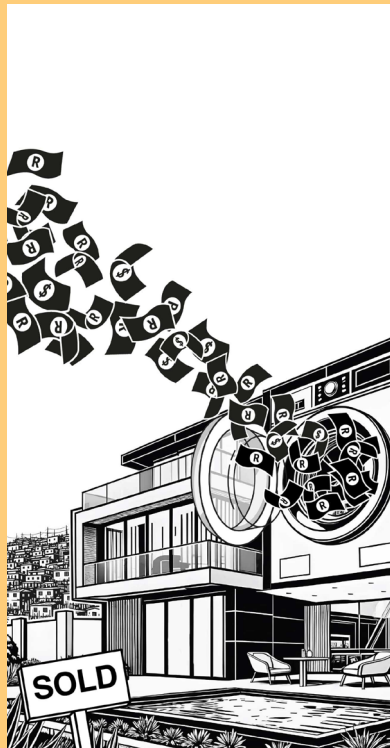


# The Continent

How Mozambique's  
presidents stash  
their **dodgy cash**



Illustration:  
Gaelen Pinnock/  
Open Secrets



**Cover:** Even independent observers say that the people of Mozambique voted for change in the 9 October election, no matter what the official results indicate (p8). But the ruling party isn't going anywhere – perhaps because staying in power is simply too lucrative, especially when your neighbours will look after your ill-gotten gains (p16). All this means that the man who should be president, Venâncio Mondlane, might never be (p19).

# Inside:

- **Climate negotiations:** Women bear the brunt and get little representation (p7)
- **Kenya:** Inching towards genetically modified crops (p9)
- **The Continent:** Come work with us (p10)
- **Zimbabwe:** Boreholes in the suburbs as drought bites (p12)
- **Colonisers:** It's been 140 years since Africa was carved up in Berlin (p14)
- **Afrobarometer:** A beautiful, humanising film about a delivery driver (p32)



## SUBSCRIBE

Get the latest edition of *The Continent*, plus every back issue (all 181 of them) by visiting [thecontinent.org](https://thecontinent.org).

To subscribe (for free!), save our number to your phone (+27 73 805 6068) and send us a message on [WhatsApp](https://www.whatsapp.com)/[Signal](https://t.me)/[Telegram](https://t.me).

Or email us:

[read@thecontinent.org](mailto:read@thecontinent.org)

**AZERBAIJAN****Drill baby, drill**

The 29th annual climate meetings opened this week in Baku, in a country whose economy depends on fossil fuels and which plans to increase gas production by a third. Its president, Ilham Aliyev, kicked

things off by saying oil and gas are a “gift from God”. These meetings are meant to be about getting the world to zero carbon emissions. And this year is going to end up 1.5°C hotter – a number African countries have tried in vain to convince world leaders to stay under because that much extra heating is devastating.



Photo: Mladen Antonova/AFP

**SOMALILAND****An election for which nobody died**

In a peaceful election on Wednesday, an estimated one million people turned up at 2,000 polling stations to vote for the next president of Somaliland, which is home to six million. Incumbent Muse Bihi Abdi ran against opposition candidates Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi and Faysal Ali Warabe, with all three promising the same thing: the fight for Somaliland to get global recognition as the independent country it says it is. Results are expected on 21 November.

**HEALTH****Measles is resurging globally – WHO**

Around the world, 10.3-million people got measles in 2023, a 20% increase from 2022. Measles outbreaks are preventable if 95% of the children in any population get two doses of its effective vaccine. But vaccination rates are falling: only 83% and 74% of children received their first and second dose of the measles vaccine last year respectively. Major outbreaks were recorded in 57 countries in 2023, according to the World Health Organisation and the US Centers for Disease Control.

## UNITED STATES

## A rare win for victims of US torture in Iraq

After a 16-year legal battle, three Iraqi men who were tortured at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison won \$14-million each in damages against a US military contractor. The company, CACI, was contracted by the US government to provide “interrogation services” at the prison where Suhail Najim Abdullah Al Shimari, Salah Hasan Nusaif Al-Ejaili and Asa’ad Hamza Hanfoosh Zuba’e were sexually abused, beaten and threatened with dogs. According to *The Intercept*, CACI tried more than 20 times to get the lawsuit dismissed.

