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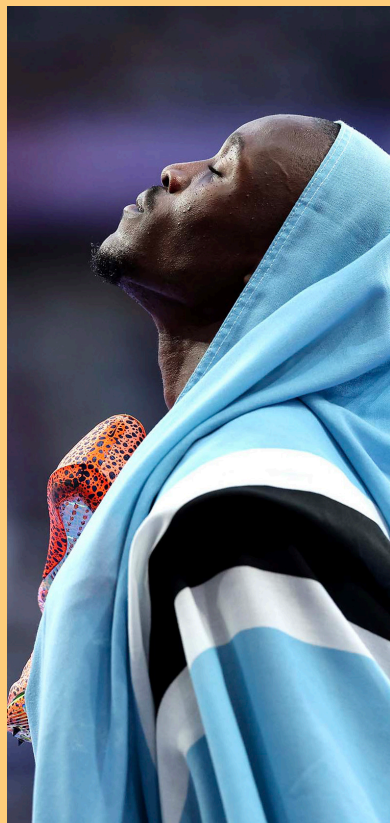
The Continent

From grass to grace

The Letsile
Tebogo story



Photo: Cameron Spencer



Cover: This weekend, the nation of Botswana came together in celebration of Letsile Tebogo – and his mother, in the ancestral realm – whose journey started 21 years ago in the small village of Kanye and culminated in a thrilling, record-breaking 200m dash in Paris. We join them, too. He is, after all, the first Motswana to take home an Olympic gold medal – and he did it in style (p11).

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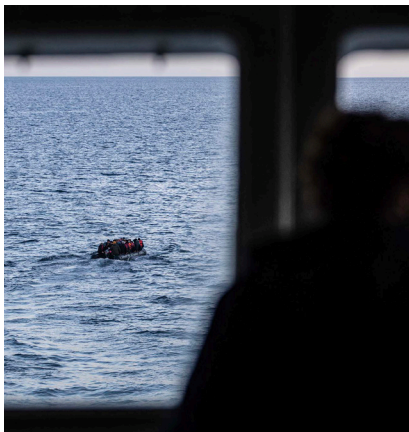
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MIGRATION

Remains of 14 people found on pirogue adrift in Caribbean

The decomposing bodies of 14 people were discovered this week on a pirogue found floating adrift off the coast of the Dominican Republic. Documentation found on the boat suggested they were from Senegal and Mauritania and that at least one was just 18 years old. The Atlantic Ocean route from West Africa to Europe is extremely dangerous. Last month, 89 bodies were found on a capsized pirogue that had left Senegal with 170 people.



Peril: Desperate migrants risk their lives to travel to Europe. Many do not make it. Photo: Sameer Al-Doumy/AFP

UNITED KINGDOM

Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone issue travel warnings

On Thursday, Sierra Leone became the third African country, after Kenya and Nigeria, to issue a travel warning in response to the ethnic violence that gripped the United Kingdom over the weekend. Sierra Leone's carefully worded advisory appears to be motivated by fear that its citizens would become targeted because of the racist nature of both these riots and policing in white-majority countries. It warned Sierra Leoneans in the UK to "avoid protest areas and steer clear of large gatherings that could potentially attract negative attention".

NAMIBIA

National oil chief cleared of corruption but fired anyway

The managing director of the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia, Immanuel Mulunga, was cleared of two charges relating to his role in a controversial N\$123-million (\$6.7-million) purchase of an oil block in Angola. The company accused Mulunga of impropriety and breach of trust in the deal, suspended him and started disciplinary proceedings against him a year ago but the presiding judge, Gerhard Maritz, said they failed to prove that "on a balance of probabilities" Mulunga acted wrongly. Nonetheless, the company's board has fired him.



Strait shooter: The Grande Dakar has inaugurated a direct shipping route from China to Senegal.

GLOBAL TRADE

Why sail Suez when you can take Dakar

The Grande Dakar, the first ship ever to travel directly from China to Senegal, docked in Dakar on 3 August, opening a new global maritime line that will now operate monthly. Aboard the cargo ship from Shanghai were 5,000 vehicles, 1,300 of which it offloaded in Dakar before continuing to Italy via the Strait of Gibraltar two days later. Dakar port managers who have been working for years to improve port services hailed the journey as “confirming the role of Dakar as a regional hub”.

SOUTH AFRICA

Kidnapped and trafficked migrants rescued in Jo’burg

South African police raided a house in Lyndhurst, Johannesburg and rescued at least 90 people who were reportedly living there against their will. According to the police, the people were Ethiopian nationals, including one who was kidnapped early last week from a town east of Johannesburg. Police are treating them as victims of human trafficking. Neighbours told the *Sowetan* that the owner of the house moved out more than a month ago and they had not seen any activity until the police raid.

NIGERIA

State violence and subterfuge mutes 10 Days of Rage

An effort by Nigerians to demand solutions for the cost of living crisis, that many say is the worst they have lived through, was sabotaged by both open and underhanded state tactics. About 13 people were reported to have been killed by the police as they cracked down. In other reports, some counter-protesters against the “10 days of rage” movement claimed they had been paid by authorities. After a few days, the number of protesters whittled down to hundreds in most cities.

TECHNOLOGY

Musk's mind-control chip found in second patient's actual brain

American company Neuralink has implanted a computer chip into the brain of a second trial patient. The chip is designed to help people use computers using their thoughts alone. It allowed the first patient, Noland Arbaugh, who got it in January, to play video games, post on social media and move a cursor on his laptop. Arbaugh, a quadriplegic, was paralysed in a diving accident. Neuralink was founded by seven scientists and Elon Musk, who is somehow *not* the billionaire usually voted most likely to inject computer chips into people. Sorry, Bill.



What's on your mind?: Noland Arbaugh lost the use of his limbs. Now he can play Mario Kart just by thinking about it.

