


with Mail & Guardian

# The Continent



**Ghana's  
president  
under  
pressure**

Photo: Ernest Ankomah/Getty Images



**Cover:** The official residence of the president of Ghana, a hulking glass-and-steel edifice, is built to look like the Golden Stool: the divine throne used by the kings of Ashanti. But its current occupant, Nana Akufo-Addo, does not rule by divine right. His authority comes from the people – and they appear to be increasingly fed up (p9) with his broken promises and Ghana's poor economic performance (p7).

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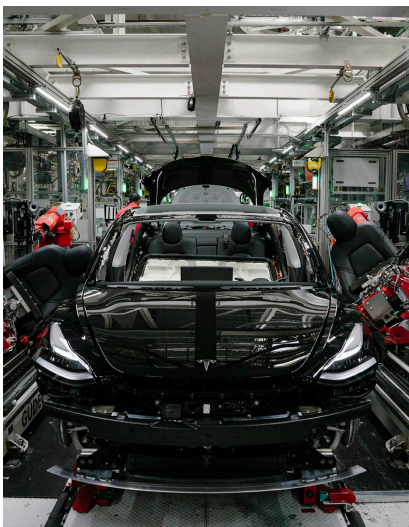


**ETHIOPIA****Photograph sheds light on legendary stolen painting**

The *Kwer'ata Re'esu*, a portrait of Jesus Christ, is perhaps the most important painting in Ethiopian history. Originally painted in the Iberian peninsula in around 1520, it somehow made its way into Ethiopia's royal court. There, it became a holy icon for successive Ethiopian emperors. Nobles swore allegiance before it, and it was carried into battle. And then it was stolen by a British agent in 1868, who later sold it to a rich Portuguese family. This week, *The Art Newspaper* obtained the first-ever colour photograph of the legendary painting, which remains in foreign hands.



**Framed:** The *Kwer'ata Re'esu* icon was stolen from Ethiopia in the 19th century

**RACISM****What's with the racist Nazi vibe, Tesla?**

The US government's anti-discrimination agency is suing Elon Musk's company Tesla over claims that its managers enabled a culture of racism – and retaliated against those who complained. At least 16 former and current employees have already sued the company over a racist work environment, which reportedly included swastikas etched on toilet walls and repeated use of racial slurs. In April, a judge ordered Tesla to pay one of those employees \$3.2-million.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Joburg's 'Take Winnie Mandela to Work' day

As of Tuesday, William Nicol Drive – a major Johannesburg thoroughfare named after an Afrikaans theologian in the apartheid era – will be known as Winnie Mandela Drive. South Africa has been relatively slow to erase its nomenclature of oppression, with plenty of historical figures still being honoured in place and road names. Not everyone welcomed the Winnie Mandela change: Some opposition parties questioned the cost (about \$13,000), while others called her record into question (as well as being a struggle hero, Winnie Mandela was implicated in violent acts committed by her security detail).

## LIBYA

### Haftar courts Wagnerless Putin

Khalifa Haftar, the general who controls eastern Libya, was in Moscow this week to meet Vladimir Putin. This comes as the eastern Libya government that is loyal to Haftar, and runs parallel to the UN-backed one in Tripoli, reckons with the aftermath of the flooding in Derna that killed over 11,000 people. Survivors are now demanding accountability. Haftar previously relied on the recently decapitated Russian mercenary group Wagner for military support.



**Controversial: Kenya's plans to lend police to a US security mission in Haiti have caused a bit of a stir.** Photo: Richard Pierrin/AFP via Getty Images

## HAITI

### Ruto unveils Kenya's Rent-a-Cop service

Kenya has agreed to lead a multinational force to Haiti, in a bid to bring criminal gangs on the Caribbean Island under control. It is planning to deploy around 1,000 police officers there. Foreign Minister Alfred Mutua signed a deal to this effect with his American counterpart in Washington this week. The United States is funding the mission to the tune of \$100-million. Haiti has been crippled by political instability and gang violence for several years. The planned deployment has attracted plenty of criticism at home, with President William Ruto being accused of supporting America's neo-colonial agenda.



**Facelift: Edward Lungu's exercise habits have police on edge.** Photo: Marco Longari/AFP via Getty Images

## ZAMBIA

### Running to the office = running for office?

Zambian police have declared ex-president Edgar Lungu's weekly jogging "political activism." In future, police say, Lungu – who usually goes for a run every Saturday – must seek permission before any exercise events with members of the public. Speculation has been rife that Lungu, who lost the 2021 election to President Hakainde Hichilema, plans to make another bid for the presidency in 2026. Lungu's lawyer Makebu Zulu has threatened legal action, telling the BBC that the 66-year-old has been exercising since "time immemorial".

## RUSSIA

### Let us in, we'll help you do our bidding

Moscow is formally seeking readmission to the United Nations Human Rights Council, after being expelled last year for invading Ukraine. In a position paper requesting support from other members, Russia promises to stop the council from becoming an "instrument which serves political wills of one group of countries". While 24 countries – including North Korea, Iran, Syria, Vietnam, China, and Cuba – voted against Russia's expulsion from the council, an overwhelming majority of 93 voted in favour.