## SUDAN

## Civil war increases death rate by 50%

Researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine estimate 61,000 died in Khartoum State alone between April 2023, when war broke out in Sudan, and June this year. That’s a “50% increase from the pre-war death rate.” The main cause of death was preventable disease and starvation, but violent deaths in Khartoum exceeded what was recorded for the entire country before the war. “Our findings reveal the severe and largely invisible impact of the war on Sudanese lives,” said Dr Maysoun Dahab.



**Patriarch-eye:** Iran now has cameras in public areas to detect women who violate its hijab law. Photo: Fatemeh Bahrami/Anadolu via Getty Images

## IRAN

## Special clinic to treat hijab removal

The head of the “Women and Family Department of the Tehran Headquarters for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice” wants to send Iranian women who remove their hijabs to a special clinic for “scientific and psychological treatment”. It’s been two years since 500 people reportedly died in protests over the requirement for women to wear the hijab. And it comes after a young university student, angry that the morality police had claimed she was improperly wearing her hijab, walked the streets in her underwear in protest.

## ENGLAND

## Archbishop resigns over abuse silence

England's top vicar – Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury – resigned this week, finally accepting that he enabled harm when he didn't tell the police about a church volunteer's habitual and serial abuse as soon as he learned of it in 2013. John Smyth died in 2018, having sexually, psychologically and physically abused about 30 boys in the UK, and another 85 in South Africa and Zimbabwe.



**Vicarious abuse: The now-former archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.** Photo: Andrew Milligan/AFP

## BURKINA FASO

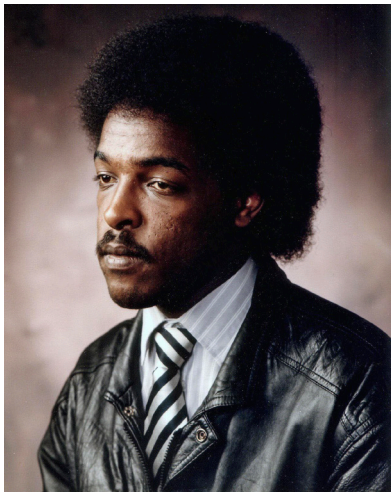
## Junta continues to set legal progress back by decades

Justice Minister Rodrigue Bayala says Burkina Faso could reinstate the death penalty, which was abolished in 2018 and had not been carried out since 1988. It's the latest legal regression of the military junta, which approved a draft amendment to the family code banning homosexuality for the first time, a move replicated in Mali this month. In both states, the military took power promising security, but after struggling on that front is instead grasping for populist straws to secure power. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database, violence has killed 15,500 people in Burkina Faso since the junta seized power in 2022.

## MALI

## Australian miner's shares spiral during big boss detention

It's been a week for Australia-based Resolute Mining Ltd, whose biggest asset is the Syama gold mine in Mali. On Thursday, it was forced to suspend Sydney trading of its shares, which have been tanking since Friday when three of its staff, including CEO Terence Holohan, were detained in Bamako. The three were in the country to negotiate a tax dispute on its 2015-2021 income, on which the government wants \$160-million in back taxes. Malian authorities detained four Barrick Gold employees in September during a similar "negotiation" and the Canadian company ended up paying \$85-million in October.



**Out of sight:** Eritrea has held Dawit Isaak without charge for 23 years.

## ERITREA

### **Detained journalist lauded in absentia**

Dawit Isaak, the world's longest-imprisoned journalist, was on Monday awarded by Sweden's Edelstam Foundation for defending human rights and standing up for freedom of expression. The Swedish-Eritrean journalist co-founded Eritrea's first independent newspaper before being arrested by the regime in Asmara which has held him incommunicado without charge for more than 23 years now. His health state and location is unknown but Isaak's family was told in September 2020 that he was alive. His daughter Betlehem will accept the award on his behalf in Stockholm on 19 November.

