

The Continent

Africans of the
Year 2025





COVER Khalil Gibran, a poet born in Lebanon in the late 1800s, wrote that we work so that we might keep pace with the earth and its soul. We'd argue that some of us work with love and purpose so deep, clear and abiding that they outpace the soul of the earth, especially in a year like 2025 when said soul seems to have been lost altogether. In our annual tradition, we close out 2025 with a special issue of *The Continent* that celebrates individuals in Africa, or of African roots, who remind us that there is still much to be inspired by, and to root for. "Work is love made visible," Gibran wrote. The **Africans of the Year** profiled in this issue embody that love in action (begins on p11).

Top picks

- 10 Wilfred Okiche** – our film and music critic – selects five films you must see before writing 2025 off
- 15 DJ Darlyne Komukama**, a curator of Uganda's famed Nyege Nyege festival, shares the five songs that carried her in this year of chaos
- 20 Jacqueline Nyathi** – our literature reviewer – picks essential 2025 reads for your shelf, or for your gift-giving
- 25** Kicking and screaming, our photo editor **Paul Botes**, picks favourites from the hundreds of African photos he cherished

Stay in touch

We found each other in a global pandemic, unaware that it was the start of an age of chaos we would witness together. In 2025 *The Continent* was here to keep an African record. You kept reading, and hopefully learning to sit with it all, without setting your hair on fire. We're closing down to spend time with ourselves and our humans. We'll reconnect with you on 24 January. Tell us what to keep or change by responding to our [survey](#). If you want to support us with cold cash, [our fundraiser](#) is open. As ever, the power of Africa's newspaper is in your sharing it with other humans. All Protocol Observed.

EDITORIAL

A love letter to readers of *The Continent*



DEAR readers,

All protocol observed.

Let us give you your flowers. You've earned them. Here are three reasons why.

First: You give us a ridiculous amount of your time. In our last reader survey*, nearly half of you said you read the newspaper from cover to cover. And 65% of you read every edition. Attention is one of humanity's most valuable resources – thank you for giving us so much of it. For comparison, the *Financial Times* considers a “quality read” to be when a reader gets through just half of a single news article.

Second: This newspaper does not employ any delivery people – and yet, we have one of the most effective distribution networks in the world. That's because we send it to you – and you take care of the rest. Every time you share *The Continent* with your friends and family, or in your neighbourhood WhatsApp groups, you are endorsing our journalism – and exponentially increasing its impact.

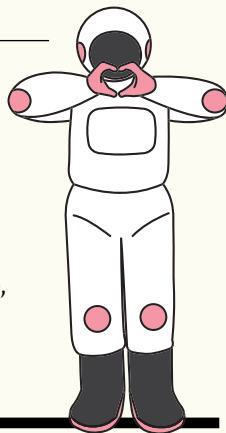
Third: In South Africa, where *The Continent* is published, media houses

have slashed their coverage of the rest of Africa in recent years. It's the same story elsewhere. It is too expensive, publishers claim, and nobody is interested. Every week, you prove them wrong. We all know that Africa's national borders are a colonial construct – there is no reason why our journalism should be similarly constrained.

The world's most powerful people appear to have little attachment to the truth. This makes reading and sharing reliable information not just an act of civic engagement, but also an act of resistance. Thank you for resisting with us. We see you.

Until next year,
The Continent team ■

*One last request for 2025: Please fill in our annual reader [survey](#) and get your friends to as well. The more responses we have, the stronger our case for funding.



ANALYSIS

The Year in News

Matters escalated and escalated, and we tried our hardest to breathe through the smoke of everything burning around us.

Christine Mungai – news editor

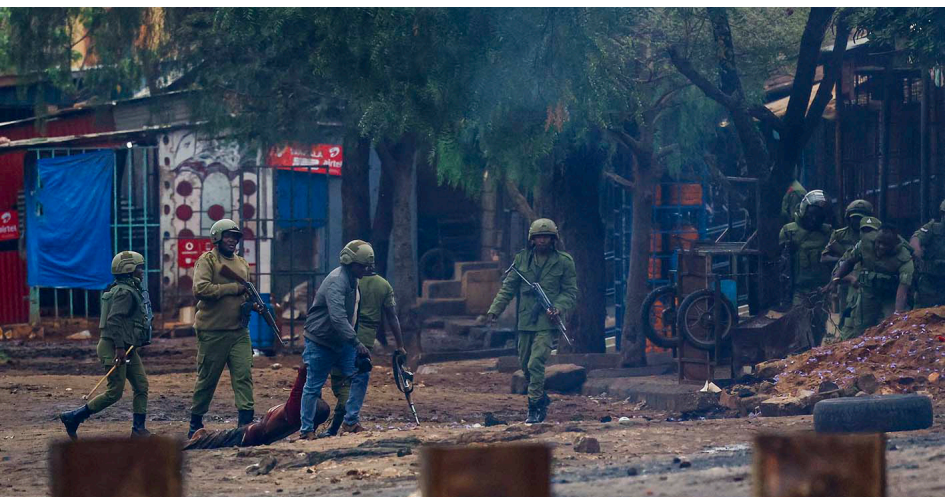
Lydia Namubiru – editor-in-chief

Kiri Rupiah – communities editor

What was the most significant African news story of the year?

CM: The Tanzanian election in October. It's likely thousands of people were killed indiscriminately by security forces. Hundreds more were abducted, forcibly disappeared, or tortured – even before voting day. That level of violence did not emerge from nowhere.

Tanzania was already a repressive state, but this year's brutality feels rooted in something larger: the collapse of international norms that once constrained political excess on the continent. There used to be a real brake on behaviour like this – leaders knew that certain lines, if crossed, would trigger aid cuts or diplomatic isolation. Now, with global attention fractured and donor funding in decline, that restraint has vanished. What we saw in Tanzania is, in some ways, the product of that vacuum.



Shame: Police drag a man killed during Tanzania's post-election protests.