## NAMIBIA

### No South African chickens allowed

Namibia has suspended, with immediate effect and until further notice, the importation of live poultry, birds, and poultry products from neighbouring South Africa, fearing the spread of the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). South Africa first reported cases of bird flu on commercial farms in April. Earlier this month, the South African Poultry Association said it is dealing with two different strains of the virus. South Africa is one of the continent's major poultry producers.

## FRANCOPHONIA

## Niger can see clearly that Sylvain is gone

France's ambassador to Niger arrived in Paris this Wednesday, after President Emmanuel Macron reversed his earlier position to maintain a diplomatic French presence in Niamey. Niger's current military junta, which overthrew elected president Mohamed Bazoum in late July, has been demanding the removal of ambassador Sylvain Itté for weeks. France had argued that the junta is illegal, and had no right to make such demands. It has seemingly changed its mind. Macron also said French soldiers will leave the country by the end of this year, claiming that Niger is no longer interested in tackling terrorism.

## FOOTBALL

## East Africa set to host Afcon in 2027

Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania will co-host the men's Africa Cup of Nations in 2027, it was announced this week. This will be a first for each of these countries, and is the first time since Ethiopia in 1976 that the continental football tournament will be played in eastern Africa. The joint bid won over bids from Senegal and Egypt, and another joint bid from Botswana and Zambia. The host nations will be hoping to do as well on the pitch as they have done off it: none of their national teams have made it past the group stage of the competition in 40 years. The 2025 tournament will be hosted by Morocco.

## BURKINA FASO

## Do as I say, not as I coup

The ruling military junta in Ouagadougou says it foiled an attempt by forces with "the dark intention of attacking the institutions of the republic". An attempted coup, that is. The current regime, led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré, has been in charge for about a year – after it seized power in a coup. It overthrew Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba last September, who had himself come to power in – you guessed it – a coup.



**Ouagado-not: An attempted coup in Burkina Faso failed this week.** Photo: Olympia De Maismont/AFP via Getty Images



**Just Kente:**  
Ghana's President Nana  
Akufo-Addo. Photo:  
Cristina Aldehuela/ÁFP  
via Getty Images

## Nana Akufo-Addo lies in the thorny bed he may or may not have made

**Bad luck, corruption or incompetence – the jury is out on what derailed Ghana's economy under its current president, whose political career appears unlikely to survive the fallout.**

**Francis Kokutse in Accra**

**G**hana's president, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, has been either one of the West African state's worst economic managers or its unluckiest president. Either way, with just over a year to go till the next elections, the odds of him finishing on a high are not looking good.

Over the weekend, hundreds of demonstrators mobilised by the "Fix The Country" movement stormed the streets in a protest dubbed #OccupyJulorbiHouse. Julor bi translates as "child of a thief" and in this case is also a play on the name of Ghana's presidential palace: Jubilee House.

Police stopped the protesters' advance

about a kilometre away from Jubilee House on Liberation road, spilling the crowd into 37 Military Hospital.

“Most of my friends are at home with nothing to do, which shows the level of unemployment in the country. Yet we see the government taking no action,” said Peter Allotey, a protester who said he graduated from university four years ago.

According to a recent government labour survey, nearly 1.8-million Ghanaian workers were unemployed by the third quarter of 2022 and 3.5-million had moved in and out of employment since the year’s start.

Compounding that economic pain, shared by millions of Ghanaians, is a deep disillusionment with Akufo-Addo, who started his presidency saying and doing all the right things. In his inauguration speech in January 2017, Akufo-Addo said: “We must create wealth and restore happiness to our nation.”

His first year in office delivered on that, going by data from the Ghana Statistical Service. Industry, which contributes around a quarter of Ghana’s GDP, grew by about 17% in 2017. In the year before Akufo-Addo won the election, it had contracted by 0.5%. Within industry, the mining and quarrying subsector recorded spectacular growth of nearly 50%. Agriculture grew by 8% compared to 3% in 2016.

The economy remained buoyant until 2019. But then Covid struck in early 2020, followed by a global economic fallout from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Ghana’s economy has floundered since. Some call it bad luck. Akufo-Addo’s critics disagree.

Parliamentary minority leader Cassiel Ato Forson of the National Democratic Congress blames “the government’s implementation of many ill-thought policies”. He accuses Akufo-Addo’s government of “illegal and excessive printing of money” and depleting Ghana’s external reserves “which resulted in the unprecedented depreciation of the cedi, the main cause of hyperinflation in 2022.”

By August 2023, inflation had shot to 40%. The World Bank estimates that 850,000 Ghanaians were pushed further below the poverty line in 2022 due to inflation alone.

There is little chance that Akufo-Addo will recover from such a record.

**By August 2023, inflation had shot to 40%. The World Bank estimates 850,000 Ghanaians were pushed further into poverty due to inflation alone.**

“A new government will take over in 2025,” predicts Nyaho Nyaho-Tamakloe, a leading member of the New Patriotic Party, which Akufo-Addo leads.

Nyaho-Tamakloe blames corruption in the current regime and says the new 2025 government “must bring to book all the people in the current government who have looted the country’s finances.”