## SENEGAL

### **EU bins Senegal fishing accord**

The European Union says it will not renew a controversial fishing agreement with Senegal that was first signed in the 1980s, and last renewed by former president Macky Sall in 2019. *The Continent* reported previously that the agreement contributed to the so-called "migrant crisis" by allowing EU ships to overfish Senegalese waters, decimating the livelihoods of local fisherfolk. The EU said earlier this year that Senegal had become a "non-co-operating country" which didn't monitor or try to control "illegal fishing" by Senegalese ships.

## RWANDA

### **Last Marburg patient discharged**

Rwanda's last Marburg virus patient was discharged from hospital on 8 November. If no new cases are reported in the 42 days from then, the World Health Organisation will declare the country's outbreak over. Marburg, a viral and highly contagious haemorrhagic fever similar to Ebola, has typically had a fatality rate of up to 88%, but a swift response and experimental treatments helped Rwanda bring that down to 23%, and a trial vaccine controlled the infection rate to 66 cases since the 27 September outbreak.

# Climate

## Men seek climate equity by speaking over women

**Disproportionately hurt by our heated world, women are unlikely to get much of a say as men in climate talks over the next decade.**

### Marché Arends

**O**f the 78 world leaders currently at the annual climate talks (COP29) in Azerbaijan, only eight are women.

That number gets better in the delegations sent by countries, with 40% of the 17,000 representatives identifying as women. Analysis by UK-based Carbon Brief shows this to be the most gender balanced COP on record. The first COP, in 1995, had just under 1,000 delegates – and 88% were men.

But this is averaged across the nearly 200 countries in Baku. Research published in *Lancet Planet Health* on Monday found that African delegations are only likely to achieve gender parity – at least 45% of

their delegation being women – by 2033.

When it initially announced the 28-person team to run this COP, Azerbaijan had 28 men. After some backlash, the country quietly added 12 women – and another two men.

The *Lancet* paper said: “Women are less likely to own land and resources to protect them in post-disaster situations, have less control over income, less access to information, and experience limited institutional support and restricted freedom of association, resulting in increased vulnerability to acute and long-term climate change impacts.”

But they are barely present in the rooms where strategies and resources to mitigate those impacts are negotiated. Men continue to dominate the seats at the table to solve a crisis that affects women the most. ■



**So predictable: World leaders, mostly men, at COP29 in Azerbaijan. Despite all the suits, they seem to prefer skirting issues.** Photo: Alexander Nemenov/AFP

---

# Mozambique

---

## Frelimo well placed to win constitutional long con

Kiri Rupiah

**T**he Constitutional Council evaluating allegations of electoral fraud in Mozambique's 9 October presidential poll is stacked in favour of the accused Frelimo ruling party, according to a leading human rights defender in the country.

The council's five members are nominated by political parties based on their "proportional representation" in Parliament, giving Frelimo an automatic majority. And its president was reappointed for a second term this year by incumbent president and Frelimo stalwart, Filipe Nyusi.

"The constitutional council sees its mandate as that of protecting the rule of the current regime," Professor Adriano Nuvunga, who chairs the Mozambique Human Rights Defenders Network, told *The Continent* at a regional activists' meeting in Johannesburg on Thursday.

Leading opposition party Podemos – the Optimist Party for the Development of Mozambique – led by Venâncio

Mondlane, is challenging the election results, which declared Frelimo's Daniel Chapo the winner with 70.67%.

The former rebel movement Renamo joined Mondlane's challenge, and the Mozambique Democracy Movement – another political party – filed a separate lawsuit saying the election officials falsified results at polling stations and during district and provincial counts.

Last week, the council raised some optimism for the challengers when its chair, Lúcia Ribeiro, sent a terse letter to the electoral body demanding an explanation for discrepancies in vote tally within 72 hours.

But its final ruling on the validity of the overall result won't come until the end of the month, and it's expected to toe the Frelimo party line.

"Perhaps they will change a comma here or a heading there, but their ruling will not change anything," Nuvunga said.

The Southern African Development Community will meet in Zimbabwe's capital Harare at the weekend to discuss a way forward on Mozambique's political crisis, where protests called by Mondlane are in their second month and have caused several deaths and huge financial losses.

