, making them susceptible to this novel infection.

“We have a lot of pathogens that [usually] do not cause disease – and certainly not death. But if the host defences break down, that allows the bacteria to spread and in the end, it doesn't just cause a local infection after a bite – but causes severe disease,” he told BBC Radio.

Botswana and Zimbabwe have the highest elephant density in the world and so risk factors there have big implications for the population as a whole. Elephants are already hugely threatened by the global trade in ivory which drives poaching in the countries where they live.

Current estimates suggest that there are 415,000 African elephants left in Africa with numbers rapidly dwindling. The only other place in the world with elephants is Asia, and the population there is estimated to be 50,000 or less. ■

Uganda

Tough times ahead as Kampala's taste for bigotry bites it in the US

Politicians are stoking hatred to hold on to power. But the country is finding itself increasingly unable to get money thanks to its newfound pariah status.

Kiri Rupiah

Ugandan authorities learnt this week that the United States is kicking the country out of its Agoa programme, along with three other countries.

Uganda, Gabon, Niger and the Central African Republic were booted out of Agoa – the African Growth and Opportunity Act – which gives countries duty-free access to the American market.

For the goods covered, this makes them cheaper and therefore more competitive. While the programme is not without its critics, it has seen countries like Kenya grow entire new industries. For the United States, it is a powerful diplomatic tool, as evidenced when US politicians threatened South Africa's membership of Agoa after claims that the country had shipped weapons to Russia.

In a letter to the US senate, President Joe Biden said Uganda has engaged in gross human rights violations. These

are understood to include the country's passing of a harsh law targeting LGBTIQ people and its brutal repression of supporters of President Yoweri Museveni's political opponent Bobi Wine.

Participating in Agoa was itself not worth much, covering \$5-million in exports each year. But the salvo comes just three months after the World Bank said it will not consider new funding proposals from Uganda (as long as the anti-gay law is in effect) and will tighten conditionalities around the existing loans.

In another development, Norway announced that it will close its Kampala embassy. And the cumulative effect of these steps have started to become a problem for Uganda.

With some of its longstanding development funders divesting, the country is likely to turn to other sources of credit, as Museveni vowed in August, after the World Bank's decision.



Crackdown: Police descend on the intended gathering area for an opposition politician's campaign rally in Kayunga, Uganda. Photo: Badru Katumba /AFP

It would not be a novel path. Excluded from global capital markets, and with rich countries lending less, African countries are increasingly relying on borrowing locally, says the annual Africa debt report by ratings agency S&P Global.

This has had mixed results.

For countries like Botswana, Morocco, and South Africa, with good sized domestic savings and strong financial sectors (like pension funds and insurance), this local money is a buffer when times are tough.

But S&P notes that many others have struggled to find the funds they need locally. And when they can borrow money, it is often at a higher cost than they would get from an institution like

the World Bank.

There is also the effect on local businesses. Because the government is still almost always a safer bet than a private borrower, banks and other financial institutions will still lend to it, ignoring local businesses that might have grown the economy.

This is already a problem in Uganda.

Banking on expected oil revenues to clear its debt to China, the country has been taking on increasingly large amounts of debt to finance energy, transportation and other infrastructure. This means the country has to pay even more to service its debt. And local businesses as well as would-be entrepreneurs have even less chance to raise money. ■

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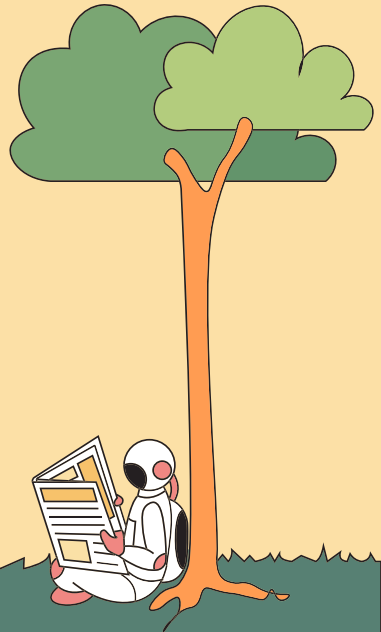
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Will the real Burna Boy please sit down

He's celebrated around the world. But the increasingly self-destructive behaviour of Nigeria's biggest musical export since Fela Kuti could derail the ride of a lifetime. And show foreigners what Nigerians have known all along.

Wilfred Okiche

In a marked departure from the fawning platitudes that have greeted Burna Boy at sold-out concerts in western capitals, his seventh studio album, *I Told Them...*, got a considerably muted critical reception when it was released this August. Audience fatigue? Perhaps. But what other factors could have been at play?