Allotey agrees. Citing an investigation in which a special prosecutor seized over \$800,000 in cash from the home of former minister Cecilia Abena Dapaah, he says: “The president came out to show support [to Dapaah]. If that is not collaborating with corruption, what else can this be?” ■



# We were arrested for challenging Ghana's sham democracy

But we were not alone: a fire has been lit beneath the nation's youth, writes **Delali Adogla-Bessa** in Accra

**S**eated on the floor in a dingy police cell in Accra, a daunting realisation seized me: Ghana's democracy was well and truly in the gutter. I was among the 49 Ghanaians unlawfully detained for daring to challenge the Akufo-Addo government's widespread dysfunction in a movement called #OccupyJulorbiHouse – a play on Jubilee House, the seat of Ghana's presidency, now being called the house of a thief's son.

This was on 21 September, a day meant to mark Pan-African hero Kwame Nkrumah's birthday. It will also go down as the day many of Accra's youth came of age politically and embraced the call to restore Ghana's democracy.

"Do you go to demonstrations as a journalist or protester?" I was asked recently. "Always both," I replied. While I consider it a duty to document attempts at resisting our political class and its moral bankruptcy, I also carry many frustrations that make me want to dump my creaky Nikon and hoist a placard calling President Akufo-Addo a thief. It's not just about the high cost of living and corruption we have yelled about for

years. It's the lack of accountability from the state and the utter contempt it has for us in all spheres of society.

Where do I start? For the environment, this contempt has manifested in the absolute devastation of water bodies by illegal mining and the government's unwillingness to intervene. When I think of healthcare, I remember that 10 minutes from my home, the government demolished a functioning hospital and put up a sign thanking President Akufo-Addo for replacing it with a new one. The only problem is the site remains a pile of rubble three years on. Among the arrested protesters last week was a doctor. "I am tired of people dying needlessly," he said.

And then there's the way the 49 were arrested. For a while on the day, I was only an observer of the police abuse of protesters. I captured officers swooping on a couple of protesters just for talking to the press. I saw protesters sandwiched between heavily armed police in pickups, being treated like they were fugitives caught after a killing spree.

When I was arrested later, the police opted for false pretence – claiming that the



**No to Nana: Ghanaians enraged by economic collapse joined #OccupyJulorbiHouse protests against President Akufo-Addo.** Photo: Nipah Dennis/AFP via Getty Images

police commissioner wanted to meet us. I was one of the luckier ones. By the time I arrived at Accra's police headquarters, a group of young lawyers had mobilised to come to the aid of protesters.

The groups detained before mine were not so lucky. Those arrests included some of the protest leaders and featured some accounts of violence. Some were denied access to lawyers for over five hours and have since shared with me photos of bruises and swellings, taken a day after they say they were brutalised by police.

They were also separated and taken to multiple police stations in the Accra region with nothing but uncertainty to hold on to. No one outside knew how they were faring or where exactly they were. But they were the bravest people in Accra that day and served as inspiration for me

and many more of Accra's youth.

Accra's youth certainly did not cower. In addition to the group of young lawyers stepping up, others tracked down detainees and mobilised food and water for them. Within a day hundreds of young people gathered a kilometre away from the presidency trying to get past barricades and occupy "Julorbi House". The number seemed to double the next day.

In the heat and bubble of the protests, I felt most hopeful for Ghana and the work to restore our democracy.

This movement was confined largely to Accra. It is important to stress this. Ghana is bigger than its capital city. It is bigger than GH Twitter, where many have put pressure on the state, to the chagrin of the government's PR machinery.

More hands are needed. ■

# Ethiopia

## Welcome to Addis Ababa (unless you're homeless, ill, young or poor)

Samuel Getachew in Addis Ababa

**E**thiopia has a history of cleaning up the streets of the capital, Addis Ababa, ahead of major international conferences (as reported in issue 117 of *The Continent*). This includes the removal, by force, of the city's beggars and homeless people.

But an operation conducted over the past few weeks by security forces appears to be more far-reaching. In the early hours of the night, thousands of poor residents in shacks and temporary dwellings have allegedly been rounded up and held in a detention centre on the outskirts of the city. From there, some are being forcibly relocated to their native provinces.

*The Continent* spoke to 27-year-old Henok Tsegaye, an engineer who got caught up in the crackdown. He came to the capital from Tigray after the end of the civil war, to reunite with his family and to find employment. His family home was

demolished to make way for a government project, leaving them homeless.

Tsegaye was rounded up with dozens of others while looking for work on the streets, and taken to the detention centre. "We slept in the open air literally next to strangers. Open defecation was the norm, there were no mattresses, our safety was always compromised and water was extremely limited. I was extremely hungry," he said.

Tsegaye feigned an illness in order to be transferred to a hospital, from which he managed to escape. "I am the reality of Ethiopia. I experienced war in Tigray when I could have been a productive citizen. I moved to Addis Ababa to find employment but even finding employment as a waiter became difficult. And now the appearance of being poor makes me a prisoner," he said.

Earlier this month, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said that the crackdown on Addis Ababa's indigent population amounts to a "violation of human rights". It warned that conditions in the detention centre will increase the risk of a disease outbreak.

