

# The Continent

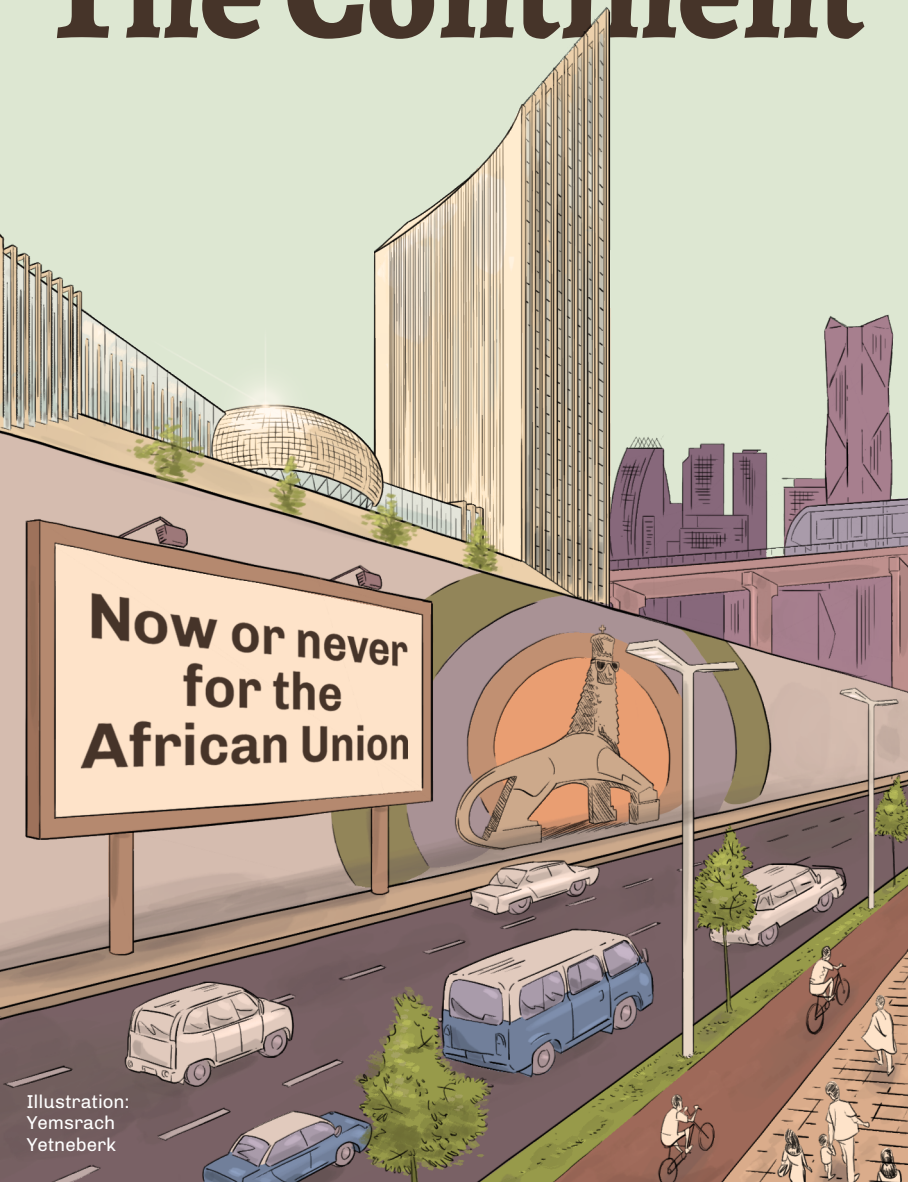
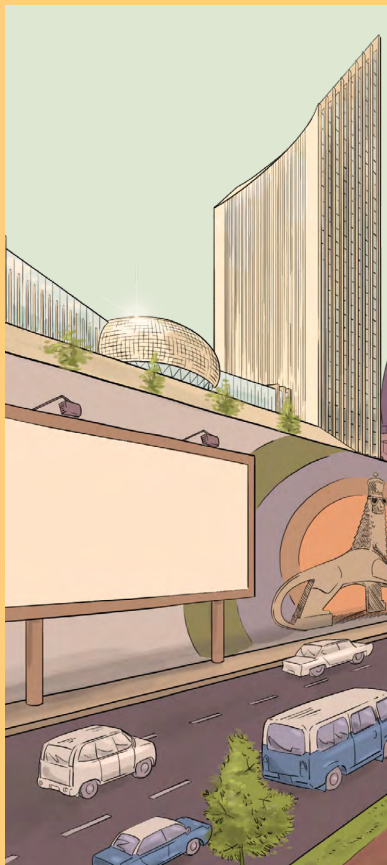