Try Burna Boy's own hubris.

Since his global breakthrough album, 2019's Grammy nominated *African Giant*, Burna Boy's entire brand narrative has been about global Blackness. He has talked about building a "bridge" between Africa and its diaspora. But when Chakabars Clarke, an influencer, asked him about the importance of that reconnection – a simple enough question and Burna Boy had had at least five years of preparation for – the response turned into a rant. In the video, since widely circulated, he talked about Chinese and Italian immigrants having a connection to their home, as opposed to African-Americans, who he said had forgotten their roots.

There was instant backlash, and Burna's response was typically defensive. "There is nothing I said that Malcolm X didn't say. There's nothing I said that the honourable Louis Farrakhan didn't say," he would charge in a later interview with *Complex*, a US pop culture media platform.

The international community was introduced to the Burna Boy that long-suffering fans at home had long known.

"The international audience hasn't

been as critical of him as they should, and I think this comes from not understanding him the way Nigerians – his early supporters – do," says Nelson CJ, a Lagos-based culture journalist whose critical coverage of Burna Boy has drawn the ire of Outsiders – the superstar's internet stans.

In the past, Burna Boy's controversial antics, which range from derisive comments to deeply disturbing actions, have mostly targeted fellow Nigerians.

While promoting *I Told Them...* for instance, Burna Boy told Apple Music's Zane Lowe that "Afrobeats is mostly about nothing, literally nothing. There is no substance to it, nobody is talking about anything. It's just a great time, an amazing time." Afrobeats is the catch-all term that has come to represent Nigerian pop music.

Prior to that at his New Year's Day concert in Lagos, Burna Boy kept his Nigerian fans waiting for six hours, before blaming the organisers for doing a shoddy job with logistics.

In 2022, Burna Boy's police escorts reportedly shot up a Lagos club after a woman declined Burna Boy's invitation to join him in the VIP section. Two people were injured. Security guards affiliated with Burna Boy were arrested and charged with attempted murder and the woman later accused the singer and his family of trying to silence her with hush money.

That same year, in a messy Twitter brawl, Ghanaian artist Shatta Wale accused Burna Boy of rape. Shatta Wale also casually admitted to having done the same. Burna Boy didn't

specifically respond to the rape allegations but dismissed Shatta Wale with, “fighting a pig will only leave you dirty. I really let this pig get to me but I promise this is the last time I will ever allow myself to stoop to this level.”

In 2017, Burna Boy was questioned by police for his alleged involvement in a robbery and attack on Nigerian artist Mr 2Kay, who later withdrew the charges.

All this mess has made for a complicated relationship with his home audience, who have often made do with “separating the art from the artist”, though even his most ardent followers will admit how exhausting this has been. “Burna is a great artist no doubt but a troubled and troublesome person,” says Dika Ofoma, a journalist and filmmaker who also identifies as a fan of the “African Giant”.

Burna Boy appears to have no particular appreciation of the disorienting dance his fans do around his personality to continue enjoying his art. On *Thanks*, the distasteful track which closes *I Told Them...*, Burna Boy adopts an ill-fitting victim posture, dismissing concerns about his conduct with nary a hint of self-reflection. “*Is this the motherfucking thanks I get?/For making my people proud every chance I get?*” he asks on the track.

And lately, he is not making things easy for himself with other fanbases. “That image of Burna Boy as we know it was built up by foreign media, but I also have to admit that he has been peerless when it came to the music,” says Motolani Alake, a music executive who has covered Burna Boy as a journalist. “But the seams have started to show over the past year.

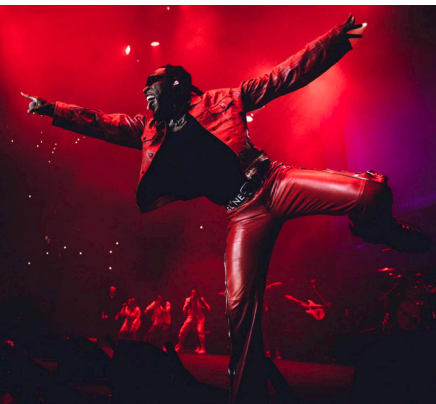


Tested and untrusted? Burna Boy's global glow-up is starting to wear off.

He has gotten comfy in his success and has started to show off parts that only Nigerians have known all along.”