PHOTO: REUTERS/THOMAS MUKOYA

LN: The “end of aid”, particularly with the dramatic contraction coming at a time when countries are so indebted and still struggling to recover from the pandemic or Russia’s war in Ukraine. Countries are increasingly borrowing to make up for shortfalls and more of that borrowing is coming from private capital with higher interest rates. This does not end well, as citizen movements want different things from the domestic and international lenders who will be ever-more invested in the survival of regimes that owe them money.

KR: The massacre of El Fasher in 2025 stands as one of the darkest chapters of Sudan’s ongoing war. After months of siege, Rapid Support Forces fighters and aligned militias overran key districts of the North Darfur capital, unleashing widespread killings and looting, burning entire neighbourhoods. Hospitals, markets, and displacement camps were attacked, leaving civilians with no safe refuge. Humanitarian agencies reported hundreds of people were killed in a matter of days, although the true toll is feared to be far higher due to mass graves and bodies left in the streets. The bloodbath was so extensive, it could be seen from space. The assault targeted non-Arab communities, echoing the grim patterns of the 2003 to 2005 Darfur genocide. With aid routes cut and communications cut off, survivors described it as a deliberate attempt to erase the city’s remaining population. International condemnation followed, but no effective intervention came.



PHOTO: HANDOUT / SATELLITE IMAGE

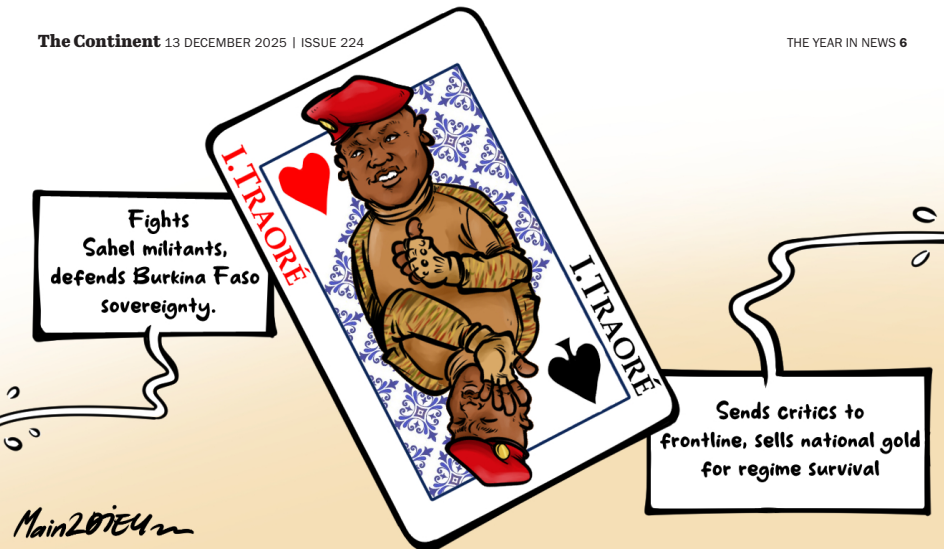
What remains: A satellite image from October showing smoke from fires near El Fasher Airport

El Fasher’s massacre has become a symbol of Sudan’s spiralling, unrestrained violence.

What story should have received more attention?

CM: The abrupt dismantling of USAID, particularly of the HIV and Aids control programmes supported by PEPFAR. Some African countries have managed to continue their HIV prevention and treatment programmes, but many have not. UNAIDS estimates that if no other funding fills the gap, Aids deaths could rise fivefold globally. Over the next 10 years, adult incidence rates could triple in Africa.

LN: What bedevils trade in Africa. Why isn’t it growing enough between African countries? Beyond high-level analyses, we ought to have stories that get into the nuts and bolts of it. Why is Africa’s share of international trade contracting? If there’s a rising tide that’s lifting other boats, why not ours?

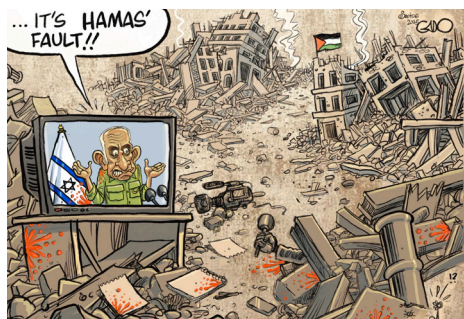


KR: The quiet crackdown on political freedom across the Sahel and West Africa. Coups in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso made headlines and, in some respects, attracted praise. But behind the scenes, military governments were also locking up opposition leaders, activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens without trial, closing down media outlets, and using the law to silence dissent. Thousands of people have simply disappeared into detention. This erosion of rights barely made the news compared to dramatic events like protests or border clashes. It's a story that will shape the region's future, even if most of the world hasn't noticed.

What was the biggest international story of the year?

CM: The Gaza war and the global crisis of moral authority. The world's response – or non-response – has revealed the

collapse of the international system more starkly than any event this decade. It has crumbled the shared narratives that are supposed to help us to make sense of right and wrong. What Israel has done in Gaza has made a mockery of the very concept of “human rights” and has ushered in a new era that is harder to interpret, more difficult to navigate, and far more morally disorienting. And it has inevitably radicalised a generation watching the world fail, publicly and in real time.



LN: Donald Trump's second coming and its disruption of multilateralism. His movement is certainly doing what it can to kill multilateral politics – except as unadulterated transactionalism.

KR: The world saw the United States slip into full democratic backsliding, with executive overreach, attacks on independent institutions, and harsh limits on civic freedoms. Once a global “standard bearer” for democracy, exporting destabilisation, this decline and the speed with which it happened emboldened extremist groups and showed that even long-standing democracies can falter. It also revealed Europe's limits: once quick to lecture on governance, European Union leaders largely failed to respond to the US's erosion of norms or stop Israel's war in Gaza, exposing a gap between talk and action.

