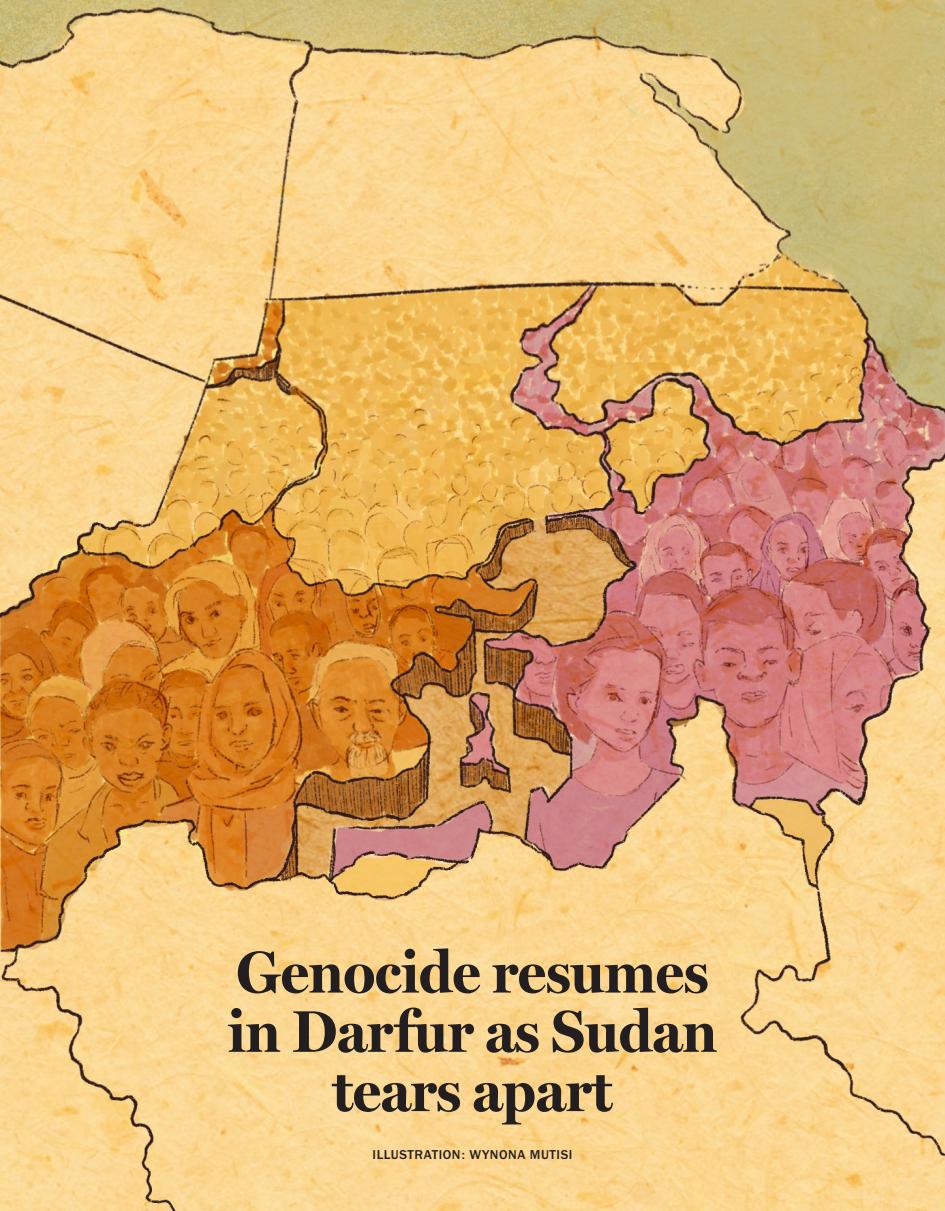
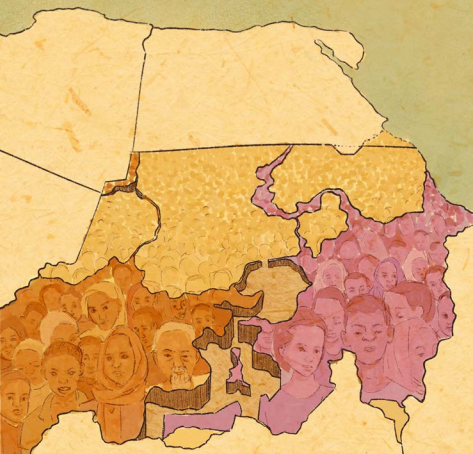


# The Continent



**Genocide resumes  
in Darfur as Sudan  
tears apart**

ILLUSTRATION: WYNONA MUTISI



**COVER** In our pages and elsewhere, the story of the fall of El Fasher – the last Darfuri city to resist the Rapid Support Forces – is deeply distressing. We tell it because the massacres unfolding now, visible from space and in videos posted by the perpetrators themselves, became inevitable when the world looked away. That's despite the siege lasting 500 days. And the same people being responsible for genocide in the same area two decades ago. On Monday, the Sudanese army negotiated a safe exit for its troops, abandoning a quarter of a million people as genocidal militias swept in. A trickle of famished survivors are walking 60km through open desert towards Tawila, where aid supplies are already low. Knowing this may leave you in despair, as it did our team, we are taking an unusual step: sharing a curated list of ways to support Sudanese civilians. *Page 13*

# Inside

- 7 Zimbabwe:** Guess who brought petrol bombs to a constitutional fight?
- 11 Tanzania:** Massive demonstrations reject this week's election, and President Samia Suluhu Hassan
- 17 Photos:** The annual pirogue race by the Lebou people in Ngor
- 21 Gold:** As the world gold price soars, artisanal miners in Uganda get locked out
- 25 Data:** The Sahel alliance has not lost its shine in Mali
- 28 Comment:** Why we are not the tax base our leaders wish for



## SUBSCRIBE

Get the latest edition of *The Continent*, plus every back issue (all 217 of them) by visiting

[thecontinent.org](https://thecontinent.org).