Courting foreign audiences

Nigerians warmly received Burna Boy's 2013 debut album *L.I.F.E.* But back then, he was just a young, talented kid from Port Harcourt with an alternative Afrofusion sound – a mash-up of flavours ranging from Fela Kuti's afrobeat to reggae, R&B and jazz. “In the beginning his sound and style weren't mainstream. People weren't sure what to do with him even after he transcended that barrier. Nigerians did not fully embrace him until the international community did. We knew he was talented and made good music, but he wasn't well-regarded for it. I think that bred some contempt,” Ofoma explains.



Removed from the core Lagos music scene, he didn't immediately dislodge peers Wizkid and Davido who were anointed the next princes of Nigerian music. Sensing some resistance to his outsized ambitions, Burna Boy looked away from home for new audiences.

Preparation met opportunity after the release of Burna Boy's 2018 mixtape *Outside* and the accidental uptake of his single *Ye*, which was streamed by loads of Kanye West fans.

By the time Burna Boy entered his *African Giant* era in 2019, he had managed to craft a socially conscious brand with a message of Black solidarity that was welcoming to the global communities seeking him out. This culminated in his Grammy win for *Twice as Tall* in the Global Album category.

At home, his rebrand was received mostly with mild amusement. It was tough to reconcile this image of "global community shaper" with the chaotic person police charged in the attack on a fellow Nigerian artist, who also appeared

to be on the run from British authorities. (While attending college in the United Kingdom, Burna Boy was sent to jail as a minor for his involvement in a gang-related stabbing and later released on parole. He was only able to reenter the country years later).

Perhaps more importantly, despite positioning himself as a socially conscious artist and sampling Fela Kuti's lyrics on songs like *Ye* and *Collateral Damage*, Burna Boy stayed out of real world social movements like 2020's #EndSARS that demanded allyship.

He practically had to be bullied into showing his support to the most important youth movement of this generation. Thus, to a Nigerian ear, a song like *Monsters You Made* and its powerful lyrics denouncing colonisation, sounded hollow, impeccable musicianship notwithstanding.

"Artists are not politicians or activists and I don't like that we put this pressure on them. But for Burna Boy, there seems to be a dishonesty about him because he is always found wanting when it comes time to walk the talk," says Alake.

Nelson CJ adds: "I think we can take his music much more seriously than his politics. The latter hardly serves anyone but himself."

And there is a lot to take seriously in the music on *I Told Them...* and its condensed restraint, compared to the bloat of Burna Boy's last two records. It plays like a really good time, leaning into 90s American hip hop and obvious self-celebration. The album is a reminder of how great Burna Boy is at making feel-good, even relatable music when he sets his mind to it. ■



Aim true: Thomas Mapfumo spearheaded a critical musical movement. Photo: Frans Schellekens/Redferns

Mukanya's last dance

The Lion of Zimbabwe, Thomas Mapfumo, plans to leave the stage – but not the music.

Derick Matsengarwodzi

Thomas Tafirenyika Mapfumo was forever changed by a white man who shouted, “Shut up you kaffirs!” at his band, as they came to the end of their rendition of Elvis Presley’s *The Last Time*.

Back then, in the 1970s, Mapfumo, like many of his peers, was enamoured with rock and roll, and Presley’s showmanship and swagger. So, “this blatant racist episode hurt me a lot and made me think that: we are not allowed to sing foreign music,” he told *The Continent* over the

phone from his home in Oregon, US.

But it also made him realise that he could just as easily borrow from the musical traditions of Zimbabwe and wider Africa.

Overlaying Zimbabwean and other African oral storytelling traditions with mbira, drums and guitar riffs set Mapfumo apart as a musical virtuoso. In his prime, while on stage, he’d swirl to the mbira and drums, head bowed, dreadlocks swaying, seemingly in devotional connection with the world yonder.

Fans would chant “Mukanya,

Mukanya, Mukanya!” a reference to Mapfumo’s baboon totem.

A speaker of hard truths

Unlike his surname, the plural of a spear, a weapon used to pierce the enemy from a safe distance, Mapfumo’s lyrics have always been direct and confrontational, earning him the moniker “The Lion of Zimbabwe” – beautiful, militant, mystical, poetic and dangerous.

“During the 1970s war, Mapfumo had made himself a legend with slyly political songs sung in an African tongue (Shona), and referencing sacred traditional music that had been systematically stigmatised by Rhodesian officials,” says Banning Eyre’s book, *Lion Songs: Thomas Mapfumo and the Music that Made Zimbabwe*.

In 1989, nine years into independence, graft was rife within the echelons of the new elite. Mapfumo released *Corruption*. The hard-hitting album soon drew the ire of Robert Mugabe’s regime. Mapfumo was eventually forced into exile and the album confined to selected bars and homes.