NIGER

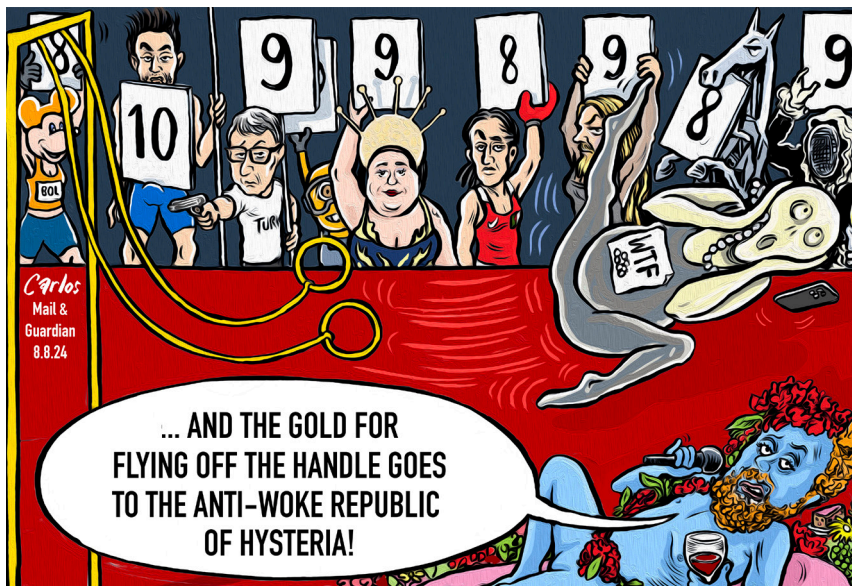
US hands over major military base

The United States and Niger announced jointly that the Americans have handed over their last West African military base to local authorities. Airbase 201 was in Agadez, the huge province in Niger's north which borders Mali, Algeria, Libya and Chad. It has been an important hub for US counter-terrorism activities in the Sahel. A smaller drone base in Niger's capital of Niamey was handed over earlier this month and US army personnel have until 15 September to leave the country.

EGYPT

Panic-selling pounds treasury bill scheme

As much as 8% of the local currency treasury bills issued by the Egyptian government were sold off in a panic that gripped global money markets on Monday, the *Al Arabiya* news outlet reports. Foreign investors were reportedly rushing to convert their holdings into US dollars, fuelled by fear about the recently devalued Egyptian pound and inflation. To get a \$8-billion loan from the IMF in March, Egypt devalued its currency and also agreed to stop fixing fuel pump prices.



SAHEL

Mali, Niger cut ties with Ukraine after Russian mercs killed

Within days of each other, Mali and Niger cut ties with Ukraine. This was after a Ukrainian intelligence spokesperson suggested that his country helped Malian rebels with information that led them to kill fighters of Russia's Africa Corps (formerly Wagner Group). Dozens of mercenaries died fighting alongside the Malian army in a three-day battle against a rebel group that paraded their bodies on social media. Ukraine later officially denied any involvement in the battle.

BENIN

Vodún mask festival signals about-face in state priorities

A new festival celebrating traditional masks saw spectators streaming into Benin from as far as Togo and Burkina Faso. The three-day event evolved from the Porto-Novo International Festival of Vodún Arts and Culture. Beninese cultural expression is rebounding after the government named art as the second pillar of the economy after agriculture. Authorities have ramped up investment in arts programmes and will complete four new museums in the next five years. (See *The Big Picture*, p31)

DRC - Rwanda

SADC steps towards peace are showing promise

The on, off and on again attempts by the big men in Kigali and Kinshasa to talk about the end of bloodshed in eastern DRC are looking productive at last.

Lydia Namubiru

On Sunday, a two-week humanitarian truce between the Congolese army and the M23 rebel group was commuted into a temporary ceasefire. It's a rare glimmer of hope for ending the violence that escalated in November 2022 and trapped millions in famine, precarity and displacement.

Eager to make the ceasefire stick, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa travelled to Angola to lend support to President João Lourenço's effort to broker peace. "We both discussed how we can make sure that the ceasefire becomes permanent," Ramaphosa told a press conference at the end of his one-day trip to the Angolan capital, Luanda.

The Luanda peace effort is the process that Rwanda, which supports the M23 group, has appeared enthusiastic about. Its negotiators shunned the East African Community's Nairobi-based peace plan because that process labelled M23 as a

terrorist organisation. Ramaphosa has the ear of President Félix Tshisekedi of the DRC, having contributed troops to the SADC mission that is supporting the Congolese army in eastern DRC.

This week's developments appear even more promising in light of an early July meeting between Rwanda's foreign minister and the DRC's deputy foreign minister in Zanzibar. The Rwandans described that meeting as "constructive and solution-oriented".

The Rwandans described that meeting as "constructive and solution-oriented"

Activists on the ground are cautiously optimistic. In an open letter published by the Crisis Group this week, civil society groups said that "while the reinvigoration of talks at ministerial level is a welcome positive development, the momentum must be sustained and the heads of state of DRC and Rwanda must meet". ■

Bangladesh

People power trumps people in power

Sustained protests forced long-serving leader to flee.

Simon Allison

For weeks the prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, defied the growing protests against her rule. She urged her security forces to control the situation by force, and they complied – at least 440 protesters were killed, and more than 10,000 arrested.

But the protests kept coming. And in the end, after 15 years in power, the prime minister was given just 45 minutes to pack her bags. It was a phone call from her son on Monday morning that eventually persuaded her to step down, and to board the military helicopter that was waiting to fly her into exile in India.

Just minutes after she departed, her residence was overrun by joyful protesters, mostly students, who could scarcely believe what they had done.