To subscribe (for free!), save *The Continent*'s number to your phone (+27 73 805 6068) and send us a message on [WhatsApp/Signal/Telegram](#). Or email us: [read@thecontinent.org](mailto:read@thecontinent.org)

# THE WEEK IN BRIEF

## CAMEROON

### Protesters won't rest 'until the final victory'

Cameroon's opposition leader, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, has vowed to resist "until the final victory" over President Paul Biya after days of protests left at least 23 people dead, according to civil society group Stand Up for Cameroon. Security forces battled protesters demanding an end to 92-year-old Biya's 42-year rule. Demonstrations had erupted in Douala and other cities after Biya's disputed re-election was upheld by the Constitutional Council, whose rulings cannot be appealed.

## MOZAMBIQUE

### TotalEnergies demands \$4.5bn to restart project

French energy giant TotalEnergies says it will lift force majeure and resume its suspended liquefied natural gas project in Mozambique only if the government meets conditions including covering the \$4.5-billion cost of the delay and allowing the company to make higher profits. The project was halted in 2021 after militant attacks in the northern Cabo Delgado region. Negotiations are ongoing, with President Daniel Chapo's administration expected to challenge these demands.



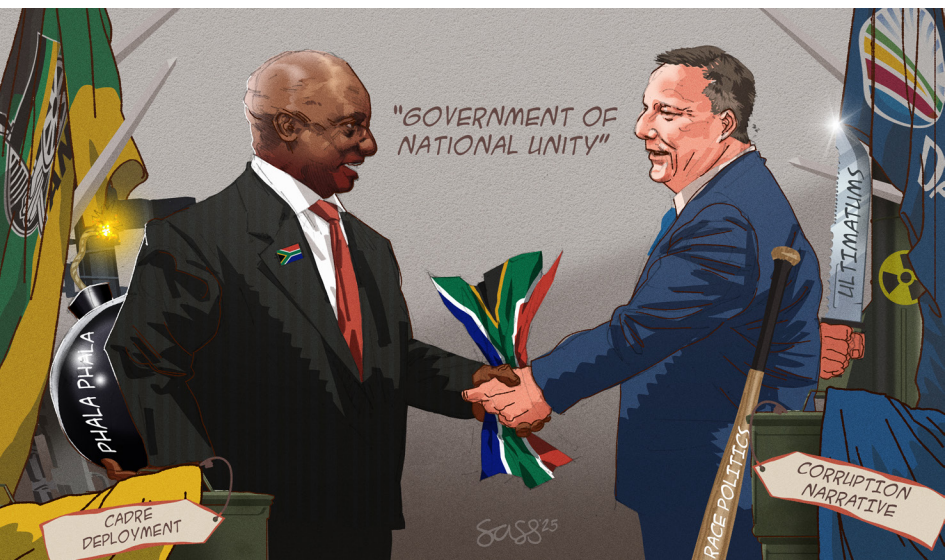
PHOTO: REUTERS/LUC GNAGO

*Review: Wide-ranging reforms intend to boost returns from Africa's top gold producer.*

## GHANA

### Mining houses must show their working

Ghana has begun its most comprehensive mining audit in a decade, targeting major companies to recover lost revenue and tighten oversight, *Reuters* reports. The new framework will shorten licence terms and mandate direct revenue-sharing with host communities. It's the most sweeping mining law overhaul in nearly 20 years. Mining generated 17.7-billion cedis (\$1.68-billion) in 2024. This was driven by a 25% jump in gold output that has helped stabilise Ghana's economy after the 2022 financial crisis. The gold price has risen even further since then.



**Uneasy coalition:** South Africa's government includes its liberation party and the main opposition party.

## LIBERIA

### Boakai's purge leaves Monrovia rattled

Liberian President Joseph Boakai has dismissed several senior officials in the latest of a string of unexplained sackings, including Boakai's longtime ally, Mines and Energy Minister Wilmot Paye. This week, officials at the Liberia Airport Authority, the ministry of education, and other state institutions were dismissed without reason. The president's office issued only terse statements urging the new appointees to serve with "integrity and diligence". Government insiders say tense officials are unsure who might be next, *Front Page Africa* reports.

## LESOTHO

### Anti-graft unit shuttered after doing its job

Lesotho's asset-recovery unit has been disbanded for allegedly being "not properly gazetted", just a month after it exposed land allocations involving top officials. These included Deputy Prime Minister Nthomeng Majara, as well as former ministers and judges. The unit found that 97 government plots were suspiciously transferred, and more than 2,900 unaccounted fuel records suggested misuse of state vehicles. Authorities say the team will be reinstated when properly gazetted, but critics fear its closure might be permanent, *GroundUp* reports.