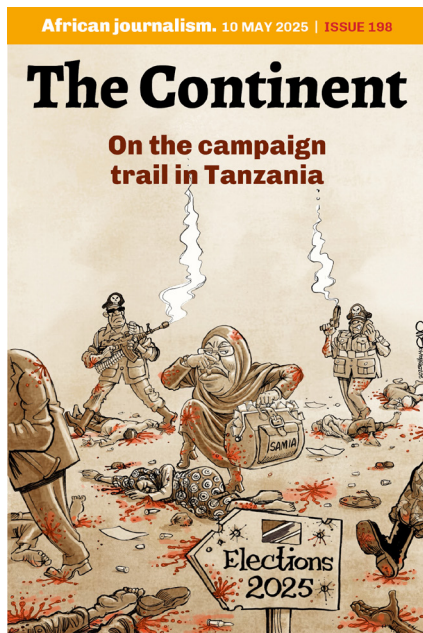
Who was the biggest villain this year?

CM: The Kenyan officials in the Saudi Embassy in Riyadh, who demanded sex and money from women desperate to get away from their abusive employers. Kenyan diplomats even pressured the women to become sex workers to pay for their tickets home, *The New York Times* reports. There are stories like this everywhere in the Middle East, but the *Times* reporting brought it all home in harrowing detail – including identifying Kenyan President William Ruto as personally benefiting from the labour-exportation scheme.

A (dis)honourable mention must go to Sean “Diddy” Combs. The man is diabolical.

LN: The warlords whose militias executed the El Fasher massacres in late October: Al-Tahir Hajar, Al-Hadi Idris, and Suleiman Sandal.

KR: Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan cemented her reputation as one of Africa's most repressive leaders. Ahead of and after the October elections, her government disqualified opposition parties and jailed political opponents. After the elections her administration meted out extraordinary violence against ordinary Tanzanians to shut



down protests. The death toll is still disputed. The treatment of activists Boniface Mwangi and Agather Atuhairu at the hands of state security agents while monitoring opposition trials is a testament to Tanzania's decline under her leadership. Unfortunately, this is likely just the beginning.

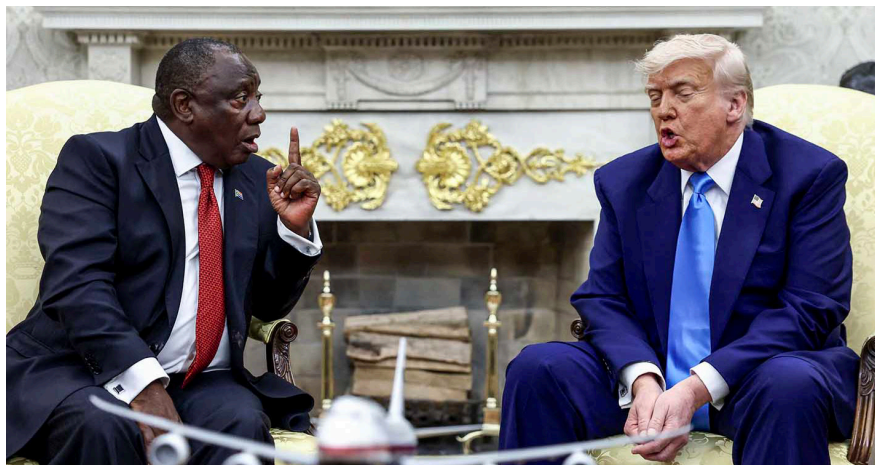
What story gave you hope for 2026?

CM: The mass anti-government, youth-led protests in Nepal in September. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli resigned, and four days later former chief justice Sushila Karki assumed office as the interim prime minister, with the poll decided on the Discord community platform. As a Kenyan, it was hugely inspiring to watch young people force political accountability and then help to shape the transition process itself. It showed, in real time,

how citizen power can rewrite the rules.

LN: South Africa's valiant attempt to step up and become the glue that keeps multilateralism going. For all the shortcomings, contradictions, and inequality that bedevil it, it's hard to imagine that a purely transactional and fragmented world order would be better than attempting to work together towards a global human union.

KR: South Africa's president, Cyril "Cupcake" Ramaphosa, distinguished himself by not bowing and scraping to US President Donald Trump over his unfounded claims of white genocide. Whereas his counterparts showed up to Washington to be praised for speaking English well, Ramaphosa's measured response was emblematic of his status as the leader of a sovereign nation. Pity about his banking habits though. ■



Perhaps not: Cyril Ramaphosa told Donald Trump to his face that he was peddling lies about his country.

*It is time.
Help us grow by
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Annual Survey™*

SURVEY



**all protocol
observed.**

publisher of The Continent *and* The Friday Paper



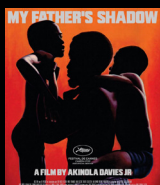
THE YEAR IN MOVIES

As chosen by **Wilfred Okiche**, *The Continent's* film critic.



5 **Khartoum** (Sudan)

After the outbreak of war in Sudan, Anas Saeed, Rawia Alhag, Ibrahim Snoopy Ahmed, and Timeea Ahmed join British director Phil Cox to re-enact stories of survival involving five residents of the city. *Khartoum* is a fine example of filmmaking as therapy – for the filmmakers and participants alike – and of what non-extractive storytelling might look like.



4 **My Father's Shadow** (Nigeria)

Akinola Davies Jr's quietly accomplished debut announces the arrival of a major cinematic talent. Mixing myth, memory, folklore and history, *My Father's Shadow's* unique if opaque take on the coming-of-age story has two brothers (Godwin and Chibuike Marvellous Egbo) spend a memorable day in Lagos with their emotionally unavailable father (Şopé Dirisù).



3 **Happy Birthday** (Egypt)

In Sarah Goher's acerbic feature debut, an eight-year-old maid (Doha Ramadan) has to learn a bitter lesson about social inequality while organising a party for the daughter of her employer. *Happy Birthday* is shrewdly observational about class conflicts in Egyptian society, but also reflects on the fantasies of childhood, just before they are ripped away.



2 **The Heart is a Muscle** (South Africa)

A child goes missing for a few moments at a friendly gathering. His father is surprised by his own violent reaction to this scare, as is everyone else. Imran Harndulay's debut takes its protagonist on a journey of self-discovery while ruminating on masculinity and generational trauma. An interview with the director is coming in the next edition of *The Continent*.



