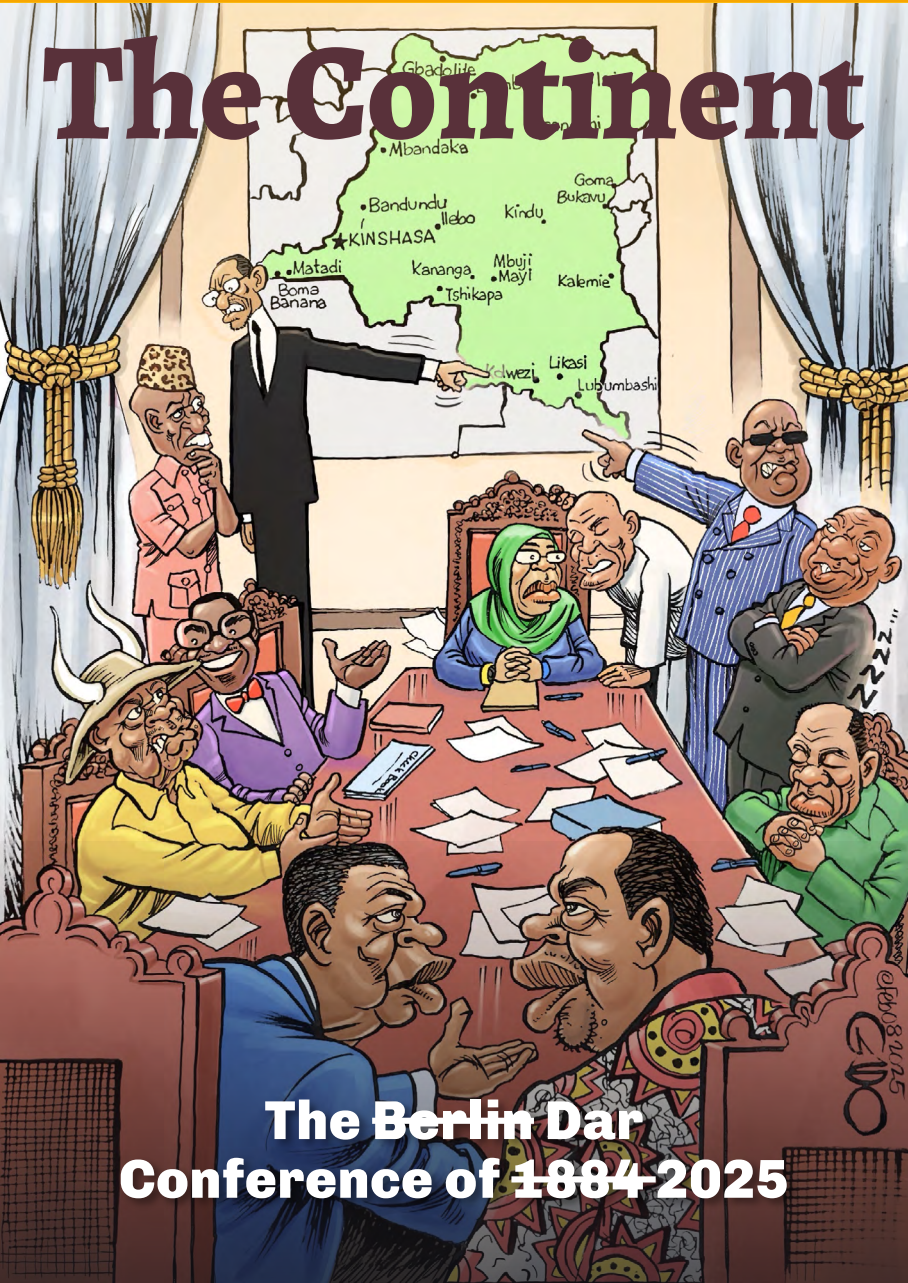
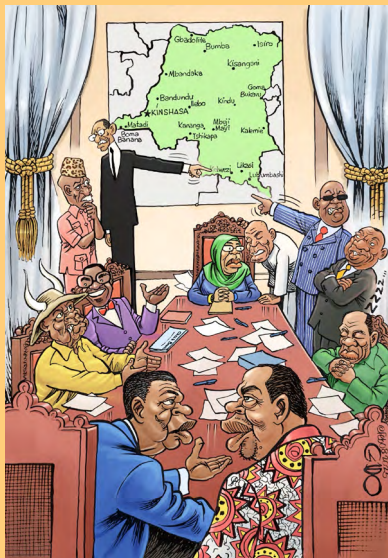


The Continent



**The Berlin Dar
Conference of 1884-2025**



Cover: Nearly all appeals seeking to dial back the war in the eastern DRC are addressed to powerful Western countries. Or they are beseeching Rwanda to pull its support for the rebel movement, even though Kigali has made it clear this won't happen. So far, none of it has worked. M23's advance continues undeterred, to the terror of the people in the targeted city of Bukavu (p13). But what if the best country to petition is closer to the ground? What if it is Tanzania? (p15). Now would be a good time to call President Samia Suluhu Hassan. After all, she is hosting a multinational conference to decide the matter.