## TUNISIA

## Rights groups gagged, civic freedoms shrink

A Tunisian court has ordered leading human rights groups including Mnemty and the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights to suspend their activities, deepening fears over shrinking civic freedoms under President Kais Saied. Mnemty's president, Saadia Mosbah, has been detained since May 2024 amid a crackdown on migrant-rights activists. Saied espouses the "great replacement theory" and sees migrants as a national threat. Critics say he uses claims of foreign interference as a tool to silence dissent. The Forum plans to appeal.

## MALI

## Former PM imprisoned for prisoner posts

A court has sentenced former prime minister Moussa Mara, who has been detained since August, to a year in prison for a social media post expressing solidarity with political prisoners. The cybercrime court in Bamako found him guilty of "undermining state credibility and opposing legitimate authority". Mara, who held his post from 2014 to 2015, received a suspended 12-month term and a fine, a ruling he has appealed. Amnesty International condemned the verdict amid Mali's worsening crackdown on dissent under military rule.

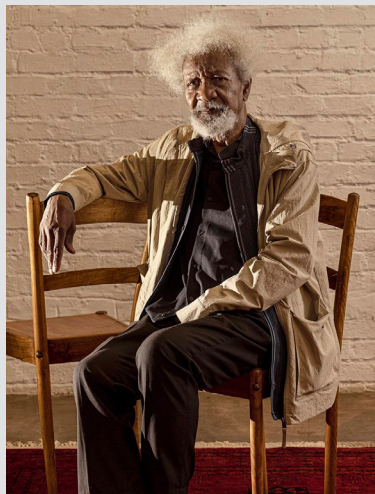


PHOTO: MARCO LONGARI/AFP

## NIGERIA

## Nobel laureate's US visa revoked, but he's too busy to care

The United States has revoked the visa of Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka. The 91-year-old is known both for his wit and criticism of authoritarianism. He described the notice from the US consulate in Lagos as a "curious love letter". Soyinka also joked about being too busy to return his passport for the visa to be cancelled, *Al Jazeera* reports. The revocation comes amid US President Donald Trump's renewed visa crackdowns. Soyinka, who once destroyed his US green card in protest, said he is unfazed.

## GAZA

## Albanese speaks up despite US ban

United Nations investigator Francesca Albanese condemned world leaders for failing to oppose US sanctions against her. The US denied Albanese a visa, effectively preventing her from presenting her latest report on Israeli human rights abuses in person to the UN in New York. Calling the sanctions “unlawful and spiteful”, she said they undermine the UN’s integrity. Albanese’s report accuses Israel of genocide and apartheid in Gaza and the West Bank. The US and Israel rejected her claims, with Israel’s envoy calling the report “shameful”.

## SOUTH AFRICA

## Court orders former president to pay fees

The high court has ordered former president Jacob Zuma to repay \$1.6-million to the state attorney for legal fees from his private cases, plus interest. Zuma has 60 days to pay or risk asset seizure, including his pension, *AP* reports. The fees stem from corruption-related litigation during and after his 2009-2018 presidency. Earlier rulings found taxpayer funds were wrongly used for his defence. Zuma, expelled from the governing African National Congress in 2024, now leads the uMkhonto weSizwe Party.

## MADAGASCAR

## Ousted leader stripped of citizenship

Former Malagasy president Andry Rajoelina was deposed in a coup earlier this month. Now he’s been stripped of his citizenship by his successor’s government. He fled after protests over power and water shortages led to a military takeover by Colonel Michael Randrianirina. Prime Minister Herintsalama Rajaonarivelo’s order cited laws revoking nationality for those with foreign citizenship; Rajoelina obtained French citizenship a decade ago. He is now



PHOTO: RIJASOLO/AFP

**Sheltering:** Andry Rajoelina filmed a national address from an undisclosed location.

in hiding and says he fears for his life. Randrianirina’s new government has pledged elections in two years.

## NEWS

## ZIMBABWE

# Democracy is under fire in Harare, literally

Opposition leaders suspect a Zanu-PF faction has brought petrol bombs to a constitutional fight.

JEFFREY MOYO IN HARARE

IN THE early hours of Wednesday morning, unidentified assailants threw petrol bombs into the Sapes Trust building in Harare. They allegedly also abducted one of the building's night guards. The blaze destroyed the building's seminar room.

The bombing took place just hours before opposition leaders were set to hold a press conference on Zimbabwe's constitutional crisis at that venue. They planned to challenge President Emmerson Mnangagwa's bid to extend his rule to 2030, two years beyond his constitutional term.

The opposition leaders insisted on conducting the press briefing in the bombed-out venue, but police violently dispersed them, declaring the place a crime scene.

"We have reached the zenith of despotism and things are falling apart," a political science lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe said after the bombing. The lecturer requested anonymity for fear of reprisal.

But Tendai Biti, former finance minister and opposition politician, appeared unfazed. "We are uniting everyone to move forward to defend the Constitution, the values of the liberation struggle, and the values of our own democratic struggle," Biti told *The Continent*.

Jacob Ngarivhume, leader of opposition party Transform Zimbabwe, also appeared untroubled, saying the Mnangagwa regime is panicking because democratic forces in Zimbabwe have now joined together. "We are united against the 2030 nonsense and we are not all going to accept it," he said.

