

# The Continent



## The great Algerian sheep shortage

ILLUSTRATION: WYNONA MUTISI



**COVER** It is Eid al-Adha, the Islamic festival of sacrifice – but in Algeria, sacrificial lambs are in short supply. That is because years of drought have decimated the country's sheep herds. To keep religious traditions alive, the government is importing sheep from Spain and Romania, but even these are being carefully rationed through lotteries and raffles. Morocco has taken a different approach. (p16)

# Inside

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**Photos:** This season in our pages, seven photographers will each share their unique view of the African city they call home in a limited series called *We Built This City*. This week, we travel to Napata in Sudan, where a displaced photographer is finding community. We'd also love to hear from you. What would you like us to explore about your city? Send your ideas to [photos@thecontinent.org](mailto:photos@thecontinent.org)

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# THE WEEK IN BRIEF



PHOTO: GIANLUIGI GUERIO/AFIP

**Bow out:** The late Edgar Lungu was president of Zambia from 2015 to 2021.

## ZAMBIA

### Ex-president Lungu dies in South Africa

Former President Edgar Lungu has died at the age of 68, following specialised treatment in South Africa for an undisclosed illness. Lungu, who was president for six years from 2015, lost the 2021 election to the incumbent president, Hakainde Hichilema, by close to a million votes. Last year, the Zambian Constitutional Court barred him from vying again, ruling that he had already served the maximum two terms allowed by law. The court counted the 20 months Lungu served after his predecessor Michael Sata died in office as the first term.

## FOSSIL FUTURES

### Big Oil admits to beguiling kids

Norway's state energy company, Equinor, has admitted to funding a computer game aimed at UK school children which promotes the idea that fossil fuels are part of a green energy mix, *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism* reports. A web page promoting the game stated that it aligned with the company's work to "build future talent pipelines ... at a time of sensitivity around fossil fuels."

## DR CONGO

### News media blackout on ex-leader Joseph Kabila

The government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) will suspend the licences of media houses if they report on former president Joseph Kabila. So said the head of the country's communications regulator, according to *Africanews*. Congolese authorities accuse Kabila of supporting the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels who seized Goma and Bukavu in the country's east and now run parallel administrations in the two cities. Kabila recently returned to the DRC from exile in South Africa, choosing to live in occupied Goma.





**Psychogram:** Two East African activists deported from Tanzania say that security recorded their torture and mocked them, telling them to “thank Samia”

CÔTE D’IVOIRE

Search for contraband spirals into bloodbath

Five inmates at a prison in Bouaké were killed when a routine search for contraband turned into a violent clash, the *Associated Press* reports. Public prosecutor Abel Nangbelé Yeo said prisoners in Bouaké reacted with “hostility” to the search but didn’t provide details on how they were killed. Twenty-nine people, including both officers and prisoners, were injured. Officers claim that they seized blocks of cannabis, Tramadol tablets, mobile phones and three grenades in the search.

LIBYA

Scores of bodies found in black ops militia’s HQ

More than 70 dead bodies have been discovered at sites linked to the Stabilization Support Apparatus, a recently disbanded militia that said it was affiliated with Libya’s Presidential Council and claimed to have helped to stabilise security in Tripoli. The UN suspected that it was involved in forced disappearances and torture. Following its disbandment, 10 charred bodies were found at its headquarters and 67 more in fridges at two hospitals. A burial site was found in the Tripoli Zoo, which the militia ran.



## MALI

## Goïta: Dammer wrong to damn us for debt

Mali owes over \$94-million to Sogem, the electricity company that manages the Manantali dam supplying power to Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania. The dam sells more than half of its 200MW output to Mali. Sogem says that the debt is now a “life or death” threat to its operations. Assimi Goïta’s interim government acknowledges the debt – most of which was incurred last year – but told *Reuters* that it accumulated because money had to be spent on costly alternatives such as renting generators when Sogem failed to meet expected power production levels.

## SUDAN

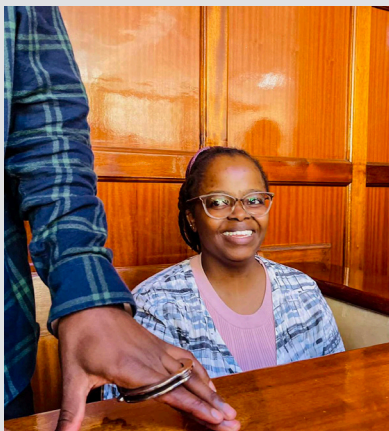
## New PM dissolves caretaker government

On Sunday, his second day on the job, Sudan’s Prime Minister Kamil Idris, who was appointed by the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), dismissed the country’s caretaker government. He has not yet named a new cabinet. Idris said he will “treat all political and national actors equally and stand at equal distance from all”. He has nevertheless referred to the campaign by the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group, which has fought SAF for control of the country since April 2023, as “criminal operations”.