The protests were sparked by a perception that Hasina was reserving plum government jobs for ruling party supporters. This proved to be an incendiary allegation in a country with



Sheikh rattled, rolls: Anti-government protesters ran Bangladesh's prime minister out of town. Photo: K M Asad/AFP

a young population and few avenues for economic advancement, and it was student groups that started – and sustained – the massive country-wide demonstrations against the prime minister.

Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning banker – who had been persecuted by Hasina's administration – will lead an interim government in anticipation of elections. Many questions remain unresolved, such as when those elections will take place, who will be allowed to participate, and what role the powerful security establishment will play.

Yunus described the events of the last weeks as Bangladesh's second liberation. "Young people should lead the way, they should be in charge of the country, not the older generation, they have old ideas, old ways," he told *The Print*. ■

South Africa

Potato prices set to double

Frost and water cuts are pointing to a significantly reduced potato harvest.

Aarti Bhana

The price of potatoes could double soon, on the back of damages caused by black frost in Limpopo last month. The northernmost province is the largest producer of the crop in South Africa.

While Potatoes SA said it is still assessing the extent of the damage to the crops, information and regional manager FP Coetzee said the crops of some farmers had been decimated. “There are farmers who had a total wipeout and some farmers who received a burn.”

It all depends on how old the potatoes

were when the frost hit. That means it’ll take some time to calculate the full yield from this season’s crop.

Anjé Venter, a business analyst at Potatoes SA, said initial surveys suggested that about 1,800 hectares of potatoes were affected by the frost.

Thabile Nkunjane, the National Agricultural Marketing Council’s economist, said that because Limpopo is the largest supplier of potatoes, the effect of the frost on yields, supply and the price of the crop will be felt more significantly.

The expected price hikes will hit towards the end of August, when these potatoes would have headed to market.

At the moment, 10kg of potatoes cost around R80 (\$4), cheaper than the R120 (\$6) of late last year, when load-shedding and input costs pushed prices up.

The shortfall could be made up in other growing regions, such as the Western Cape. But the national water department has asked farmers there to reduce water use by a third, to ensure there’s enough for people and the environment.

FNB agricultural economist Paul Makube said with fewer hectares of potatoes growing, “you are likely to have an over-100% rise in potato prices in the near term.” That hike could be as high as 150%, or triple the current price, he said. ■



When the chips are down: A diminished harvest will drive up potato prices.

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Sport

Gold leader:
Botswana's
Letsile Tebogo
surges ahead
in the men's
200m Olympic
final. Photo:
Kevin Voigt/
GettyImages



Letsile Tebogo is his mother's son

The runner from Botswana this week became the first African to win gold in the 200m at the Olympics.

Keletso Thobega in Gaborone

Letsile Tebogo was not the pre-race favourite for the men's 200m sprint. In the build-up to the race, the commentators barely mentioned his name – and when they did, they mispronounced it. But one person always knew that he was going to win gold: his mother.

Shortly before her untimely death in May, Seratiwa “Sthando-same” Tebogo –

who raised Tebogo single-handedly – said that she wished God would extend her time on earth so that she could see her son clinch an Olympic gold medal. However, He did not grant that wish, and the whole of Botswana mourned with Tebogo as she made her spiritual transition.

In Paris, Tebogo made it clear who he was running for, engraving his mother's birth date on his running shoes, and painting her initials on his nails. “It's

basically me carrying her through every stride that I take inside the field,” he said, in the aftermath of his stunning victory on Thursday. “She’s watching up there, and she’s the happiest person in the world.”

Botswana, too, is celebrating. No Motswana has previously won an Olympic gold medal. “I have never been so proud to be a Botswana national,” said sports minister Tumiso Rakgare. President Mokgweetsi Masisi announced a half-day national holiday on Friday in Tebogo’s honour. He is being showered with gifts: the government has offered him a four bedroom house in a location of his choosing, while supermarket chain Choppies is handing over a cash prize of a million pula (\$74,000).

It took just 19.46 seconds for Tebogo to run from the start to the finish line on Thursday night – a new African record, and the fifth-fastest time in history. But his race really began 21 years ago, in the village of Kanye, in south-east Botswana. He grew up there with his mother and his extended family, as is the norm in Botswana, especially when in unfavourable socioeconomic conditions.

On weekends, the family would walk to their farmlands 20km away, to visit elders and plough the land. This instilled in Tebogo an appreciation for Setswana culture and lifestyle, and he is said to still carry out duties at the cattle post.

In the last media interview before her death, his mother said that he had always been a hyperactive boy, and she tried to channel that energy into sport. He loved playing football, but it was in athletics that he really excelled, even though he had to



For mum: Letsile Tebogo lifts the flag of Botswana after winning the men's 200m Olympic final. Photo: Ben Stansall/AFP

train in cheap shoes.

Tebogo later moved to Gaborone with his mother, and that is where his athletics talent was identified. At the age of 12, he secured a place on the Botswana national team that represented the country at a regional meet in Namibia. He brought home his first-ever major medal – a silver in the 200m.

By now his mother had a corporate job at the Bank of Botswana, and their socioeconomic status had improved. So did his prospects: with access to better facilities, and under the mentorship of coach Kebonyemodisa Mosimanyane, Tebogo just kept getting faster. More medals followed, and records: he set a world junior record at the under-20 world championship in Columbia in the 100m in 2022, and then broke the African record in the 200m last year.

Going to Paris, he was hopeful – even if everyone else was focused on his American rival, Noah Lyles. But Tebogo – and his mother – had a feeling. “I strongly believe this is an African year,” he said in April. “We are there to leap over.” ■

Africa's identity crisis

Biometric tech – like iris scans and facial recognition – is meant to make governments work better for citizens. It has fallen short. And it has been abused.

**Beatriz Ramalho da Silva
and Tomas Stadius**

Every country has a system to identify the people who live within its borders. Things like birth certificates, identity cards and passports allow people to prove that they are who they say they are – and they access government services.