1 **The Voice of Hind Rajab** (Tunisia)

If there was a film released anywhere this year that seemed to carry the most urgency, then it was *The Voice of Hind Rajab*, the latest experimental feat by Tunisian filmmaker Kaouthar Ben Hania. Her account of the killing of a five-year-old girl by Israeli forces is a furious indictment of a collective culpability that has rendered some lives dispensable.

ZOHRAN KWAME MAMDANI



ILLUSTRATION: NZILANI SIMU

More than just the mayor of New York

A year ago no one knew who he was. Now Zohran has fans and haters across the globe.

CHRISTINE MUNGAI

BY NOW, the biographical notes on Zohran Kwame Mamdani are well known. Born in Uganda. Two childhood years in Cape Town. Emigrated to the United States when he was seven. Zohran's American citizenship was obtained only in 2018, and he's still a Ugandan citizen. Now, improbably, he's mayor of New York City.

The more interesting story is how Zohran completes an arc his parents began. The scholarship of his father, Mahmoud Mamdani, has long asked: Who belongs? Who decides? The films of his mother, Mira Nair, explore these questions within the stakes of daily life – how ordinary people live inside borders that were not built for them. Even in *Queen of Katwe*, the anxiety is there: What happens when a young girl's dreams threaten to pull her beyond the limits of where she “should” belong?

What strikes me is how Zohran isn't just engaging these questions: he inhabits them, and becomes the answer.

He has shrugged off every label meant to destabilise him. “Jihadist

candidate.” “Terrorist sympathiser.” “Pure communist.” When Zohran's college application resurfaced – where he'd selected both “Asian” and “Black/African American” – opponents treated it like the ultimate gotcha. But instead of backpedalling into blandness, Zohran went all in. He met the attacks with humour and a willingness to be fully himself. He ate rice with his hands.

Many of us have our own entanglements on the question of belonging. If we can learn anything from Zohran, it's that leaning into these complexities can be a winning strategy.

Of course, his win wasn't just on vibes and memes. He mobilised over 100,000 volunteers, the greatest field operation by any candidate in New York City's history. He centered the material lives of working-class New Yorkers: free buses, childcare, relief for the cost of living. He was someone telling a simple, resonant story – about power, and who it serves.

And it worked. ■



PHOTO: MICHAEL NIGRO/GETTY IMAGES

Belonging: New York City mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani out on the stump earlier this year.

Christine Mungai is the news editor of *The Continent*

SARA ELHASSAN



ILLUSTRATION: NZILANI SIMU

Making sure Sudan is seen

KHALID ELWALID

WRITER and editor Sara Elhassan has been documenting Sudan's political situation since 2013. Through uprisings, revolutions, coups, and now full-scale war, her work has evolved from analysis and commentary into an act of sustained national witnessing. Over more than 900 days of conflict, she has provided coverage, insight, and interpretation of a war that has devastated communities and fractured the country.

Beyond daily reporting, Elhassan has become deeply involved in direct support efforts. She fundraises for emergency-response rooms, grassroots organisations, and families trapped in the conflict. In a country in which institutions have collapsed and humanitarian access is limited, these networks represent the final thread keeping many communities alive. Elhassan has helped to redirect global attention and resources to people working under fire to provide food, medical care, and shelter.

What Elhassan values most, she says, is her role in amplifying a narrative often overshadowed by power and violence – the story of Sudanese people saving themselves. Across the ruins of cities and the collapse of formal systems, she has documented how ordinary people have organised kitchens, clinics, evacuation routes, and emergency shelters with little more than willpower and solidarity.



These activists, medics, and volunteers continue to function in conditions that defy survival. For Elhassan, they are not supporting characters in the story of war: they are the story itself.

Her call to Africa and the world is to support what still lives in Sudan. Support emergency response rooms. Support local organisers. Support families by any means possible. Beyond financial aid, she emphasises the necessity of solidarity and moral recognition. Sudanese people, she says, have long felt invisible. War has only deepened that invisibility. Naming the injustice matters. Saying this suffering is not normal, not acceptable, and not forgotten, matters.

Ultimately, Elhassan has a simple vision: she hopes for the day when this work will no longer be necessary. ■

Khalid Elwalid is a contributor to *The Continent*



THE YEAR IN MUSIC

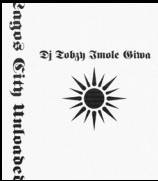
As selected by **DJ Darlyne Komukama**, a curator of the Nyege Nyege Festival.



5 Foug El Nakhl – AlMutaqa Orchestra
The AlMutaqa Orchestra from Sudan released their first EP *Dafayer* this year. The four featured tracks showcase the group's particular blend of Afro-Arab musicality expertly led by maestro Ahmad Shamma. *Foug El Nakhl* is my favourite by a very close margin – the whole EP is worth taking the time to listen to all the way through.



4 Matlatsi – DJ Dadaman & Moscow Dollar
Matlatsi opens Pretorians DJ Dadaman and Moscow Dollar's *Ka Gaza*, a previously never-heard collaboration from the Bacardi music hit-making duo released this year. The whole album compels you to move and echoes the kwaito and house that inspires Bacardi music, while signalling towards the gqom and amapiano it will birth.



3 SIDE B Lagos City Unloaded – DJ Tobzy Imole Giwa
This one is a bit of a cheat because the track is technically a 25-minute mix of DJ Tobzy's frenetic foot-tapping virtuoso mixing of everything from kwaito, palm wine, Afrobeats, gqom, and amapiano to techno, rap, and Brazilian funk to create a whole new genre called cruise coming out of Lagos.



2 Iyee! – Mitirikpwe Patricia
The Ugandan R&B scene is so, so delicious lately, with the likes of Joshua Baraka, Tai Dai, Mwami, Likkle Bangi and so many more. Honestly, get into it. My obsession is Mitirikpwe Patricia, whose EP *Mitirikpwe* I've had on repeat since January. The quality and tone of Mitirikpwe's voice gives me literal goosebumps and I can just swim in that album forever.