## KENYA

## State locks Rose down for helping citizens rise up

Kenyans are once again at odds with their government over the detention of software developer Rose Njeri, who created a tool to help people parse and react to the 2025 Finance Bill. Arrested on Friday after a police raid, Njeri was released on bail on Tuesday, and ordered to return to court on 20 June. Her website highlighted clauses in the bill and allowed users to email Parliament. Law Society head Faith Odhiambo told the *BBC* Njeri’s arrest is a sign of growing government repression.



## FRANCE

## Police probe terror motive in attack

French anti-terror prosecutors are investigating a suspected racist terror attack after a man fatally shot his Tunisian neighbour and wounded a Turkish national in Puget-sur-Argens. The suspect, a French man, posted racist videos before and after the attack, and was arrested shortly afterwards. *Le Parisien* newspaper reports the man swore allegiance to the French flag and urged violence against foreigners. The attack follows the April killing of a Malian man, Aboubakar Cissé, in a mosque. Anti-discrimination NGO SOS Racisme condemned France's "poisonous climate" for hate crimes.

## EGYPT

## New desert city set to soak up Nile water

Egypt has announced plans to build Jirian City, a new desert development 42km west of downtown Cairo that will include homes for up to three million families, commercial areas, a marina, and a free economic zone. Water will be diverted from the River Nile to serve the city, which is part of the wider New Delta project to reclaim up to 2.5-million acres of desert land for agriculture and habitation by serving them with 7% of the country's annual Nile water quota.



PHOTO: OLYMPIA DE MAISMONT/AFP

*Mean streets: Increases in the cost of owning a pet in Nigeria have stoked abandonment rates.*

## NIGERIA

## Dramatic surge in pet abandonment as naira fall drives up care cost

Animal rights activists and shelters in Lagos say they're seeing a surge in abandoned dogs and cats as care costs soar. Pet food, medicine, and vet fees have more than doubled due to inflation and the naira's sharp fall against the dollar. Many owners can no longer afford to keep their animals. The chairman of St Mark's Animal Rescue Foundation told the *BBC* that about a dozen pets are now dropped at the centre each month – an unprecedented rate.

## NEWS

## NIGERIA

# Catastrophic rains in Mokwa send hundreds to their death

**HUSSAIN WAHAB IN MOKWA**

EID PREPARATIONS are all about going to the market – transporting animals, haggling, buying and selling. But disaster struck the major transit town of Mokwa in central Nigeria.

Mokwa serves as a key link between livestock traders and food producers in the north, with consumers in the south of the country. On 29 May, intense overnight rains triggered catastrophic floods that collapsed the key infrastructure, including the vital Mokwa bridge. A mosque where dozens had taken shelter overnight collapsed. Two key roads were also washed away.

With the ruined transport infrastructure, rescue efforts have been slow. Niger State's agency for emergencies initially reported that 159 individuals had died in the flooding. By 4 June, more than 200 were confirmed dead but that number could be as high as 700. The *BBC* reported that 500 were missing thought unlikely to still be alive.

More than 3,000 people are displaced; many are now living with relatives or crammed into overcrowded temporary shelters. Unicef said that over 250 homes

and businesses were destroyed, and more than 10,000 hectares of farmland ruined.

Fatima Goro, a student of Usmanu Danfodiyo University in Sokoto, had returned to Mokwa from school. She found her family home washed away. "It is so painful ... My education is in limbo," she told *The Continent*.

Local governor Umar Bago of Niger has cancelled all Eid-el-Kabir (or Eid al-Adha) activities in the state to mourn and honour the victims. President Bola Tinubu has declared a state of emergency and approved two-billion naira (about \$1.3-million) to help fund the crisis response.

The disaster has also disrupted trade as far south as 200km away in Oyo.

"The market is empty this sallah season. We can't travel to restock," said Yusuf Olusho, who sources animals from the north. "The market should be bustling with animals, but this year, they are scarce and costly."

Emergency officials and experts have blamed poor drainage systems, decaying infrastructure, and a lack of preparedness for the scale of destruction occasioned by the natural disaster. ■



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# SENEGAL

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## Grand Theft Aqua: Spoiling the sea, ruining lives

KIRI RUPIAH

A NEW GAS extraction plant off the coast of northern Senegal was intended to bring jobs and economic prosperity, but instead is hurting local livelihoods, the *Associated Press* reports.

The Grand Tortue Ahmeyim (GTA) project, a joint venture between British energy giant BP and US-based Kosmos Energy, began operations late last year. Located offshore from Senegal and Mauritania, the field could potentially produce 2.3-million tonnes of liquefied natural gas a year.

Amid a cost-of-living crisis, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye's government is betting on the oil industry to re-energise an economy that has relied on mining, fisheries, tourism and agriculture.

On the campaign trail last year, Faye promised to create an exclusive fishing zone for locals. But fishing communities say the GTA project is hurting them. A gas leak endangered a deep-water coral reef, campaign group Greenpeace told *AP*. The bright lights on the GTA platform are attracting marine life, but locals are not allowed to fish there.