But claims that Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa helped Frelimo rig the election, are already casting doubt on the regional bloc's impartiality and credibility. ■



---

# Kenya

---

## Fight against GM crops heads to the appeal court

**The state has opened the door for modified seeds to help grow food. Activists desperately want to close it.**

**Maureen Kasuku**

**T**he Kenya Peasants League says it is collecting a million signatures to support its appeal against a ruling that okayed genetically modified (GMO) crops – the latest front in a decades-long battle to keep GMOs out of Kenya.

In last week's ruling, the High Court of Kenya dismissed a petition by the Law Society of Kenya and a collective of food sovereignty activists. It also affirmed a 2023 decision by the Environment and Land Court greenlighting modified crops.

How food is grown is at the centre of a heated debate. Agroecologists and local farmer groups argue against GMOs. The corporations selling them, biotech scientists and policy wonks aligned with the global agriculture industry argue for GMOs.

In 2022, amidst the country's worst drought in 40 years, Kenyan authorities lifted a decade-long ban on GMOs. The decision was driven by President William Ruto. And that's the decision the Law Society and others challenged.

Claire Nasike, an agroecologist at the British charity group Christian Aid, says farmers need to control and breed their own seeds. "Lifting the ban will expose small-scale farmers to exorbitant seed prices and tie them down in the cycle of debt and intellectual property laws by giant multinationals."

Professor Richard Oduor, the chair of Kenya University Biotech Consortium, says modified crops give farmers more resilient and higher yielding crops, and solve food security. In an interview with Alliance for Science just after the High Court ruling, he said it is "a big win not just for scientists but also for farmers and Kenyans in general".

With backing from the courts, Kenya can move ahead with GM crops. But it could struggle with exports to its neighbours in the East Africa Community.

"Other member countries like Tanzania, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo have declared their opposition to GM seeds and crops," warned Mariam Mayet, a South African campaigner who advocates for agroecology. ■

# The Continent is hiring!



**W**e're looking for a news editor to join our newsroom in January 2025. If you are an African journalist who cares about storytelling, can demonstrate that you like to coach reporters, and has done quality journalism of your own, we want to hear from you. The news editor is at the heart of our operation; our last news editor is now our editor-in-chief.

Your job will be to keep on top of news across Africa so you can find reporters to commission and work with to tell news stories that people want to read, on developments that affect their lives. *The Continent* opens with seven to 11 pages of news. They will be your primary deliverable.

We know that (for all the reasons) marginalised people are less likely to think they're qualified for a role. But even if imposter syndrome is telling you not to, apply. Our organisation is

worker-led, majority-women and we strive to empower each other.

## WHAT YOU NEED:

- At least five years of journalism experience, including two years in editing and/or commissioning;
- Ability to write and edit tightly, understanding that a 300-word piece can be nuanced and interesting;
- Happy to work remotely while communicating really well with everyone in your team and at *The Continent*
- Comfortable working with online team tools like Slack and Google Docs
- An understanding of how stories look on a page and how different elements (like illustrations) tell a story
- Capacity to flexibly work 40 hours a week, including some late shifts
- (Proficiency with spreadsheets and data analysis is an advantage)

**THE FINER DETAILS:** *The initial contract will be for \$3,000 a month for 10 months, while we source funding to extend it. The role is remote and will benefit from the production breaks which come after each 10-edition season.*

**HOW TO APPLY:** *If you want to join Africa's best loved newspaper, send your CV, a sample of*

*published work you edited/ commissioned (with a note describing your input), and in the body of the email, use a maximum of 100 words to tell us why you are the right news editor for The Continent. The deadline to apply is 2 December 2024. Send to [jobs@allprotocol.org](mailto:jobs@allprotocol.org). Shortlisted candidates will also do an editing test and interview(s) with our team.*

# New to *The Continent*? Press the button.

Pressing this button on your phone will open a WhatsApp chat with *The Continent*. Send us a message to receive a brand new edition of Africa's most widely read newspaper every Saturday morning. Subscribing is totally free.

