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The Continent

Ghana is slowly disappearing

Who is going to pay?

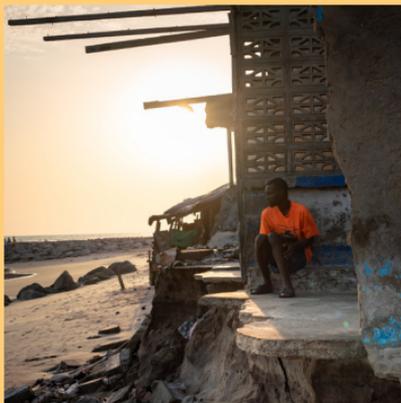


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A message for WhatsApp subscribers

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Cover: Rising sea levels are eating at Ghana's coastline, destroying homes and lives. Ghana is paying the price for the pollution of others, and contributes just 0.04% of all carbon emissions (p11). In Algeria, a hotter world means more fires and death sentences (p9). But COP27 may have found a way to help, in a win for developing countries – if rich countries don't destroy that too (p14).

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Cartoon: Yemi Yetneberk

INTERNATIONAL

UN adopts African proposal on global tax regulations

United Nations member states this week passed a resolution that might give poorer countries more say in global taxation rules. Currently, the rules are often set by rich countries through the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. The resolution, proposed by African states, will make the UN the centre of intergovernmental negotiations on tax global tax regimes instead. *The Guardian* reported on fierce behind-the-scenes opposition from some western diplomats.

TUNISIA

Four-year-old unaccompanied migrant sent home

A four-year old Tunisian girl who reached Italy without her parents has been returned home, at the request of Tunisian authorities. The toddler was taken in October by a makeshift migrant boat which set off before her parents could board. The parents were temporarily jailed over the incident but have since been reunited with the child. The AFP news agency reports that between January and August, about 2,600 Tunisian children arrived in Italy as migrants, and about two thirds were unaccompanied.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE**Forests to triple in size in next decade**

Cocoa plantations in Côte d'Ivoire – which grow the beans that produce much of the world's chocolate – have destroyed the country's forests over the last 50 years. To fix this, the government has announced an ambitious new tree-planting project that aims to triple forest cover by 2030 to cover 20% of the country. The project is funded by the World Bank to the tune of \$149-million, and also includes provisions to reinforce protection for national parks.



Photo: JB Dodane

EAST AFRICA**Leaders give M23 rebels ultimatum**

If fighters of the March 23 Movement (M23) continue fighting and holding positions in eastern DRC beyond 6pm on Friday 25th November, the East African Community Regional Force, the joint army that Burundi, Kenya and Uganda are sending into the region, will attack and “induce them to submit”. That's the ultimatum they were given on Wednesday by East African leaders who met for a mini-summit on the conflict in Luanda, Angola. Rwanda, which has been accused by the DRC of supporting the rebels, agreed to the ultimatum – but M23 leaders have said they have no intention to comply.

SIERRA LEONE**Lawmakers get their House into disorder**

Legislators threw punches and chairs at each other in Sierra Leone's parliamentary chamber during a debate on an electoral law change proposed by the ruling party. With its popularity declining, the Sierra Leone People's Party wants the general elections in February 2023 to be based on civil-war era proportional representation, and not the current “Westminster” system in which voters directly elect their representatives. The opposition All People's Congress considers the proposal unconstitutional. An earlier bill proposing the change was withdrawn after fierce opposition.



The wurst: The statue of Curt von François is gone. Photo: Antoine 49

NAMIBIA

Another offensive statue toppled

A statue of a German colonial officer has been removed from the centre of Namibia's capital Windhoek, following a campaign by activists who described it as a symbol of colonial oppression. Curt von François served in Germany's imperial army from 1889 to 1894, during which time he oversaw the massacre of at least 80 Nama people, mostly women and children. He is often described as the founder of Windhoek, but historians note that the first recorded settlements in the area actually date back 50 years previously.

WEST AFRICA

Green projects to get \$1.3-billion by 2025

The West African Development Bank has said it will devote 25% of its portfolio to green projects, earmarking \$1.3-billion to finance climate adaptation efforts in Benin, Burkina, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The financial institution, which is based in Lome, Togo, says that it gave 10% of its funds to green projects between 2015 and 2019. It will be looking to fund climate adaptation projects in agriculture, energy, eco-construction, electric mobility and waste management.

SOUTH AFRICA

Zuma's early release was illegal, but ...

The Supreme Court of Appeal ruled on Monday that former president, Jacob Zuma, was unlawfully released from prison. Two months into a 15-month sentence for refusing to testify before a commission investigating corruption, Zuma was released last year on medical grounds by the head of the prison service, against the advice of the medical parole board. Zuma was ordered back to prison to finish the sentence but the prisons head is appealing the ruling. His initial arrest sparked riots across South Africa in which at least 350 people died.

LIBYA

Half a million at risk of landmine injuries

This year, 39 people have been killed or injured by landmines and similar remnants of war in Libya, according to UN agencies in the country. They include a child who was killed when he found and played with a grenade, and his two brothers who were severely hurt. The agencies said in a statement that more than 505,000 people run the same risk across Libya, where constant conflict since the ousting of longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi has littered the land with unexploded ordnance.

SOUTH SUDAN

State accused of starving populations

Global Rights Compliance, a human rights law firm in the UK, released a report this week accusing South Sudan's government of using mass starvation as a weapon of war. The report, which the group says is based on extensive open-source intelligence, calls this alleged campaign against civilians in central Equatoria, "one of the world's most unknown state-led mass crimes". The group wants the UN Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court for a full investigation.