Inside:

- **Climate:** We are living in the worst-case scenario (p7)
- **Capitalism:** One corrupt multinational boss slapped with a small consequence (p8)
- **Stolen History:** Egypt's Rosetta Rashid Stone (p18)
- **Health:** The Zimbabwean church that is as politically useful as it is anti-vax (p22)
- **Women:** Bucking the anti-vaccination trend to keep Nigerian babies alive (p23)
- **Data:** Who do public servants disrespect most? (p27)

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CHAGOS

UK handover to Mauritius stalls

The £9-billion Chagos Islands lease deal that the UK government agreed with Mauritius in October has stalled, with each side telling a different tale as to why. In Mauritius, Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam told legislators that he renegotiated it such that UK payments arrive faster and then increase to include inflation. That, according to the British newspaper *The Times*, would double the overall amount. The UK says it's not finalising anything anyway until US President Donald Trump, whose country has a military base on one of the islands, is consulted.

NIGER

Militants kill 10 government troops

Militants in western Niger ambushed a detachment of government soldiers and killed 10 of them on Wednesday, according to a broadcast statement. The statement called the attackers terrorists but did not name their affiliation. The soldiers were on an operation to counter cattle rustling. Like Burkina Faso and Mali, Niger is ruled by a military junta that overthrew a civilian government. The three countries recently said they now have a 5,000 strong joint force to fight insurgents.

AID FREEZE

Nigeria finds local funds for HIV drugs

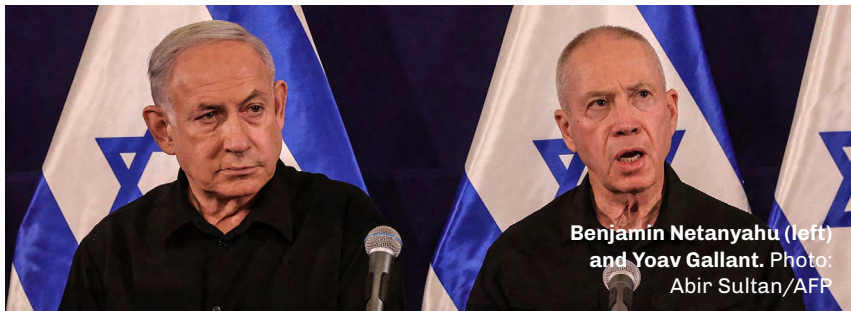
The federal government has allocated 4.8-billion naira (about \$3.2-million) for 150,000 HIV treatment packs over the next four months, *TVC News* reported. It's a stop-gap response to the disruptions caused by the United States' suspension of most of its aid. According to the UN agency that coordinates the global HIV/Aids response, 1.7-million people in Nigeria were receiving antiretroviral therapy until recently. Reports indicate the Trump administration intends to whittle down the USAID agency to fewer than 300 employees from its current 10,000.

SUDAN**Doctors forced to go underground**

Doctors at Sudan's Al-Saudi Maternal Teaching Hospital have resorted to working in dimly lit shipping containers buried underground, according to *Drop Site News*. Situated in El-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, the hospital has been attacked 15 times since war broke out in April 2023. And the humanitarian situation in the whole of Sudan is about to get a whole lot worse after the US cut almost all foreign aid.

KENYA**Canada steps in as US freezes funds**

Of the \$15-million that the US pledged to contribute to the multinational policing mission that Kenya is leading in Haiti, \$13-million is now frozen under the executive order President Donald Trump issued late last month, *Reuters* reports. The mission nonetheless has enough money to run until September this year, thanks in large part to contributions from Canada.



Benjamin Netanyahu (left) and Yoav Gallant. Photo: Abir Sultan/AFP

TRUMP**US sanctions target ICC investigators**

United States President Donald Trump issued an executive order sanctioning workers of the International Criminal Court (ICC) who investigate citizens of the US or its allies. The US isn't a member of the ICC but its citizens could

be prosecuted when their crimes happen in member states. Trump targeted the court in his first term too and has one more reason lately: US conservatives, his political base, are outraged that the court issued arrest warrants for Israeli leaders, Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, over Gaza war crimes. At least 47,583 Palestinians were killed and more than 111,600 wounded in the 470 days of the war.

UGANDA

Shot in the arm as Sudan Ebola vaccine trial kicks off

Days after a nurse died in Kampala from the Sudan strain of Ebola fever, Uganda has begun testing a world-first vaccine for that strain of the haemorrhagic fever. The origin of the outbreak remains unknown but two of the deceased nurse's relatives have since tested positive. The trial is targeting health workers and others who have been exposed. The World Health Organisation's Africa director, Matshidiso Moeti, said the trial, which was prepared in just four days – “demonstrates the power of collaboration for global health security”.

Photo: Badru Katumba/AFP



EU

‘Scrap Rwanda deal,’ Belgium urges

Belgium is leading the push for the European Union to suspend a deal worth €900-million that gives European tech companies preferential access to Rwanda's mineral exports, *The Guardian* reports. This comes after M23 fighters, backed by Rwanda, seized Goma and other towns in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The latter's foreign minister has called for an end to the “bloodstained” deals that put “Visit Rwanda” logos on the jerseys of football clubs Paris Saint-Germain, Bayern Munich, and Arsenal.

SOMALIA

Senior insurgent leader surrenders

A senior Islamic State (IS) fighter, Abdirahman Shirwac Aw-Saciid, surrendered to Somali police on Monday in Puntland, according to the country's state news agency. Aw-Saciid led an IS squad accused of assassinations and extorting local businesses. His surrender followed days of United States airstrikes bombarding areas in which the group operates. IS was once a minor threat in Somalia compared to al-Shabaab but its influence has grown in recent years, bolstered by foreign fighters and better funding.