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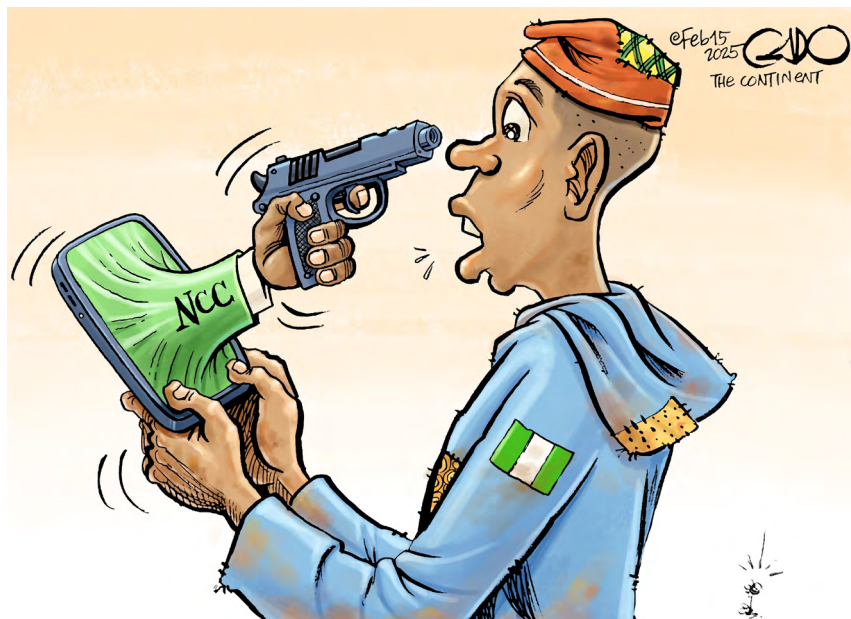
**Cover:** This is no ordinary African Union summit. Donald Trump is in the process of shattering the world order as we know it. In Addis Ababa this weekend, we should start to get a sense of how the continent will adapt to the new abnormal. Can our leaders present a united front? Or will we remain divided and ruled? (p10)

# Inside:

- **Libya:** Mass graves and migration (p8)
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## Hello and welcome!

In the past few weeks, more than a thousand new people have subscribed to *The Continent*. If you are one of them – it is a pleasure to welcome you to our pages. We are well on our way to achieving our goal of 30,000 subscribers by the end of this season. If you know anyone else who might be interested in a weekly dose of award-winning African journalism, please send them this edition – and ask them to subscribe too!



## NIGERIA

### Labour unions call for telecoms boycott amid price-hike rage

The Nigeria Labour Congress, a collective of trade unions in the country, called on mobile phone users to boycott the products of MTN, Airtel and Glo for four hours a day, to protest their 50% price hike. The war over the hike peaked when MTN further increased the cost of a 15GB bundle by 200% to 6,000 naira (\$4), causing social media outrage. MTN later apologised and pulled the bundle altogether – but the 50% hike across the board remains.

## ANGOLA

### Shocking death rate fuels rush on cholera vaccinations

At least 180 people died in a cholera outbreak since January, Angola's health ministry said this week. More than 3,000 people were infected. The 3.4% fatality rate is much higher than the 1% public health experts expect when a cholera outbreak is managed appropriately. It has seen Angolans rush to get the oral vaccine for cholera. "More than a million people have been vaccinated in the three hardest-hit provinces," the World Health Organisation said on Wednesday.

## CAR

## National memecoin tops \$17-million in its first week

In a bid to attract funding to his beleaguered country, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra launched a Central African Republic memecoin on Monday. A memecoin is a cryptocurrency whose value is driven by the popularity of its promoters. Critics warn they resemble pyramid schemes in which early adopters make a fortune at the expense of those who buy in later. The most successful is Elon Musk's \$40-billion Dogecoin. Neither Touadéra nor CAR have Musk's profile but the \$CAR memecoin was worth \$17.4-million by late Friday afternoon, according to CoinMarketCap.

## CAPITALISM

## Reporting shames agricorp snoops into ditching snitch site

A US-based company that tracked and profiled environmental activists for state and corporate clients has abandoned its industrial-scale snitching. *The Continent*, in partnership with *Lighthouse Reports*, previously reported on V-fluence and the firm's "stakeholder wiki", a secret site that gathered intel on activists, sometimes including private information like their addresses, and provided it to policymakers and agricultural industry clients via an invite-only web portal. The firm told Radio Canada it deleted the site after that reporting triggered numerous complaints.

## NIGERIA

## Senate digs deep to help bridge chasm left by US funding freeze

Nigeria's senate has approved a supplementary budget of \$200-million for the health sector to help mitigate the effects of the US decision to cut its foreign aid, the *Associated Press* reports. Last week, \$3.2-million was approved for HIV treatments over the next four months. Before the aid freeze, annual US aid to Nigeria's health sector was nearly three times the total amount approved so far.



**US vs us: The aid freeze ordered by US President Donald Trump has gutted health programmes across the continent.** Photo: Kola Sulaimon/AFP

## GHANA

## Former first cousin declared 'fugitive'

Prosecutors have labelled Ken Ofori-Atta, the former finance minister of Ghana, a fugitive who is wanted for his alleged involvement in multiple corruption cases. Ofori-Atta held the role between 2017 and the end of 2024, during the presidency of his cousin Nana Akufo-Addo. He has left the country, missing an interview with special prosecutor Kissi Agyebeng who is probing the mismanagement of funds for a massive national cathedral project.

## NIGERIA

## The people of the Niger Delta vs Shell

A decade-long bid by the Ogale and Bille communities in the Niger Delta to hold Shell accountable for oil-related pollution, leapt forward this week. The United Kingdom's high court held a "preliminary issues trial" to determine the scope of the full trial that Shell will face next year. It was the first court date since December 2024 when Shell's lawyers lost their last appeal in their many attempts to stonewall or prevent the trial from ever happening.