After Mugabe was deposed, Mapfumo triumphantly returned to a Zimbabwean stage in 2018. The gig became a *pungwe*, an all-nighter, that delighted fans spoke of as an almost spiritual experience.

The truce with Zimbabwean politicians did not last. Mukanya keeps ruffling feathers, asking as he did in his 1998 song: “Ndiyani Waparadza Musha?” – who destroyed my home?

“I once called the main opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa, regarding the [August] elections and I told him not to accept them without reforms, without



Practiced: Thomas Mapfumo and his band at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Photo: Jack Vartoogian/Getty Images

foreign observers, and the voters roll,” said the musician.

He is so concerned about repercussions for his continued interest in Zimbabwean politics that he did not attend the funeral of his brother and bandmate Lancelot, who passed away last year.

Now aged 78, after gracing global stages for five decades, Mapfumo wants to leave the stage, but on his own terms. He plans to release one more album but has decided he will retire from live performances and instead spend his energy on supporting upcoming musicians.

But his retirement venture will roll out with a caveat – one that suggests that the racial aggression of that 1970s white man still cuts. He too became something of a music culture separatist. He wants to support upcoming musicians to “promote their own music and culture, not music from other foreign nations.” He says of people who prefer Zimdancehall, “you are despising your own music and culture and encouraging foreign music.” ■



Giving Mapfumo his flowers

As history was made, a legend was born in the prelude to independence.

Jacqueline Nyathi

When *Three Sevens Clash* is a collection of reminiscences mainly about the rise of Zimbabwean musical legend Thomas Mapfumo but also about the years leading up to Zim's independence. Mapfumo is still with us, and this anthology gives him his flowers.

In the foreword, editor Percy Zvomuya honours Mapfumo's brother and bandmate, Lancelot, who passed away

in 2022. Farai Mudzingwa gives us the history of the almost mythical Seven Miles Hotel, where Mapfumo was once a fixture.

Rutendo Chabikwa's moving *Only Daughter* explores a sliver of gender in Zimbabwe through a portrait of her amazing, somewhat gender-fluid uncle.

Historian Brooks Marmon brings us the story of the 1958 All-African Music Festival by Daniel Madzimbamuto and Herbert Munangatire's Cultural Syndicate. It was the first and last event of its kind, and Marmon explains why it both succeeded and failed.

In *The Beaters in Rhodesia*, Atiyyah Khan writes about a young Siphon "Hotstix" Mabuse, the South African singer-songwriter who would go on to record and produce for Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela. *Adatshona* by Marko Phiri is deeply moving on the dislocation of Malawian migrants to Zimbabwe.

Tawanda Mudzonga's personal essay on identity skewers Zimbabweans' obsession with how people sound, a classist and elitist consequence of colonialism. And last is a regrettably short entry by another legend, Tony Namate, on his time at Zimbabwe Publishing House, rubbing shoulders with Mungoshi, Hove, Marechera, Nkosi, Gordimer and Farah.

When Three Sevens Clash is a lovely collection of memories of the heady days of Zimbabwe's formation and a welcome response to the complaint that too little of the country's history is being recorded. Zvomuya has brought many gifted minds and voices together in this volume. ■



The 'mokorotlo building' in downtown Maseru. Photo: Tšoloane Mohlomi

TRAVEL

Welcome to Maseru

The gateway to the Mountain Kingdom is lovely to visit in summer – but winter can make it a snowy paradise, writes Tšoloane Mohlomi

Vibe check

Nestled along the meandering Caledon River on the western border of Lesotho and South Africa, the city of Maseru is an urban sprawl towered over by the Maluti Mountains in the far distance.

Its rocky and flat scenery makes the capital city of Lesotho, Africa's coldest country, unique. Lesotho has the highest lowest altitude of any country in the world, which makes sense if you think about it long enough.

Maseru, or Mjesa as locals like to call it, has a youthful tempo. Its people are upbeat, friendly and seem like go-getters who like to get things done. They tend to greet you with "Khotso" – which means

peace – but generally speak both English and Sesotho.

Activities and sightseeing

You could go fishing on the Caledon River, hike towards the mountains or stay in town to watch the vibrant urban scene at the string of popular restaurants that dot its quads.

The iconic mokorotlo building in downtown Maseru is the place to buy the famous straw woven Basotho hat and the newly opened Lesotho Tourism and Crafts Centre near Pioneer Mall also has various crafts on display.