Last year, the *AP* interviewed four

women who said they had been forced into sex work because their husbands, all fishermen, could no longer make a living after they had been barred from fishing in the fertile waters around the gas rig.

Even before the gas drilling began, the fishing industry was struggling. For years, foreign trawlers have been illegally fishing in Senegalese waters, forcing locals in small pirogues to venture farther out into the Atlantic.

The Institute for Security Studies estimates Senegal loses \$272-million a year to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. In 2021, Senegal was the second largest fish exporter in Africa. Most of that went to Europe.

But while Europe may want Senegal's fish, it does not want its people. As jobs dry up, more Senegalese turn to migration. In 2024, nearly 64,000 irregular migrants from West Africa reached Spain: double the 2022 figure.

According to the Environmental Justice Foundation, arrivals in the Canary Islands alone surged 200% in two years. Senegal is among the top three nationalities of arrivals to these islands. ■

# SUDAN

## Aid convoy hit in deadly strike

**Belligerents are still targeting food aid for destruction in the worst humanitarian disaster.**

TWO YEARS into the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), more than half of the country's population needs humanitarian support. Yet this week, one of the belligerents attacked a 15-truck food aid convoy heading to besieged El Fasher, setting the vehicles on fire, incinerating the food on board, and killing five United Nations workers, says a joint statement from Unicef and the World Food Programme. Several more people were injured.

The SAF claims that the RSF did it with "criminal drone attacks". In turn, the paramilitary group says the trucks were attacked in airstrikes by Sudan's army.

El Fasher, located more than 800km southwest of Khartoum, is the capital of North Darfur and the last major city in the region that the RSF has not overrun. For more than a year, the RSF has sought to wrest control of El Fasher from the army, launching regular attacks on the city and two major famine-hit camps for displaced people on its outskirts.

Prior to the current war, El Fasher had become home to hundreds of thousands of people who fled the earlier Darfur

genocide by the Janjaweed militia which later became RSF. El Fasher's population grew from 200,000 before that genocide to over 500,000 by 2009. Many of these people didn't return to the outlying areas. They are now at high risk of starvation, according to the UN.

The year-long siege initially triggered massive price inflation on the food that was in El Fasher and as the blockade went on, those supplies ran out, while new supplies were restricted by RSF presence along the routes into the town.

The UN estimates that three out of every five people living in Sudan need humanitarian support, the highest figure on record in the history of modern humanitarian responses, according to charity Concern Worldwide. It has increased by 23% in the last year. ■

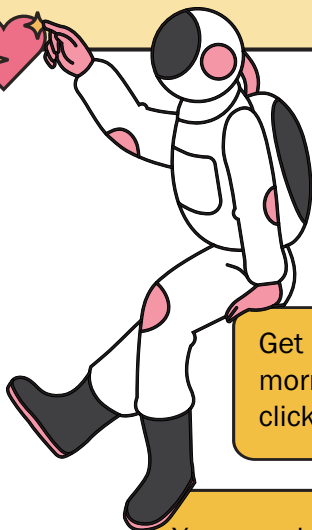


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# UNITED STATES

## Trump tax will cost some African senders 10% of remittance

LYDIA NAMUBIRU

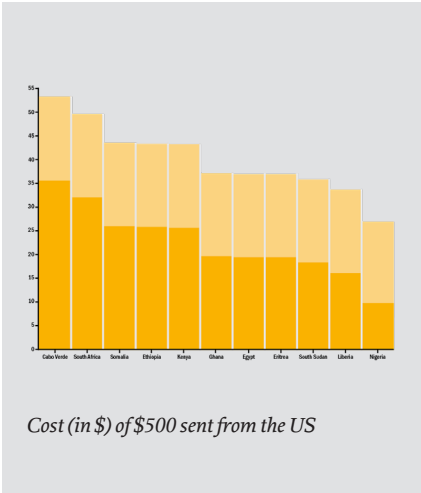
AMERICAN legislators passed President Donald Trump’s so-called “big beautiful bill” with a provision that non-citizens who send money out of the United States will pay a 3.5% tax on their remittances. New analysis by *The Continent* shows that in at least eight African countries, the tax will push transaction costs to 9% or more of the amount moved, especially for people sending and receiving small amounts.

The analysis is based on World Bank data on what it cost to send \$200 and \$500 from the US to several African countries between October and December 2024.

This tax rate goes against every goal that multilateral groups have been working towards on remittance costs. The United Nations has asked countries to reduce the cost of cross-border remittances to 3% of the amount sent. G20 countries initially agreed to work towards reducing it to 5% and later adopted the UN’s more ambitious goal.