1 Oli Mudoma aka Wa Wa Wa Iniwa – Dexta Rapper, Force HD, and Sturbon Joz
Ironically, the version of *Oli Mudoma* available to stream does not contain the “wa wa wa iniwa” refrain that popularised the song, together with Dexta Rapper's father's soft waist. Turns out we really needed that father-son dancing joy energy, even if it was just for 30 seconds at a time on social media video clips. A wawawawonderful holiday season to us all!

COLLEN MASIMIREMBWA



ILLUSTRATION: NZILANI SIMU

The Zimbabwean aligning modern drugs with African genes

Big pharma medicines are not one-size-fits-all and the good prof is remeasuring them to size for Africans.

LYDIA NAMUBIRU

PROFESSOR Collen Masimirembwa deservedly won this year's African Genius Award. The pharmacogenetics pioneer has spent three decades exemplifying African scientific excellence.

At the University of the Witwatersrand and the African Institute of Biomedical Science, his biochemistry lab teams consistently produce new knowledge on how drugs interact with the genetics of African populations. His peers have also cited his research at least 7,300 times, according to Google Scholar.

That already clears the bar for genius, but he also strives to incorporate this science into clinical practice.



In 2016, when UNAIDS announced its ambitious plan to turn HIV-infection into a manageable chronic condition by getting at least 90% of positive people on antiretrovirals, Masimirembwa welcomed the effort but flagged a major risk: the rollout included efavirenz. This drug causes severe psychiatric effects in people of African ancestry, as his team's research had proven the previous year. He shifted to lobbying and the dosage of that drug was eventually reduced.

He is now pursuing similar change for African women with breast cancer. Decades ago, research found a unique genetic variation in African women. More recent research by Masimirembwa's team shows the variation makes it harder to respond to tamoxifen, a standard breast cancer medication. He is lobbying for a change in tamoxifen dosage, specifically for African women.

His lab also invented a blood test, GenoPharm^R, which predicts how a person of African ancestry may react to medicines. It could prevent many of the drug-response problems that have turned Masimirembwa into both a scientist and an advocate. ■

Lydia Namubiru is the editor-in-chief of *The Continent*

MARIAM ISSOUFOU



ILLUSTRATION: NZILANI SIMU

Architecture that works like a portrait

Shelter should absolutely consider who creates it and who benefits from it.

WYNONA MUTISI

SOME of the mud-brick (adobe) structures in the historical city of Agadez date as far back as the 16th century. This is what Mariam Issoufou – who pivoted from computer engineering to architecture in her early 30s – grew up around. Now she draws inspiration from them for her architectural practice.

Agadez's early masons built with their desert climate in mind. As the sun beats down, the structures provide essential shade and absorb the heat. At night when it is cooler, the walls slowly release the heat. Issoufou's Western education provided design solutions to modern architectural challenges, but it seemed blind to the wisdom embedded in the ancient architecture she grew up around. This disconnect set her on a journey: researching heritage construction.

At the end of that process, Issoufou's curiosity had led her to an innovative outlook on architecture. This is evident in projects she has designed, like the award-winning Hikma Community Complex and the Dandaji Market in Niger. They borrow from Nigerien



architectural heritage and update it at the same time.

Issoufou's sustainability approach involves using local materials, including raw earth and recycled metal. In her structures, clay, which is lower maintenance than mud bricks, is compressed into earth bricks to maintain the thermal qualities of adobe. Like the ancient Nigerien masons, she uses structural forms that allow the houses to cool naturally, resulting in less energy use. She hires local builders to blend traditional Nigerien masonry with contemporary practice. Ultimately, her buildings serve the community who will inhabit them. They sustain their livelihoods, history, and culture, which also ensures they are fit for local use.

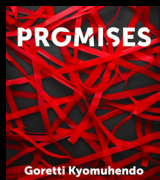
Issoufou's practice is a lesson in not forgetting the past and its wisdom while building a future that wholly and truly represents its people and context. Rather than producing grand new architectural designs, her practice starts with the community's knowledge. ■

Wynona Mutisi is an illustrator and layout designer at *The Continent*



THE YEAR IN BOOKS

As chosen by **Jacqueline Nyathi**, founder of *Harare Review of Books* and *The Continent's* book reviewer.



5 **Promises by Goretti Kyomuhendo**

The dream of a settled middle-class life through the power of the almighty pound drives young people in former British colonies to the United Kingdom. The couple in this story may be fictitious, but their trajectory – from hope to despair, and then picking up the pieces again – is all too real.



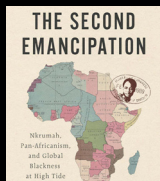
4 **Will This Be A Problem? The Anthology: Issue V, edited by Olivia Kidula and Somto Ihezue**

This spectacular collection features speculative fiction from Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, South Africa, Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe. In it you'll find shifty markets, njuzu, tech, cosmic battles, alt-history, anti-capitalist rebellion and maybe even the reason why donkeys have 44 teeth.



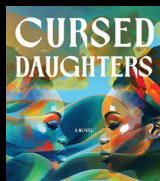
3 **Everything is Fine Here by Iryn Tushabe**

Another book about African lives, which are so often a dance between the rural and urban. This great novel shows both these aspects. It's a heartwarming coming-of-age story of two Ugandan sisters, with themes exploring queerness and the tensions of family – whether that's one's family of origin, or chosen family.



2 **The Second Emancipation by Howard W French**

French's biography of Kwame Nkrumah evaluates the impact of Ghana's first post-independence leader on Africa and the world and his claim to pan-Africanism. It demonstrates links from Africa to the diaspora and illuminates how events on the continent shaped and were shaped by world affairs. Keep reading us next year for a more substantive review.



1 **Cursed Daughters by Oyinkan Braithwaite**

A late-year surprise, Braithwaite's wonderful tale of generations of women getting into trouble with men is a balance of the lighthearted and the serious. It's a well-executed exploration of desire, love, loss, desperation, and the apparent power of self-fulfilling prophecies. A glorious work.