Mnangagwa's bid faces resistance even within his own party, the ruling Zanu-PF, and has deepened the division between the president and his deputy. Earlier this month, Mnangagwa accused his deputy, Constantino Chiwenga, of "incitement and treason". This was after Chiwenga presented a dossier to the politburo warning against amending the Constitution to prolong Mnangagwa's stay in office. ■

---

# CHAD

---

## Rival parties refuse to play rigged game

**Opposition grouping says it won't return to national politics until basic conditions for participation are met.**

**MAHAMAT SALEH IN N'DJAMENA**

A COLLECTIVE of Chadian political parties has withdrawn from political life, accusing President Mahamat Déby's government of manipulating the Constitution. The Groupe de Concertation des Acteurs Politiques (GCAP) announced the decision on 22 October, citing its opposition to recent constitutional amendments that removed presidential term limits.

In September, despite an opposition walkout, Chad's National Assembly passed constitutional changes including allowing presidents to run indefinitely. GCAP says the amendment's purpose is to allow Déby a life presidency.

The group says it won't return to national politics until the basic conditions for diverse participation are restored. "To continue political activity in such a context is simply to accompany

a dictator and legitimise his endless rule over the Chadian people," GCAP said.

Chad's current Constitution was first adopted in December 2023 when Déby was still a military ruler. He took power after his father, Idriss Déby, was killed on a rebel frontline in 2021 after 30 years as president. In May 2024, Chad went to the polls and the younger Déby was declared winner.

GCAP says even in this nominally democratic era, security forces still control political life without regard for laws. Security agents, they say, threaten legislators and even demand to read their statements before they can speak in Parliament.

**'To continue political activity in such a context is simply to accompany a dictator and legitimise his endless rule over the Chadian people!'**

Embezzlement, political assassinations, kidnappings, and arrests are common, says GCAP. Succès Masra is a former prime minister who ran against Déby in last year's election and disputed the result. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison for "hateful and xenophobic" communications in August.

"In short, bad governance is growing without any solution," GCAP said. ■

# SOUTH SUDAN

## Water, water everywhere but not a bite to eat

About 7.7-million people in South Sudan already faced hunger. Recent floods have submerged farmlands.

**BUTROS NICOLA IN JUBA**

NEARLY A million people across six states in South Sudan are battling floods, the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs warns. About 335,000 people have also been displaced – many are crammed onto shrinking patches of higher ground in Jonglei and Unity states, two of the hardest-hit.

In Fangak County in Jonglei, Nyaluak Gabriel watched the floodwaters creep closer to her home, submerging the crops, taking the livestock until, finally, her house vanished. “We thought the fighting was the only disaster we faced,” she said. Now her children have no school to attend. “It is difficult for us to secure food,” her husband, Bol Guarkur, added. The couple were agropastoralists, until the floods destroyed their crops.

The flooding compounds a dire humanitarian crisis. The World Food



PHOTO: EBRAHIM HAMID/AFP

***Above water:** A Wad Ramli villager salvaged his belongings on a barge after the Nile flooded.*

Programme estimates 7.7-million people in South Sudan already faced food insecurity. The destruction of farmland will deepen hunger, the International Organisation for Migration warns.

“Beyond the immediate destruction, we are facing a collapse in farming, broken healthcare, and ... children losing their education,” said Pareil Magany Yieth of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. Food aid has faltered because of transport limitations.

Conflict and tension between President Salva Kiir and suspended vice-president Riek Machar have made things worse. The bombing of a Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in Old Fangak forced more than 30,000 families into flooding marshlands in May – and killed seven people. ■

This article is published in collaboration with *Egab*

# *Reading is resistance.*



We deliver Africa's leading independent newspaper to your device, for free, every Saturday morning: [thecontinent.org/subscribe](https://thecontinent.org/subscribe)

---

## THE TEAM

**Lydia Namubiru** Editor-in-Chief  
**Christine Mungai** News Editor  
**Refiloe Selboko** Production Editor  
**Matthew du Plessis** Managing Editor  
**Gado** Cartoonist  
**Simon Allison** International Editor  
**Wynona Mutisi** Illustrator

**Yemsrach Yetneberk** Illustrator  
**Paul Botes** Photo Editor  
**Sipho Kings** Publisher  
**Dumi Sithole** Distribution  
**Evania Chiza** Finance  
**Kiri Rupiah** Communities Editor  
**Ashleigh Swaile** Designer

## OUR PARTNERS

*The Continent* has received support from the following institutions: 11th Hour Project, African Climate Foundation, Africa No Filter, African Union, Amplify SA, Ford Foundation, Fred Foundation, GiZ, Luminate, National Endowment for Democracy, Mott Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Pulitzer Centre and the Swiss Philanthropy Partners.

# TANZANIA

## Hundreds reportedly killed in post-polls violence

Unified Tanzania has never experienced unrest on this scale before.

The election on Wednesday was supposed to cement President Samia Suluhu Hassan's legitimacy as president of the United Republic. According to the story told by the country's electoral authority, and state-run media outlets, it did exactly that. Although the result is yet to be announced, early official returns point to a landslide victory for the incumbent, who has been in power since her predecessor John Magufuli's death in office.

The story on Tanzania's streets is very different. For the past three days, thousands of people have been protesting in major urban centres, including Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, Mwanza, and Tunduma. They are being met with a violent response from state security forces. The main opposition party, Chadema, claims 700 people have already been killed.