GHANA

Akufo-Addo blessing was nearly enough

On the eve of Ghana's opening match in the men's football world cup, President Nana Akufo-Addo flew to Qatar and

dropped in to encourage the Black Stars. Unfortunately, it was not enough to secure their win over Portugal on Thursday night. The Black Stars lost in a intense five-goal match. Presidents Mack Sall (Senegal), George Weah (Liberia) and Paul Kagame (Rwanda) are also in Qatar for the tournament.

THE AGENDA

◆ If you can beat the traffic, make your way to the **Civic Centre on Tuesday 29th November for the 4th edition of Lagos Transport Fest**. Event Hive Nigeria, the organisers, bill the event as “West Africa’s most important gathering of mobility leaders across road, rail and ports”.

◆ Go for the red carpet, stay for the fits by Africa’s top designers at the launch event of **Africa’s Next Supermodel** starting at 3pm on Saturday 26 November 2022 at the Kigali Marriott Hotel.

◆ On December 1st, in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, Unesco will host an **awards ceremony to celebrate 20 African women for their outstanding contributions to science**. Each of the 20 will win a research grant of 10,000 euros.

◆ If you’re in Johannesburg, the **Jozi Food and Wine Experience** is a food and wine pairing event happening on Saturday 26 November at SUD Restaurant in Vilakazi Street Orlando West, Soweto. Get your tickets [here](#).

◆ Chester House in Nairobi is hosting a **Speed Dating Party for Single Professionals on Thursday 1 December**. Entry is \$25, which includes “a steady flow of drinks and bites” and “the possibility of a potential soul mate”.

◆ Musikilu Mojeed, the editor-in-chief of Nigeria’s *Premium Times*, is releasing his debut book on Thursday. **The Letterman: Inside the ‘Secret’ Letters of former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo** examines the life and career of the former president through his correspondence.

◆ **The African Diaspora International Film Festival** kicked off its 30th anniversary celebration on 25 November. You still have time (until 11 December) to watch the continent’s best and brightest. Head to nyadiff.org for tickets.

◆ The third season of the South African teen crime series **Blood and Water** hit Netflix on Friday. Expect more twists and secrets from the hit show, along with plenty of drama.

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Malawi

Vice-president charged in graft probe

A long-running corruption investigation is finally netting some very big fish

Golden Matonga in Lilongwe

Vice-president Saulos Chilima was arraigned and charged with multiple corruption offenses on Friday.

This is the climax of a years-long investigation by Malawian and British authorities into a bribery scandal that allegedly centres around multimillionaire Zuneth Sattar, a Malawi-born British citizen.

Chilima is accused of receiving a share of \$280,000 from Sattar, who allegedly sought to influence the award of lucrative government contracts. Sattar denies all wrongdoing.

By the time of his court appearance on Friday afternoon, Chilima was vice-president in name only. President Lazarus Chakwera suspended him from his duties in June when these allegations first surfaced.

Addressing journalists and his

supporters after being granted bail, Chilima avoided making any comment on the proceedings or his political future.

“I have nothing to say except that we will let the process continue,” said Chilima.

The future of the ruling Tonse Alliance is now in doubt. Chilima’s United Transformation Movement is a key member of the coalition. Supporters of his party thronged to the head office of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, and later the courts, in a show of support.

Joseph Chunga, a political scientist at the University of Malawi and a researcher for Afrobarometer, said that Malawians would be broadly supportive of the legal proceedings against the vice-president.

“Remember a majority of Malawians, at least from Afrobarometer survey results, want politicians and public officials to be fired from their positions once charged for corruption,” he told *The Continent*.

“I have nothing to say except that we will let the process continue,” said Chilima.

Other senior officials are similarly implicated. The president’s chief of staff, Prince Kapondamgaga, has been duly suspended, while a former police chief and a former head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau itself have also been arrested. ■

Algeria

After the fire, the fallout

The impact of extreme weather events lasts long after the weather has changed

During an extended heat wave in Algeria last year, forest fires broke and eventually killed at least 90 people. During one such fire in the district of Tizi Ouzou, locals accused a 38-year-old man of arson and beat him to death. A video of the killing went viral on social media.

It later emerged that the man was Djamel Ben Ismail, an artist who had in fact travelled 230km to Tizi Ouzou, after the fires had started, to volunteer with those who were trying to put them out.

This week, an Algerian court sentenced 49 of the locals accused of participating in Ismail's lynching to death. Another 28 were given jail terms ranging from two to ten years.

If the 49 are executed, at least 120 deaths will have happened as a direct result of last year's extreme weather events in Algeria. (The country has not executed anyone since 1993 and most death sentences are instead commuted to life in prison).



Fatal mistake: Djamel Ben Ismail was mistaken for an arsonist. Now his killers face death.

While the wildfires were a seasonal occurrence in the desert countries for centuries, climate scientists warn that global warming is making such events more frequent and extreme. The Algeria events present a vivid picture of the mayhem that is likely to result. *The Continent* reported in August that over 100 forest fires broke out in Algeria this year. In one week, they killed 26 people.

In addition to loss of lives and heightened conflict, wildfires have destroyed about 2,500 hectares of forest. Forests buttress the world from further global warming by soaking up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. ■

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A life's work washed into the ocean

Thanks to pollution elsewhere, Ghana's coastline is being eroded by rising sea levels. Homes are being washed away, and livelihoods ruined.

Photos: Ernest Ankomah/The Continent

Marian Ansah in Accra

Nii Okine is a fisherman in Chorkor, a fishing community in Ghana that has thrived for generations. Their homes weave along the beaches and coastline. But their land is being eaten away by the encroaching waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

“All the money I have made from the sea has been washed back in,” Okine says. He had put his life savings into building homes in the area, which he could rent out as well as live in. He was building intergenerational wealth. Last Easter, the ocean completely washed away three of his buildings.