OBITUARY

Aga Khan IV departs for the spirit world

Tributes are pouring in for the fourth Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims. Prince Karim al-Hussaini had led the millions-strong community from age 20 when he was an undergraduate at Harvard University. He built his family's philanthropic foundation, the Aga Khan Development Network, growing its annual budget to \$1-billion and expanding its work in healthcare, education, and housing to 30 countries. The father of four was 88 years old when he died on Tuesday in Portugal. His son, Rahim al-Hussaini, was named Aga Khan V on Wednesday.



Philanthropist: Founder and president of the Aga Khan Development Network, Karim al-Hussaini. Photo: Sajjad Hussain/AFP

NIGERIA

Dream about 'witch' ends in nightmare

Five men have been sentenced to death for the murder of a 67-year-old woman, Dahare Abubakar, whom they accused of witchcraft. The men from Kano State attacked her while she was tending to her farm, beating and stabbing her. They were arrested shortly afterwards. The men's evidence that their victim was a witch was literally dreamt up. The sick wife of one of the men, Abdulaziz Yahaya, had allegedly dreamed that the woman was chasing her with a knife.

BURUNDI

Bitter pill: doctors arrested over failed wage dispute

Burundian intelligence services arrested and imprisoned five doctors after they resigned over failed salary negotiations. According to *AFP*, the Burundi General Practitioners' Union says the doctors were arrested between 27 December and 31 January for allegedly "undermining national security". The doctors, who worked in public and private hospitals, earned about \$170 a month. The union says poor pay and abysmal working conditions are driving doctors to leave Burundi. The country already has a high ratio of about two doctors to every 20,000 residents.

Climate

The great existential bonfire burns on apace

The hottest January ever shows humanity is locked into a path of self-destruction.

Sipho Kings

In late 2019, the UN's climate agency released in-depth projections of how the climate crisis could play out. It had three scenarios: we save the day; nobody does much until it's almost too late; or we elect madmen and double down on heating the world.

The first scenario envisioned political leaders having the will to do what is needed to keep temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-Industrial Revolution levels. African countries have long argued that such a course will allow them to survive the climate crisis. And this was the number all but four countries in the world agreed to work towards in 2015 with the Paris climate agreement.

But temperature increases of more than 1.5°C have been recorded in 18 of the past 19 months.

The second scenario expected nobody to do enough until the 2020s, when the effects of a world spinning out of control began to pick up pace: fires, floods, famine, drought. The biblical stuff. All these disasters have come to pass, repeatedly. But, apart from China, the world's main polluters are weakening efforts to reduce their emissions. Or abandoning them entirely. The biggest polluter in history, the United States, has elected a man who took billionaires' money with the promise of allowing more drilling for fossil fuels. He has paid back that investment by withdrawing from the Paris Agreement.

Which brings us to scenario three. UN scientists predicted this path would mean "poverty levels increase to a very large scale and incidence of starvation increases very significantly". High levels of public unrest follow, "resulting in some countries becoming dysfunctional". And that was just the intro to that scenario.

The Paris Agreement earmarked 2025 as a critical year. Countries are meant to come back to the negotiating table with ever-more ambitious plans to reduce carbon emissions.

Those emissions increased last year. And last month was the hottest January in recorded history. ■

Organised crime

Trafigura executive found guilty

A Swiss court says Mike Wainwright orchestrated \$5-million bribe to an Angolan official.

On Friday last week, a court in Switzerland found Mike Wainwright – the former chief operating officer of Trafigura – guilty of corruption. He has been sentenced to 32 months in prison.

The court found Wainwright had organised the payment of \$5-million in bribes to a senior official in Angola's state oil company, Sonangol, using a shell company in the Virgin Islands – a tax haven – in an effort to disguise the payments. The payments were made via a middleman known as “Mr Non-Compliant”, prosecutors said.

The bribes gave Trafigura a lucrative near-monopoly on the trade of Angolan petroleum products – and denied Angolans a competitive price for their natural resource.

Trafigura, one of the world's largest traders of commodities such as oil and metals, was also held liable for the crime



Oily character: Wainwright is also a racing driver. Photo: Charlescannon

and ordered to pay a fine of \$3-million and compensation of \$145.6-million.

According to *Bloomberg*, Wainwright is “the first senior executive at a major commodity-trading house to be convicted of corruption”.

Wainwright maintains his innocence, and is planning to appeal. And Trafigura can afford the fine. The company makes its money by buying commodities and then selling them for a profit – and it makes lots and lots of money. Last year, it raked in \$2.8-billion in profit. In 2023, that figure was more than \$7-billion.

The company has been repeatedly implicated in major corruption scandals, and fined by various regulatory authorities around the world – but, until now, the people who commit the crimes on its behalf have walked free. ■

Nigeria

Police arrest 165 migrants linked to Ponzi scheme

The organisation is accused of being a front for human trafficking.

In a raid on a flat in Kebbi State, on Nigeria's border with Benin and Niger, police arrested 165 nationals of Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire.

The authorities said the people did not have proper immigration documents. They suspect that they were working as part of Qnet, a scheme that brands itself as a lifestyle and wellness direct sales company, but has been repeatedly linked to human trafficking through overseas travel scams. Qnet denied these links in a statement issued last May.