Arms' length: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and United States President Donald Trump.

Photo: Saul Loeb/AFP

## EGYPT-US

## Aid-freeze exemption hardly a trump card

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has postponed his Washington DC visit which was originally set for 18 February. Cairo is often happy to be a US ally and US

President Donald Trump kept it on-side when he quickly exempted its military aid from his global aid freeze. But Trump's proposal to relocate Palestinians from Gaza is a bridge too far even for that allyship. The Egyptian government said it rejects any proposal that "aims to liquidate the Palestinian cause by uprooting the Palestinian people".

## UGANDA

## M7's arch-nemesis on hunger strike in martial law protest

President Yoweri Museveni's most dogged opponent Kizza Besigye has begun a hunger strike to protest his imprisonment. Besigye was kidnapped from Nairobi in November and charged in a military court for allegedly possessing firearms. Opposed to applying martial law to civilians, Besigye, who resigned from the army 24 years ago, refused to take a plea in the military court. A landmark ruling by Uganda's Supreme Court last month ordered all court martial cases involving civilians to be transferred,



**Tyranny sans frontières: Kizza Besigye was abducted from Kenya by Ugandan forces.** Photo: Badru Katumba/AFP

backing Besigye's stance. The court martial has not acted on the ruling.

## DRC

## Rape and murder by soldiers give M23 all the excuse they need

Government troops reportedly looted households, raped women and killed at least 12 civilians in Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, over the weekend. The rampage happened amid speculation that the city was about to fall to M23 – the rebels who over run the North Kivu capital Goma. A military court charged 84 of the government soldiers on Monday. M23 fighters resumed their advance to Bukavu, after a two-day lull, claiming they “heard the desperate cries of the civilian population” there and reportedly seized it on Friday night.

## ALGERIA

## Tebboune reaps rare protests for defunding education

Teachers across Algeria went on a two-day strike this week to protest against poor pay and working conditions. The strike echoes January demonstrations by similarly unhappy students. In a country that has become increasingly hostile to dissent under President Abdelmadjid Tebboune this is “an unusual outpouring of protest,” says the *Arab News* outlet. But it was not unpredictable. In 2019 when Tebboune came to power, 16% of government spending was being spent on education. That has fallen steadily to 13% as military spending rose.

# United States

## The cost of Trump's executive disorder is measured in lives

Uganda's health authorities have closed all the clinics that focused on patients with HIV and tuberculosis. Staffed by health workers who over time developed deep expertise in sensitively managing infectious yet stigmatised diseases, the clinics were key to Uganda cutting HIV infection rates from over 30% in the late 1980s to about 5.3% now.

The closure of these clinics is just one example of the disruption and confusion surrounding the near-total freeze on US aid and development funding ordered by the United States President Donald Trump last month. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) says there have been similar disruptions to successful HIV programmes in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The closures persists despite – or perhaps because of – weekly missives from Washington DC offering piecemeal waivers or ambiguous guidance.

American aid to the global HIV response is channelled through the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (Pepfar). It is the world's biggest HIV response fund and it supports – or supported – up to 20-million people.

Uncertain about its fate, many HIV care providers funded by it have decided to close their doors.

Last week, the US State Department issued further guidance, saying life-saving care for HIV-positive mothers “should be resumed as soon as possible”. But it excluded providing some services to sex workers, drug users and LGBTQ+ people.

On Thursday, a court in Washington DC ordered a temporary suspension of Trump's freeze on aid. It is far from clear whether the executive branch of the United States will accept the ruling of its own judiciary – leaving Pepfar-funded organisations, and the millions of people that they serve, extremely vulnerable. ■



**Bitterest pill: NGOs providing vital HIV medication have been forced to shut their doors.** Photo: Barbara Debout/AFP

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# Libya

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## Mass graves highlight the hidden danger migrants face in the desert

Kiri Rupiah

Libyan police have unearthed two mass graves in the desert in the country's south-east, near Al-Kufra, and recovered the bodies of at least 50 people who they say were shot dead or left to die by human traffickers. Authorities have arrested several people they believe to be connected to the deaths: a Libyan and two foreign nationals.

Most reporting on migrants deaths has focused on drownings during perilous crossings across the Mediterranean sea to Europe, and the human rights abuses that happen on the North African coast, especially when EU-funded Libyan coastguards try to stop people from making it across the sea.

But much of what actually happens inside the country remains hidden, says Franz Prutsch of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

It's often just as horrifying, as the grisly

discovery this week made clear.

The graves were discovered following a raid on a site in the area, where victims of human trafficking were being held. The Libyan attorney general's office said that police rescued 76 people who were being held captive.

The raid and graves are just snapshots of the perilous land route and smuggling networks that run it. The IOM says that more than 22% of the migrant deaths recorded in Libya last year happened on land routes.

Reporting by many outlets including *The Continent* has shown that some of the violence and neglect that kills the migrants is by government forces in North Africa which have received hundreds of millions of euros over the past decade to "manage migrations".

In some cases, their interceptions are brutally violent or end in so-called "desert dumps" where migrants are pushed back into the harsh desert where they risk death.