According to the EHRC, at least three civilians have already died in the detention centre which is located in Gelan Kifle Ketama in Oromia province. Many more have contracted illnesses or sustained injuries and require medical care.



**Sidelined:  
Unemployment and  
homelessness have  
rocketed in Addis  
Ababa since the end  
of the civil war in  
Tigray.** Photo:  
Sawra Tafara

“There are way too many people coming – weak and near death, with beating scars – to be discarded at our hospital,” said an administrator at the nearby Tirunesh Beijing Hospital, speaking on condition of anonymity. “There is little we can do to help them.”

In a statement, the Oromia regional government denied the existence of the detention centre, dismissing reports as “false information” to “confuse the public”. The office of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed did not respond to a request for comment.

### **Dreams deferred**

In 2019 the mayor at the time, Takele Uma, promised to tackle homelessness among youth in Addis Ababa. Inspired by Chinese models, the plan was to set up a rehabilitation centre to train young people and then transition them into formal employment in one of the new industrial parks that were growing rapidly at that time.

This plan died abruptly when civil war broke out in 2020, and many foreign

investors pulled their funding. Most significant was when the United States revoked Ethiopia’s benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which killed thousands of jobs in the industrial parks.

The existing homelessness issue was exacerbated by a wave of internal migration into Addis Ababa, with people fleeing conflict and looking for economic opportunities.

Among their number is Yared Kibret, a 19-year-old vendor from Amhara province, where fighting between government forces and the Fano militia is ongoing. He sells cheap belts and wallets on the streets near Meskel Square. In recent weeks, many of his friends – street vendors like him – have vanished.

Kibret does not know where they are, but he suspects they have been detained. He is worried that he will be next.

“I am mentally prepared for such an eventuality,” he said. “I just wish that working, instead of begging, would be my ticket to freedom.” ■

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Photo: South Sudan Basketball Federation

## South Sudan's great rebound

Amid the trials South Sudan faces in rebuilding after the long, brutal struggle for its independence, its success in basketball is monumentally hopeful.

**Lethabo Nxumalo**

**I**n 2024, South Sudan's men's basketball team will be at the Olympics for the first time. The 13-year-old nation qualified for the Paris event after a 101-78 win over Angola at the FIBA World Cup.

In the jubilant locker room after that decisive game, among the elated, perspiring, screaming and dancing players, stood Luol Deng. The two-time All-Star NBA player is a class act: a consummate professional on the court and off the court, a humanitarian whose work has won him multiple awards,

including the Order of the British Empire. To tell the story of South Sudanese basketball is to tell the story of Deng's capacity to dream and build.

In 1990, his father Aldo Deng was arrested following a coup in Sudan and the rest of his family fled the country. They eventually settled in London where young Deng joined the British basketball system.

An American scout spotted him and took the lanky 14-year-old into the cold winters of New Jersey, where he enrolled in Blair Academy. By his senior year, Deng was the second-highest ranked and most sought-after high school basketball player

in the entire country. He chose to go to Duke University, known for its prestigious basketball programme, from which he went on to a successful NBA career.

Deng, who was mentored by another South Sudanese basketball great, Manute Bol, never lost sight of his roots. A year after turning professional, he set up the Luol Deng Foundation, which co-ordinated emergency relief and surgical missions for refugees and people living with disabilities. The foundation also placed a strong emphasis on education and wellness, using basketball as a vehicle for positive change.

The foundation work would provide the blueprint for Deng's later work on developing basketball in independent South Sudan.

### Going home to rebuild

In 2010, a year before South Sudan's independence referendum, Deng returned to his homeland. He donated his salary to enable people in the diaspora to travel and vote in the referendum. His next undertaking was developing basketball in South Sudan.

Deng serves as the president of the South Sudanese basketball federation.

Building a basketball culture in the newly independent, war-traumatised country was daunting. Infrastructure was sorely lacking. In 2015, Deng's foundation built the Manute Bol Court in Juba. It still stands as one of only six outdoor basketball courts in the country – four are still under construction. But Deng appears motivated, not deterred, by challenges. Under his leadership,



**Big shoes:** Basketball supports health and youth development programmes.

Photo: Akuot Chol/AFP via Getty Images

the men's basketball team has found its footing on the continent and world stage.

The team is made up of primarily immigrant players whose families left the country during the long war, dispersing to different regions of the world as refugees. They reached the quarterfinals of the 2021 AfroBasket and breezed through their World Cup 2023 African qualifying group, winning all but one of their 12 games.

Their 11-1 win-loss record was a first in the history of the competition. It included two major upsets against the 2021 AfroBasket champion Tunisia and Africa's most tenured team, Egypt.

Despite not progressing beyond the group stages of the recently concluded FIBA World Cup, South Sudan left the tournament ranked number one in Africa and 31 in the world. And, of course, having qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics. "This is a significant achievement for us as a nation that is only 13 years old," says Orom Mackmot, vice-president of the

South Sudan Basketball Federation.

The feat is all the more remarkable considering that South Sudan only became a member of FIBA in 2013.