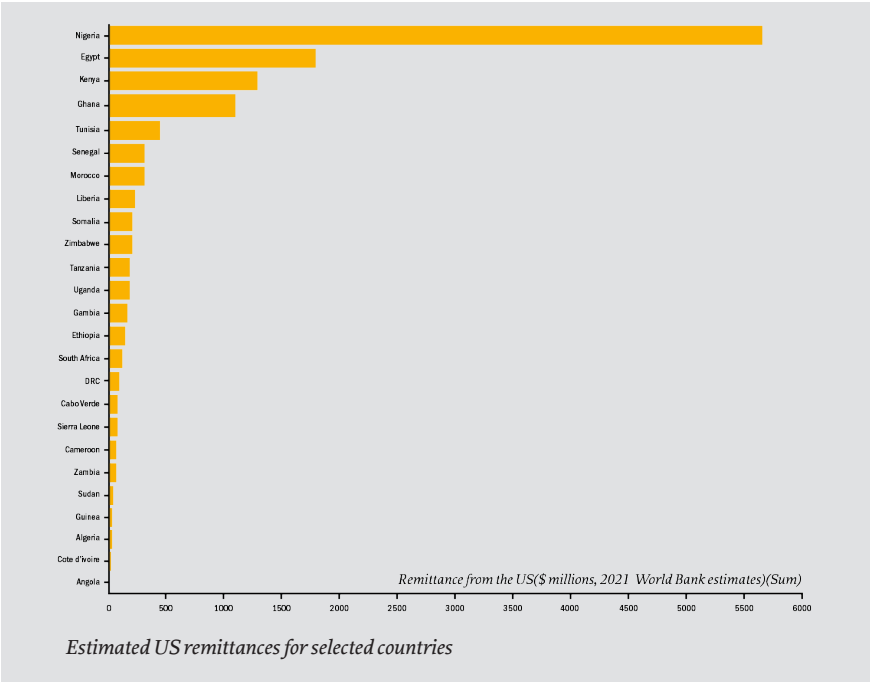
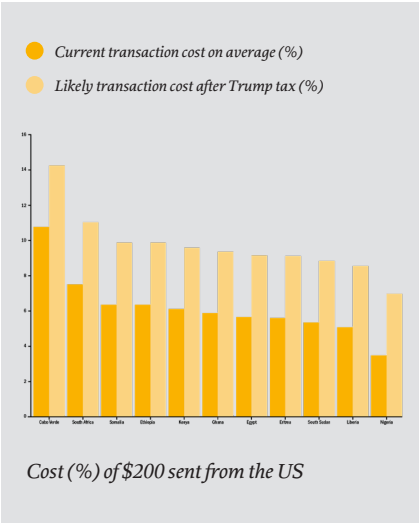
For Africa, this goal is important because remittances – which amounted to \$90-billion last year – are a crucial alternative to dwindling and top-down foreign aid (\$73-billion in 2023), and expensive loans. Yet, high transaction costs still form a kind of “African premium” even on this source of funding. According to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the average cost of sending remittances to Africa is 7.4%, even before the Trump tax kicks in.

But while all African countries benefit from remittances, the Trump tax will worry some more than others, depending on whether or not the



US is a significant source for them. Nigerians, who receive about \$6-billion in remittances from the US, will find that the Trump tax exceeds all other transaction costs – operator fees and exchange rate margins – even for an amount as low as \$500.

To add insult to injury, the Trump administration has included seven African countries among those whose citizens are banned from travelling to the US: Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, Somalia and Sudan. Citizens of Burundi, Sierra Leone and Togo will also face additional visa restrictions beginning on Monday. ■



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# ETHIOPIA

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## Doctors on strike, government on the attack

On average, doctors in Ethiopia earn just \$80 a month – a fraction of what their counterparts elsewhere in Africa take home. Now, doctors and healthcare workers are going on strike to demand better pay. But instead of negotiating, the government is locking them up.

SIYANNE MEKONNEN

OVER THE past two decades, Ethiopia's healthcare system has been radically transformed. The government has poured investment – and leveraged international development aid – into expanding access to basic services, with startling results.

As of 2019, 48% of births took place in a healthcare facility – up from just 5% in 2001. Over the same period, the percentage of children receiving basic vaccinations rose from 14% to 43%, according to the *Health Policy Plan* academic journal.

To support the expansion of its healthcare system, Ethiopia introduced a “flooding” policy to train tens of thousands of healthcare workers. It worked: the number of trained doctors in the country increased nearly tenfold in two decades from 1,936 (in 2003) to more than 18,400 (in 2023), according

to World Health Organisation data. The number of nurses and midwives increased at an even faster pace. The country's population grew too, but at a much lower pace, to less than double what it was then.