But it's becoming increasingly clear that cynical official forces are far from the only risk migrants face: Since the Nato-supported toppling of Libya's longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the country has been fragmented between militia and political factions which contributes to widespread violence and the proliferation of criminal enterprises like human trafficking. ■



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# African Union



History repeats:  
Gaddafi and Salim at  
the launch of the AU  
in 2001. Photo: The  
Salim Ahmed Salim  
Digital Archives

## The African Union's moment of truth

**At this weekend's summit in Addis Ababa, our presidents must decide: Does the continental body serve them, or us?**

### NEWS ANALYSIS

**Simon Allison**

**I**n March 1990, the Tanzanian statesman Salim Ahmed Salim visited Muammar Gaddafi in Tripoli. At the time, Salim was just six months into his long tenure as secretary-general of the Organisation of African Unity. According to Salim's notes, the Libyan dictator made

him wait before eventually granting him an audience in the ruins of a former presidential compound that had been bombed by US warplanes several years earlier. Gaddafi had turned the compound into a museum.

On two chairs set up outside a tent, the pair discussed the major issues of the day – civil war in Ethiopia; clashes in Darfur; the Western Sahara dispute –

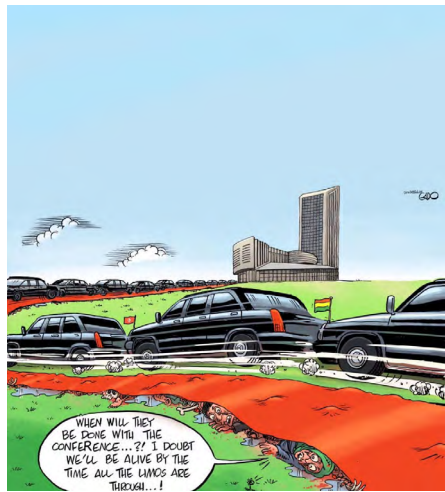
before Gaddafi steered the conversation towards global geopolitics. The Cold War was over and the Soviet Union was collapsing. Suddenly, the world was a very different place. The sense of change, and possibility, was tangible.

So too was the threat. “I think the map of the world will be reshaped,” said Gaddafi. “I am afraid, and I am sorry for it, Africa will have its part.”

Both Gaddafi and Salim went on to play a key role in the creation, in 2001, of the African Union – Africa’s attempt to respond to this new world order. The new institution was better-structured, better-resourced and more empowered than its predecessor. The thinking of its architects was simple: we are stronger together. Without a strong continental body, Africans will always be at the mercy of foreign powers.

More than three decades later, the world is being reshaped again. Africa will have its part – and there is plenty of cause to be afraid.

Already, in just a single month, the impact of an isolationist and explicitly racist administration in the United States is being felt on the continent. Billions of dollars in development assistance have been withdrawn; the lives of millions of Africans are imperiled by the halt in distribution of key medication; and President Donald Trump has threatened a trade war against South Africa, the continent’s largest economy. Meanwhile, right-wing movements like Trump’s are gaining ground all over the western world, while international institutions like the United Nations and the World



**New Addis: Ethiopia's capital gets a makeover before most AU summits.**  
Cartoon by Gado from Issue 117 of *The Continent*

Health Organisation are getting weaker.

The threats loom large.

So too do the possibilities.

How the AU responds may determine the economic and political future of this continent for generations to come.

Now is its moment of truth.

### **Tectonic shifts**

For the AU, the timing of all this global upheaval is interesting.

The chair of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, is nearing the end of his second four-year term and is not allowed to run for the position again. That’s just as well: assessments of Faki’s tenure are uniformly damning – pointing to chronic mismanagement,



**Side-eyed and sidelined: Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairperson of the African Union, is on his way out. He won't be missed tbh.**

Photo: Amanuel Sileshi/AFP

widespread corruption and cronyism, and a timid, ineffective approach to conflict prevention (see: Sudan, the Sahel, Ethiopia). Last week, in Dar es Salaam, Faki endured the ultimate humiliation. At the regional meeting called to discuss the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Faki was ordered out of the room before the talks got serious. Even his peers do not trust him with sensitive negotiations.

This weekend, at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, heads of state will gather to elect Faki's replacement. The three candidates are Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, the foreign minister of Djibouti; Raila Odinga, the former prime minister of Kenya; and Richard Randriamandrato, the former foreign minister of Madagascar. But whatever Faki's own faults were, there are structural issues that make it difficult for the AU chair to exert authority. Whoever wins will face them as much as Faki did.

One issue is that the chair answers to, and implements the decisions of, the

African Union Assembly – composed of the heads of the 55 member states. Given the governance records of too many of those heads of state, it is hardly a surprise that issues like corruption and due process are not taken seriously.

Another issue, perhaps even more significant, is that these member states do not provide nearly enough funds for the AU to operate effectively. In fact, the contributions of member states account for only a third of the AU's budget. Other countries – international partners in AU terminology – make up almost all the rest: \$370-million of last year's \$605-million budget. The AU was intended to help Africa assert its independence from foreign powers. Instead, it is almost entirely beholden to them.

### **Now or never**

Fortunately for whoever succeeds Faki, if they try to remake the AU, they will not be doing it alone.

In 2018, 37 women staffers within the African Union Commission wrote

a letter to Faki. The letter described a “professional apartheid” within the AUC, in which women were routinely discriminated against for promotion and opportunities.