The picture emerging from this raid is similar to the one that emerged from a two-month Interpol operation across 19 African countries last year. Interpol arrested just over a thousand people suspected of being behind ransomware, digital extortion, and online scams. They included a group in Cameroon that was suspected of trafficking victims from seven different countries to run a multi-level marketing scam.

"After paying a 'membership fee', victims were promised employment

opportunities or training, but once in Cameroon, they were held captive and obliged to lure others into the scheme to gain their freedom," the global policing body said at the time. The traffickers in that case had made about \$150,000 in fees from their victims.

It's currently unclear which role the 165 people taken from the Kebbi flat this week played: trafficker or trafficked. The state police handed them over to the Nigerian immigration service for further investigation. ■



Strong arm of the law: Nigerian police.
Photo: Olympia De Maismont/AFP

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The Continent

South Africa

Trump takes aim at the Rainbow Nation

South Africa has been behaving ‘VERY BADLY’ – and might end up paying a real price.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Simon Allison in Johannesburg

It is not hard to understand why the new United States government is unhappy with its counterpart in South Africa.

The first issue is South Africa’s legal case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, which was the most serious attempt by any country to hold Israel accountable for war crimes and potential genocide committed in Gaza. This embarrassed both Israel and its allies – most prominent among them the US.

The second issue is South Africa’s alleged embrace of Russia and China, the US’ key geopolitical rivals. Evidence for this includes South Africa’s membership of the Brics+ bloc; its increasing economic ties with China; and the case of the *“Lady R”*, a sanctioned Russian cargo ship that docked in Simon’s Town in 2022.

(South Africa maintains even closer relationships with Western countries: the US is its second-largest trading partner and it conducts military exercises with both the US and European powers.)

The third issue is perhaps the most pertinent – and may explain the level of vitriol being directed towards the country. Trump touched on it earlier this week in a post that threatened an indefinite freeze on all aid to the country. “South Africa is confiscating land, and treating certain classes of people VERY BADLY,” he wrote on a social media network he owns.

Elon Musk, Trump’s closest adviser and the richest man in the world, said the quiet part out loud when he reposted several outright lies on X, the social media platform he owns. These included demonstrably false claims that “White South Africans are being persecuted for their race in their home country” and that “racial quotas” are being used to deprive white farmers of water access.

These claims have repeatedly been debunked; nonetheless, they persist and are turbocharged in right-wing echo chambers like X. The persecution of white people is a thread that underpins much of Trump’s populist politics. In the absence of any real evidence for such persecution, that evidence must be invented. ■

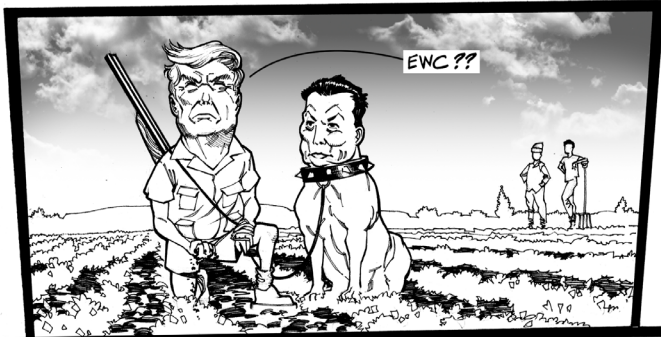


Illustration: Chris Sassman

Sass²⁵

DRC

Inside Bukavu

After Goma, South Kivu's capital may be the next city to fall to advancing M23 fighters.

Ajabu Adolphe in eastern DRC

Overcoming Burundian and Congolese resistance, March 23 Movement (M23) fighters seized Nyabibwe, a mining town in South Kivu, on Wednesday, renewing panic in the provincial capital, Bukavu. The town is just 70km north of Bukavu and even nearer to the Kavumu airport, which government forces defending the area are relying on for supplies and reinforcement.

“It shows the seriousness of the situation. Nyabibwe fell last night. They are in Ihusi. It's just a few metres from Katana, and Katana is already the city of Bukavu,” national assembly president Vital Kamerhe told Congolese legislators.

On Monday, the Rwanda-backed rebel movement had claimed it would not seize Bukavu and declared a unilateral ceasefire. Now it appears to be renewing the southward advance it began after seizing North Kivu's capital, Goma, last week.

Should the rebels take Bukavu, they would be in control of an area that covers the entire Congolese border with Rwanda

and Burundi, as well as a long stretch of the border with Uganda.

Kamerhe urged swift action from President Félix Tshisekedi's government, which had promised a “vigorous response” when Goma was overrun.

In Bukavu, numerous Congolese police, soldiers, and pro-government militia, known as Wazalendo, had already poured into town. They tried to reassure the residents of security, but it was in vain.

“The authorities keep saying that everything is under control, whereas we are losing territory,” said a Congolese civil society worker, who spoke to *The Continent* on Wednesday via phone from South Kivu.

Instead, the people braced for the fall of their city. Several Bukavu residents who spoke to *The Continent* said they were scared to death and described a city going under lockdown as many people fled.

“The situation is tense: the authorities are telling us to stay calm. We've learned that the rebels are advancing towards Kavumu airport, a place not far from our town of Bukavu,” said Abigaelle Sabiti.

Sabiti said she had seen many United Nations workers leave Bukavu, as well as staff of international NGOs.

Even local people were trying to leave, but that option was quickly closing. The local migration office had reportedly run out of travel permits for people seeking to go to Rwanda and Burundi.



Praying for peace: On Wednesday people gathered for an interfaith prayer meeting in Bukavu.