PHOTO: REUTERS/THOMAS MUKOYA

**Riots:** A police officer throws away a used teargas canister near a border crossing with Kenya.

Some civil society organisations put the number of deaths even higher.

Residents of the largest city, Dar es Salaam, report hearing gunshots throughout the day and seeing military helicopters circling overhead. A dawn-to-dusk curfew has been imposed in the city and soldiers patrol its streets. The country's internet connection has been cut by authorities, making it difficult to communicate with the outside world – or for protesters to coordinate their actions. The few images that are coming through show unprecedented scenes of public anger: destroyed infrastructure, polling stations vandalised, and police firing tear gas at protesters.

Tanzania, which has been ruled by the Chama Cha Mapinduzi or CCM party



PHOTO: REUTERS/ONISAF OCHANDO

**Unprecedented:** Tanzanians have never before experienced civil unrest at this scale, with reports coming in of 700 people killed over three days of youth-driven protests in cities in opposition to a ‘fraudulent’ election.

since independence in 1961, has never before experienced such widespread and deadly civil unrest.

Activists who spoke to *The Continent* on condition of anonymity say the protests are being driven by young people – much like the recent protests in Madagascar and Nepal, which resulted in changes of government. The protesters say the election was rigged. The European Parliament agrees: in a statement, parliamentarians described the vote as a “fraud” that “has been unfolding for months”.

In the run-up to the vote, hundreds of opposition supporters were reported to have been detained and assaulted. Chadema was disqualified from the

ballot on a technicality and its leader, Tundu Lissu, arrested and charged with treason. Even activists from other countries were targeted. When Uganda’s Agather Atuhaire and Kenya’s Boniface Mwangi visited Dar es Salaam to attend Lissu’s trial, they were reportedly tortured and sexually assaulted by security forces, before being deported.

More protests – and more repression – are expected. The unrest may also expose other faultlines in the country. These include tensions between the police and the military; among rival factions within the ruling party; and between mainland Tanzania and the island of Zanzibar, from which Samia hails. ■

# SUDAN

## Sudan's split in two (again) is now more concrete

'Hemedti' now controls all of Darfur, continuing the genocide that began with the Janjaweed.



PHOTO: AIRBUS DS 2025 YALE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH LAB

### KHALID ELWALID IN KHARTOUM

THE RAPID Support Forces (RSF) seized El Fasher this week after besieging the city for more than 500 days. It was the last Darfuri city not under

the paramilitary group's control. The 6th Infantry Division of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and allied groups withdrew on Monday. This brought El Fasher's long resistance to an end and gave the RSF control of all five states in

the Darfur region.

The RSF – first known to the world as the Janjaweed militia responsible for the Darfur genocide between 2003 and 2005 – began its siege of El Fasher in May 2024. Hundreds of thousands of people were trapped inside the city, many of whom had fled there during the earlier genocide.

As the siege dragged on, food ran out and new supplies stopped coming in. Some people fled El Fasher to areas such as Tawila and the Zamzam camp for displaced people but by late 2024, the RSF and allied militia had cut off safe passage. The fighters extorted “exit fees” and conscripted or executed men and boys older than 17 years. They captured and raided Zamzam camp – destroying it, executing aid workers, and forcing the survivors to flee. By the time El Fasher fell, about 250,000 people were still inside the city.

Between Monday and Tuesday, militia linked to Al-Tahir Hajar, Al-Hadi Idris, and Suleiman Sandal poured into El Fasher. These warlords are allied with RSF leader “Hemedti” Hamdan Dagalo and their militia are notorious for massacres. The International Organisation for Migration says a new wave of civilians is now fleeing. Its Displacement Tracking Matrix reports 26,000 newly displaced people since El Fasher’s fall.

Graphic videos circulating on social media, many filmed by the fighters themselves, show ongoing massacres in El Fasher and along the road to Tawila. In one clip, a commander known as



**Slaughter:** Satellite images over El Fasher likely show bodies, blood, and house to house raids.

Abu Lulu boasts that he “lost count after reaching 2,000” killings. Displaced residents say hundreds of people were executed at a hospital, among them patients – a report the UN confirmed.

Satellite images analysed by Yale University’s Humanitarian Research Lab show mounds resembling human bodies near the wall the RSF built around the city to entrench the siege. There are more apparent bodies in other parts of the city, resulting from what is presumed to be house-to-house raids by the militia. The lab’s director, Nathaniel Raymond, urged the US government to deploy armed drones over El Fasher. The “eyes in the sky”, Raymond argued at a press conference on Tuesday, would send a message to the RSF that its actions are being watched.

The ongoing atrocities echo



**Trigger happy:** Sudan's paramilitary RSF released video footage of the seizure on social media.

the earlier Darfur genocide when government-backed Janjaweed militias systematically attacked non-Arab communities. They killed about 300,000 people and displaced 2.5-million more. The International Criminal Court later issued an arrest warrant for former Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir. As the RSF – rebranded from Janjaweed – leads the El Fasher assault, survivors see this as another phase of the campaign that started two decades ago.

“For decades, we’ve been warning that the Darfur genocide never ended,” said Emtithal Mahmoud, a survivor of that genocide. “We warned that we would see the final phase of the Darfur genocide. After the Zamzam massacre, after the El Geneina massacre, we warned that the El Fasher massacre would happen.”