It was leaked to the *Mail & Guardian*, which published a related investigation in May of that year, causing a furore within the institution. The resulting media attention forced the AUC to appoint an independent commission of inquiry. This inquiry, led by the Senegalese feminist advocate Benita Diop, upheld the complaints in the original letter. But it went even further, concluding that sexual harassment, fraud, nepotism and abuse of power was rife within the institution. The report named names – although these were never revealed publicly. No further action was taken against the alleged perpetrators, and the commission was later accused by staffers of covering up the allegations.

That effort at accountability, triggered and ultimately defeated by the worst of the AU, nonetheless revealed its best potential. It showed it as an institution with people who, despite it all, are willing to risk everything and stand up to the combined power of 55 heads of state in the service of good governance and pan-African values. If Faki’s replacement

can harness this spirit and courage, the AU might come to fulfil the destiny envisioned by its founders.

It is possible. Take the example of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, which steered the continent through a global pandemic. Or the ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area: critics said it was unachievable, until it happened – pushed through in large part thanks to the relentless energy of the AU trade commission.

As the global order disintegrates, the emerging multiple poles of power are jostling for influence in this continent. What bargains they strike will either be driven by a united voice coming out of the AU, or by the disparate interests of 55 states and various blocs.

Which it will be – divided and ruled, or a continent united – depends largely on the gravitas and capabilities of the man who wins the AU election this weekend. It also depends on the African public’s engagement with the institution. And on whether people rally behind those who seek and deliver its wins, or those who use it for their own ends. ■

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*Simon Allison is the co-founder and International Editor of The Continent*

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## Green gems, red flags

Illustration: Wynona Mutisi

*The wealth from Kenya's rare tsavorite gems rarely goes to those who find them. Worse, the companies that exploit local miners often abuse them too. Could the country's shifting stance on artisanal mining change this old – and all too common – misfortune?*

## Maureen Kasuku

One evening two years ago, Kijala's sister came home in tears from her work at a tsavorite mine in Taita-Taveta, in Kenya's south west. "She told me that she had been forced into a room by one of her supervisors [and another man], where she was stripped to make sure she was not trying to smuggle any tsavorite stones through her private parts," says Kijala.

After reporting the assault to the police, Kijala joined other family members to confront one of the men involved. It did not go well. "We were arrested," Kijala tells *The Continent*. "They said we were trespassing."

Working the tsavorite mines of Kenya's

Kasigau corridor should be lucrative. After all, just a single carat of the rare sparkly-green garnet gemstone – one fifth of a gram – can fetch up to \$10,000 on the world market. In reality, the mines are both a lifeline and "a trap", says Chao\*, a woman in her mid-40s who has been a miner for 12 years now.

Chao spends weeks on end at the mine, leaving her children to be raised by her mother. Her earnings pay to keep them in a local secondary school and that is often enough to keep her going. But she also worries that paying school fees is not enough to make up for being an absent mother.

Emmanuel Kishushe, a community organiser in the tsavorite mining town



Kasigau tsavorite mine.

Photo: Milla Fedha

of Voi, says the children of miners who spend months away are left vulnerable. “Many of them end up being preyed upon, and some drop out of school altogether.” Chao agrees and says her own children are struggling. “I’m scared they’ll end up working here at the mine. I’ve already seen children of some of the other miners join us.”

Wages from working at a tsavorite mine have helped Mwatela, a woman in her 20s, support her aging parents. But the work has taken a physical and psychological toll on her. “It’s very hard work,” she says. “Sometimes I go for days without bathing or brushing my teeth. I feel masculine working here. I’ve never been in a relationship with a man. I would like to get married someday.”

Despite these fears, Chao and Mwatela, like hundreds of others in Kasigau, cannot simply walk away from mining for tsavorites. History left them few other options.

### **What’s mined is ours**

Kasigau, their homeland, lies right at Kenya’s border with Tanzania, which was a German colony from the 1880s. In 1915, Kenya’s British colonisers exiled people from the area, accusing them of aiding German World War I forces. When they returned in 1936, the land had been labelled “Crown Land”. At independence, it was passed on to the Kenyan government as public land. The government went on to parcel much of it out to private wildlife conservancies.

Prevented from farming the land around them, many descendants of

the 1915 exiles turned to mining once tsavorites were discovered in the area in the 1970s. They keep doing it because “it feeds our families,” says Charity Mwangogo.

But Mwangogo is doing it a bit differently from women like Kijala’s sister. She is not mining as a company employee but as part of a local collective of artisanal miners: Nyangala Cooperative. Chao recently registered to be part of the collective too.

Collectives like Nyangala are helping Kenyan miners in Kasigau and elsewhere to find a middle ground between walking away from economic opportunity and taking abuse from cut-throat companies.

**There are 140,000 Kenyan miners who have chosen to do it themselves rather than work for companies, and this shift has given them a chance at collective recognition and formal recognition**

Kenyan authorities have also opened up to this middle ground, decriminalising artisanal mining – often called illegal mining elsewhere – in October 2023. There are 140,000 Kenyan miners who have chosen to do it themselves rather than work for companies, and this shift has given them a chance at collective recognition and formal recognition.

The government wins too, especially if it can begin to collect taxes from the artisanal mining industry, which is worth an estimated \$224-million. ■

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*\*Name changed at the request of the subject*



## Mining is pivoting to ‘critical minerals’ like cobalt, lithium ... and coal?

Last week’s Mining Indaba focused on semantics rather than anything resembling real change.