Tourists can also visit Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, the fortress of the



Top: The Roman Catholic Church next to the main traffic circle in Maseru. Bottom: A billboard celebrating King Letsie III's diamond jubilee this year.

Photos: Tšoloane Mohlomi

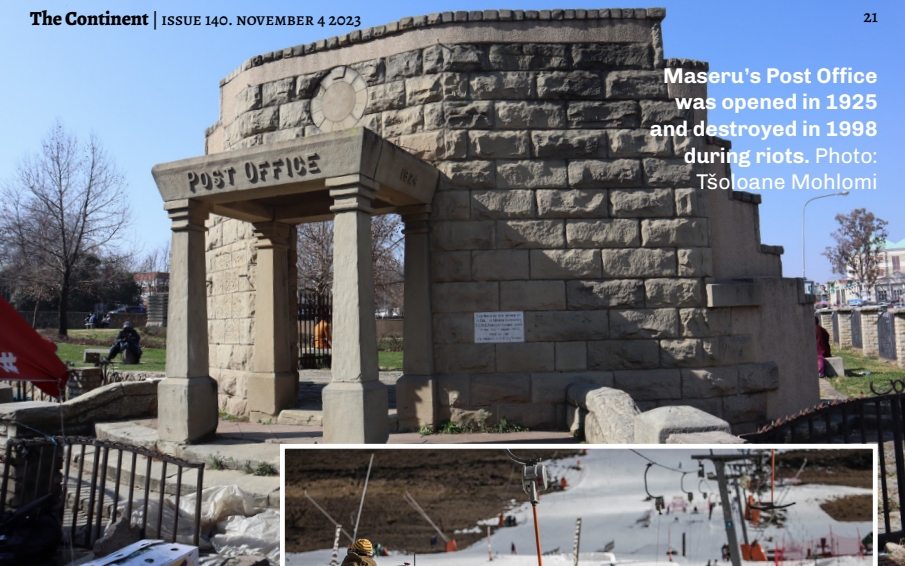
nation's late founding king, Moshoeshe I, which is just 24km out of town.

Thaba-Bosiu means “overnight mountain” – legend has it the fortress mysteriously sprang out of the ground one night, to protect Basotho from their adversaries.

If you are into colonial history, the first Christian church in Lesotho was built in Morija, about 45 minutes from Thaba-Bosiu. The place is also home to the Morija Museum which houses some of Lesotho's oldest archives. A tour costs less than \$8.

Eating out

The Market Restaurant in Maseru Mall offers both traditional and continental dining. Try their seafood skillet for two as a starter for \$30. For a more artsy and youthful vibe visit Café What in the city's industrial area. Is it a restaurant? A night club? An art gallery? A coffee shop? Yes. Yes it is. The spot is most popular for its wood-fired pizzas, smash burgers and Mexican nachos. Thirsty? Stay hydrated and energised with motoho, a local sorghum-based beverage available from street vendors.



Maseru's Post Office was opened in 1925 and destroyed in 1998 during riots. Photo: Tšoloane Mohlomi



Skiing is a drive away from Maseru. Photo: Marco Longari/AFP

Accommodation and getting around

Hotel prices start from \$70 while B&B's charge around \$30 for an overnight stay. For trips around town, one can catch either a minibus taxi or hail the local cab service known as a 4+1.

A song that represents the city's feel

Ntate Stunna's *Ke Thata* – which means "I'm tough" – does a great job of capturing the appeal of Maseru's rugged spirit.

Best time to visit

Maseru is lush and green all year round, and glorious summer weather kicks in during October and lasts all the way through to March. On the other hand, the winters can really be quite cold. So cold that there's a good chance a mid-year visit will involve snowfall, and if you don't mind driving out and want to hit the slopes without going to Switzerland, the Afri-Ski resort will take care of you. ■

Do you want to show us around your town or city?

Send an email to read@thecontinent.org and we'll be in touch!

PHOTO ESSAY

Try, try and try again

Ahead of this year's men's Rugby World Cup, Agence France-Presse asked 20 aspiring photographers from each country in the tournament to photograph one aspect of the rugby union culture in their country. This photo essay is South Africa's contribution. It focused on Jabulani Technical Secondary School in Soweto,

which – inspired by Springbok captain Siyamthanda Kolisi and the team's World Cup win in 2019 – began running a rugby programme. Helped by the University of Johannesburg and the Mac Masina Foundation, the programme seeks to reintroduce sport into schools in underprivileged neighbourhoods.