Standing near the beach, he points to a now-empty space: “I had one house right there. Now I have nothing.” He now lives in a shop owned by a friend, with two of his children. “Life has really been tough. Sometimes, I think of giving up everything.”

Between 2005 and 2017, erosion destroyed a third of Ghana’s coastline, according to Kwasi Appeaning Addo, the director of the Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies at the University of Ghana.

In a natural system, these coastal areas would shrink and expand naturally over hundreds of years, with the ocean and land pushing and pulling at each other. Humans hasten this process by doing things like mining beaches, which make the coastlines especially vulnerable to sea level rises.

Addo says the melting of ice sheets, as well as the oceans expanding because they are getting hotter, means the sea is

now pushing into Ghana’s coastline. This is eroding a strip of Ghana’s more than 500km-long coastline.

In places like Chorkor, that is destroying homes, livelihoods and leading to conflict.

Last year, when many homes in the community were washed out to sea, Comfort Cobblah says she lost her home which she shared with renters. “My house was completely washed away. It was a big blow to me and I’ve not recovered,” she says. Her tenants requested a partial refund, which she couldn’t provide.

Melting of ice sheets, as well as the oceans expanding because they are getting hotter, means the sea is now pushing into Ghana’s coastline.

They took her to court. Several months later, a judge ruled that she did not have to refund the rent, since what happened was no fault of hers.

In the past, catastrophes like this would be called an “act of god” by insurance companies and industry. This meant nobody was responsible.

But damage from climate change does have a responsible party — polluters, particularly the United States, European Union and China, are responsible for the vast majority of the greenhouse gases that are trapping heat in the atmosphere and oceans, melting ice caps and driving sea level rises.

The UN’s climate agency predicts that sea levels will rise by up to 40cm by the



Climate devastation: Thanks to pollution in rich countries, homes in communities like Chorkor are being destroyed by rising sea levels. Photos: Ernest Ankomah/*The Continent*

end of this century, meaning that more of the coastline will keep getting eaten away.

In its budget this year, the government allocated \$1.6-million for strategies to save the coastline and protect the millions of people who live along the coast.

With so little money available, communities are facing the losses on their own and have to deal with them in isolation. In some parts of Ghana, this means communities building sand walls or concrete sea walls to keep the Atlantic out. As Professor Addo points out, this damages the ecosystems on those beaches.

For solutions that are more proportionate to the problem, Ghana depends on the actions of rich polluters;

first to reduce emissions and therefore slow the rise in sea levels, and to pay for the damage that has already been done. This month's global climate negotiations in Egypt created some hope of support for countries like Ghana.

After decades of failure, African countries and their peers in the developing world got the 200 countries present to agree to create a "loss and damage" fund.

How it works in practice is something that will be decided in future negotiations. But its spirit is to help countries like Ghana, which is responsible for less than 0.04% of global carbon emissions, survive a world that is changing through no fault of their own. ■

Beyond the winners and losers narrative of COP27

This month's climate negotiations have been labelled a win for developing countries and a loss for the effort to reduce carbon emissions. Voices from the global North are telling themselves that they tried to keep carbon emissions to safe levels but the rest of the world refused. The reality is far more nuanced.

Faten Aggad

This year's climate negotiations in Egypt ran until sunrise, two days after they were meant to end. An agreement was reached. Some have called it a "failure" because the final text, arguably, did not go far enough in confirming that countries will do whatever they can to keep global warming to below 1.5 °C.

This was a key promise of the Paris climate agreement in 2015. Data from the UN now shows that, if every country does what it has promised to do on reducing emissions, the world will heat by 2.4 °C.

Those pushing the failure narrative have tended to be leaders, advisors and commentators from the global North — people arguably in need of great introspection. The climate crisis is almost entirely a product of these same rich countries, with the USA and the EU (which negotiates as a block in climate negotiations) continuing to be the world's worst two polluters, followed by China.

At the conference, much was said by leaders such as John Kerry, Frans Timmermans and Alok Sharma on the need to keep the 1.5°C target "alive". These are people used to controlling the narrative at climate negotiations. And much of what they said was targeted at domestic audiences. It was echoed in media, with, for example, *The Guardian's* environment editor writing that the temperature target "died at COP27".

The argument, implicitly, is that the West tried to put the focus on reducing emissions and that the rest of the world failed all of us by focusing on other priorities. But for other, primarily global South climate justice activists, COP27 was a historic win. For the first time, their demands that polluters pay for the damage done by the climate crisis – called "loss and damage" in negotiations – made it onto the agenda. And ended with an agreement to create a fund.

The agreement to establish the fund is what negotiators consider an *acquis* (that

which has been acquired) that unlocks the door to the next step of the negotiations. At previous summits, this key ask from the global South has been downplayed. Rich countries have instead steered the focus to reducing carbon emissions, reducing the risk that they will have to take responsibility for their actions.

Before Egypt, the European Union and United States went on the record to say they refused to even entertain the idea of such a fund.

They kept this up throughout much of the negotiations, actively undermining discussions and at one point tabling their own proposal, aimed at splitting the G77 group of countries, which represents the interests of those who are vulnerable to climate change and have done little to contribute to emissions.

They caved at the very last moment, forcing the maximum concessions. One of these was the inclusion of a sentence noting that a loss and damage fund would be for “developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change”.

This is in part because China, despite being the third biggest carbon polluter in history after the USA and the EU, is still classed as a developing country in climate negotiations. But that sentence excludes many African countries, who are not in the two climate negotiating blocks that are considered particularly vulnerable — the V20 and Least Developed Countries.