Recognising that “basketball, and sports in general, have the capacity to change a nation” as Mackmot points out, South Sudan is expanding its investment in developing teams and leagues.

To rectify a glaring gap between the men’s and women’s national basketball team which has yet to compete in the AfroBasket women’s tournament, the federation has created the South Sudan Women’s League to build a talent pipeline.

Currently, assembling a women’s national team “is a bit of a struggle because a lot of the players are in collegiate basketball so it’s hard to get

everyone in the same place at the same time” says national forward Christina Deng (no familial relation to Luol Deng). Launched last year, the second edition of the women’s league is currently under way with round one and two fixtures scheduled till the middle of October.

Deng’s foundation is collaborating with the Jr. NBA for the under-16 league programme which is nurturing basketball skills from a younger age.

It’s a long game in which everyone can win. “Basketball can not only bring unity but also improve the lives of players and their families through education, by awarding scholarships. If they don’t make it as pro athletes, they can become doctors, lawyers, and so forth, helping the nation at large,” says Mackmot. ■



**Top of their game: South Sudan’s men’s basketball team are ranked number one in Africa, and 31 in the world. Photo: South Sudan Basketball Federation**



# Global rankings don't give African universities enough credit

## We need to find better ways of measuring the impact of our tertiary institutions

**Charles Ebikeme**

**T**en years ago, only four African universities featured in the global rankings of the United Kingdom-based Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings. That figure has since risen to 97.

In response to the growing significance of tertiary education on this continent, earlier this year THE launched its Sub-Saharan Africa University Rankings, which includes 88 universities across 20 countries on the continent.

Global rankings are influential in shaping a university's reputation. But not everyone is convinced of the need for these rankings, which tend to concentrate power and prestige among universities in the Global North, maintaining and reproducing an unequal status quo.

"The main criteria and methods used in global university rankings reflect perspectives and standards that are biased towards wealthier, older, larger, and more research-intensive universities in the Global North," says David McCoy, a research lead and professor at United

Nations University. "Crucially, none of the major rankings apply methods that control for the resources available to a university or that adjust for challenging and unstable social and political contexts, for example."

Additionally, universities can only gain a higher placement if other universities lose theirs. This system of winners and losers negates the notion that standards can rise across the board, incorrectly implying a finite amount of good quality education and research that universities must compete over.

"Such an imagined zero-sum game institutionalises and accentuates inequality within the higher education sector at the expense of promoting high quality education universally," a report from the United Nations University explains. Already, according to THE, Africa's tertiary education is further hindered by competition from outside the continent for academic talent.

It is important to remember that the justification for Africa's universities is strongly anchored in post-independence nation-building. "At independence, every

country needed to show its flag, national anthem, national currency, and national university as proof that the country had indeed become independent,” Mahmood Mamdani, the Ugandan scholar once noted. Universities were expected to train the professionals needed in the expanding public service.

This link to national development incentivised governments to fund universities, making them more accessible. Of the top 10 universities in the THE Africa rankings, seven are public and their median annual tuition is under \$1,200, compared to about \$2,300 in private nonprofit universities and \$4,000 in for-profit universities in that tier.

The public service values and justifications for African higher education are not easily represented in global lists and could be lost when institutions prioritise the rankings game.

An awkward colonial inheritance also persists. Universities across Anglophone Africa were modelled, structurally and philosophically, on England’s “Oxbridge” universities; some were originally built to support British colonial policies. They have much decolonising ground to cover in moving away from the western value judgements embedded in global rankings.

So where *should* African universities focus? Given developmental challenges on the continent, perhaps something more radical than what exists now.

The World Bank has consistently asserted that Africa needs more PhDs – innovative researchers who will diagnose challenges and produce solutions that are appropriate to their context.

But here again we must be sceptical about transplanting western models, warns Eric Fredua-Kwarteng, a Ghanaian education policy scholar. Producing PhD holders whose overriding career ambition is to teach and research within Ivory Towers, as the western model often does, is not suitable for Africa.

Fredua-Kwarteng says that Africa must design its PhD models to produce researchers who will teach and produce new knowledge – but also make policy, participate in entrepreneurship and run economies.

A ranking that captures efforts in that direction might just be worth paying attention to. ■

## Africa’s Top 10 Universities

1. University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
2. University of Johannesburg, South Africa
3. Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania
4. University of Pretoria, South Africa
5. Makerere University, Kampala
6. University of the Western Cape, South Africa
7. Covenant University, Nigeria
8. University of Global Health Equity, Rwanda
9. Ashesi University, Ghana
10. Ardhi University, Tanzania

Source: THE Sub-Saharan Africa University Rankings 2023

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*Charles Ebikeme is a commentator on science, policy, and global health issues.*

Photo: Enrico Spanu/Universal Images Group via Getty Images



## TRAVEL

# Welcome to Malindi

*The coastal town just north of Mombasa is a glorious blend of beach, Swahili food and interwoven histories, writes* **Jean Pierre Afadhali**

### Vibe check

Malindi sits on Kenya's coast and gives you all manner of fun things to do – from enjoying the beach, bird-watching and taking in its natural attractions, to interacting with the Swahili culture mixed in with a certain Italian feel to the town thanks to its connection to the European country. Malindi feels safe, the people speak mainly Kiswahili and English, and are friendly and used to tourists.