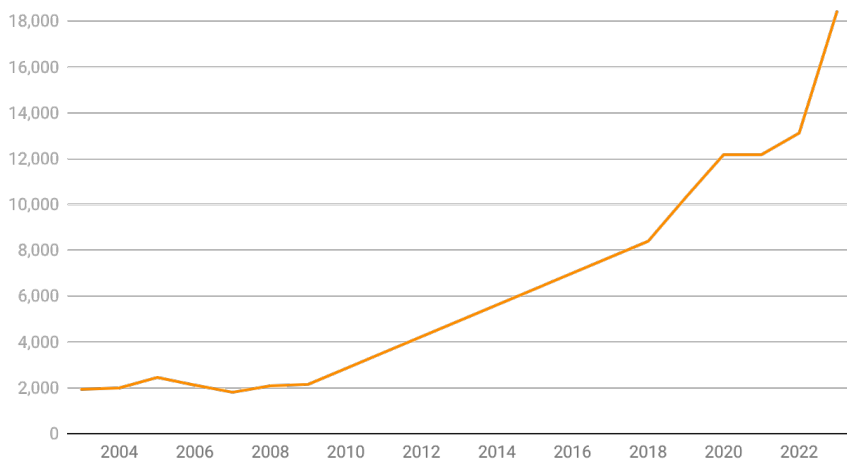
Ethiopia's story was “often seen as a model for primary care in low-income countries”, according to *Health Policy Plan*. But the “flooding” created a new problem: how would all these doctors, nurses and clinicians get paid?

Ethiopia's answer has been low wages. The national average salary for doctors in Ethiopia is just \$80 a month, according to Amnesty International. By comparison, doctors in Kenya are earning around \$1,600 a month, while their peers in South Africa usually bank more than double that.

With recent cost of living increases, the low wages have become untenable, Ethiopian doctors say. Earlier this month, across the country, they went



## Doctors in Ethiopia



Source: WHO Global Health Workforce Database • Created with Datawrapper

on strike to demand pay increases and better working conditions.

“Years of training, only to make \$85 a month, is why we went on a strike. This isn’t about politics, it is about survival,” one young doctor in Addis Ababa told *The Continent*.

“We are at a point where economic hardships are on the verge of killing us and our children,” said another.

Although the cost-of-living crisis is being felt across the country, the strike poses more fundamental questions about how the government values its health workforce. The health sector receives just 8.3% of the government budget (far below the 15% target set in the African Union’s Abuja Declaration).

A third-year resident at Hawassa University Comprehensive Specialized Hospital, who is also on strike,

said: “This all has revealed that the healthcare system is only symbolic. The government clearly doesn’t care about the patients and assumes that since a healthcare worker’s salary doesn’t last a month as it is, it’s a matter of time before we get back to work whether or not our grievances are addressed.”

**“We are at a point where economic hardships are on the verge of killing us and our children.”**

The health ministry warned that it would take legal measures against healthcare professionals who are participating in the ongoing strike. The state minister of health, Dr Dereje Duguma, did not respond to requests for comment.

The government is carrying out its threats: on 22 May, Amnesty International received a list of 121 professionals who have been arrested across the country since the strike began. The Ethiopian Federal Police Commission says it has detained and is investigating 47 healthcare professionals who it accused of staging “illegal strikes”, enticing others to disrupt healthcare, and endangering the lives of citizens.

Among the detainees was Yonatan Dagnew, the president of the Ethiopian Health Professionals Association, who was held by security forces in the Amhara region for several days.

“This should not have led to detention and could have been solved through discussions. We continue to ask for the release of our colleagues across the

country,” he told *The Continent*.

The situation is even worse in the Tigray region, which is still recovering from the brutal civil war between 2020 and 2022. Despite working on the front lines of a health system that was destroyed, doctors in this area were not paid for 17 months throughout the war – and remain underpaid compared to their colleagues in other areas.

One doctor from Tigray said: “Many of us have continued to serve under extreme pressure, through war, pandemic, and poverty. To continue working under current conditions would be professionally irresponsible and personally unsustainable. The emotional toll is significant. Many feel exhausted, ignored, and betrayed after years of sacrifice.” ■



‘Exhausted, ignored and betrayed’: Doctors on strike in Ethiopia in May.

PHOTO: LEULSEGED MAMI

## FEATURE



PHOTO: BILLEL BENSELEM/APP/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

# This Eid, Algeria is short on sheep to share

Years of drought have decimated Algeria's sheep population. Now, the country is having to rethink one of its most cherished religious traditions.

MADJID SERRAH IN ALGIERS

AT A DUSTY livestock outlet in Baba Ali, on the edge of Algiers, a group of men sit cross-legged beneath tall eucalyptus trees. They aren't protesting, nor escaping the midday sun. They're waiting for sheep.

"There's nothing here," one man says

with a chuckle. "But the air is nice, and we brought tuna and bread. Might as well make a picnic of it."

The men had been told that a shipment of imported rams would arrive overnight – part of Algeria's surprise solution to a nationwide shortage of sacrificial animals ahead of Eid al-Adha, the Muslim festival. But by midday the



following day, not a single sheep had shown up. Staff shrugged. No one knew when – or if – they would arrive.