The Africa Group, and the wider G77 group of countries, will have their unity and cohesion put to the test thanks to this possible definition. But developing

countries now have a foot in the door.

Despite their narrative that the fault lies elsewhere, the global North countries continue doing more than their fair share of pollution. According to nonprofit group Climate Action Tracker, neither the EU nor the USA are on track to do what they would need to do to keep global warming below 1.5 °C, despite the resources at their disposal.

Just hours after COP closed, France’s President Emmanuel Macron emphasised the need to “help emerging economies transition from coal” (not oil and gas because Europe needs those fossil fuels). A closer read of the COP concluding remarks of the US’s Kerry indicates that his focus is also on coal. This is not surprising.

Between 2023 and 2025, that country is projected to lead oil and gas expansion. The UK is no different.

While the agreement to establish the loss and damage fund has captured much attention, it should not distract from the need of high emitters to address current consumption patterns, which, if not adequately mitigated, will continue to put our planet at risk and subsequently make loss and damage funding alone inadequate to address the plight of the world.

Enough with COP’s posturing. Now is the time for accountability. ■

Faten Aggad works for the African Climate Foundation and was at COP27. The Foundation funds part of The Continent’s journalism. It has no say in editorial decisions.

Malawi

IMF lifeline just in time to delay the inevitable

Every dollar counts – but even so, this is little more than temporary relief

Josephine Chinele in Blantyre

On Monday, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a loan of \$88.3-million for Malawi to address its food crisis. Hunger, or the risk of it, has doubled since 2021 – one in five Malawians will suffer acute food insecurity between October 2022 and March 2023.

The loan is the first to be made under the IMF's Food Shock Window programme, which seeks to provide emergency funding to countries suffering from an acute cost of living crisis. South Sudan and Guinea are seeking loans of \$112-million and \$69-million respectively from the same facility.

Taurai Banda, the spokesperson for Malawi's finance ministry, told *The Continent* that the loan "will definitely

address some of our food deficit".

But Malawi's economic problems run a lot deeper and analysts outside of government are less enthused. Hopkins Kawaye, an economics lecturer at the Catholic University of Malawi, worries that the loan money "may last for two to three months and things could become worse."

John Kapito, executive director of the Consumer Association of Malawi, has the same fear. "The amount is not that substantive considering our challenges. We hope that other donors as well would come in and top up on this."

But more loans, or grants, won't solve the country's structural problems that lead Malawi to import more than it exports. "This is a long-standing issue which we have been concealing with borrowed money," Kawaye says. Malawi, he says, must produce more for the international market. Doing that means more public investment in research and development, to build the parts of the economy that create goods and services that can be sold.

The IMF loan might do the opposite. An IMF spokesperson told *The Continent* that under the agreement Malawi must "enforce fiscal discipline", among other things. In IMF speak, fiscal discipline often looks like austerity measures – and not public investment in risky but potentially high-yield areas. ■

Want expert commentary on the football? Ask a woman.

The men's World Cup has kicked off in Qatar. Aside from the players, another group of individuals is in the spotlight: the commentators and pundits. For years, this space – like the pitch itself – has been dominated by men. But things are changing fast.

Samira Sawlani

Suo Chapele remembers the moment she became hooked on football. Nigeria were playing Bulgaria in the group stages of the 1994 World Cup. A crowd had gathered around a television set in her home town of Warri. Her brother lifted her onto his shoulders so that she could see the screen. When Rashid Yakini scored the first goal for the Super Eagles, everyone went crazy. From then on, all she ever wanted was to talk about football.

Now she does it professionally. During the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, Chapele – aka Chief Suo – will be commentating on the games in Pidgin for South African broadcaster SuperSport. She's one of a growing number of African women staking their claim to the beautiful game – but getting here has not always been easy, and she has had to put up with plenty of hostility and discrimination along the way.

“You know that some guys will want to make you feel like you don't know



Mic drop: Chief Suo's Pidgin commentary is on point, on the ball and on the radio.

the sport, or push for sexual favours in return for offering more time on the mic,” Chapele told *The Continent*. But growing up with 11 brothers means she knows how to “be comfortable in spaces I am not supposed to be comfortable in”.

Usher Komugisha, an award-winning journalist from Uganda, is in Qatar, where she is covering the tournament for local broadcaster Al Jazeera. Komugisha was obsessed with sport as a child, trying her hand at golf, netball, cycling, track and



Fieldside: Usher Komugisha is in Qatar covering the World Cup for Al Jazeera.

field, and basketball (even representing Uganda at the East African Secondary School Games). “When I found boys riding bicycles, I was in on the competition and my target was to beat them,” she said.

A radio gig talking basketball in 1998 has turned into a career in sports journalism. “I want to tell these stories to the world from an African perspective. Often, the continent is misrepresented; I am playing a part to change that.”

Not everyone has welcomed a woman taking such a prominent role covering what is often considered to be “a man’s game”. Just prior to launching a football-focused TV show in 2018, the show, with Komugisha’s involvement, was dismissed by a critic as “one of those gender balance shows with one female who knows nothing about sports”.

Later, after actually watching the show, the same critic apologised, and agreed that Komugisha really knows her stuff.

Also in Qatar this year is Juliet Bawuah, who earlier this month was crowned sports journalist of the year at the Ghana Journalists Association Awards. She developed a love for sport from an early age, especially football. “I often went to the stadium with an uncle of mine, we saw local league games together and the passion grew from there.”