Duncan Money

Cape Town is an odd place for a mining conference. It’s easily one of the furthest spots you can be in Southern Africa from an actual mine. Yet since 1994, when post-apartheid optimism in South Africa gave birth to the Africa Mining Indaba, Cape Town has been where thousands of mining executives, government officials, investors and other assorted hangers-on trek each year for the industry’s biggest event on the continent.

The Indaba has morphed considerably over the years. But it has often taken liberties with its advertised themes. Attendees at the 2015 Mining Indaba who showed up for the “diverse perspectives from investment-minded leaders” were treated to Tony Blair (the former British premier) as keynote speaker. This year, the event was all about “placing indigenous peoples and local communities at the forefront,” but a ticket was going for \$3,147. If you were an investor – defined as someone with at least \$1-million on hand – it was free to attend.

The big emphasis at this year’s Indaba



**Date-stage capitalism: Delegates queue up to exploit networking opportunities in Cape Town.** Photo: Mining Indaba

was the world’s need for critical minerals for the energy transition away from fossil fuels. Accordingly, key themes included delivering net zero, just energy transitions and maximising the use of Africa’s critical minerals like copper, cobalt and manganese.

If the world wants to build large numbers of electric vehicles, wind turbines and solar panels, it needs metals like these. Mining them to fight climate change is the big pitch of the mining industry at the moment.



**Fossil fool: South Africa's mineral resources minister, Gwede Mantashe (left-ish), looked ravaging in green.**  
Photo: Mining Indaba

At the Indaba, however, not everyone was following the “save the planet” script. South Africa’s mineral resources minister, Gwede Mantashe, used his opening speech to declare coal a “critical mineral” too. South Africa has 16 planned mining projects that collectively will expand the country’s annual coal production by 44-million tonnes.

Most of these projects will produce thermal coal to be burnt in power stations in South Africa or overseas. They, too, are looking for investors and lots of coal producers attended the Indaba.

Mantashe’s claim points to a wider manoeuvre with the industry’s strategy in Africa. What are defined as “critical minerals” are the metals needed for an energy transition in the Global North. Is it necessary for African mineral producers to follow this definition established by others? Could they not formulate their own definition of “critical minerals”, one

based on their own needs and priorities?

It’s not necessary for Africa to accept the external definition. But pulling on this string also has a self-serving logic for the mining industry. With a wider definition, a mineral could be critical for employment, economic development, electricity generation or building infrastructure. This means coal, iron ore, uranium or gold could be critical minerals. Basically, anything mined could be.

It’s not hard to see what’s going on here. The use of the term critical mineral and the connection with combating climate change has brought positive attention and investment to the industry. By rebranding almost all mining activity as “critical”, they hope to bring the same gloss to the rest of the industry. ■

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*Duncan Money is a historian and researcher who focuses on the mining industry*

# The Museum of Stolen History

*Things can be taken. Their stories must still be told.*

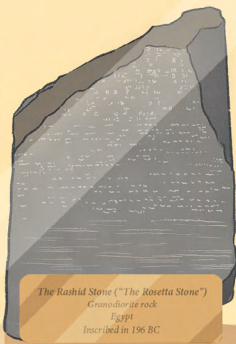
Curated by Shola Lawal | Art direction by Wynona Mutisi



Ngwi Ndem ("The Bangwa Queen")  
Sculpture in wood  
Cameroon  
Circa late 1800s



Golden Crown  
Solid gold, alloyed with silver and copper  
Ethiopia  
Circa 1740s



The Rashid Stone ("The Rosetta Stone")  
Granodiorite rock  
Egypt  
Inscribed in 196 BC



Lions of Tsavo  
Taxidermy specimens  
Kenya  
Shot and killed in 1898



Photo: Field Museum  
of Natural History

## Ghost and Darkness

**B**ritish colonists were scrambling to dominate the entire Great Lakes region before the Germans. They needed to transfer soldiers, munitions, and other supplies inland. But how? Their answer: a colossal 530km railroad that would snake through the rugged wilderness and link Mombasa to Lake Victoria.

The year was 1898. So began the Uganda Railway project. It was quickly nicknamed “The Lunatic Express” because of its vast expense in both lives and money.

More than 30,000 Sikhs were shipped in from Britain’s colony in India to work on the project – thousands died from disease and sheer exhaustion. When the

project got to the wild plains around the Tsavo River, a pair of enormous, maneless lions began attacking workers in their tent camps at night, seizing sleeping workers and dragging their screaming victims off into the bush. Those left behind were terrified.

It was odd: Lions attack humans out of desperate hunger or to defend themselves, but they don’t actively hunt us. Some speculate that the plentiful dead bodies of railway workers had fuelled their appetite for humans. In the camps, rumours spread they were ancient spirits furious about construction on sacred land. Camp workers named them Ghost and Darkness.

Ghost and Darkness caused nine months of nightly horror. Thick walls of whistling thorns did not stop the beasts from penetrating the camps and seizing one victim from the hospital. A local warrior dispatched to hunt them unfortunately arrived after nightfall and was attacked and killed by the pair. The death toll grew so alarming that workers threatened to flee. Construction was suspended.