For decades, these systems have been based on paper. If you don't have the right piece of paper – or that paper does not have the right stamp, or if the correct filing cabinet cannot be located – then proving your identity is an administrative nightmare. And papers are easily forged.

Biometric technology is meant to change all that. The digital technology uses a person's physical characteristics – their fingerprints, their face, the pattern of their retinas – to confirm their identity. Used properly, it allows governments to build reliable population registers and voter rolls, and deliver services more effectively. It should make it harder for criminals to commit identity fraud, and for elected criminals to commit electoral fraud.

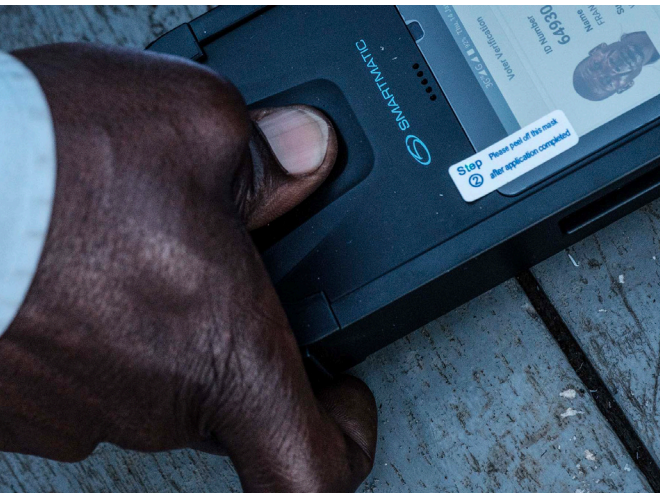
That's the theory, at least, and may explain why governments around the continent have been enthusiastically embracing biometric technology.

At the recent ID4Africa Conference in Cape Town, delegates from 50 African countries – including numerous government procurement officials – rubbed shoulders with hundreds of predominantly non-African companies. Speakers enthused over the technology's potential to improve governance and protect human rights. The atmosphere was thick with discreet deal-making as states queued up to spend their resources on new solutions to old problems.

Except the solution may not be as transformative as promised. A year-long investigation by *Lighthouse Reports* and *Bloomberg* – shared with *The Continent* – examined three high-profile attempts to roll out biometric technologies on the African continent. All are cautionary tales.

Big promises

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a bewildering trail of blockbuster deals to print national ID cards has resulted in plenty of money changing hands – but only a handful of national ID cards to show for it. The country has had no functional civil registry for decades, which can make it difficult for citizens to do things like open bank accounts or receive money from abroad.



Buy-ometrics:
A man puts his thumb on a biometric machine to check his ID to cast his vote at a polling station in Kampala, Uganda.
 Photo: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP

Successive governments have promised increasingly expensive ID schemes to solve these problems. But to date no successful ID rollout has occurred. One such scheme involved the Belgian company Semlex, which has previously been implicated in corruption scandals on the African continent. In 2014, it presented the president at the time, Joseph Kabila, with a deal to roll out national ID documents in return for a lucrative contract to print passports. Kabila took the deal.

Passport sales began, but soon sparked controversy: Semlex charged \$185 per passport, among the most expensive in the world, of which \$60 went straight to Kabila's family, according to a *Reuters* report in 2017.

Sources told *Lighthouse* and *Bloomberg* that instead of funding national IDs, passport profits were diverted to the construction of the Hypnose luxury shopping mall in Lubumbashi – seen as

a safe way for Kabila to store his money. Neither Semlex nor Kabila responded to requests for comment.

Kabila's successor, Félix Tshisekedi, initiated a second round of ID card procurement. This resulted in a blockbuster \$1.2-billion deal, initially reported as being awarded to French company Idemia and local partners.

But as civil servants raised the alarm about financial irregularities and the risk of an “enormous scam” – and with the World Bank refusing to fund the project – production of IDs quickly ground to a halt. Only Tshisekedi himself and a few hundred VIPs ever received ID cards.

When contacted, Idemia said that it “is not a party to any contract” with the Congolese government, but does currently have a contract with Afritech, a Congolese company, to build Congo's civil registry and print ID cards. A spokesperson for Tshisekedi declined to comment.

Same old problems

The government of Mozambique turned to biometric technology to address concerns with the credibility of its elections. It issued a series of multimillion-dollar contracts to procure biometric voting equipment. But the new technology appears to have had the opposite effect – creating new ways to fix electoral results.

Artes Gráficas, a company owned by businessmen with close ties to the ruling party, Frelimo, won the contract to provide electoral equipment ahead of the 2018 election. It partnered with a South African tech vendor, Laxton, to provide a voter registration kit ahead of presidential elections.

But the process was marred by irregularities, which included inflated voter numbers in areas sympathetic to the ruling party.

Sources inside the government, and former employees, claimed that Laxton was aware of these issues. Yet, in 2023, Laxton won an “exceptional” no-bid tender for \$127-million, to provide a new set of voter registration technology. Behind the scenes, internal documents and meeting minutes reveal there were serious concerns inside the government electoral body over Laxton’s equipment and the technology’s value for money.

After the 2023 local elections – won by the ruling party – the main opposition party condemned a “massive electoral fraud”, while both civil society and international observers highlighted the presence of hundreds of thousands of “ghost voters” on the voters roll.

This was exactly the kind of irregularity

that the new biometric system was supposed to eradicate.

A Laxton spokesperson said that its system had been reviewed and approved by numerous stakeholders, “including government agencies and multiple political party representatives”. The company said it had carried out “the successful registration of a record 16.8-million voters” and that “alleged isolated incidents do not reflect the overall success and reliability of the system”.

Surveillance state

In Uganda, a new national ID system ended up feeding a sweeping surveillance state built in co-operation with Huawei. The \$126-million deal resulted in a network of closed circuit television cameras built across the country, which has given it the capacity to deploy facial and number-plate recognition technology. Meanwhile, sensitive personal data – like that required to register a sim card or make a bank transaction – can be accessed at will by state actors with no due process.