Photos: Siyamazi Khathola/AFP via Getty Images



Vat hom: Lwazi Tshazi races for the try line with Siyabonga Mosemini hot on his heels during practice at Jabulani Technical Secondary School in Soweto. Once considered the preserve of white Afrikaaners, rugby has played an unusually outsized role as a unifying force since the end of apartheid in the early 1990s.



Top: Unathi Ntanjana watches friends from Jabulani's under-16 side play during rugby practice at their grounds in Soweto.

Bottom: Lwazi Tshazi is hoisted by his teammates as he reaches for the ball in a line-out, a throw-in formation intended to restart play after the ball crosses over the touchline marking the field's side boundary.



Top: The team from Jabulani Technical Secondary School sing and dance ahead of a match against St John's College Johannesburg.

Bottom: Jabulani's Thando Licenga grabs the ball mid-air during a match against Marist Brothers Linmeyer School, also from Johannesburg.

In praise of busteki

Atula Owade

The emergence and explosion of Somali restaurants is one of the most distinct changes in Nairobi food culture in the recent past. This change was spearheaded by Al Yusra Restaurant, which first opened in 2006 on the street overlooking Jamia, the most prominent mosque in Kenya.

In the Somali worldview no other animal compares to the camel. Somalis revere camels to the extent that their language, I came to learn, has more than a hundred names for the beast.

I had my first taste of busteki – grilled camel meat – in 2019. The food was served on the large round trays we call sinia in Kiswahili. The large open plate is intended to encourage sharing.

The plate was a rainbow of colours. At the centre of the tray was the steaming meat itself, golden brown and chunky. It was surrounded by a portion each of various starches including chapati, plain rice and pilau. Salads were brought in side dishes, like moons around the Planet Sinia, everything in perfect balance.

I had never tasted camel meat in all my 25 years of existence. Unsure what to expect, I took a small bite of the meat, at first. It was soft and juicy – much more



Not just deserts: Somali busteki – grilled camel meat – has become a welcome addition to sinia dishes in Nairobi.

tender than I thought it would be, given how hardy the camel itself is. My brother, more familiar with it, laughed at my surprised expression.

In the years since, like thousands of other city residents, I have found myself frequenting the growing number of Somali restaurants in Nairobi. Besides Al Yusra, Kilimanjaro and Beirut, now almost every major street in the city centre has a restaurant serving Somali food. And each brings something new and interesting to sample on their menu and adds a layer to Nairobi's culinary scene. ■



Last week we were in South-East Nigeria trying out okpa. This week, we try a Somali dish, butseki, popular in the heart of Nairobi. We want to hear about your favourite food and what makes it so special. Let us know at letters@thecontinent.org. \$100 for the winning letter.

How common is police brutality?

Sometimes police brutality makes headlines – think Nigeria’s SARS, South Africa’s “blue light brigade”, American officers who killed George Floyd. But often it doesn’t.

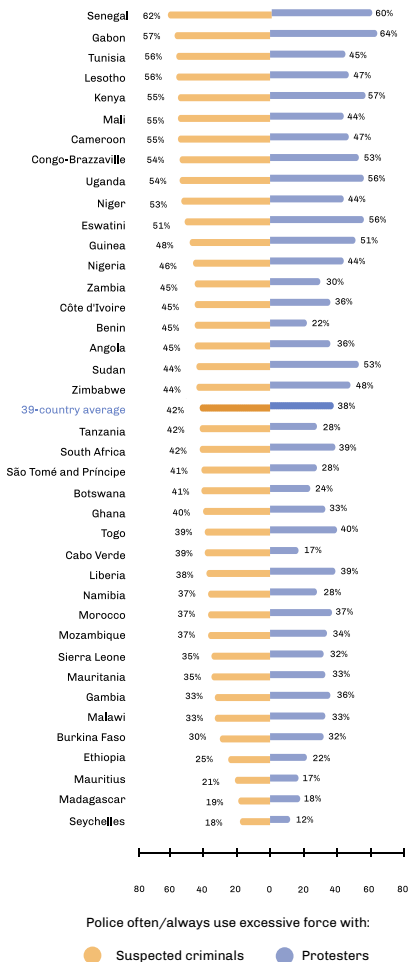
How widespread is the use of excessive force by police in Africa?

Based on Afrobarometer’s 54,436 interviews in 39 countries in 2021/2023, it’s far from rare. About four in 10 respondents say their police “often” or “always” use excessive force with suspected criminals (42%) and with protesters (38%). If you add those who say the police “sometimes” use excessive force, you’re at about two thirds of all adults who see a problem.