### Activities and sightseeing

While in Malindi, visit Vasco da Gama pillar, erected in 1498 by the Portuguese

explorer on the shores of the Indian ocean. It's part of the package that includes a visit to Malindi Museum and a Portuguese chapel – said to be the first Christian worship site in East Africa. Non-resident adults pay Ksh500 (around \$4).

Another option is bird-watching at Falconry of Kenya. The private zoo has a variety of birds of prey, including eagles, falcons, owls, goshawks and peckers. It also has crocodiles, tortoises, monitor lizards and a snake enclosure home to green mambas, pythons and cobras.

The ocean also means sand dunes, and everything that comes with clambering,



**Clockwise from left: Vasco Da Gama Pillar; the Marafa Depression; and a chapel said to be the first Christian worship site in East Africa.**

sliding and rolling along them.

Two hours out of town, Hell's Kitchen (also known as the Marafa Depression) is a rocky depression that was formed over millions of years, and is steeped in legend. Local stories tell of an earthquake that caused it – as well the collapse of a city founded by a man famed for having many wives. Entry for Kenyans and East Africans is about \$2, and \$4 for non-residents. For that, a guide will weave myths as you walk around the site on a 40-minute tour.

According to the guide, at night the depression smells like fish, giving it the name Hell's Kitchen.

### **Eating around**

Swahili people at the coast of the Indian ocean in East Africa are known for their cooking. The city shore is teeming with restaurants, spilling out flavours and scents. Try Seafront's biryani or coconut fish, with ugali, rice or chips. Meals cost about \$4 and you can add juice for \$1.

Fast food eatery Baobab offers coastal food and other globally conventional foods. Taheri restaurant in the town centre offers Swahili and Indian fast food. Their pilau is worth trying and will cost you about \$3.

Thanks to its Italian ties – dating back to the launch of an Italian space centre



**Sun-kissed: Malindi's Indian Ocean beaches and idiosyncratic residences.**

off the coast in the 1960s – a lot of places offer pizza. And it's not uncommon to hear Italian spoken around town.

### **Accommodation and getting around**

Transportation within the city is usually motorbikes known as boda bodas, tuk tuks, cabs and mini public service vehicles that ply the town and its surroundings. You can also walk around, as it is a relatively small town. You can get there by bus or flight from Nairobi; or a train from Nairobi to Mombasa followed by a shuttle to Malindi, which takes around

three hours.

The coastal town hosts hotels, guesthouses and AirBnB. Prices range between \$25 and \$30 a night.

### **A song that represents the feel of the city**

Listen to Alikiba's *Utu*, which means "humanity", to get the feeling of Malindi.

### **Best time to visit**

Many like to visit the town during the festive season but late August is also enjoyable and the weather is tolerable. ■

**Do you want to show us around your town or city?**

Send an email to [read@thecontinent.org](mailto:read@thecontinent.org) and we'll be in touch!

## Can vulnerable children find help?

If our greatness is judged by how we treat those who are most vulnerable, how great are we doing when it comes to helping vulnerable children?

Afrobarometer survey findings suggest we have room for improvement. On average across 37 African countries surveyed between late 2021 and early 2023, more than half of respondents say that support is available in their communities for abused and neglected children (59%), for children living with disability (57%), and for children and adults with mental or emotional problems (52%).

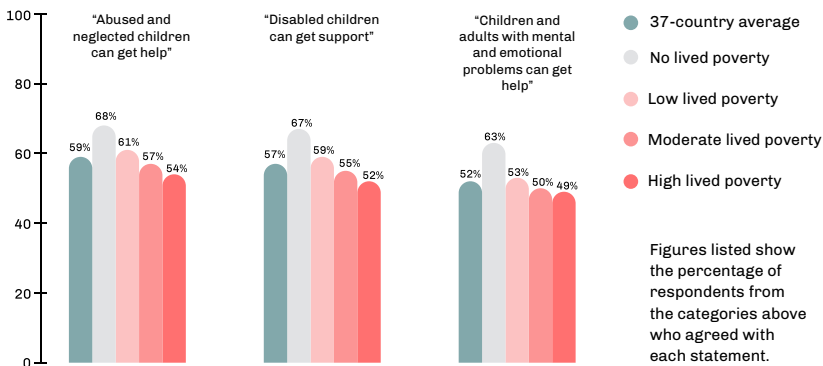
That may be a good start, but it also

means that more than four in 10 adults are less than confident that these children will be able to find the help they need to succeed in life.

This confidence declines along with respondents' economic status: While 68% of well-off citizens say help is available for abused or neglected children, only 54% of the poor agree.