Biometric tools, now central to many of the day-to-day functions of the state, have become a powerful mechanism for surveilling politicians, journalists, human rights defenders and ordinary citizens. One of them is Nick Opiyo, one of East Africa’s leading human rights lawyers.

“There’s almost no confidentiality in my work any more,” Opiyo told *Bloomberg*. “There’s pervasive fear and self-censorship.”

Neither Huawei nor the Ugandan government responded to requests for comment. ■



Nailed it: Anti-fascism protesters face off against far-right demonstrators in Weymouth, England.

Photo: Justin Tallis/AFP

Islamophobic violence rips through England

Some 400 people face prison time in the island nation after the far-right targeted migrant and Muslim communities. The counter-protests were bigger.

Kiri Rupiah

Violence swept across English towns and cities this week as gangs of white men and youths attacked members of minority ethnic and religious groups. Muslim people were their main target.

Stoked by hate, fear, hot weather and disinformation, they looted shops, tried to burn down a hotel with people in it, and threatened the lives of anyone not responding to their interrogations in the

“right” accent. More than 50 police officers responding to the riots were injured.

The violence began with an attack on a mosque by a gang claiming to be “protesting” against the 29 July murder of three young girls who were killed at a Taylor Swift-themed dance session in Southport, a seaside town located 380km north of the country’s capital London.

The motive for the killing, where 10 children and parents were also injured, is not yet known.



Thinning blue line: Police in riot gear form a barrier against a far-right crowd in Bristol on 3 August. Photo: Justin Tallis/AFP

The attacker was born in Wales but, at first, no details about his identity were released because he was under 18. That was an opportunity for people to spread lies. In the hours after, fake news websites and social media posts wrongly claimed that he was a Muslim refugee or asylum seeker. Wealthy populist Nigel Farage – who leads a political party with five seats, or less than 1% of the British Parliament – boosted the claims by insinuating that the anonymity was a ploy to deceive the general public about the attacker’s identity.

Tensions escalated. Lists of hotels where people believed asylum seekers are being housed were circulated on platforms such as Telegram. Hundreds took to the streets of Southport in protests that quickly descended into violence.

After Southport, people tried to spread the violence across the country, but increasingly smaller groups turned out in just 20 towns and cities in England and in Northern Ireland. Scotland and Wales, colonised centuries ago and now part of the UK, did not see such violence.

Media matters

Islamophobia, racism, and race riots have not been a novelty in England since after the world wars of the last century, when a booming economy brought in mass migration.

This week’s riots were different from the historical ones in at least one respect: the role of social media. Using misinformation and virality, the far-right gangs were able to quickly mobilise. They egged each other on with hysteria seeded by fascist and neo-Nazi propaganda like the “great replacement theory” – which claims white populations are being replaced by black and brown ones through immigration.

While platforms like X and Facebook – where algorithms hype content that spreads division and hate – have been key in spreading the violence, print newspapers have a long history of doing the same. The UK’s press is not required to act in the public interest, or balance free speech rights with responsibilities, as is common in republican democracies. Newspapers like the *Daily Mail* have

repeatedly run covers that incite violence, particularly against minorities and Muslim people. Headlines have included: “UK Muslims helping jihadis”; “Migrants: How many more can we take?”; and “The ‘swarm’ on our streets”.

“This anger and hatred has been incubated by the media,” Christanghelo Godino of the Kanlungan Filipino Consortium, which has been helping people terrified for their lives this week, told *The Continent*.

As the violence burned out, helped by colder days and the arrest of 400 rioters, the same newspapers began to cover the riots in a less sympathetic tone. Counter-protesters – in their thousands as opposed to the hundreds of rioters – featured on front pages. Photos of convicted rioters were paraded on the same pages. But the language retained a tinge of sympathy. The rioters were still “protesters”. Prime Minister Keir Starmer called them “far-right thugs” even though their violence met the legal threshold of terrorism.

Tough times make scapegoats

The UK has been struggling to find its place in the world since it lost its empire in the 20th century. This has intensified since the Brexit referendum eight years ago. The country has stumbled from one crisis or scandal to another: costly disruptions to trade with Europe; deep cuts to public spending under 14 years of conservative leadership; a botched pandemic response; a cost of living crisis; and corruption.

With so much going wrong, the previous government worked its comfortable relationship with the media



Red flag: A far-right demonstrator waves a Union Jack at a gathering in Weymouth, Dorset. Photo: Justin Tallis/AFP

to sell easy and populist distractions. Particular focus went to the 30,000 people who arrived illegally in boats in 2023, in an attempt to claim asylum. They would be sent “back home” or to Rwanda. Net migration to the UK last year stood at 685,000 people, or 1% of the population.

“The death throes of the Tory [conservative] government were basically to call lawyers traitors to the country for representing refugees, to pass the most insane bits of legislation in order to be able to deport refugees to Rwanda,” said Satbir Singh, a London-based social justice advocate who has campaigned for the welfare of immigrants for years.

As a result of that toxic rhetoric, minorities in the country have lived under a cloud of hostility for more than a decade. According to police statistics, there has been a growth in hate crimes, especially against Muslim people.

Few then are surprised that it culminated into this weekend’s race riots. “It’s just metastasising,” Singh says. “No one is terribly surprised.” ■

Confusion, then defiance: Algeria rallies around Imane Khelif

Through no fault of her own, the boxer has been at the centre of the biggest controversy in the 2024 Olympics.

Madjid Serrah in Tizi-Ouzou

From a sporting perspective, this has been a good Olympic Games for Algeria. The success of 17-year-old Kaylia Nemour is one of the feel-good stories of Paris 2024: when she won gold in the uneven bars, she became the first African gymnast to win any Olympic medal.