She studied journalism at university, and has gone on to work for some of the biggest broadcasters in Ghana, the continent and the world. In Qatar, Bawuah will be paying special attention to the progress of the Black Stars – and soaking up the atmosphere. “When you know you are going to cover a game you get all your notes together and rehearse in advance of match day. The atmosphere on match day in the media box is lively, there is an intensity and speed.”

Her progress has not always been easy, but she trusted in her talent and hard work. “If the work is good, any bias becomes insignificant,” said Bawuah.

That said, she is doing what she can to make things easier for the next generation: the African Women’s Sports Summit, which she founded, seeks to foster greater inclusion for women in the African sports scene. Its third annual event took place in Accra this July.

Such spaces help African women in sport to support each other – and cement their gains. “As a woman in this field you don’t have the luxury to mess up, you always have to conquer things, because there is always someone wanting to undermine you and make you feel like you don’t know it,” said Chapele. ■

It's not racist to criticise the way workers in Qatar are treated

I know. I was a migrant worker in Doha, and I saw the labour abuses myself

Geoffrey Otieno

As the World Cup rolls on, criticism has continued to grow around Qatar's poor treatment of migrant workers – including those used to build the tournament stadiums. The Gulf Kingdom has dismissed this criticism as “racism”, and tried to shift the blame to Europe for its colonial past.

As a black African worker who made the 2022 World Cup possible, nothing – including the abuses to which I was subjected, and those that I witnessed – has been more infuriating. We are being gaslit by an entire government.

When I had an opportunity to go and work in Qatar, I was excited. Like every migrant worker there, I went to Qatar with the hope of bettering my life. I worked on the stadiums, including the Lusail Stadium, which will host the final. But my job as a safety officer was

little more than a formality. Despite all the plans on paper, in reality, incidents occurred again and again.

I would receive hundreds of distressed calls from workers. The suffering I witnessed was great: some workers lost limbs; some had to flee their employers, placing in danger not only their residency statuses but their lives. Some of these incidents were addressed. But the biggest challenge was the fear placed on workers by state authorities and by companies.

We African workers were continuously treated as less-than. An African worker would be assigned as a helper and another foreign worker a technician. If the African worker performed the duties of a technician, he still remained a helper on paper, the discrimination was so open. The idea that the same set of skills should equate to the same salary, no matter a person's background, just did not exist.

In 2020 my company terminated me



Tarnished tournament: Qatar's World Cup Stadiums, including the Lusail Stadium, were built by exploiting migrant labour Photo: Qatar 2022

for advocating for others. The termination meant deportation for me to Kenya. I was worried. I was scared. I was anxious thinking about my family and my safety. And if deportation was not enough, I was banned from the country for a set period.

In Qatar, migrant workers are an expendable commodity. At least 95% of the jobs for the World Cup have been carried out by people such as myself, who are not considered important enough to be in the country during the tournament.

Systemic abuses

New research published this week by Equidem, a human rights research organisation for whom I am the lead investigator, highlights the pattern underlying individual cases of abuse.

Kenyan and Ugandan workers interviewed for the study described worker deaths on construction sites, wage theft, nationality-based discrimination, illegal recruitment fees, understaffing and overwork, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, occupational health and safety risks, and exposure to Covid-19.

This pattern of abusive working conditions is not isolated. Rather, these cases are indicative of business as usual. And, of course, it is not just Qatar that is profiting from these abuses: EU-based corporations have made massive profits in the construction and hospitality sectors linked to the World Cup in Qatar, often at the expense of African workers. The activities of these brands have increased the risk of exploitation, discrimination, and forced labour for African and other migrant workers.

So yes, Europe does have its own case to answer – but that does not give Qatar a free pass.

Instead of paying us what we are due and providing us with remedy funds for the harms we have experienced, Qatar continues to channel money to silence our voices.

The government of Qatar could have paid workers and their families the billions they are owed by now, and had money left over to support the establishment of a genuinely independent Migrant Worker Centre. Instead, it has funneled cash into a glitzy public relations campaigns that dismisses all criticism of genuine human rights abuses as anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hate.

To add insult to injury, Fifa tells the world to focus on the game. Its president, Gianni Infantino, went so far as to say that he feels like a migrant worker, after having been subjected to legitimate criticism. This outrageous claim is nothing more than verbal blackface.

Instead of giving us hope, Qatar has only given us despair. Instead of justice, we have dealt with crippling depression and mental health challenges.

So no, it is not racist to criticise Qatar's treatment of migrant workers – it is the truth. And if people want to truly support the workers, they'll shine a light on Qatar's bold lies each and every single time they repeat them. ■

Geoffrey Otieno was a migrant worker safety inspector at stadium construction sites ahead of the World Cup in Qatar. He is now an investigator for Equidem.



Divine intervention: Bishop Manyange Chenjerai sings his prayers to the Domboshawa mountains outside Harare

ESSAY

At the dawn of the New Zimbabwe, and the death of hope

This week marks the fifth anniversary of the fall of Robert Mugabe. Things have not gone according to plan.

Words by Zoë Flood and photos by Nichole Sobecki/VII

Within moments of the messages – “He’s gone” – a colleague and I were rushing at speed through the jacaranda-lined Avenues area of Zimbabwe’s capital Harare to get to the city centre.

Or trying to, at least.

Like many cars in Zimbabwe – battered by decades of economic hardship

– the ageing flatbed Mazda truck I had borrowed had a clutch issue, so I bunny-hopped us through various sets of non-functioning traffic lights, fellow drivers already tentatively sounding their horns.

Could it actually be true? Could the drama of the past week, and the past 37 years, actually be coming to an end?