With the fate of the empire hanging on his shoulders, Lieutenant Colonel John Henry Patterson, the army officer in charge, took matters into his own hands. An experienced tiger hunter, he resolved to kill the lions.

According to his own account, *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* – published in 1907 – the effort nearly killed him. At one point, believing he could lure the beasts with animal carcasses, the lions ignored the trap and circled his location.

He finally managed to kill one from a tree top. The second proved much tougher, and would not die despite several encounters where the animal was shot and wounded. In their final meeting, the beast charged straight at Patterson, coming mere steps away before it collapsed from a barrage of bullets. Eight men carried each carcass back to the camps.

In February 1899, the rail line was finished.

At least three movies are based on

Patterson's tale, including the 1996 thriller *The Ghost and the Darkness*. No one knows exactly how many workers the lions killed. Patterson's book said "no less than 28 Indians and Africans". In subsequent writings, he raised the number to 135 deaths, saying that African workers were not officially documented. Using hairballs stuck in the cavities of their teeth, expert analysis concluded they killed 35 humans.

In 1925, Patterson sold the lions' skulls and skin – which he had turned into rugs – to the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History for \$5,000. Specialists restored the carcasses by stuffing them and then mounted them on display.

Analysis of the pairs' jaws helped reveal the two were brothers, and that one lion had a tooth abscess that must have been excruciatingly painful. It was likely, experts concluded, that they both hunted humans because our species is easier to hunt and chew than other animals.

In 2009, Kenya's museum authorities began advocating for the repatriation of the remains. However, it is not clear if a formal request was ever made.

Fredrick Manthi, director of Antiquities at National Museums of Kenya, told *The Continent* that Kenyans want to own and showcase their history in their country. The people of Kenya and Tsavo have the right to this resource, he said.

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**Illustration note, by Kenyan artist Geoffrey Gichuhi Muikia:** "Beware brothers, the devils are coming. Beware the ghosts are here," the workmen would warn each other in their native tongue. Nothing was more nerve-racking than the deep roars of these dreadful monsters, growing gradually nearer and nearer, letting one know that they were doomed.



Illustration: Geoffrey Gichuhi Muikia

J.P. PENCIL  
KING

## PHOTO ESSAY

# Cutting edge

**H**idden inside Nairobi's Panari Hotel is East Africa's only ice rink, a small patch of ice measuring 32m by 12m, a third of the size of a standard rink. Opened in 2005, it quickly grew a following of recreational ice skaters. Then, in 2006, a group of Canadians discovered the rink and introduced the country to ice hockey. A small but committed group emerged and a decade later Kenya's national team,

The Ice Lions, was born. In 2019, a federation was formed to grow the game, and the Madaraka Day Cup was launched. The Ice Lions, who recently triumphed at an exhibition match on a full-size rink in South Africa, play mainly in a friendly league against NGO and embassy workers from the United States, Canada and Europe. And this year, for the first time, they won the league. ■



**Just chilling:** Kenya's national ice hockey team, known as The Ice Lions, won their first title in 2023 – the Madaraka Day Cup, named for the day marking self-rule in Kenya. This year they won the league. Photo: Luis Tato/AFP



**Parallel pucking:** Rink time is limited, and not inexpensive, so members of the Kenyan Ice Hockey National Team have taken to coaching junior players in roller hockey on inline skates.



**Sticks on stone:** Rollerblades or inline skates aren't exactly the same as ice skates, but it's a great way of giving kids a taste of the sport, and getting them some game time. Photos: Luis Tato/AFP





**Slice of life:** During May 2020's lockdown Benjamin Mburu, an architect by day, practised stickhandling in his living room. Post-pandemic The Ice Lions mostly get just one hour of practice on the ice. Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP



**Frost and furious:** The Ice Lions face off against the Friendship League international team, made up of embassy and NGO workers from abroad, during their friendly league final at the Panari rink in Nairobi. Photo: Luis Tato/AFP



**Cool heads prevail: The Ice Lions celebrate their league win. In October, Kenya joined Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and South Africa to become the fifth African member of the International Ice Hockey Federation.**



**Keeping the faith: Supporters and family cheer the Ice Lions on during the national side's friendly league match at the Panari ice rink in Nairobi.**

Photos: Luis Tato/AFP

## More people are going without the basics – and more often

The prospect of dramatic cuts in United States international development assistance comes just as evidence is emerging from Afrobarometer’s on-the-ground data collection that the need for assistance continues to grow: Across Africa, lived poverty is surging.

The average rate of “going without” five basic life necessities at least once during the previous year is now the highest ever recorded by Afrobarometer since it began its surveys in 1999.

Across 30 countries surveyed consistently for the past decade, experiences of shortages have risen significantly on all five essentials: to

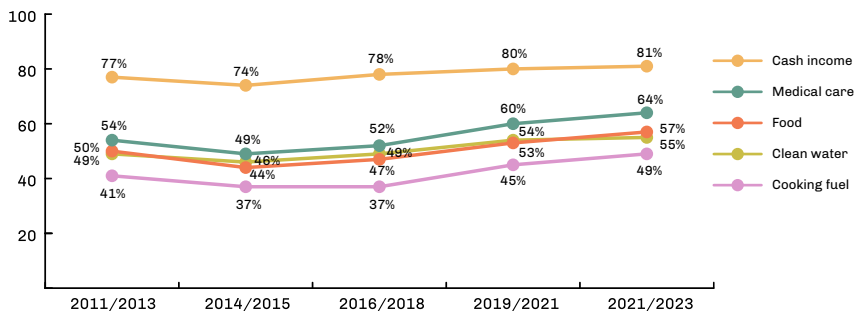
57% of all respondents for food (up by 13 percentage points compared to 2014/2015), to 55% for clean water (+9 points), to 64% for medical care (+15 points), to 49% for cooking fuel (+12 points), and to 81% for a cash income (+7 points).