This year, Algeria has imported a million sheep from Spain and Romania. It is the first time the government has had to import livestock on such a dramatic scale, thanks to the nationwide sheep shortage.

This has been caused by a perfect storm of high feed prices, a shrinking national herd and years of punishing drought. A hotter world means more extremes of this kind of weather.

By importing sheep from Europe, the government intended to make Eid affordable for struggling families – but the plan has exposed deeper cracks in the country's agricultural resilience.

Eid al-Adha, or Eid el-Kebir as it's known locally, is a sacred occasion when Muslim families – who make up a sweeping majority in Algeria – traditionally slaughter a sheep to commemorate Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his only son when God asked. But for many this year, the ritual has become a luxury.

The imports are being sold at around 40,000 dinars (US\$300), while local sheep now go for between 85,000 and 160,000 dinars. But supplies are limited, and chaos has followed.

### **'This isn't Eid'**

Across the country, at more than 800 designated outlets, queues stretch long into the day. In some places, customers have waited hours only to walk away empty-handed. In others, buyers allege

that bribes were demanded for access to the healthiest animals, or that better rams were reserved for "special lists".

In Oran, parliamentarian Kada Nejadi condemned what he called "widespread irregularities", claiming that some employees sold access slips for up to 5,000 dinars. "We've received numerous complaints," he wrote in a Facebook post, "and the system is being manipulated by those with no conscience."

To avoid a stampede, some municipalities have launched public lotteries. In one small town, just four imported rams were available — for a population of 4,000. Winners were announced via Facebook. In another, 130 sheep were raffled to over 600 residents. Authorities recorded the draws and posted the videos online. The spectacle sparked online mockery and memes, but also frustration.

"This isn't Eid," one man muttered as he turned away from a livestock centre. "It's bingo."

A few blocks away, a private seller offered locally bred sheep, some weighing more than 100kg – for triple the government's price. Asked why, he was blunt: "Feed is expensive. You want big sheep, you pay big money."

Then he turned to a customer who looked more serious.

Those who expressed disdain refused to share their names for fear of reprisal from the authorities.

### **'Temporary fix'**

The state's move to import rams has been championed by pro-government media.



**Buy ram/ewe:**  
A trader pulls a ram by its horns at a livestock market in Algiers ahead of Eid al-Adha, which began on Thursday evening.

PHOTO: AFP

The national news agency described it as “a major decision in favour of citizens’ purchasing power”. One newspaper even called it “a step toward dignity and food security”. Shipments of sheep arriving in ports like Annaba and Oran have been broadcast on evening news bulletins like state visits.

But beneath the headlines, the system appears overstretched – and Algerians know it.

“In theory, this plan helps the poor,” said Yazid Belkalem, head of the agriculture committee in the provincial council of Tizi-Ouzou. “But in practice, it’s just a temporary fix. We need deeper structural reforms – investment in local feed, livestock subsidies, and support for small-scale herders.”

He added: “We should also be looking at direct support to workers, like one-off cash grants for Eid. That would have a more immediate and lasting impact.”

Neighbouring Morocco, facing similar drought-driven livestock shortages, took a different approach. In February, King Mohammed VI made an unprecedented announcement: he called off the traditional Eid sacrifice for this year. The royal palace said the decision was made in solidarity with struggling citizens — and to preserve the nation’s livestock.

In Algeria, by contrast, the government chose to preserve the ritual, importing the sheep to keep it going.

Back at the sales point in Baba Ali, the atmosphere had turned quiet. The crowd had thinned. A few men lay on plastic mats in the shade, waiting for sheep that may or may not arrive.

“No one wants to skip Eid,” one man said. “But these days, it’s starting to feel like Eid is skipping us.” ■

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This piece is published in collaboration with Egab

## SERIES



## Napata, new home in ancient lands

**WORDS AND PHOTOS: MOGTABA KANARY**

KHARTOUM was once my home. Fleeing the horrors of war there, I sought refuge in the calm of a village whose people humbled us with their kindness and generosity, despite their modest means. What surprised me even more was that they knew me and my lineage, even though they had never seen me.

The journey of displacement became, for me, an exploratory adventure.

I was in an ancient capital of the Kingdom of Kush: a countryside that stretches from barren desert to

lush fields and orchards; from the enchanting Nile to the towering Jebel Barkal.

At first glance, the area's most famous feature, Jebel Barkal, appears to be just an ordinary natural formation. But after meeting friends connected to the field of archaeology, I came to understand the true value of this flat-topped butte with stunning views of the Nile and the desert. Located in northern Sudan, near the town of Karima, the small mountain is one of the most important archaeological landmarks in Sudan.

In both ancient Egyptian and

Kushite civilisations, Jebel Barkal was regarded as sacred. It was believed to be the birthplace of Amun, God of the Sun, King of all Gods. At its base lies the ruins of Napata city, an ancient religious and political centre whose temples and pyramids date back to the Kushite period. Unesco formally designated Jebel Barkal and Napata a World Heritage Site in 2003.