Dagalo previously called the El Fasher violence a “tribal conflict” he isn’t involved in, according to the *BBC*.

### ‘Beyond desperate’

From El Fasher, fleeing civilians are walking through open desert towards Tawila, about 60km away. No vehicles are available. Many of those leaving are already weak from a months-long famine caused by the siege.

Mawada Ahmed, a doctor who is currently volunteering in Tawila, told *The Continent* only a small number of people had managed to reach the town by Wednesday afternoon. She described the condition of the new arrivals as “beyond desperate” – wounded, malnourished, and extremely weak.

Among them are children as young as six weeks old, arriving with siblings after

losing parents. “We immediately check if they need IV fluids, food, or water, but even as we try to help, many don’t survive,” Ahmed said.

Ahmed believes some women and girls may have suffered sexual violence but medical volunteers are waiting several days before asking questions that could retraumatise them. “I couldn’t bring myself to ask the new arrivals what they had seen or experienced on the road,” she said.

Tawila already hosts thousands of families who had managed to flee earlier. The town is running out of supplies. The only food left is ambaz – animal fodder made from sesame and bean husks. It is mixed with water and given to the children. The Tawila Emergency Room is appealing for urgent support “to save lives and alleviate suffering”.

“We don’t have enough resources or funding to make even enough meals a day,” said Mahmoud, the Darfur genocide survivor. She is now a director at the IDP Humanitarian Network, Sudan’s largest indigenous-led aid network. The group has been sending cash transfers to volunteers inside Sudan during the ongoing war between the SAF and the RSF, which began in April 2023. ■

**Editor’s note:** Reading about deep human tragedy can leave you feeling despondent. For some people, helping is its own form of solace. If that’s you, this [Linktree](#) – curated by Sarah Elhassan, a Sudanese culture worker and organiser – leads to mutual aid initiatives and other verified ways to support people in Sudan.



**Takeover:** A still from RSF video footage shows fighters celebrating in El Fasher.

PHOTO: AFP PHOTO/NO/SUDAN RAPID SUPPORT FORCES (RSF) TELEGRAM ACCOUNT



## PHOTO ESSAY

# The wind in their sails: fun, games, and heritage

WORDS AND PHOTOS: CARMEN YASMINE ABD ALI

PIROGUES HAVE come to be associated with dangerous migrant crossings from the West African coast in recent years. But they are so much more than that. The Lebou people, a Senegalese fishing community, have built a full maritime culture around pirogues over decades as the local vehicle of choice on the Atlantic Ocean.

Every year, the village of Ngor, located on an island off the Dakar region, hosts a regatta in which local fishermen race traditional wooden pirogues. (Fun fact: Ngor is the western-most point

of continental Africa). This year's pirogue race was held on 18 October. Teams representing different Dakar neighbourhoods raced one another in a show of rowing skill and co-ordination.

As always, the race drew spectators from the community and surrounding areas. Lebou women danced ahead of the pirogue race, and supporters ran along the beach, waving team flags during the race.

The pirogue race remains a key tradition in Lebou and Ngor's fishing heritage and pride. ■







## FEATURE

# As gold prices soar, artisanal miners get edged out

Small-scale miners are being sidelined as new laws and industrial giants move in, leaving those who first unearthed the wealth struggling to survive on the margins.



PHOTO: BADRU KATUMBA

## SOITA KHATONDI WEPUKHULU IN BUSIA

THE ROAD to success and frustration is paved with gold in Tiira, a town in the eastern Uganda district of Busia.

Behind lines of grocery shops, two men crank a winch, lowering or raising poles and miners 150m underground.

“If one doubts the men working the winches, they cannot survive. If they don’t trust the people going down the shafts, we can’t earn,” says Vincent Bura, the site manager.

For decades, gold mining and processing in the area was an affair of artisanal miners, working with shovels

and hoes. But as Uganda formalises its gold sector, they see their interests being edged out. “Only the government has the power to change policies to favour us local miners,” Bura says. “But it appears it’s now too late.”

Just 4km away from this site, Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni commissioned the \$250-million Wagagai gold mine and refinery, run by Chinese investors. The concession covers nearly 10km<sup>2</sup> and is estimated to hold up to 30-million tonnes of gold ore.

Although the foreign-backed gold mine boasts better equipment, Tiira’s miners are reluctant to work there. Bura says he prefers small-scale landlords’ mines, where workers feel valued,

compared to Wagagai’s rigid work environment.

The government’s reforms are designed to attract investors and maximise output, with gold prices this month at a record high of \$4,100 an ounce. But the new rules are pushing out small-scale operators. “We are not supposed to use open-cast mining and have been told to use underground shaft mining – yet we don’t have the capacity,” says Stephen Padde, the head of the Busia Gold Mining Association. A licence is \$300 and environmental impact assessments cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000.

Licensed miners, such as the Tiira Small-Scale Miners Association, are



PHOTO: BADRU KATUMISA

**Trickle down:** Unlicensed miners, many of them women, are allowed to sift through old pits.



**Subsistence:** *About 300,000 Ugandans are small-scale miners.*

PHOTO: BADRU KATUMBA

faring slightly better. Their 16-hectare site has electricity-powered winches and air blowers. Children no longer work there, though unlicensed miners – mostly women – are allowed to sift through old pits “as a way of giving back”, says association secretary Josephine Aguttu.