These numbers vary widely by country. In Senegal and Gabon, roughly six out of 10 respondents say police routinely abuse suspects and protesters, compared to fewer than one in five Seychellois and Malagasy.

As the shape of the chart suggests, brutality against suspects and protesters tends to be perceived at similar rates in many countries. But not everywhere: In Benin and Cabo Verde, for example, perceptions of excessive force against suspected criminals are about twice as high. ■

Police use of excessive force with protesters and suspected criminals | 39 African countries | 2021/2023



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.



THE QUIZ

0-3

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

4-7

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

8-10

"I still think the answer to #3 should be 'All of them'."



1_ True or false: Zimbabwe has the largest elephant population in the world.

2_ The Tassili n'Ajjer national park (pictured) is located in the Sahara Desert. Which country is it in?

3_ How many years of independence will Kenya be celebrating this year?

4_ Dedan Kimathi, who was murdered by British colonial rulers, was the leader of which 1950s uprising?

5_ Asamoah Gyan once captained which national

men's football team?

6_ What is the demonym for people from the Central African Republic?

7_ Maseru is which country's capital?

8_ Which Zimbabwean musician is known as "The Lion of Zimbabwe"?

9_ How many Rugby World Cups have South Africa's Springboks won?

10_ Name the three present-day countries that were part of the German East Africa colony which existed from 1885 to 1918.

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

Dear reader, you are cordially invited to a celebration of the birthday of none other than your very favourite *Continental Drift* columnist. Happy birthday, me! As for the venue, we had hoped to have it at the African Union HQ and of course we invited all of you alongside our favourite leaders and had all the party games ready! From “Pin the Blame on the Opposition” and “Pass the Parcel of repressive laws or else” to a tear-gas treasure hunt sponsored by the global military-industrial complex, and, of course, the obligatory stuff-the-ballot-box contest!

Unfortunately, however, not *one* of them RSVPed, and when we arrived to set up the cake table we were escorted off the premises!

Why, if we were less forgiving that might be considered grounds for a whole new season of *Keeping Up with the Coupdashians*.

Fortunately we’re not the sort to hold grudges. And, bless, some of them have actual excuses not to attend. Like Billy Ruto, who has been forced to visit Kenya again to babysit a pair of British pensioners: King Charles III and the patron saint of sidechicks herself, Queen-consort-of Camilla. President Ruto has

made 38 trips abroad since he came into office in September 2022, and is potentially competing for the title of the Dora the Explorer of African presidents, currently held by Liberian President George Weah. Ruto says it’s only right that he jets about so much, on account of being the “chief agent and chief ambassador of Kenya” and these trips are crucial to “look for opportunities for Kenyans”.

Now, this is just a wild idea we’re throwing out there, no presh, but has he tried looking for opportunities for Kenyans in... Kenya?

Back at the royal visit, Chuckles gave a speech in which he expressed sorrow and regret over “wrongdoings of the past”, adding that there “can be no excuse” for the “abhorrent, unjustifiable acts of

violence” committed against Kenyans as they fought for independence.

No mention of the words “reparations” or even “sorry”. But according to our favourite diplomacy textbook *So You’ve Been Colonised*, this is actually the posh way of saying “sorry not sorry” – and to be fair that technically features the word “sorry” twice.

At the same time, Germany’s president,

It’s my party, I’ll cry foul if I want to



CONTINENTAL DRIFT

Samira Sawlani



No swiping! William Ruto and George Weah wish they were the real Dora.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier was in Tanzania this week, where he issued an apology for atrocities carried out by his country during the colonial era. In his speech, Steinmeier said “I ask for forgiveness for what Germans did to your forefathers”.

That’s more like it, right? Except for an apology to mean anything it would help if you weren’t complicit in abuses elsewhere at the very same time as you’re apologising – and Germany’s stance on the ongoing war on Palestine rather goes against that.

Speaking of hypocrisy and party invites, United States President Joe Biden has announced that the Central African Republic, Gabon, Uganda and Niger have been summarily uninvited from the Agoa trade agreement party.

This is because Niger and Gabon, both of which currently have military governments – aka the coupdashians – have not made progress towards “political pluralism”, while the CAR and Uganda

have engaged in “gross violations” of human rights. Interesting. And sure, yeah, that tracks. But Joe does seem a bit pick-and-choosey about exactly which atrocities are off the menu. The aforementioned war on Palestine refers, as do the many atrocious situations on the continent.

The United Nations announced that 6.9-million people are now displaced in DR Congo, a record high. Meanwhile as conflict in Sudan enters its seventh month, the UN say the country is facing one of the “worst humanitarian crises in recent history”, with over 5.8-million people displaced within and outside Sudan since April 2023.