Napata was founded in the 15th century BC by Thutmose III, the fifth pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty of Egypt, making it the southernmost point of Egypt at the time. But political instability in ancient Egypt would lead the region to regain its autonomy, with the Kingdom of Kush founded in 1070 BC around Napata as the capital. Its Kushite elite even conquered the northern lands

to rule Egypt for nearly a century (744 to 656 BC) as its 25th Dynasty. All five pharaohs of this Nubian dynasty (also called the Black Pharaohs) are buried in the Nuri and El-Kurru pyramids, 10-20km away from Jebel Barkal.

At Jebel Barkal, archaeological excavation has continued since George Andrew Reisner started excavating in the early 20th century. One of the key activities in the current excavation project is to sift through the large mounds of soil and debris left behind by Reisner, which have negatively impacted the area's natural landscape.

From these mounds, archaeologists have uncovered several new artefacts that had been previously overlooked, including beads, arrowheads and nails, which were likely used in coffins. ■



















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

**➡ EMAIL US**

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

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DATA

# Trying to weather the storm

NOTICED a shift in the weather lately? You're not the only one. A majority of Africans across 30 countries surveyed in 2024/2025 say the past decade has seen more severe droughts (55%). A similar proportion (54%) say crop failures have intensified.

So this week, with World Environment Day (5 June) fresh in our minds, we're asking: How have these and other consequences of climate change affected lifestyles and livelihoods on the continent?

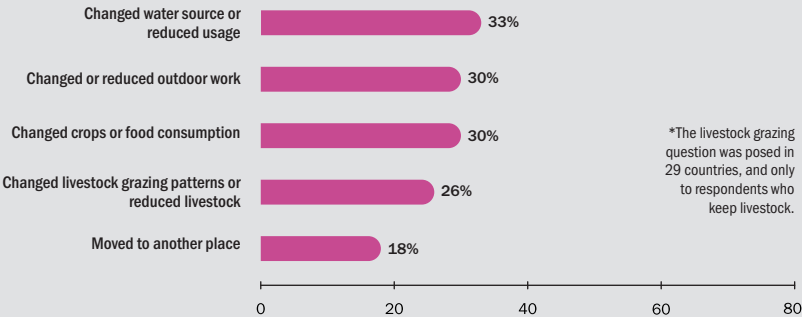
Asked about adaptations they and their families have had to make over the past five years, a third (33%)

of respondents say they switched their water source or cut their level of consumption.

Three in 10 say they adjusted outdoor workloads or schedules (30%) and altered their eating or crop-planting practices (30%). A quarter (26%) of those who keep livestock changed their grazing patterns or reduced their holdings. And nearly one in five (18%) physically moved homes.

Climate change has hit the poor particularly hard: On every metric, they are between 12 and 15 percentage points more likely than the rich to have been forced to adapt their ways. ■

Adaptations to climate change in past five years | 30\* African countries | 2024/2025



FEATURE



## What Ngũgĩ meant

Following the luminary Kenyan writer's death on 28 May, *Jacqueline Nyathi* asked global writers how they will remember him.

## **Zukiswa Wanner**

### ***South African journalist and novelist***

We were all fortunate to live at a time when Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was alive too. His activism on writing in African languages inspired many generations of writers. Like other writers who left us before him, he is not gone but lives on through the gift of his writing.

## **Bhakti Shringarpure**

### ***Indian-US writer and scholar***

Ngũgĩ's passing feels like the end of an era because he was the last of the writers for whom literature and politics were inextricable. For Ngũgĩ, writing was never an individual or professional pursuit, it was meant to serve a common good. He wrote to create an awakening about oppressive structures and how to resist them. More importantly, he wrote to bring communities together.

## **Tinashe Mushakavanhu**

### ***Zimbabwean writer and scholar***

Ngũgĩ was not just a man from Kenya or merely another great African writer. He was an institution in himself. His legacy will endure because he left us with the tools to tell our own stories and to dismantle oppressive systems.

## **Aminatta Forna**

### ***Transnational writer***

My favourite memory of Ngũgĩ is one from the PEN World Festival in New York in 2015 which was that year celebrating African writing. We all stayed in the same hotel. Ngũgĩ was like a father to us all. Like good African children we

vied to fetch his tea, find him a pen or organise a cab. Brave and brilliant, he was also beloved. He sang *Happy Birthday* to me in Gikũyũ. One night I invited other writers to a nearby bar. Ngũgĩ went to bed early, set an alarm for 10pm and came downstairs to join us. I taught *A Grain of Wheat* to students at Georgetown [University in Washington DC]. Many were majors in government or international affairs and their outlook was profoundly changed [by the book]. Every year I was reminded of the power of literature to convey truths, and of Ngũgĩ's brilliance. The world will never forget Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o.