Photo: Amani Alimasi/AFP

“More people than usual have bought them to travel,” Sabiti said.

Another resident, Jonathan Uwezo, told *The Continent*: “Some people are rushing out to buy food because of the uncertainty. Others are even starting to buy solar kits. We followed what happened in Goma, with load-shedding and soaring food prices.”

The flow of new goods into the city had been blocked when M23 occupied Goma and suspended travel on Lake Kivu. The South Kivu provincial government also suspended lake traffic shortly thereafter.

Bukavu is about 200km south of Goma, but the roads between the cities are often impassable. Most travellers going between the two cities use the lake route. With panic buying and no new stock, inflation is likely.

Those people who were not trying to leave took other precautions. Shop doors were being barricaded and reinforced as traders braced for looting. Bar patrons were staying away, preferring to drink at home.

In a related development, Rwanda is

no longer strenuously denying allegations that it is supporting the M23’s takeover of parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) territory.

Asked by *CNN*’s Larry Madowo on Monday if there were Rwandan troops in the DRC, President Paul Kagame said, “I don’t know”, and went on to claim that there are good reasons why Rwanda would be invested in the eastern DRC.

M23 leaders claim their rebellion was triggered by anti-Tutsi sentiments and violence that has targeted Congolese Kinyarwanda speakers. Bracing for takeover, people in Bukavu are already carefully choosing what they say about the “unusual situation” in which they find themselves.

“We can’t express ourselves the way we used to,” said 35-year old Ansima Ange. “I have the impression that our freedom has been somewhat compromised. But I believe it will work out one day. Let the parties involved in the conflict give priority to a peaceful resolution. We don’t want our blood to spill.” ■



The eastern DRC war could reshape the region

Even as the conflict escalates, regional powers look to seize an economic opportunity.

Charles Onyango-Obbo

Events beyond the frontlines are shaping the war in the mineral-rich eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as much as the fighting itself. A major decider of its outcome could be how Tanzania reacts to the fighters who appear to have the upper hand in the latest escalation. These fighters are known as the Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC) coalition of rebels, which includes the March 23 Movement (M23).

Having taken the key strategic city of Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, last week, the AFC-M23 fighters advanced 192km south towards Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu. Clashes with Congolese and Burundian troops slowed them down, but not for long.

Although they announced a unilateral ceasefire for “humanitarian reasons” on Tuesday, and stated they had no intention of taking Bukavu, the ceasefire proved short-lived. Barely 24 hours later, they captured the strategic town of Nyabibwe, with Bukavu just 70km away.

Away from the frontline, heads of state from the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are meeting today in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to discuss escalation. The DRC is a member of both organisations. SADC has a stabilisation force in the country and 14 South African and three Malawian troops from its contingent were killed in the battle for Goma.

The decisions taken – or not taken – at this meeting could have long-lasting



Mass grave: Members of the Congolese Red Cross and civil protection workers bury dozens of victims of the recent conflict. Photos: Alexis Huguet/AFP

ramifications for the region.

M23 – and those who will speak for it there – will consider demands to withdraw from captured positions to be maximalist. On the other hand, despite faint hints of a softening stance earlier in the week, Kinshasa is unlikely to accept anything less, fearing a political crisis for President Félix Tshisekedi, who has adeptly fanned nationalist sentiments amid the war.

Rwanda, which shares strategic interests with the rebels, is unlikely to agree to any deal unless the DRC commits to removing the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) from the country. This group, formed by perpetrators of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, operates in eastern DRC. However, it has become a crucial cog in the DRC’s military strategy against the rebels, making it difficult for Kinshasa to abandon it.

Not that Kigali is pining for a

compromise from Kinshasa. Rwanda's securocrats obsess over its status as a small country "without strategic depth". Long-term – or preferably permanent – domination by allied rebels over eastern DRC would be a significant relief. AFC-M23 control in eastern DRC could push the FDLR 400km further away and Kigali would have a real sphere of influence at last.

The Tanzania question

Larger strategic dynamics will also shape the course of the war.

To keep Goma, which the AFC-M23 this week reinforced with thousands more fighters, the rebels must seize Bukavu, from where the DRC and Burundi can mount counterattacks. A critical drone base in Bukavu has already been relocated to Kisangani, 665km away.

To hold Bukavu, the rebels must also secure Uvira, 125km further south at the northwestern tip of Africa's longest lake, Tanganyika.

The hills around Uvira are dubbed the "Golan Heights" of Central Africa. Controlling them provides a strategic edge over southern DRC and, more importantly for M23, leverage over Kinshasa's ally, Burundi. Bujumbura, Burundi's commercial capital and location of the country's sole international airport, is just 30km away. Placing surveillance and long-range guns in Uvira would enable M23 to monitor Bujumbura airport and disrupt Burundian forces crossing into DRC.

Most critically, overseeing the northern part of Lake Tanganyika would

give the rebels control over Tanzanian trade routes into and out of the DRC. That could be a red line for Dodoma. What will Tanzania do? That's the wild card in this war.

Much is said about Rwanda's alleged interest in the minerals inside eastern DRC, but not enough about its recent discovery of oil in Lake Kivu, which it shares with the DRC.

It is yet to be determined if the Kivu oil is of commercial quantities. If it is, Tanzania would be the key route for exports – just as it is for Uganda, which is building a 1,444m heated pipeline, the world's longest, from the Albertine region at the DRC border to the Tanzanian port of Tanga. Kigali will not want to alienate Tanzania, whose Dar es Salaam port has surpassed Kenya's Mombasa as Rwanda's primary trade route.