Overall, nine in 10 respondents report having faced at least one of these five forms of material deprivation in the previous year.

Even more troubling is the growing intensity of deprivation in most surveyed countries: One in four Africans (24%) now report frequent shortages, or severe lived poverty. ■

### Going without basic necessities | 30 African countries | 2011-2023

Percentage of respondents who say they or a family member went without these basic necessities at least once or twice during the previous year:



**Source:** Afrobarometer is a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200 to 2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.



**Book Review**  
Jacqueline Nyathi

# Speculation spans chapter and multiverse

**A science fiction and fantasy anthology offers top-tier writing from Africa and the diaspora.**

**I**magine “a shared world based on a blend of African cultural worldviews” – the Sauútiverse, a self-contained universe with its own rules, languages and vivid characters. Stories by T L Huchu and Xan van Rooyenwe in the third volume of *Year’s Best African Speculative Fiction* anthology, showcase it well.

The new volume – published late 2024 but collecting works that originally appeared individually and elsewhere the year before – is edited by Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki and Chinaza Eziaghighala.

Nalo Hopkinson’s *The Most Strongest Obeah Woman of The World* tells of monsters, Black trauma, and a girl coming into her powers. With great wit, the inimitable P Djèlí Clark gives us instructions for *How to Raise a Kraken in Your Bathtub*. Wole Talabi’s Saturday’s Song features the nightmare god Shigidi



of 2023’s *Shigidi and the Brass Head of Obalufon*. The teleporting protagonist of the intriguing *Nairuko* by Dennis Mugaa is from the Ilaikipia people, and we learn about their survival after genocide through this story about the attempted secession of Kenya’s Coast Province. Kemi Ashing-Giwa’s *Thin Ice* could easily be a story about AI and creatives, when the machines take over. Gabrielle Emem Harry’s brilliant *A Name is a Plea and a Prophecy* has one of the best and cleverest depictions of Death personified that I’ve ever read.

With many more stories from Tananarive Due, Tobias Buckell, Adelehin Ijasan, Makena Onjerika, Amanda Ilozumba, Michelle Enehiwealu Iruobe, Chisom Umeh, Vuyokazi Ngemntu, and Uchechukwu Nwaka, the edition is packed with talent and creative vision.

Brilliant. And highly recommended. ■

# THE QUIZ

**0-3**

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

**4-7**

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

**8-10**

"I am on a roll and I kente stop, and I won't stop."

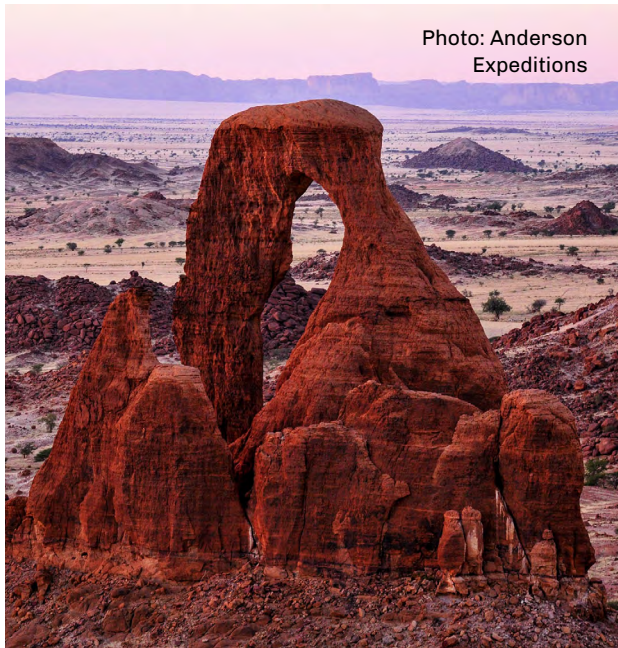


Photo: Anderson Expeditions

- 1\_** Sam Nujoma was which country's first democratically elected president?
- 2\_** Which Congolese city served as a de facto capital of Free France between 1940 and 1942?
- 3\_** What is the capital city of Benin?
- 4\_** In what country is the Ennedi Plateau (pictured) located?
- 5\_** In which country did the dance and musical genre known as kizomba originate?
- 6\_** True or false: Hargeisa is Somaliland's capital.
- 7\_** Fort-Lamy is the former name of which city in Chad?
- 8\_** Mohamed Bazoum is which country's ousted president?
- 9\_** Which country is kente cloth from?
- 10\_** In which city is this weekend's AU Summit taking place?

**HOW DID I DO?** WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to [+27 73 805 6068](tel:+27738056068) and we'll send the answers to you!

# THE BIG PICTURE

Age shall not weary them: Defence force pallbearers, at Swartkop base near Pretoria, accompany the caskets of the South African soldiers killed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Photo: Phill Magakoe/AFP



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