Similar gaps (of 14-15 percentage points) separate the well-off and the poor when it comes to perceptions of community resources to support children with disability (67% vs 52%) and children and adults with mental or emotional problems (63% vs 49%). ■

### Is help available in the community for vulnerable children? 37 African countries | 2021/2023



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

**TOMORROW  
TOMORROW  
INSHA ALLAH**



How the journey back to my roots became  
an adventurous escape from the Sahara

**SARA  
CHEIKH**

## An insider's tale of Africa's last colony

Coming home to a country  
in peril is a painful and  
heartwarming journey

Jacqueline Nyathi

**S**ara Cheikh left Western Sahara as a young child, migrating to Spain with her family. Although she briefly returned home, she is now both a Westerner and yet still Sahrawi. This is something she explores in *Tomorrow, Tomorrow, Insha*

*Allah* – a memoir chronicling her return to “the desert”.

With dry wit, she tells us how she wanted to see her grandmother and immerse herself in her people's ways, but her visit coincided with the first Covid lockdowns. Her journey from the desert to Paris is an epic story of endurance, dust, kindness, goats, complicated bureaucracy, time in a camp near the Algerian border, and a lot of thinking on her feet.

Underlying her tale is the heartbreak of her homeland. The Sahrawi have struggled for autonomy from Morocco for more than 40 years. They've also been trapped in a small area of desert in the western Sahara, and in camps built by Sahrawi women in neighbouring Algeria in the 1970s.

Although the story of her homeland is wrenching, Cheikh's tale gives us a picture of the real effects of geopolitical manoeuvring on ordinary people. The central theme of a migrant's connection to home is a story many will relate to. Cheikh also brings much humour, warmth and delight with her descriptions of the Sahrawi way of life in the desert.

The title of the book, *Tomorrow, Tomorrow, Insha Allah*, evokes the Sahrawi people's endless struggle; perhaps true independence will arrive tomorrow, God-willing.

Cheikh's account of her epic journey offers us a rare opportunity to read an insider's tale from Africa's last colony, of a region underreported, and of a people neglected and forgotten. ■

# In praise of the Ugandan Rolex

Evelyn Karokora

There's a joke that Rolexes are worn in Europe but devoured in Uganda. My first encounter with the Ugandan version of the Rolex was in the early 2000s after graduating from university. It served as an affordable, quick and satisfying remedy after a day of job hunting in Kampala.

As a recent graduate navigating Kampala, two essentials in my life were a "rolex guy" (vendor) and a "boda guy" (motorcycle driver). Typically, it was the trusted boda guy who would deliver the coveted Rolex from the reliable vendor.

Back then, it was primarily street food – with a hint of dust and exhaust fumes from the bustling traffic adding a unique flavour that you can never quite replicate when you make them at home.

So, what even is a Rolex, then? It's essentially chapati with a twist – a dish you can enjoy any time of the day while adding some protein and vegetables to your diet.

The flatbread serves as the base. The twist involves eggs and vegetables, crafting an omelette of sorts. You break the eggs and whisk them with salt, onions, cabbage, carrots, peppers and tomatoes.

For those who like it spicy, a dash of



**Lunch hour: Every minute spent with a Rolex will leave you craving seconds.**

chilli can be added. Fry the egg mixture on low heat, gently turning it to achieve a slight browning on both sides. Then, place the egg on the chapati and roll it up like a wrap.

The Rolex has since become a beloved snack, with countless variations in fillings, available at most eateries in Kampala. When you're in town with time to kill and a belly to fill, be sure to try a Rolex; it might change your culinary life forever. ■



Last week we explored Kenya's diverse cuisine sampling their chapati. This week it's Ugandan chapati with a twist, Rolex. We want to hear about your favourite food and what makes it so special. Let us know at [letters@thecontinent.org](mailto:letters@thecontinent.org). \$100 for the winning letter.



# 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'm even bigger than the Big 5."



Photo:  
Frederique  
Wacquier

- 1\_ Bambara is a language native to which country?**
- 2\_ Which country was basketball player Manute Bol born in?**
- 3\_ The eagle of Saladin is featured in the middle of which African country's national flag?**
- 4\_ The Volta River and Lake Volta are found in which country?**
- 5\_ Nigeria and Somalia are both democratic republics of what type?**
- 6\_ Malindi is on the coast of which country?**
- 7\_ Gorée (pictured), the tiny island once known as the largest slave-trading centre on the continent, is found just off the coast of which African city?**
- 8\_ Which country is considered to have the highest rhinoceros population?**
- 9\_ Which animals make up the Big Five?**
- 10\_ Bo, Kenema and Koidu are cities in which country?**

**HOW DID I DO?** WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

This week's column comes to you from the Spanish capital Madrid. That's right dear reader, we have left behind the joys of Nairobi and London (albeit for a short time) and are currently doing maximum enjoyment in España.

All this travelling has us exhausted, and we really do wonder how our leaders do it! And we don't mean how they could possibly justify using taxpayers money to jet around so much. It's not like they *want* an all-expenses paid holiday! They *need* an all-expenses-paid holiday so they can raise the profile of their countries. Which is why they *have* to raise the taxes of their country.

And if they do some shopping while they're at it, or pop into a luxury hospital for a quick three-month-long check-up, then what of it? That's just making sure they get good value for (your) money.

And it's a good thing they are looking after their health. It must wreak havoc on one's spleen, all that constant noise from ungrateful citizens, and rude interruptions from pesky oppositioners, and of course the French. Always the French. But maybe not always anymore?