Tanzania is already making a decent effort at challenging Kenya's economic dominance in East Africa. A key strategy is to become a regional transport hub. The country has invested heavily in ports and is emerging as a railway powerhouse. It is building a railway to Rwanda and Burundi and has signed an agreement with Burundi for a railway transporting metals, including the battery-mineral nickel, to Dar es Salaam.

A secure perch from which to hold sway in southern DRC would give AFC-M23 leverage in negotiations with an increasingly mercantilist Tanzania – and might just secure their territorial gains. ■

Charles Onyango-Obbo is a Ugandan journalist and writer based in Nairobi

The Museum of Stolen History

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

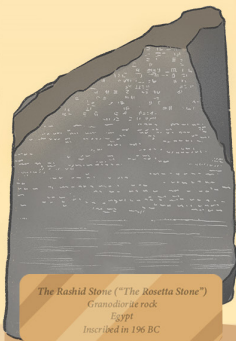
Curated by Shola Lawal | Art direction by Wynona Mutisi



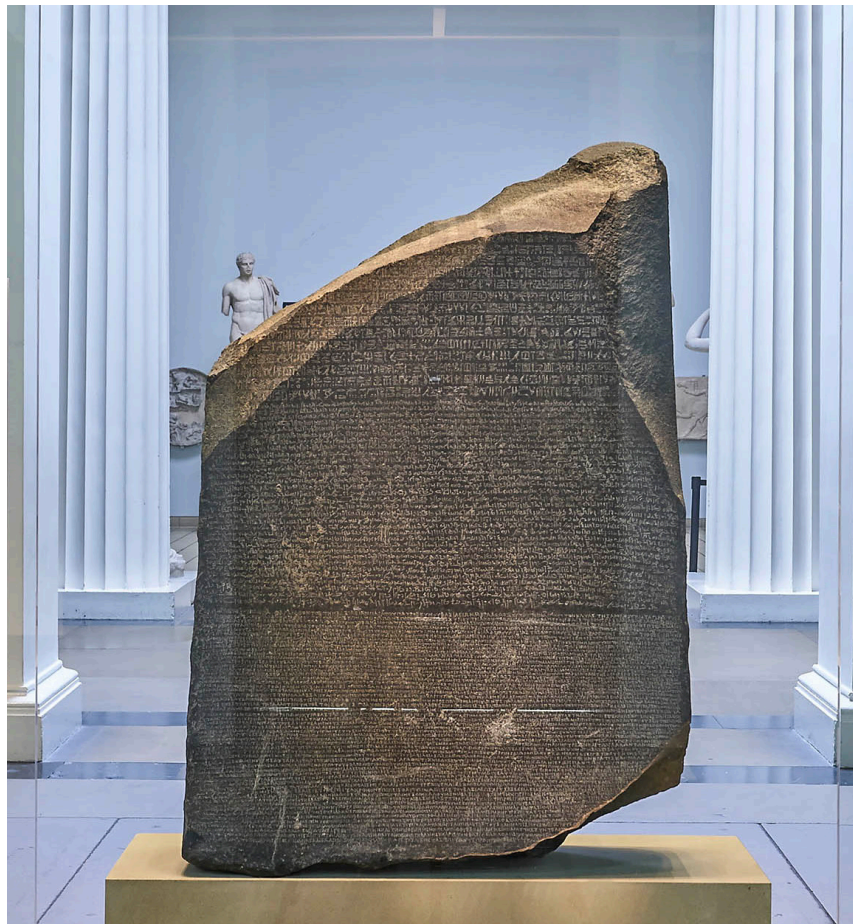
Ngwi Ndem ("The Bangwa Queen")
Sculpture in wood
Cameroon
Circa late 1800s



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



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



In July 1799, French soldiers seized control of Rashid, a port town in Egypt. The French call it Rosetta. One of the first things they did was to rebuild the town's old fort. That's when they found it, in the construction rubble: a large fragment of stone inscribed with writing in three different scripts.


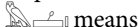
This stone, known now as the Rosetta

Stone, was the key to deciphering Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics – and, in so doing, unlocked the lost history of that civilisation.

The dark, granite-like slab is a fragment of a larger stele – a standing inscription stone, about 2m tall, used to document written information. This one was a copy of a Royal Decree, issued on 27 March in

196 BCE. The decree commemorates the coronation of a new pharaoh, Ptolemy V, and raises him to the status of the gods. It exalts the new pharaoh – a boy of just 13 years – as “the mighty one of twofold strength, the establisher of the Two Lands”.

Crucially, the decree is written in three different scripts: hieroglyphics, Ancient Greek, and more modern Greek. Linguists’ knowledge of Ancient Greek allowed them to translate the 14 lines of hieroglyphics that were legible on the stone. This was the key breakthrough in the development of a hieroglyphics dictionary, which allowed historians to read the text on countless other artefacts from Ancient Egypt.

Even when the Rosetta Stone was inscribed, more than 2,000 years ago, hieroglyphics was a dying script. Only priests used it and then only for official decrees. Greek had become the administrative language. Hieroglyphics is unlike most modern scripts in that it uses a combination of images rather than letters to represent meaning. For example,  means “in the hand of”, and  means “at the back of”.