(Above) Monolith:
The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe building dominates Harare's skyline



(Left) Branch support:
A supporter watches the opposition party's closing campaign rally in Harare's Freedom Square on 28 July 2018

As we pulled over next to the armoured fighting vehicle that had been stationed for some days on the city's main intersection, next to the offices of the presidency and under the towering Reserve Bank building, a few dozen jubilant Zimbabweans had already gathered.

Most were dressed in office wear, their

sober ties and briefcases contrasting with their electric moods.

They were soon joined by a man with a neatly printed sign, declaring "Thank you ZDF [Zimbabwe Defence Forces] Yours Truly Zimbabwe", a nod to the "military-assisted transition" that was definitely not a coup.

And soon after that many thousands

more in full, ecstatic voice were pouring out onto the streets, as a typically beautiful Harare sunset laid Robert Mugabe's multi-decade rule – once celebrated, then frightening, tyrannical, and controversial to the end – to rest.

“This is more than I saw for independence,” said a shop owner who had invited us onto his roof above the intersection, gesturing at the vibrating crowds below.

But beneath the celebrations of Zimbabwe's “second independence” and of being “free at last” – phrases I heard widely that night – and beyond the hangovers and the beer bottles strewn around the wheels of the parked Mazda that I was only able to crunchingly extricate after midnight, the question of “what next?” was already bubbling.

Would the feared securocrat, who had finally managed to engineer his long-standing superior and ally out of

the prime position, bring desperately needed change? Would Zimbabwe's “New Dispensation” be just that?

Five years to the week since happy, hopeful Zimbabweans thronged the country's streets, the verdict on Mugabe's prodigal son, and his political assassin, is harsh.

Zimbabwe under Emmerson Mnangagwa – who promised not long after Mugabe's ouster that the country was “open for business” – remains plagued by an ever-devaluing local currency and the absence of basic, reliable essential services, especially for the poor.

Businesses continue to struggle, with inflation once again hitting record-breaking highs.

Health care workers are leaving the country in droves, incidents of the detention of political opponents are rising – opposition legislator Job Sikhala has been repeatedly denied bail and spent



**New dawn:
Voters
queue at
a polling
station in
Mbare in
July 2018**



more than 160 days behind bars this year – and press freedom is again under threat.

Whispers of “better under Mugabe” can sometimes be heard as even well-educated professionals are bailed out by relatives and friends in the economically powerful, politically disenfranchised diaspora. Medical emergencies – visible

through the endless, desperate fundraisers that often circulate – reveal how close to catastrophe some are forced to live.

But for eight months after Mugabe’s fall, I saw many Zimbabweans allow themselves to believe. To believe that, this time, change was going to come. That the country would re-enter the international



(Above) Detained:
Protesters sit in the back of a police vehicle after the 2018 election

(Left) Silenced:
Riot Police prepare to shut down an opposition press conference



Stepping out: A dance troupe practices in an abandoned lot in Bulawayo.

community. That investors would pour in, the economy would recover fully, and the doors to opportunity seen in the country in the 1980s and 1990s would once more swing open.

It was a heady time, one that crackled with possibility and, above all, hope.

Citizens who had long steered clear of politics felt inspired to stand for office, while political events were filled with energy. International media reported freely. Businesspeople and former regime opponents tentatively investigated opportunities, while Mnangagwa – as interim president and now-leader of Mugabe’s Zanu-PF party – and his representatives did the international rounds.

Some people I spoke to during those months urged caution – especially those who witnessed past Zanu-PF violence first-hand. “I can’t celebrate this, it’s not going to be good,” a local journalist told me the day after Mugabe’s resignation.

When there is no choice, no alternative, hope is a comfort that allows you to keep

going. It’s a familiar rush for many in Zimbabwe, one that usually ends with a post-election disappointment. But for those fed up with decades of the status quo, the siren song of hope – combined with the New Dispensation’s promises of change – was impossibly alluring.

Built up in days, that hope came crashing down as quickly. On 1 August 2018, security forces indiscriminately fired upon mostly peaceful demonstrators protesting the delayed release of election results, killing six civilians and injuring dozens. Forty-eight hours later, Mnangagwa was declared winner of the presidential election, sneaking victory in the first round by a razor-thin margin.

Business as usual, Zimbabweans shrugged angrily, going back to theirs. ■

Zoë Flood and Nichole Sobecki’s reporting in Zimbabwe was supported by the International Women’s Media Foundation’s Howard G Buffett Fund For Women Journalists

Is domestic violence a private matter?

A woman dies every 11 minutes at the hands of an intimate partner or family member, UN Women tells us. One in four women has suffered intimate partner violence. A majority of women who experience violence don't seek help of any kind; among those who do, fewer than 10% go to the police.

So here's a question for International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November): Is domestic violence a private matter that should be resolved within the family, or is it a criminal matter that should involve law enforcement?

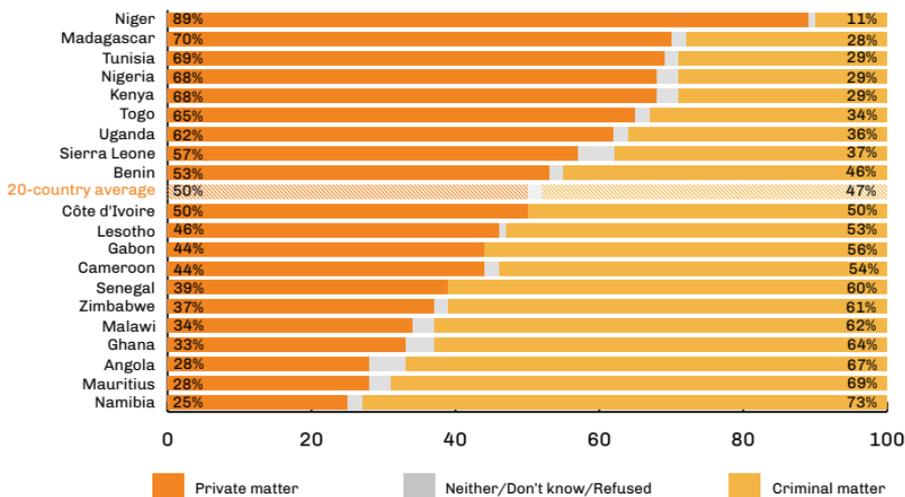
Afrobarometer asked citizens in 20

African countries, and their responses are almost evenly split: 50% say private, 47% criminal. Even among women, only a slim majority (52%, vs. 43% of men) see domestic violence as a criminal matter.