France's ambassador to Niger, Sylvain Itté, was also on a plane this week, you see. Last month Niger's brand new junta enthusiastically suggested that the ambo book a window seat to Paris right away, but his line manager denied the leave application at the time, saying that the junta was "not the boss of me". Or possibly "not a legitimately elected authority" – sorry, our French is a bit rusty.

But then! Manny Macron must have remembered his British neighbours' insistence that "leave means leave", and decided that he'd better Frexit the ambassador after all, along with French troops stationed in Niger. Itté wasted no time and by all accounts is already back in Paris toasting marshmallows over the flames of fury

coming out of Macron's ears.

Travelling to Europe is not everyone's cup of tea, which must be why Kenya's President Billy Ruto is giving 1,000 of his country's trusty police officers a well-deserved break on a tropical island in the Caribbean. Well, technically it'll be a working holiday, seeing as it involves leading a multinational force to help tackle security issues in Haiti.

## Frexit means Frexit



### CONTINENTAL DRIFT

Samira Sawlani



**French exit: President Emmanuel Macron practices sérénité in the face of adversité.** Photo: Benoit Tessier/POOL/AFP via Getty Images

According to the Kenyan foreign minister, Alfred Mutua, Haiti has asked Kenya for help saying, “Kenya we are dying here we are suffering please help us” and that as “good religious people, we cannot turn them away”.

How sweet! A question, though. As good religious people, how come “we” always look away from the brutality meted out by some members of Kenya police, including in the form of the odd extrajudicial killing or two? And you’re saying Haiti specifically asked for them?

### Un-American Excess

We are not sure if Gabon’s new leader General Brice Oligui Nguema has a penchant for travel the way his ousted predecessor Ali Bongo did, but if he does he won’t be able to use his American Express card to defray expenses.

The US announced that it was “pausing

certain foreign assistance programmes benefitting the government of Gabon” while they “evaluate the unconstitutional intervention by members of the country’s military”. Which we guess is what America calls it when a coup doesn’t go the way they want it to?

Now if there’s one thing we’ve learned from binge-watching *Keeping Up With The Coupdashians*, it’s that you can’t do two coups too quickly, otherwise you’ll come to rue the coup you do and that won’t really do, you know?

Just ask Burkina Faso. The junta there said this week they foiled a coup attempt just the other day. They just weren’t having it. We’re full up on coups, they seemed to say.

It tracks. Don’t forget that transitional president Captain Ibrahim Traoré came into office after overthrowing Lieutenant General Paul-Henri Damiba, who was an original *Keeping Up With The Coupdashians* cast member after he removed former president Roch Marc Christian Kaboré from office.

Interestingly, earlier this the week, the junta announced the suspension of French publication *Jeune Afrique* over an article which alleged that there were tensions within the armed forces, saying the report “sought to discredit the army”.

Now we don’t claim to be experts but military officers seeking to overthrow a military government does not scream harmony within the armed forces to us!

But what do we know.

If anyone’s an expert on coups round here, it’s got to be an OG Coupdashian. ■

# Ghana's air pollution is a ticking bomb

**Air quality must be made into a political issue or the state will never act.**

**Sharon Boaduwa Boadu**

**A**ir pollution in Ghana is a major cause of death and disability, but is usually overlooked by the government – and the public. Despite being the leading environmental risk factor when it comes to people's health, little has been done to deal with the factors that drive down air quality, like the burning of solid fuels such as charcoal, and car fumes. These sources of pollution can be managed. But governments often act only when placed under pressure, and few civil society groups have made air quality a top priority.

Who suffers most depends on the type of pollutant. The use of solid fuels like charcoal is most problematic for vulnerable groups like the elderly, those with pre-existing medical conditions, mothers, and children who spend most of their time at home. Outdoor pollution, like that generated by older models of cars and lorries affects everyone, but is particularly harmful to those who live near major roads.

Yet despite these issues leading to

suffering for a wide range of people, they rarely make it onto the political agenda. With limited systems to monitor air quality, and relatively few scientists or research groups working on the topic, awareness about the problem is low.

Ghana is also facing a complex economic crisis, so people who are not aware of the harm pollution is doing to them are unlikely to want the government to address it when there are so many other issues – such as job creation or paying off the country's vast debt burden – that could take priority.

**Despite these issues leading to suffering for a wide range of people, they rarely make it onto the political agenda**

Addressing this issue will therefore require building a coalition of change agents, including academics, the media, policymakers, the Environmental Protection Agency and citizens to forge consensus on what should be done and to push for change. This needs to happen now to shape the debate in the 2024 general elections, and make sure the country starts to diffuse this ticking time bomb. ■

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*Sharon Boaduwa Boadu is a master's student and a Mo Ibrahim Foundation Scholar at University of Birmingham. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa*



# THE BIG PICTURE

Out of the blue: Lampedusa in the Mediterranean is a focal point both for migrants seeking refuge in Italy, and of xenophobia in Italy itself. The island says it is collapsing under an uptick in arrivals: a camp bed on a beach may now be more than most newcomers dare hope for.

Photo: Alessandro Serranò/AFP via Getty Images



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