The boxer Imane Khelif is guaranteed a medal, too. On Friday night, she fought in the final of the welterweight division. The worst she could do was silver.

But celebrations of Khelif's sporting prowess have been overshadowed by accusations that she should not be eligible to compete in women's boxing.

Khelif, along with Taiwanese boxer Lin Yu-ting, was disqualified in 2023 from the World Championship after the International Boxing Association said it conducted a sex chromosome test that ruled both athletes ineligible. The IBA said the pair "did not meet the required necessary eligibility criteria and were found to have competitive advantages over other female competitors".

The International Olympic Committee

took a different view. It had already suspended the IBA in 2019 over concerns around its finances, governance and ethics, and said recently that the decision to suspend Khelif and Yu-ting was "arbitrary" and "taken without any proper procedure".

The controversy made international headlines after Khelif's first fight in Paris, which lasted just 46 seconds. Her opponent, Italy's Angela Carini, refused to shake Khelif's hand, and said later that she had withdrawn for her own protection. Afterwards, prominent right-wing politicians (including Donald Trump) and anti-transgender influencers (like *Harry Potter* author JK Rowling) erroneously described Khelif as male or transgender – and used that description to invalidate her accomplishments. "We object because we saw a male punching a female," Rowling said on social media.

In Algeria, the controversy was initially met with confusion. Khelif's father Amar Khelif told local news outlets in her home town of Tiaret that his daughter was born female and has lived her entire life as a woman, sharing her birth certificate and pictures from her childhood. "Having

such a daughter is an honour because she is a champion, she honoured me and I encourage her and I hope she will get the medal in Paris,” he told *Reuters*.

This is a socially conservative country, where being transgender is illegal and trans rights are rarely, if ever, discussed.

“Imane fell victim to a global political context that goes beyond sports,” said Jugurtha Hanachi, a blogger from Khenchela, a city in the north-east. Hannachi was referring to the Western debate around trans rights, which has become increasingly charged, especially since far-right politicians like Trump and Nigel Farage in the United Kingdom have adopted anti-trans positions.

Since that first fight, Khelif has been subjected to a torrent of online abuse and hatred – much of it based on fake news and misinformation about her gender identity.

But Algerians have embraced her. Mohamed Kamoun, a writer in Algiers, told *The Continent* that this is not surprising, given Algeria’s long history of anticolonial struggles. “It is natural that we would support an Algerian citizen who felt oppressed and faced fierce attacks from the largest and most powerful media forces.”

Kamoun added: “She has shown that heroism transcends gender, echoing the legacy of our resistance fighters. Both men and women can be champions, and Khelif has made us proud of our belonging to this country.”

In fact, Khelif’s dignified response to the controversy swirling around her has only made her more popular. “Imane is a woman who deserves all our respect, and history will bear witness to that,” said



Bout time: Algeria's Imane Khelif reacts after winning the women's 66kg boxing semifinal. Photo: Mohd Rasfan/AFP

Lynda Chemli, a resident of Tizi-Ouzou.

Amel Hadjadj, the founder of the *Algerian Feminist Newspaper*, observed that Khelif is not the first athlete to face such criticism, citing the examples of South African runner Caster Semanya and American tennis player Serena Williams.

“These accusations highlight an inability to accept the diversity of women’s bodies and a tendency to subject them to patriarchal standards,” Hadjadj said. “Gender testing and baseless accusations are merely tools to perpetuate sexism.”
























For Amel Benaoudia, a martial artist on Algeria’s national Kempo team, all the noise and controversy makes Khelif’s medal-winning performances all the more remarkable. “An athlete cannot prepare adequately and compete under such pressure, which pushed her father to show the family register to defend her identity as having been born and lived as a girl. This is very harsh in a society like ours,” she said. ■



Who took gold, and who simply stole the show?



The moments we loved at the 2024 Summer Olympics

| COUNTRY | ATHLETES & SPORT |
|--|--|
| Kenya       | Beatrice Chebet/Gold/Athletics - 5,000m Beatrice Chebet/Gold/Athletics - 10,000m Faith Kipyegon/Silver/Athletics - 5,000m Mary Moraa/Bronze/Athletics - 800m Faith Cherotich/Bronze/Athletics - 3,000m steeplechase Abraham Kibiwot/Bronze/Athletics -3,000 steeplechase |
| South Africa      | Tatjana Smith/Gold/Swimming - 100m breaststroke Tatjana Smith/Silver/Swimming - 200m breaststroke Bayanda Walaza, Shaun Maswanganyi, Bradley Nkoana, Akani Simbine/Silver/Athletics - 4x100m relay Springboks/Bronze/Rugby sevens Alan Hatherlykh/Bronze/Cycling - Mountain bike |
| Uganda   | Joshua Cheptegei/Gold/Running - 10,000m Peruth Chemtai/Silver/Athletics - 3,000m steeplechase |
| Algeria  | Kaylia Nemour/Gold/Gymnastics - Uneven bars |
| Botswana  | Letsile Tebogo/Gold/Athletics - 200m |
| Ethiopia   | Berihu Aregawi/Silver/10,000m Tsige Duguma/Silver/800m run |
| Tunisia  | Farès Ferjani/Silver/Fencing - Sabre Mohamed Khalil Jendoubi/Bronze/Taekwondo - 58kg |
| Cabo Verde  | Daniel Varela de Pina/Bronze/Boxing - 51kg |
| Egypt  | Mohamed el-Sayed/Bronze/Fencing - Epee |
| Morocco   | Soufiane El Bakkali/Gold/Athletics - 3,000 steeplechase The Atlas Lions/Bronze/Football - Men |
| Zambia  | Muzala Samukonga/Bronze/Athletics - 400m |



Maternal flame: Egyptian fencer **Nada Hafez** competed while seven months pregnant. Photo: Carl Recine/Getty Images



Keep the faith: Mid-race jostling between Faith Kipyegon and Gudaf Tsegay initially led officials to disqualify Kipyegon's second-place finish, but the decision was overturned on appeal and the Kenyan runner got her 5,000m silver medal. Photo: Christian Petersen/Getty Images



Showstopper: South Africa's Boipelo Awuah skateboarding.
Photo: Odd Andersen/AFP



Breaking barriers: Kaylia Nemour became the first Algerian, and the first African, to win an Olympic medal in gymnastics. Photo: Loic Venance/AFP



Meet me outside: Algerian boxer Imane Khelif didn't whittle herself down for the hysterical media bullies voices claiming she is not a woman.