Aguttu says that they are open to a partnership of 49% for investors and 51% for indigenous landlords and artisanal miners. In such a partnership, the hope is that the investors would meet operating costs, including the miners’ pay.

But foreign investors have shown little interest in partnering with local associations, according to Padde. Banks are just as lukewarm towards small-

scale mining, seeing it as a gamble. Despite producing 90% of Uganda’s gold – which earned \$3.09-billion in export revenue in 2024 – the local miners rely on informal money lenders, who operate with little to no regulation.

Relief may come from the government’s new gold-buying programme, announced in July. Bank of Uganda director Adam Mugume told *The Continent* the central bank hopes to use purchase contracts as collateral for low-interest loans to mining associations. Mugume said the Bank of Uganda had received 15 applications for the programme, but only eight applicants have secured full licenses.

With direct buying from miners and the Wagagai refinery, authorities

hope to restore Uganda's credibility on the global gold market. Scrutiny over gold smuggling from the Democratic Republic of the Congo led to European Union and United States sanctions against the owner of Africa Gold Refinery in 2022. It was Uganda's only gold refinery, which cast a shadow on all gold exports from the country. "We don't want to deal with refineries that may co-mingle our gold with that from outside Uganda," Mugume says.

But for miners such as Irene Kakai, who has worked the pits since 2007,

these reforms feel distant. "On a good day, we might find gold worth 60,000 shillings (\$17)," she says, jabbing the ground with a metal rod to guess where gold ore might be. "Sometimes, you go weeks without." A nearby pit had caved in overnight, burying several days of labour and hope.

More than 300,000 Ugandans – nearly half of them women – are small-scale miners. They are the ones who first break the ground, but when investors come rushing in, they are often the first to be pushed out. ■



**Digging deep:** Tiira's miners prefer open-cast mining to working for corporations.

PHOTO: BADRU KATUMBA

DATA

# Sahel of a match

THE Alliance of Sahel States (AES) has attracted plenty of concern among democracy activists. Established in July 2024, the AES is a confederation of three states – Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger – that recently had coups d’état.

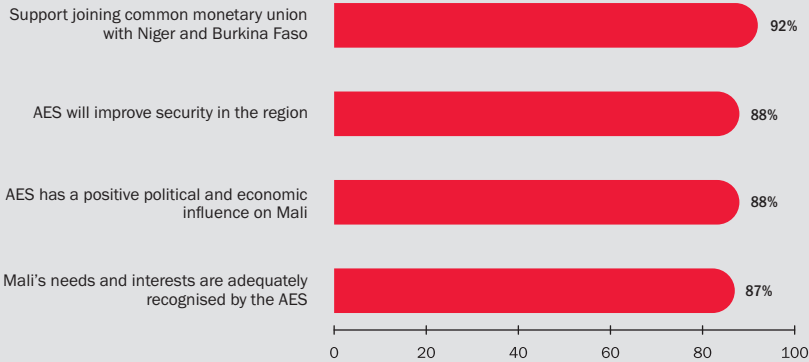
What do citizens in and around the AES think of the new organisation? Sadly, owing to regime opposition, Afrobarometer was unable to access Niger or complete its Burkina Faso survey, but we did survey Mali, as well as AES neighbours Chad and Togo.

Among the 84% of Malians who have heard of the AES, overwhelming

majorities say it has a positive political and economic influence on their country (88%), will likely provide greater regional security (88%), and adequately recognises Mali’s needs and interests (87%). An even larger share (92%) favour the creation of a common monetary union with Niger and Burkina Faso.

Togolese are divided on whether the AES impedes regional integration; 37% say it does, 39% disagree. Still, more than half (54%) say their country’s interests would be better served if it joined the AES. An even larger majority (65%) of Chadians support joining the bloc. ■

Views on the AES | Malians who have heard of the AES | 2024





# FILM REVIEW

BY WILFRED OKICHE



## A wise child knows its father

Memory can be sharp yet foggy– this film views the father-son paradigm through a dual lens.

*My Father's Shadow* is a quietly accomplished debut autofiction feature by Akinola Davies Jr., with the screenplay by his brother, rapper Wale Davies. Two boys reckon with memory – personal and national – as they spend a magical day with their mercurial father (Şopé Dirísù).

The 1993 presidential election is pivotal in Nigerian history. The ensuing military regime aborted the democratic

dreams of a generation. Childhood and nationhood destroyed are the pathos Davies Jr. explores.

In the film, Dad works in the city while the family resides in the country. Mum provides a warm presence, but her relationship with her husband is troubled. The boys (played by siblings Godwin and Chibuike Marvelous Egbo) idealise their father, perhaps more for his absence. The film is told through the eyes of the boys as they come to understand their father better, particularly as he embraces his vulnerability.

The father, played by Dirísù in early scenes as an unquestionable, authoritative figure, is larger than life. This infallibility melts away slowly as his sons see him humiliated by the regime's brutality. In the emotional climax, a memorable beach scene where buried wounds are excavated, the children see their father for the complicated, troubled human being he is.