When British troops displaced the French in Egypt, they took the artefacts too. The British Museum received the Rosetta Stone in 1802, where it has since become its most-visited object. Weighing 760kg – equivalent to about six baby elephants – the slab was so heavy that the museum’s grounds could not bear the

weight, and special structures were built to house it.

Twenty-eight more copies of the stele with nearly the same version of the decree have since been discovered.

Egyptian government officials and individuals have campaigned for years for the return of what they call the Rashid Stone, but without success. The United Kingdom claims it owns it under agreements signed by France and the Ottomans and that Egypt has other copies.

However, renowned archaeologist and former antiquities minister Zahi Hawass tells *The Continent* that the Rashid Stone is the icon of the Egyptian civilisation and, thus, should be displayed at the new Grand Museum in Cairo.

Among the histories the Rashid Stone unlocked is that of Ptolemy V himself. The pharaoh was an aggressive ruler, conquering territory that had been previously lost by the Ptolemaic Empire. He was also celebrated for lowering taxes.

But it is his tragic backstory that has captivated historians. Both of his parents died when he was five: his father, Ptolemy IV, in a palace fire; his mother in mysterious circumstances. He first ruled with the help of guardians, before being crowned when he turned 13 and came of age. It was then that the decree on the Rashid Stone was issued – and, because it was literally written in stone, we are still talking about it today.

A note on the illustration: Egyptian illustrator Alia Wahby restored the Rashid Stone to its original state – and to its original location, thought to be inside a temple in the city of Sais, known today as Sa El-Hagar. The stone is flanked by two priests, who even back then were the only people who could read its hieroglyphics. One priest is in a pose of worship and the other holds an ankh, or ‘key of life’ – an ancient Egyptian symbol representing eternal life.



Illustration: Alia Wahby

Church, state and dying children

Most Zimbabweans vaccinate their children. But a religious anti-vax view is spreading too.

Jeffrey Moyo in Harare

Melinda and Sindy are married to the same man: Denis Gawe. They go to the same church: Nguwo Tsvuku apostolic church. All three agree on most things. But when their children fell ill last year, their approach differed.

The children showed similar symptoms. “Red and watery eyes, severe diarrhoea, and dehydration,” Melinda says. Keeping with their church teachings, which shun modern medicine, Gawe diagnosed the children as having been attacked by evil spirits. Melinda had already lost a child

to cholera; Sindy had lost three. As the children became sicker, the wives became more desperate. Eventually, they sought medical help in secret. But it was too late.

The children died. Gawe still maintains they were killed by evil spirits, but nurses told his wives the children had contracted measles, a deadly but preventable disease.

Since 2021, measles infections in Zimbabwe have climbed dramatically, to thousands of reported cases a year, even though immunisation rates have largely held steady.

Religious communities, in which vaccination is discouraged or forbidden, were among those most affected by the recent outbreaks. Health ministry spokesperson Donald Mujiri says the government has reached out to anti-vaccination churches and some members are beginning to embrace immunisation.

But the government’s critics say it doesn’t push the churches hard enough.

“Zanu-PF thrives on huge support from apostolic church-goers and, therefore, can’t punish them for not immunising their children,” says Jessy Mangari, an opposition supporter in Zimbabwe. ■

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Reported Cases	1	1	1	4	3	282	5,532	5,532
Immunisation coverage for first dose (%)	95	90	88	85	85	88	90	90
Immunisation coverage for second dose (%)	63	78	78	75	74	76	77	77

Source: World Health Organisation

PHOTO ESSAY

On the vaccine frontline in Nigeria

Words and photos: Sara Hylton



Drop by drop: Ummu Nasiru, 24, administers two drops of the oral polio vaccine to a child in Dange Shuni, a village in northwest Nigeria, Sokoto State.

The grey clouds gathering overhead cast a shadow over the dry, hot day in Dange Shuni, a small village in northwest Nigeria's Sokoto State.

Ummu Nasiru, a 24-year-old Nigerian woman, tosses a small blue lunchbox over her shoulder and leads her three colleagues toward a household. The four young women share an unusual – even defiant – role in their community. Going door to door, they vaccinate children younger than five against polio, a deadly but preventable disease. The blue box holds the life-saving vaccine, which must remain chilled.

Much of the world has moved

past polio, but the vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) strain is still circulating in northern Nigeria. Last year, 46% of global cVDPV2 cases were reported in Nigeria, says the World Health Organisation (WHO). Vaccine hesitancy obstructs vaccination efforts and now the WHO has lost its largest donor, the United States. Despite these obstacles, women like Nasiru remain at the vaccination forefront, working for 8,000 naira (about \$5) a month.

Women are indispensable to the fight because, although patriarchal norms limit their mobility in northern Nigeria, these same norms allow them to enter homes that men cannot. ■



The Lord's work: Alhaji Sani Umar Jabbi (centre), the monarch and traditional religious leader of the Gagi community in Sokoto State. Jabbi, like the Sultan of Sokoto, has used his influence to encourage vaccination.



Vaccination veteran: Local clinic worker Balkisu Yusuf, 52 (centre), has 20 years of experience vaccinating against polio, tuberculosis, and hepatitis, among other illnesses.



Big dreams: Aishatu Musa Abdullahi, who was paralysed from polio at about age two, with her sister, Asma'u Musa Abdullahi, in north Sokoto. Aishatu wants to become a leader in her community. 'I also want to get married soon and have my own children,' she says.



Beast of burden: A man with his camel in Dange Shuni.