Photo: Richard Pelham/Getty Images



The fastest men alive: South Africa's Akani Simbine placed 4th in the men's 100m final, a race so intense that all eight competitors finished the race in under 10 seconds.
Photo: Andy Cheung/Getty Images



All court up : The Nigerian women's team became the first African basketball team to qualify for the quarterfinals at the Olympics. Photo: Thomas Coex/AFP



Climb every mountain: South Africa's Alan Hatherly won bronze in men's cross-country cycling. Photo: Jan Woitas/Picture Alliance via Getty Images

Do young people believe in democracy?

Recent protests in Kenya remind us that when enough young people speak up, elected leaders have to pay attention.

Given their dominance in numbers, young Africans can also make themselves heard through democratic channels that are less risky than street protests – if they believe in them.

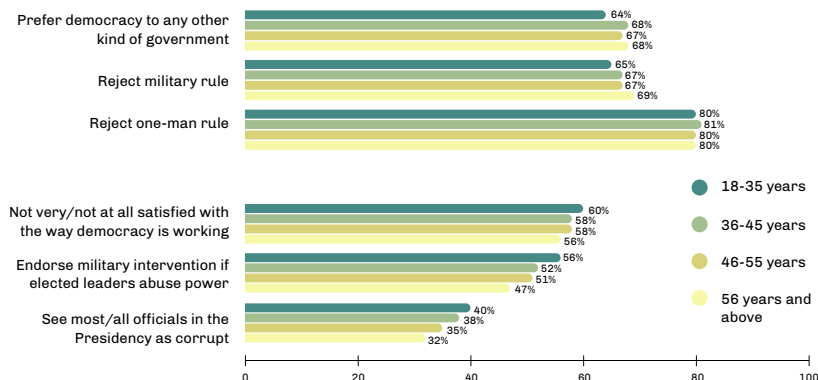
When Afrobarometer interviewed almost 28,000 young people (aged 18-35) in 39 African countries, we found a solid preference for democracy over other political systems (64%) and rejection of military rule (65%) – both slightly lower than among older cohorts. In their

opposition to dictatorship (80%) and one-party rule (78%), youth are just as united as their elders.

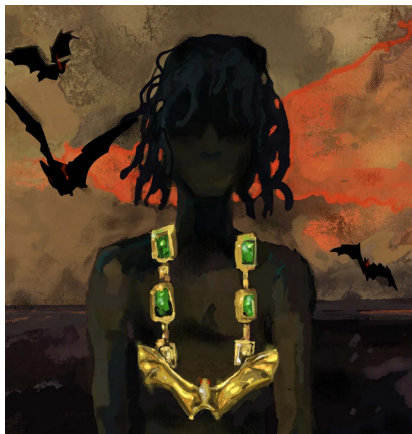
But we found greater dissatisfaction with the way their democracy is working (60%) and a greater perception of widespread corruption in the Presidency (40%). Young people are more likely to endorse military takeovers “when elected leaders abuse power for their own ends” (56% of youth vs 47% of those over 55).

For International Youth Day (12 August), one pertinent question to ask might be how to give our young people reason to believe. ■

**Views on democracy and governance by age group
39 African countries | 2021/2023**



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 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- two to three percentage points.



Another. Banger.

Rema knows his position, revels in it and will only do things one way – his way.

Wilfred Okiche

Nigerian superstar Rema has emerged as a fixture on the global stage since *Calm Down* became one of the biggest triumphs of the present Afrobeats wave.

On any given day, Rema could be making a provocative critique of how Europe hoards African art on stage in London, performing at a billionaire's wedding in India or hanging out with A-list music and football icons in New York City. This whirlwind schedule that the 24-year-old artist (born Divine

Ikubor) has settled into contrasts with his modest upbringing in Benin City. But that doesn't mean that Rema has strayed far from his origins.

Benin Boys, the lead single of his sophomore record *Heis*, is a homage to Rema's beloved hometown. He teams up with fellow homeboy Shallipopi to run through minor and major specifics of hailing from Nigeria's fourth largest city. Its local colour and braggadocio makes it the perfect lead single for *Heis*. At a brisk 27 minutes and 38 seconds, the record is a complete portrait of Rema's vision of himself as an entertainer. He knows exactly how he wants to come across and seizes full artistic control to achieve this.

On *Hehehe*, Rema scrambles conventional consensus and situates himself smack in the conversation of greatness. With chest-thumping confidence he declares: "No more big three, there's now a big four" – writing himself into the exclusive ranks of Burna Boy, Davido and Wizkid. Cheeky, but the record makes a convincing case that Rema is exactly who he says he is.

The album is a departure from his debut, *Rave & Roses*, in that Rema is unburdened by the explicit demands of going pop for mass appeal. This Rema is in top form, assured of his place, yet hungry enough to make each song a furious manifesto of self.