IMPRISONED OPPOSITION LEADERS



The people who pay the price of resistance

Across Africa, opposition figures are languishing behind bars.

KIRI RUPIAH

OPPOSING power is a dangerous pursuit in Africa and in 2025, yet again, many have paid for their dissent.

In Cameroon, the circumstances of Anicet Ekane's death are still emerging. The opposition veteran was arrested in October and died in jail five weeks later.

In Chad, Succès Masra, a former prime minister and opposition leader, was arrested in May. Masra was accused of inciting hatred and violence. In August, he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Rwandan Victoire Ingabire, of the unregistered Dalfa-Umurinzi party, was rearrested in June for "forming a criminal group" and "inciting public disorder", marking yet another chapter in her years-long struggle for political freedom.

In Tanzania veteran opposition figure Tundu Lissu remains detained on treason-related charges and senior opposition leader Amani Golugwa was also arrested in the state security crackdown around the October election.

Four-time Ugandan presidential challenger Kizza Besigye has been repeatedly arrested, charged, or placed under house arrest for more than two decades. Last year he was abducted and renditioned to a maximum security prison where he remains without bail.



PHOTO: ERICKY BONIPHACE/AFP

Aluta: Tanzanian opposition leader Tundu Lissu enters Kisumu Magistrate's Court in May.

In Mali, Yousouf Daba Diawara is still incarcerated with 11 others held under broad security charges. Former prime minister Moussa Mara was arrested in August for allegedly "discrediting the state" and inciting disorder. He was sentenced to one year without parole.

In Eswatini, MP Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza continues to serve a 25-year sentence under terrorism and sedition laws.

In Tunisia, a sweeping clampdown has targeted nearly every major opposition force. Among those detained are Rached Ghannouchi, Abir Moussi, Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, Chaima Issa, Ayachi Hammami, and Sahbi Atig. ■

Kiri Rupiah is the communities editor at *The Continent*

LAURA WOLVAARDT



ILLUSTRATION: NZILANI SIMU

All hail the all-rounder

The world's No. 1 ODI batter has hit this year for six.

FIRDOSE MOONDA

LAURA Wolvaardt is not even 30 years old, but she's Africa's leading female cricketer and one of the world's best. She is already into her 10th year as an international sportsperson and her third as the captain of the South African women's cricket team. She is also their top batter. No one has scored more runs for South Africa and she is the first from the country to reach 5,000 one-day international (ODI) runs and 2,000 in Twenty20 (T20) internationals. She has achieved all that while completing a Bachelor of Science degree – cum laude – and keeping her dream of becoming a doctor alive.

Wolvaardt secured a spot in medical school, but gave that up when she was picked for the national cricket side in 2016. She was initially lauded for her technical perfection, with one of the smoothest cover drives in the game, but was shy and reserved as she found her feet. Seven years later, she was given the captaincy and has thrived under the responsibility.

In 2025, she hit the fastest 50 and 100 by a South African woman in T20 international cricket, but those were the least of her achievements.



PHOTO: NIKHIL PATIL/GETTY IMAGES

Hey, batter batter: *Academics, cricket and even music? Laura Wolvaardt seems to find success in anything she puts her mind to.*

She also captained South Africa to their first ODI World Cup final. Wolvaardt was the leading run-scorer in the tournament, became the first captain to score a century in a Women's World Cup knockout match, and the only one to also score a hundred in the final. Although South Africa did not return from India with the trophy, they reinforced their credentials as one of the best outfits in the global game.

Wolvaardt is regarded as a smart tactician who manages her players with maturity and has united a squad from diverse backgrounds in pursuit of one goal: excellence. Did we mention she also fancies herself as a musician? She plays the guitar and sings in an amateur band. ■

Firdose Moonda is the Southern African and women's correspondent for ESPNcricinfo and has written about cricket for 20 years



THE YEAR IN PHOTOS

As chosen by **Paul Botes**, *The Continent's* photo editor.

THE AFRICAN continent has again barely featured in the global selections of the best or most impactful photography from 2025. Photography of Africa accounted for less than 5% of the work chosen and those photographs tended to display conflict, displacement, minerals, and, of course, wildlife.

In reality, there were hundreds of other photographs to pick from.

I let my bosses know that whittling down the hundreds to a measly five is super difficult. I argued for at least 10. But they remained disagreeable. This selection, therefore, represents a tiny fraction of the African photography that resonated with me this year.

As photo editor of *The Continent*, I was fortunate enough to commission a lot of original photography this year. My favourite story to work on was the Lagos Studio Archive, featuring photographs from *Abi Morocco Photos*. That stuff still makes me smile – unfortunately, it can't be considered for this list. Fethi Sahraoui's intimate look at Algiers was a standout too. This work, commissioned as part of our *We Built This City* series, explored the photographer's complex relationship with his adoptive city through beautiful, dreamlike photographs. We commissioned Moses Sawasawa to photograph the

deteriorating situation in Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), after the March 23 Movement rebels had seized control of the city. One of the photographs in particular stood out for me, as it filled me with the urgency I was reading about.

Photography of Africa accounted for less than 5% of the work chosen and those photographs tended to display conflict, displacement, minerals, and, of course, wildlife.

We also published plenty of photography commissioned by other editors. Luis Tato's portrait of a young woman in the rain, displaced in the DRC conflict, is a remarkable photograph that exudes joy in a challenging situation. Marco Longari's portrait of a Comoran couple's "Grand Marriage" is gentle, with the colourful, textured view from inside a home, imbuing the occasion with even more meaning. Tato's striking photograph of a woman leaping away from the police's attention in Kenya is arresting and stands out among the thousands of images transmitted during the protests.



MOSES SAWASAWA/
THE CONTINENT



LUIS TATO/AFP



MARCO LONGARI/AFP



FETHI SAHRAOUI/THE CONTINENT



LUIS TATO/AFP

TEAM BOTSWANA



The men from Botswana who rewrote Africa's track record

In Tokyo, Botswana's relay heroes carried more than a baton.