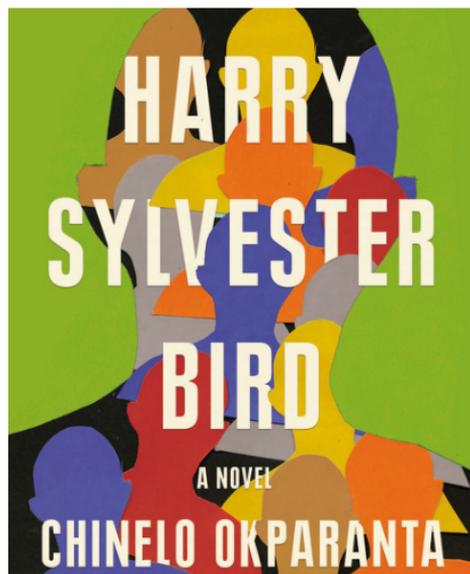
But views depend on where you are. In Niger, nine in 10 adults (89%) say domestic violence is a private matter. This is shared by over two thirds of respondents in Madagascar (70%), Tunisia (69%), Nigeria (68%) and Kenya (68%).

At the other end of the spectrum, large majorities consider domestic violence a criminal matter in Namibia (73%), Mauritius (69%), Angola (67%), and Ghana (64%).

Domestic violence: A private or criminal matter? | 20 African countries | 2021/2022



Source: Afrobarometer, 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.



A dark satire on race and appropriation

A white American begins identifying as a Black African. Let's just say we have ... questions.

Jacqueline Nyathi

Chinelo Okparanta's *Harry Sylvester Bird* is the oddest book I've read in a while. It opens with Harry going on safari with his parents to the Serengeti. Harry's mom is a distant germophobe who won't let her son touch her. His father is a racist

buffoon who seems to enjoy unsettling those around him. They fight constantly, and neglect their son, even forgetting to feed him.

The first third of the book reads like satire, with outlandishly cartoonish characters and stodgy writing. In Tanzania, the camp manager, described as "the darkest man", treats Harry with kindness, triggering Harry's body dysmorphia, making him identify very strongly with Black people, and begin to reject his whiteness. He inexplicably calls Harry "G-Dawg", a name he adopts.

The book takes off when G-Dawg goes to college, where he meets a wonderful Nigerian woman, Maryam. Secretly, G-Dawg, who now sees himself as Black, has also joined something called Transracial-Anon. This section of the book locates G-Dawg in the real world, and starts to show the consequences of his self-image, and its effect on other people.

While Harry is a sympathetic character, the way the book deals with race feels clumsy. It doesn't help that the first-person narration clouds the narrative, as Harry is completely without insight. It is unsettling.

As is the nature of Transracial-Anon. Why is their goal to change one's race rather than to treat one's dysmorphia? And why does Maryam even like G-Dawg? And what happens to his parents?

Harry Sylvester Bird has received many positive reviews elsewhere. It certainly gives us plenty to think about – even if it leaves us a little uneasy. ■

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

"Dave Matthews? My ethnomusicology studies are finally paying off!"



1_ Manovo-Gounda St Floris National Park (pictured) is a Unesco World Heritage Site in which country?

2_ What is the capital city of Enugu State, Nigeria?

3_ Which country was known as Portuguese Guinea, the Overseas Province of Guinea and State of Guinea before its independence in 1974?

4_ In last week's elections, was President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo seeking a sixth seven-year term or a seventh six-year term?

5_ In which country was

Dave Matthews, the lead singer of the Dave Matthews Band, born?

6_ Timothy Weah scored the first goal for the United States at the men's World Cup. His father is which country's president?

7_ Who is the only African player to win the Ballon d'Or?

8_ The International Monetary Fund approved a loan for \$88.3-million for which country this week?

9_ What is the demonym for people from Mauritius?

10_ A black monkey orange is: a) an animal b) a tree or c) a fruit?

HOW DID I DO?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

Absolute power cuts



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

This week's column comes to you from Nairobi, where the weather is gloomy and a power cut across parts of the country is feeling decidedly doomy – to the point where we're not entirely sure whether this week's Drift will even reach you, dear reader.

If it does, please know your correspondent has leapt through fiery hoops to make it happen, racing against a dying battery's clock, going ungently into the dying of the light, bravely raging against the prospect of a night without her telenovelas and South African soapies to keep her company.

It is times like this where one can almost understand why some of our favourite presidents have chosen the path they're on, and why our long standing leaders remain in office for as long as they do. Is a power cut ever of consequence to them? Do they not fall asleep to the hum of a generator? Are they always safely up to date on who Maria Clara is dating and if Carlos knows that only one of the twins Valentina gave birth to is actually his?

But we do not begrudge them this privilege, for they too work hard, almost

as hard as some of the power companies on the continent.

Of course a power cut does not mean we don't have access to our favourite show of all time – *Keeping Up With The Coupdashions*. This week things kicked off in Mali, where the junta announced that all NGOs and humanitarian aid organisations that receive “funding, or material or technical support from France” would be banned forthwith.