Meanwhile, videos and images continue to come out of Gaza as we witness Palestinians mourning their dead, of bodies beneath rubble, of young children sat on hospital floors hurt.

While the bombs are being dropped, the healthcare facilities are being deprived of fuel, the bakeries are being targeted.

Part of the definition of a war crime is “intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population”. In the past few weeks we have seen the targeting of refugee camps, hospitals and churches – all of which have been known to shelter civilians. So what good is your international law if your BFFs are exempt?

British-Somali poet Warsan Shire, said: “In Somali, when we see injustice we say ‘dhiiga kuma dhaqaaqo?’ which translates to ‘Does your blood not move?’”

Thing about getting your blood moving tho? It helps to have a heart. ■

The Horn of Africa: Between the devil and the deep blue sea?

Ethiopia's neighbours are littorally on edge, despite Abiy Ahmed walking back his 'interference'.

Yohannes Woldemariam

Ethiopia's prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, sent shockwaves through the region when he asserted his government's determination to have direct access to the Red Sea either by force or consent. Ethiopia has always been landlocked, except when it was linked by a thin sliver of Eritrea (1952-91) under a federal arrangement. Following Eritrean independence that country, Djibouti and Somalia now separate it from the global waters on its eastern border.

In a 45-minute address to Parliament, Abiy stated that the future security of Ethiopia depends on having ownership of "Red Sea water", and that as a result "it is crucial for the present leaders of Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia to engage in discussions, not just for the present, but to ensure lasting peace".

The way Abiy linked access to the Red Sea to peace immediately raised concerns in neighbouring countries that Ethiopia planned to use force to end its landlocked status.

Leaders from Eritrea, Somalia

and Djibouti were quick to respond, asserting their sovereign rights. "Our two countries have always maintained strong, friendly relations. But you should know that Djibouti is a sovereign country, and therefore our territorial integrity is not questionable, neither today nor tomorrow," said Djibouti's President Ismaïl Omar.

Abiy has since clarified his remarks, promising that Ethiopia will "never assert its interests through war" and that he had "no wish to interfere in the affairs" of his neighbours. This has not fully assuaged regional concerns, considering Ethiopian imperial ambitions and Abiy's track record of deception.

Abiy fought a brutal war against Tigray, and civil conflict continues to rage in the Amhara and Oromia regions – in part because leaders and communities in those regions believe he has not delivered on early promises made to secure their loyalty – and so his status as an honest peacemaker has been fatally undermined. Moreover, some of Abiy's prior statements to Parliament indicate a desire to transform the regional



Sea-sore: Djibouti's coastal access makes it wary of landlocked Ethiopia's territorial ambitions.

Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba /AFP

landscape. In addition to describing former prime minister Meles Zenawi as a “shifta” (bandit) for consenting to Eritrean independence, his presentation referenced 19th-century Tigrayan military commander Ras Alula, who according to Abiy claimed the Red Sea as Ethiopia’s “natural boundary”, disregarding the borders created by colonialism.

Ethiopia is within its rights to negotiate a win-win arrangement that will allow it greater access to the Red Sea without the need for force, but it is also important to place Abiy’s words in the context of growing tensions between the Ethiopian leader and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki. Despite Abiy being awarded the 2019 Nobel peace prize for accepting the Hague verdict on the border dispute with Eritrea, and relying on Eritrean troops to support his own forces during the civil war in the Tigray region, it now appears that relations between the two men have significantly deteriorated.

There may be two main reasons for this. First, both leaders aspire towards regional leadership and dominance, which places them on something of a collision course once their mutual rivals – such as the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front – have been subdued. Second, Abiy was unhappy when he was excluded from a regional council involving eight countries in the Red Sea corridor launched at the initiative of Saudi Arabia and Egypt in 2020.

These broader developments help to explain why Abiy’s rash statement inspired so much concern – and why despite his subsequent efforts to put out the fire he started, leaders in Djibouti, Eritrea, and Somalia will not be relaxing any time soon. ■



Yohannes Woldemariam is a Horn of Africa analyst and academic. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa

THE BIG PICTURE

What goes around: The art installation *Aurora* by Belgian sculptor and painter Anne Quinze frames the Giza Pyramids, inviting viewers to 're-evaluate our lost balance with nature', as part of the *Forever is Now* exhibition by Art D'Egypte at the necropolis near Cairo this week.

Photo: Khaled Desouki/AFP



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