KEVIN D. MOFOKENG

MOMENTS of collective joy have felt particularly scarce this year. When four young men from Botswana stepped onto a rain-soaked track and shifted the axis of world athletics, they caused an eruption in their homeland and across Africa.

In September 2025, at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, Lee Bhekempilo Eppie, Letsile Tebogo, Bayapo Ndori, and Busang Collen Kebinatshipi made history by becoming the first African team ever to win a global relay title. It was a seismic achievement in their country of two million people and it rewrote Africa's literal track record, which was previously limited to dominance in long-distance races.

The quartet's brilliance wasn't just their speed, but also their cohesion. Eppie's quiet leadership set the tone with a composed first leg before Tebogo, the youngest, unleashed raw, breathtaking acceleration in the second leg. Ndori carried that momentum through his confident and assured third leg before passing the baton to Kebinatshipi, whose ferocity demonstrated that pressure does not intimidate him, but sharpens him. Across international meets their maturity and chemistry has been a



PHOTO: DANIELA PORCELLI/GETTY IMAGES

Go, go, go: Talent, discipline and unity won the men's 4x400m relay team their ticket to glory.

standard rarely seen in relay squads.

They move together like a single argument made in four, sharp decisive sentences – precise, unshowy, relentless, and unstoppable. Their Tokyo triumph was more than a medal: it was a message that talent, discipline, and unity can elevate a small country to global prominence.

Botswana will host the World Athletics Relays in May 2026. The Fast Four will not just be defending champions. They will be mentors, role models, and symbols of a nation redefining its sporting story. From rainy tracks to the world stage, they remind us that greatness can emerge from anywhere. When it does, it electrifies the world. ■

Kevin D. Mofokeng is a writer and advocate for social justice and development

ELLY SAVATIA



Oh, you're deaf? There's an app for that

Say hello to the Kenyan innovator who's developed an app that translates speech into sign language.

ROBERT AMALEMBA

ELLY SAVATIA spent his childhood tinkering with clocks, radios, and other electronics he found around the house. At age 13, he developed a rotatable wind turbine, winning a challenge at school.

And thus his journey as an innovator began.

"I knew this path was meant for me because I never believed in theories taught in the traditional classroom without sufficient experimentation," Savatia tells *The Continent*.

Over the years, he has focused his innovation on disability access. Savatia created The Stair Ramp – a robotic staircase for wheelchair users – and, most recently, the Terp 360 app. The app translates spoken language into sign language in real time using AI and 3D avatars.

With the app, people whose hearing is impaired no longer need a human interpreter. They simply activate it and are able to follow conversations in real time. The deaf community in Kenya were early adopters, helping with

beta-testing and sampling some 2,300 words and texts that the app converts into signs. It has already been adopted by at least 2,000 people.

Savatia conceived the idea for the app in 2019 while he was teaching students in northeastern Kenya, after watching 300 deaf students relying on a single human interpreter in the room. In a country with high mobile penetration, he thought a mobile translation app could offer a more accessible and personalised solution.

The lack of data in Kiswahili was his main challenge. "Most available datasets were British or American, with no Swahili content," he says. "A government grant allowed us to collaborate with Kenya's deaf community to create a dataset tailored to our users."

The app is now available on a trial basis in Kenya but Savatia hopes to expand to include other African languages. He is eyeing Rwanda and Uganda as the next countries to roll it out in. ■



PHOTO: MONICAH MWANGI/REUTERS

Sign up: Twenty-four year-old Elly Savatia during an interview with Reuters in April.

Robert Amalemba is a regular contributor to *The Continent*



THE YEAR IN COMICS

As chosen by **Bill Masuku**, creator of *Tokoloshe Hunters*, a fan-favourite Afro-manga that is soon-to-be-republished.



5 **Celestial Eyes** (Nigeria)

If *John Wick* and *The Witcher* had a baby, it'd be this supernatural crime thriller. From the mind of John Uche, with art by Francis Goodluck, comes the mature, magical *Celestial Eyes*. Onwanuju, the occult detective with a full blue moon in her eyes, and Odi Maria – her adventurous best friend – investigate mysterious cases that plague their city.



4 **Kalabash** (Zimbabwe)

Afro Tokyo is a Zimbabwean company creating southern African stories with art influenced by Japanese manga. Its *Kalabash* anthology aims to create easily accessible print stories rather than high-cost graphic novels. Although the pages are black and white, the writing and art creatively play with anatomy, page flow, and graphic-design principles.



3 **Imbokodo** (South Africa)

This beautiful fantasy epic from Thabo Rametsi, Thabiso Mabanna, and Katlego Motaung is unlike any comic before it. In the Monomotapa empire, Queen Nyameka commands the greatest warriors in all of Ndawo, the Imbokodo ("rock" in isiZulu). Here, a woman will fight to join them and stand for the queen, the empire, and for the freedom of all Muntu.



2 **Touch & Follow** (Cameroon)

Most comic books from Africa lean into sci-fi and fantastical worlds inspired by great but forgotten cultures. In contrast, *Touch & Follow* is a slice-of-life drama with a hint of love potions. It makes for a quintessential African story while using Zebra Comics' app to elevate the passionate and comedic narrative flow in a way that is not limited by paper.