Sisters of mercy: Dange Shuni vaccinators and their supervisors go door to door to reach children younger than five who have not been vaccinated against polio.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T, we need it when we get ID

Our social contract with governments entitles us to a variety of public services funded by tax revenues. It also entitles us to be treated with respect.

To find out how our public servants are doing on the respect bit, Afrobarometer asked survey respondents in 39 African countries who had tried during the previous year to obtain services from a public-health facility, a public school, and/or a government agency responsible for issuing identity documents (IDs) such as birth certificates, driver's licences, passports, and permits.

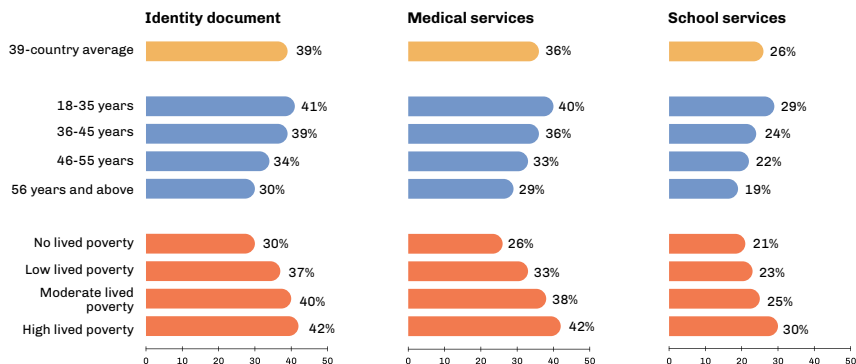
Substantial minorities report being treated with little or no respect: 39% of

those who went to get an ID, 36% who needed medical care, and 26% who sought public school services.

Women and men report similar experiences, but two groups were particularly likely to face a lack of respect: youth and poor people.

Disrespectful treatment goes beyond hurt feelings. As well as discouraging people from seeking services, our analyses show that people who experience disrespect from public service providers are less likely to trust and approve of their elected leaders and less inclined to believe in democracy as the best form of government. ■

Experienced lack of respect by public service providers | by age and lived poverty | 39 African countries | 2021-23



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



Film Review

Wilfred Okiche

Africa at Sundance: libraries, war, and road trips

Of the 94 feature films at the festival, only three were African – and yet, vital voices still emerged.

Coming right after the Los Angeles fires rattled the film community, the vibe at this year's Sundance Film Festival at the weekend was understandably muted. With features from Kenya, Sudan, and Tunisia, Africa had a charming, if sparse, showing.

Wife-and-husband duo Maia Lekow and Christopher King, whose 2019 feature was Kenya's submission to the Oscars' International Features category that year, was the best-established African team at the festival. But this was actually their Sundance debut, bringing the documentary *How to Build a Library*.

A sense of community, of family – biological or chosen, ran through all three African features.

A celebration of community action and activism, *How to Build a Library*



Collaborative: *Khartoum* was made by a quartet of filmmakers, each helming one of its four segments

documents two intrepid women, Shiro Koinange and Angela Wachuka, transforming a colonial-era building – which was “whites only” until 1958 – into a thriving cultural and educational hub.

Documentary filmmakers often talk about collaborating with participants but rarely do these collaborations appear as pure as in *Khartoum*, a story of war and displacement. It's made by a quartet of filmmakers working with British director Phil Cox: Anas Saeed, Rawia Alhag, Ibrahim Snoopy, and Timeea Ahmed. Each helms one of the feature's four segments.

The Tunisian writer-director Amel



If you build it, they will come: *How to Build a Library* is a celebration of community activism and culture, directed by Maia Lekow and Christopher King

Guellaty makes a similar point with her playful yet confident first feature, *Where the Wind Comes From*. The two-hander follows two young friends who go on a road trip to the south of Tunisia, planning on entering an art contest that will hopefully help them migrate to Europe.

In this charming, coming-of-age story Guellaty captures the beauty, vitality, and freewheeling energy of youth. The film also comments on some of Tunisia's pressing concerns – economic insecurity, migration, and gender dynamics – without being didactic. “I want people to discover my culture, the youth of my country, the beauty, but also the reality,” Guellaty told *The Continent*. ■



Youthful: Eya Bellagha and Slim Baccar star in *Where the Wind Comes From*. Photos: Courtesy of Sundance Institute

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've been listening to *Love Me Jeje* on repeat."



- 1_** Which African country has previously held a Formula 1 Grand Prix race?
- 2_** What is South Africa's currency called?
- 3_** True or false: Dar es Salaam is Tanzania's capital city.
- 4_** In which country was the Rosetta Stone discovered?
- 5_** Which institution currently houses the Rosetta Stone?
- 6_** In which ocean is the Chagos Archipelago located?
- 7_** In which country is the Simandou mountain range (pictured), rich in iron ore, found?
- 8_** In which country is the Skeleton Coast found?
- 9_** Is Mali a coastal or landlocked country?
- 10_** Name the artist who won a Grammy for Best Africa Music Performance last week.

HOW DID I DO? WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to [+27 73 805 6068](https://www.whatsapp.com/text/27738056068) and we'll send the answers to you!

THE BIG PICTURE

No fowl play: A flamboyance of flamingos stands in one of the Walvis Bay Saltworks salt ponds, which are part of the Kuiseb River delta in the Dorob National Park, Walvis Bay, Namibia.

Photo: Marco Longari/AFP



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