## **Molara Wood**

### ***Nigerian writer and journalist***

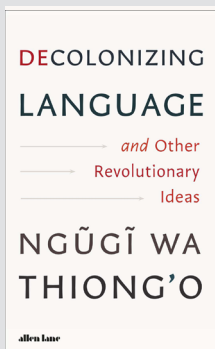
It is hard to put into words the immensity of this loss, the huge void left by the monumental figure of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. They don't come greater than this. He was one of the building blocks of the imaginative landscape of our lives, of the lives of generations of readers, especially in Africa. Long before the internet, before 24-hour news cycles, my first encounter with Kenya was in the pages of his books. In schools in tiny corners of Nigeria, pupils knew about Dedan Kimathi, the Mau Mau and the Kenyan struggle against British colonialism. They would feel for Njoroge, the protagonist of *Weep Not, Child*, as though he were their own cousin. It is a towering testament to the role of stories in our lives. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was a master storyteller whose visions will sustain us down the ages. ■





# TC BOOK REVIEW

JACQUELINE NYATHI



## One last thing

Before leaving the physical realm, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o left us with a few notes.

THE GREAT Ngũgĩ's lifelong preoccupation was decolonisation. In 1968, he, Owuor Anyumba and Taban Lo Liyong pushed for the renaming of Nairobi University's English Department to decentre English as its focus and frame of literary studies there.

This is also the focus of *Decolonizing Language and Other Revolutionary Ideas*, his final book, published weeks before he passed away.

"Language conquest, unlike the military form wherein the victor must

subdue the whole population directly, is cheaper and more effective," says Ngũgĩ in the book. To colonise via language, "the conqueror has only to invest in capturing the minds of the elite, who will then spread submission to the rest of the population".

Ngũgĩ argues that imperial educational policies were designed to do just that: to create colonies of the mind, among the elite of the colonised. "Even after independence, the intellectuals express themselves more fluently in the language of imperial conquest than in the languages from their own country ... in every postcolonial situation."

In the first of two sections, Ngũgĩ describes the damage that unequal power relationships between colonisers' languages and native ones caused to the African psyche. "You would think that after liberation and independence, the new nations, at the very least, would dismantle that unequal power relationship. But that is precisely the power of the colonies of the mind: negativity toward self has become internalised as a way of looking at reality."

Why aren't there more journals and scientific papers in African languages? Parts of the Western canon have been translated into African languages (for example, Nyerere translated Shakespeare into Kiswahili, and *Animal Farm* has been translated into



PHOTO: MARK BOSTER/LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

**Speak up:** *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's final book carries his lifelong plea: ensure our own languages stay alive.*

ChiShona). But why, Ngũgĩ asks, do we not have literature in translation from one African language to another? He insists that there are treasures buried in our own languages – indigenous knowledge of politics, economics and culture, the source of ways for us to “imagine and reimagine” ourselves in history.

The section then outlines a five-part framework to reverse this damage.

In the second section, “Voices of Prophecy”, Ngũgĩ celebrates true pan-Africanism, paying tribute to several named political activists, writers and a publisher, whose lives and work he saw as embodying it. These, says Ngũgĩ, helped shape the continent’s trajectory with a pan-Africanism that built bridges across the continent, struggled together for political reform and social good, fought for liberation, and helped society

imagine futures.

In some ways, this book is also Ngũgĩ’s memoir of his life in exile. Coming as it did at the end of his life, it also feels like his last cry, a last plea to us: ensure our own languages stay alive, participating in and contributing to our common humanity, and that intellectual production on the world stage also happens in African languages. No language, he says – referring to what he calls the Europhone languages – should “grow on the graveyard of other languages”. He proposes a pan-African process of recovery from colonisation.

It’s an incredible read.

Ngũgĩ can live on in these ideas, in the gift that his intellectual production has left us. We are always building on the work of those who came before us; now we must receive the baton from him. ■

# The Quiz

- 1 In which country are Kongou Falls, or Chutes Kongou (pictured), located?
- 2 How many official languages does Sudan have?
- 3 True or false: Ali Bongo is the president of Gabon.
- 4 Which country was Cameroon initially colonised by?
- 5 True or false: the Congolian rainforest is the world's largest tropical forest.
- 6 Name the writer of the novel *A Grain of Wheat* (1967).
- 7 How many colours are there on Libya's national flag?
- 8 *La Tchadienne* is which country's national anthem?
- 9 Name one of the two countries where Bemba or ChiBemba is spoken.
- 10 Which East African country was named after the kings of Urundi?



## HOW DID I DO?

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

### 0-3

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

### 4-7

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

### 8-10

"Already making plans to visit the waterfall, behold its elite chutes, and leave."

PHOTO: PATRICK FORT/AFP

# Big Pic

**Eid Sa'id:** Muslim worshippers in Egypt perform the early morning prayers for Eid al-Adha, the feast of sacrifice, near the ancient Abusir pyramids necropolis in the village of Abusir in Giza on 6 June.

PHOTO: MAHMOUD EL-KHAWAS/AFP



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