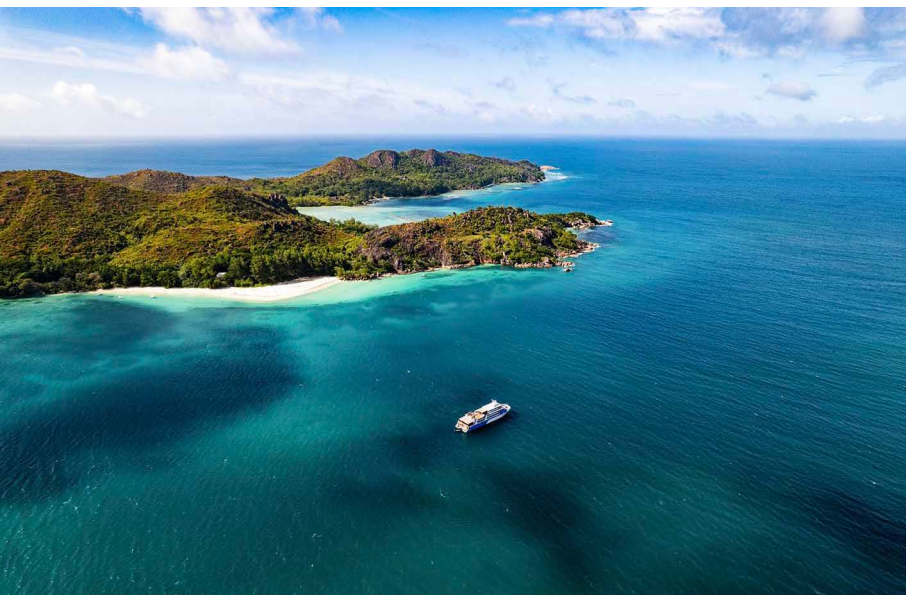


1 **Carry On** (Ethiopia)

In their contributions to Etan Comics's speculative fiction anthology, comic creators from across the continent consider what happens after a great change – and how great changes force us to make hard decisions. *Carry On* is an assortment of space, time-travel, metaphysical, and genre-bending stories of identity, culture, and the enduring human spirit.

The Quiz

- 1** Daniel Chapo became president of which country this year?
- 2** What is the nickname of RSF general Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo?
- 3** The M23 rebel group seized Goma in the DRC this year. What does M23 stand for?
- 4** In which country was the Rashid Stone, also known as Rosetta Stone, seized?
- 5** In which city did the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community meet in February to discuss the DRC conflict?
- 6** In which city did this year's AU Summit take place?
- 7** Mahmoud Ali Youssouf became the AU Commission chairperson. Where is he from?
- 8** Police from which African country were deployed to Haiti this year?
- 9** In which country were this year's Wafcon fixtures held?
- 10** Mining company De Beers extended its partnership with which country by 25 years?
- 11** In March, US President Trump said "nobody has ever heard of" which African country?



- 12** What does Ethiopia's TPLF stand for?
- 13** Legendary director Souleymane Cissé died this year. Which country was he from?
- 14** Who was re-elected as head of the Confederation of African Football?
- 15** Which 92-year-old was re-elected for an eighth term as president in 2025?
- 16** Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah became

- which country's first woman president?
- 17** Brice Oligui Nguema won 95% of the vote in which country's presidential election?
- 18** With whom did Nicolas Sarkozy enter a "corruption pact", for which he was imprisoned this year?
- 19** Which Nigerian singer released the hit song *Hot Body* this year?
- 20** Patrick Herminie this year became president of which archipelago nation (pictured x2)?



HOW DID I DO?

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

0-7

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

8-14

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

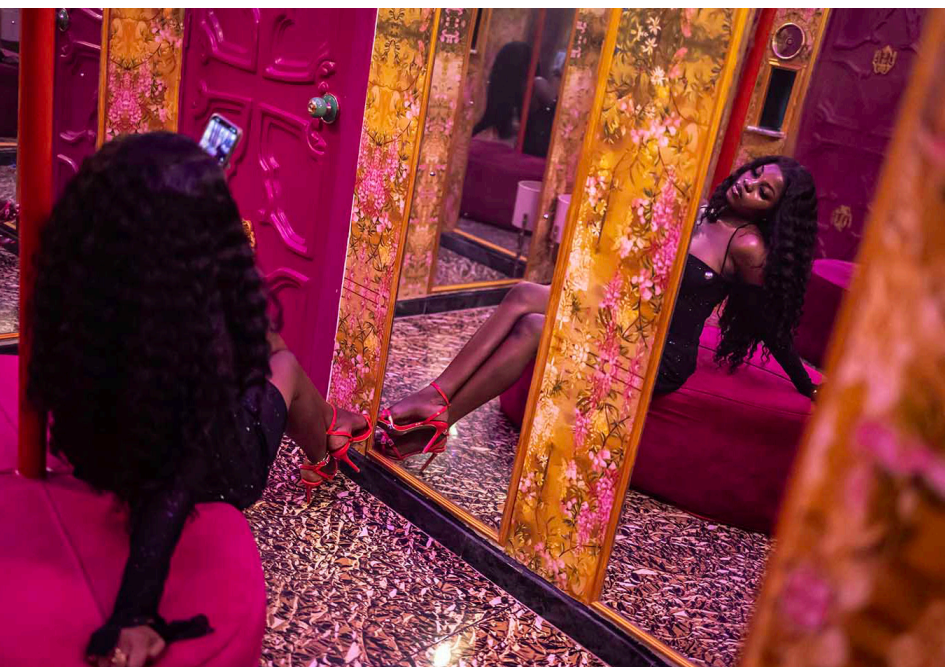
15-20

"This year I put the 'hip' into archipelago."

Big Pic

Awe de Toilette: A patron takes a selfie in the lush loo of the Zaza lounge in Lagos. In Nigeria, lavatories are no joke: clubs are maxing out their overdrafts decking out their restrooms in marble and gold to draw in affluencers.

PHOTO: OLYMPIA DE MAISMONT/AFP



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publisher of The Continent and The Friday Paper

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.

A bit about us ...

WE PUBLISHED the first edition of *The Continent* in April 2020, betting that people want to read quality African journalism. Learning from others, we reimagined what a newspaper looks like in the 21st century. That meant sharing it where you are – on WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram and email – and packing it with bits of African life, from big investigations to stories of everyday people navigating extraordinary circumstances.

We now have 31,000 subscribers. The typical subscriber says they forward the newspaper to four or five people: in church WhatsApp groups, work Slack channels and across Signal and Telegram. That's more than 100,000 each week getting insight from on-the-

ground reporting by our network of over 400 journalists across most of the countries on our continent.

People, not algorithms, decide who gets to read *The Continent*, and our old-school newspaper format means they get a fuller picture of their world than they would from piecemeal articles scattered across the internet.

That work has been supported by these funders over the years: 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.

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