*My Father's Shadow* was shot on 16mm film to capture the visual decay of Lagos in the 1990s, as well as the hazy slipperiness of memory. The film runs into trouble backdropping knotty political history into an otherwise immaculate family saga. Davies Jr. feels a need to explain Nigeria to his audiences, bringing some performativity to a film that wants to exist somewhere between dreams, memory, and imagination. ■

# The Quiz

- 1 Who won Côte d'Ivoire's presidential election last week?
- 2 With his re-election, for how many terms has Paul Biya now been in office?
- 3 What is Tanzania's currency called?
- 4 What currency is used in Zanzibar?
- 5 Who is the president of Zimbabwe?
- 6 The Tower of Africa, or Tour d'Afrique, (pictured) is located in which Malian city?
- 7 Where does Chad get its name from?
- 8 What are people from Burkina Faso called?
- 9 Which country is Nobel Literature Prize winner Wole Soyinka from?
- 10 El Fasher is the capital of which state in Sudan?



---

## 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

"If there were a Nobel Prize for African general knowledge, I'd win it!"

---

## COMMENT

# On taxes and our vampire states

Drained, disregarded, and discarded – we are not the tax base African governments dream of.



**L. MUTHONI WANYEKI**

WITH both international “aid” and trade shrinking, the solution is “local revenue generation”. Or so economists tell our governments.

The theory is simple. We give up some individual freedoms in return for collective protections. We delegate some personal sovereignty to benefit from state sovereignty. We contribute to the state purse – through taxes – to pay for public goods and services. At a minimum, basic infrastructure and security. More aspirationally: education, healthcare, housing, pensions, and social security.

The social contract. Oiled by tax. That’s the theory.

In practice, however, our social contract is beyond broken. Our states are vampiric, as a friend of mine says. They suck the blood out of us, tossing most of us aside afterwards. They reward a chosen few, transforming them into vampires themselves, to keep the performance ticking along.

Our states actively wrest our freedoms from us daily. For every centimetre we give, they take a kilometre. Their denizens have no concept that states have sovereignty only because we

delegate it to them.

When there are elections, this is another avenue for empty performances. Military takeovers are on trend – or soldiers backing the installations of “new” iterations of the same old, as they did in Zimbabwe. And a growing number of African states are now under outright military rule, again: Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Sudan.

Military men say they are there only to restore the social contract, cheered on by citizens who jump too easily on external scapegoats for our common conditions. They’ll be out in a year or two, they promise. More like never. No matter how youthful their countenance, their impacts are the same: a diminishing of civic resistance.

In their place, they offer us tired tropes: calls to versions of culture, tradition, and religion that are old, repressive, and outdated. Down with women. Down with African queers and other people labelled as friends of the degenerate West. Up with whatever can be touted as the answer to said West. Like the East – never mind its own exploitative tendencies.

Some of us continue to cheer. Cultural, traditional, and religious conservatives, of course – but also, more alarmingly,



**Social contract?:** Guinea under President Mamady Doumbouya (pictured), as well as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Sudan are under outright military rule once more, wresting control from citizens while civic resistance diminishes.

PHOTO: PATRICK MEINHARDT/AFP

some of the African Left. Except for African feminists, who rightfully see in the repudiation of women and queer people the beginnings of an inevitable race to the bottom.

Stuck in this abusive subjugation, economists tell us that we pay the lowest tax of all regions. Well, of course we do, given the state of our social contract. Why volunteer to pay more taxes? To feed the black holes of the vampires' arteries? It's not like they are not taking whatever they can by legal and extra-legal sleight of hand.

National tax incomes amount to just 16% of African GDP. Just less than 40% of that comes from indirect taxes on goods and services because most forms of personal income escape the tax authorities' radars.

Only 18% of Africans are in formal employment. The wealthiest evade most taxes, particularly on property ownership and capital gains, because states underinvest in property and company registries. Our states want

taxes but don't care to create formal jobs or invest in robust infrastructure. Or in security, except that of the state and its functions. Good luck to them.

For the wealthiest Africans, their social contract is with themselves – their ability to pay private providers for security, education, healthcare, housing, and helicopters to hop over terrible roads. Poor Africans need the state but it is absent. So they take remittances from relatives to pay for the public goods and services that those consumption taxes already extracted didn't buy.

The Institute of Security Studies estimates that 65% (!) and 50% of households in Kenya and Gambia, respectively, rely on remittances. Neither group – neither the wealthy nor the poor – will volunteer to pay more taxes to states that disregard them.

Vampires. No social contract. No taxes. ■

---

*Dr. L. Muthoni Wanyeki is a Kenyan political scientist*

# Big Pic

**Model behaviour:** A private show of the Spring/Summer 2026 collection of Nigerian designer Kanyinsola Onalaja for her Onalaja brand during Lagos Fashion Week. She describes the collection as 'daring' and 'unique'.

PHOTO: OLYMPIA DE MAISMONT/AFP



The Continent is a member of the Press Council of South Africa. This means we adhere to its Code of Ethics. It also means that there's an independent body you can reach out to with a complaint about our reporting. That process is on their website — [www.presscouncil.org.za](http://www.presscouncil.org.za).

**all protocol  
observed.**

*publisher of* **The Continent**

The Continent is published by All Protocol Observed, a not-for-profit based in South Africa. Our home is dedicated to creating a space for African journalists to do quality journalism, which we then get to you wherever you are. For suggestions, queries, complaints, or to make a donation, please contact us at [read@thecontinent.org](mailto:read@thecontinent.org).