This decision came after France said it was opting out of sending public development aid to Mali, accusing the junta of being BFFs with Wagner mercenaries from Russia. This prompted said junta to accuse Paris of using “dehumanising aid” as a way of “blackmailing rulers”.

French president Emmanuel Macron has himself been pretty chatty this week, attending a summit in Tunisia for French-speaking countries, and his comments have left us wondering if, like Nairobi, the lights aren't all on at chez Macron.

The French prez got all up in his feelings, lamenting that in North African countries French was at risk of no longer being the, uh, lingua franca. French, he declared, was “the true African language”.

Whut?

Remind us, Manny, how French came to Africa in the first place? What was that little chapter in history called again? He also accused certain “powers” who want

to spread their influence in Africa to “hurt France” and described Russia’s role in some African countries as “predatory”. (That tinkling sound you hear is probably a stone smashing into a very expensive glass house. Or maybe even the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles?)

While some may be in denial over colonialism, others are ensuring it is not forgotten. This week authorities in Namibia removed the statue of German colonial official Curt von François, long considered a symbol of colonialism, which stood in the city of Windhoek. Isn’t it time all statues and street names commemorating coloniser bosses be removed – and looted artefacts returned?

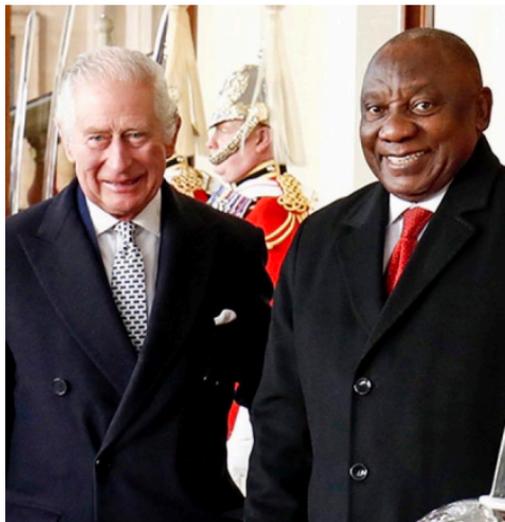
Grin and barely notice it

Was that a dig at South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa? Surely not! Why would anyone want to rain on the parade thrown for him by Britain’s King Charles III and his assorted chums. Cyril was having the time of his life!

How churlish would we have to be to remind him to ask his fancy new friend to give back “The Star of Africa” – aka the biggest diamond ever found – that his great-granddad pocketed in 1907.

It will just have to be added to Cyril’s To-Don’t list, next to sorting out unemployment, loadshedding, and the imperceptibility of South Africa’s economic growth.

Still, we hope he was enjoying the complimentary tea and scones at his HeirBnB while South Africa’s crime stats were being released back home. The data showed that between July and



The King & Eish: Charles III of Britain and Cyril, first of his name, of South Africa.

September, 989 women were murdered in the country, over 10,000 rape cases were opened and, most horrifying, 83 rape cases occurred at educational facilities. But look at that smile! There’s a chap who knows not to sweat the small stuff.

No Weah knowhow

Also having a blast this week was Liberia’s George Weah, the Dora the Explorer of African presidents.

Weah was in Qatar, and got to see his son Tim score a goal for the USA in their opening World Cup game. Weah shared a photo of himself with Tim and added the caption “Proud daddy”.

Not everyone was impressed, with some questioning why young Tim was playing for the US – and wondering where Liberia’s own football side was.

If only there was someone in charge who knew anything about the game. ■

Food shortages and GMO imports spark controversy in Kenya

Darmi Jattani and Oscar Ochieng

The global disruptions of the past few years – Covid-19, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the climate crisis – have negatively impacted food supplies. This is particularly true in East Africa, where over 2-million children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition. For its part, Kenya is ranked 94 out of 121 countries in the 2022 global hunger index.

Against this backdrop, you might have thought that an announcement that the government was to import 10-million bags of duty-free maize would be welcomed with open arms. But you would be wrong.

There are two main reasons that Kenyans are up in arms. The first is that farmers argue there is maize in the country the government has not purchased, and say that they should have been favoured over foreign producers. The second is that the maize is genetically modified, reflecting a longer-term government plan to legalise and introduce genetically modified seeds.

Many critics of the move have argued that Kenya should not be importing food products that are banned in European countries such as Denmark and France.

It is easy to see why the government believes urgent and unprecedented action is necessary. In February 2022, 3.1-million Kenyans were already food insecure, while in May, 10 counties were reported to be in a state of food crisis and a further 13 in a state of food distress. This forced the government to begin a distribution programme in 23 drought-stricken counties. Now, along with GMO imports and seeds, President William Ruto has pledged to introduce a fertiliser subsidy.

While these moves are understandable, it is essential that government policies are sustainable and have the country's long-term interests at heart. This is not the case when it comes to GMO and fertiliser subsidies, which are expensive and often manipulated to benefit the wealthiest producers.

Instead, Kenya needs a long-term plan for how it is going to manage the impact of climate change and population growth – and it needs to start implementing this plan now. ■

Darmi Jattani is an economist and Oscar

Ochieng is a communications practitioner in Kenya. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa



The Big Picture

Photo: Samir Bol/AFP

Branching out: New members of the South Sudan Police Service, armed with wooden rifles and sticks, attend their graduation ceremony in Malakal, the capital of Upper Nile State along the White Nile River. About 9,000 people, including former soldiers of rebels in South Sudan's civil war, have been integrated into the country's unified security forces after more than three years of training.



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