Think of *Heis* as an exuberant time at an addictive rave session, one that ends somewhat prematurely and leaves you excited to do it all again. ■

THE QUIZ

0-3

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

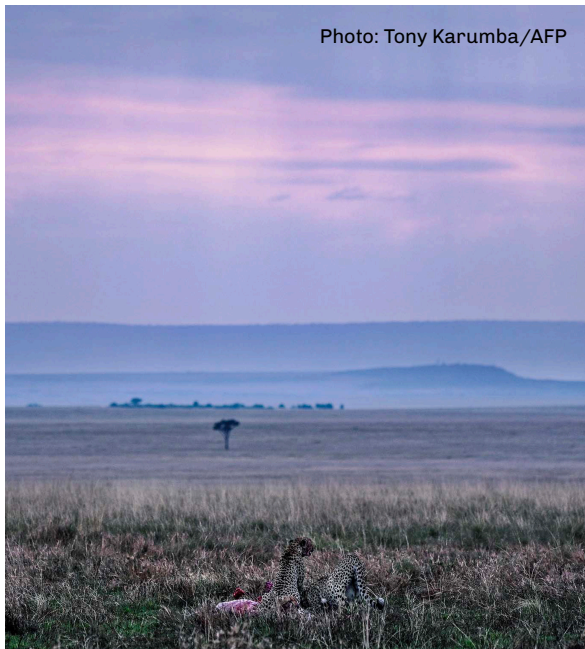
4-7

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

8-10

"I once tried out for steeplechase and caught one on my first go."

Photo: Tony Karumba/AFP



- 1_** In which country is the Maasai Mara National Reserve (pictured)?
- 2_** Which country does the reserve border?
- 3_** Kaylia Nemour won Olympic gold in the uneven bars this year for which country?
- 4_** ££, £E, LE and EGP are all abbreviations for which African currency?
- 5_** Tunisia's President Kais Saied is seeking a third term. True or false?
- 6_** Kumasi is the second-largest city in which African country?
- 7_** Name the artist who recently released their sophomore album *Heis*.
- 8_** Which country won bronze in the men's football at the Paris Olympics?
- 9_** Winfred Yavi won this year's 3,000m steeplechase for Bahrain. What is her country of origin?
- 10_** Who was the first woman to be elected head of state in Africa?

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

Social justice is the best global policy

The future does not have to be like the present – but it will be, unless we shift gears to urgently pursue social justice.

**Gilbert F Hougbo
and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**

It is easy to be pessimistic in these fraught, uncertain times. Instability is on the rise, and conflicts are unfolding on our screens every day. The post-Covid economic recovery is proving to be uneven and inequitable, with women and the poorest benefiting least. The rewards of development increasingly appear to have been monopolised by a privileged few. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Even though we can expect the global average unemployment rate to fall modestly this year, from 5% in 2023 to a projected 4.9%, there are still persistent deficits in decent work.

Only 45.6% of working-age women (age 15-64) are formally employed, compared to 69.2% of working-age men. Women in high-income countries still earn only 73 cents for every dollar earned by men, on average, and in low-income

countries, that figure falls to 44 cents.

The climate crisis is wreaking havoc on the planet. The past 12 months have been the hottest on record, with far-reaching implications for billions of people's lives, livelihoods, and health.

Excessive heat alone affects 2.4-billion people – 70% of the global workforce – and kills close to 19,000 workers each year. Driven by droughts and other factors, hunger continues to spread, and basic needs are going unfulfilled. Moreover, wars and conflicts that have already claimed the lives of millions of innocent people seem to have become more entrenched.

Development, climate action, and global governance should be re-oriented around social justice to unlock a better, more equitable world. Social justice is the thread that binds together the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – but it is usually framed in the abstract, rather than as a concrete objective. That is what needs to change.

Social justice must be pursued with the same urgency and commitment as a just energy transition and fairer trade rules. These goals are, in fact, interdependent – progress on each will help make progress on the others.

We cannot achieve social justice if we do not protect workers and businesses from the effects of climate change. We cannot have sustainable trade if jobs in factories and along supply chains have no basic occupational safeguards and living wages. We cannot ensure that our societies



High and dry: The Turkana people of drought-stricken Nanyee, Kenya are among many global south communities suffering disproportionately from climate change. Photo: Luis Tato/AFP

remain peaceful if individuals are unable to sustain their families through their work. Equally, there can be no prosperity without peace, and wars are often rooted in poverty, environmental degradation and other manifestations of injustice.

But to make progress in any of these areas, we will need more robust policies to promote equality, rights, and inclusion in labour markets and beyond. That means ensuring equal access to decent jobs, high-quality health care and education, skills training and lifelong learning, and a safe and healthy environment.

Translating the demand for social justice into reality requires mobilising all those who believe in the power of collaboration, cooperation, social dialogue, and multilateralism.

The Global Coalition for Social

Justice, which held its inaugural forum in Geneva this June, is an example. It's bringing together over 300 governments, employers' and workers' organisations, UN and regional international organisations, regional development banks, enterprises, NGOs, and academic institutions, that are convinced that genuinely inclusive policies must be implemented at all levels of governance – global, regional, national, and local.

At the UN's Second World Summit for Social Development next year, the global community will have an opportunity to advance the goal of social justice.

The aim is to help all countries align their efforts with international commitments, including those enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals. Governments and civil-society leaders will have a chance to work toward ensuring that adequate, universal social protections reach everyone, and that all people and communities are equipped with the skills, education, and knowledge they need to navigate major economic transitions and global upheavals.

We are committed to doing our part and acting as a conduit for progress through the Global Coalition for Social Justice at the World Summit and beyond. We invite others to join us. The future does not have to be like the present; but it will be unless we adopt a new mindset geared toward policy priorities that embody the quest for social justice. ■

Gilbert F. Hougbo is Director-General of the International Labour Organization. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is President of Brazil.

THE BIG PICTURE

Vous dieu: Celebrants wearing masks of the Zangbeto – traditional Vodun guardians of the night – join the grand procession of the Porto-Novo mask festival in Benin last weekend.

Photo: Yanick Folly/AFP



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