You can also subscribe via email, Signal or Telegram:  
**[Read@thecontinent.org](mailto:Read@thecontinent.org) or +27738056068**

**Share real news.**

**The Continent**

---

# Zimbabwe

---

## If the state won't fix it, well ... you know the drill

**Drought has highlighted the failure of the state to build dams and improve the country's water security, and Zimbabweans are having to dig deep to compensate.**

**Jeffrey Moyo in Harare**

**B**ehind a tall wall outside a private residence in the Harare suburb of Belvedere, people queue to collect water from a borehole installed by a generous resident. Cars parked by the roadside suggest that many reside far away. Communal taps are now commonplace in the capital city. A godsend to the city's urban poor, they also indicate how much the current drought is scorching the country.

El Niño is a naturally occurring weather event which heats parts of the Pacific Ocean, driving drought in the southern hemisphere and floods in the north. A hotter world means more energy powering a more devastating El Niño.

In April, the government announced the country was in a nationwide state of disaster. Zimbabwe's cities and towns are home to millions of, many of them poor and reliant on naturally occurring bodies of water. The drought has left them high and dry.

In response to the scarcity, the City of Harare is rationing water. The municipality gets water from dams and lakes that are increasingly drying up.

Many residents now buy water from vendors who go around with tanks mounted on trucks. Laura Chiwanza, a mother of four, tells *The Continent* that a 5,000-litre tank costs \$45. "When I use that sparingly with my family, it lasts for nearly two and half weeks."

Others form winding queues at the communal water points set up by Good Samaritans. In low income neighbourhoods like Epworth, just outside Harare, residents who still rely on wells often stand for hours waiting for enough water to pool; waiting their turn to draw what little they can.

Many people are rationing water tightly, even for the most essential needs like drinking and bathing. Another resident in Harare's Kambuzuma area says he has switched to bathing only twice a week.

Further south, in Bulawayo, Lindiwe Msipa says: "I used to drink at least two



**Liquid assets: Water rationing has led to yet another a parallel economy in Zimbabwe.** Photo: Jekesai Njikizana/AFP

litres of water, but because there is little of it, I have cut down to just two glasses in order to save.”

A few have found some sort of silver-lining in the crisis. Driving a donkey-drawn scotch-cart laden with water for sale, Latwell Sambiri in Harare’s Dzivarasekwa neighbourhood says he has made a few hundred dollars because of the crisis. Charity organisations are trying to mitigate the worst of drought by sinking boreholes, fast. In Bulawayo’s low income areas, workers supported by DanChurchAid, a humanitarian nongovernmental organisation, can be seen drilling boreholes.

These groups say they hope their efforts will curb diarrhoeal diseases like cholera, which infected 34,550 people and killed 700 others between February 2023 and August 2024.

The government’s own long-term solution – a system of 12 water reservoirs being built by the Zimbabwe National Water Service – seems far from done. By its own estimate, only two will be complete by the end of next year: the \$109-million Kunzvi dam in Harare’s northeast, and the \$600-million Gwayi-Shangani in Bulawayo.

Kunzvi has been under construction for over a decade and Gwayi-Shangani construction started even further back, in 2004. In 2021, Paul Denge, a water service engineer, cited “inconsistent funding” for the delay in the completion of Gwayi-Shangani dam.

With this year on track to break the 1.5°C heating mark – seen by scientists as a catastrophic number for Africans – the kinds of droughts seen in Zimbabwe in recent years will be all the more likely. ■

# Stolen artefacts and time's harsh march forward

**It's 140 years since the Berlin Conference formalised Europe's pillaging of Africa. Most of that loot hasn't been returned.**

## Shola Lawal in Berlin

**T**oday's No 77 Wilhelmstraße is unremarkable: a residential building blending into the block of flats in Berlin Central. Paintings in a German pub to its left depict the grand castle that once stood here. But it was at this address on 15 November 1884, that German chancellor Otto Von Bismarck gathered European leaders to carve up a continent, in what is now known as the Berlin Conference. It's here that the countries of the jagged puzzle now known as Africa were created in disregard of established boundaries or kingdoms.

Contrary to popular myth, the Berlin Conference did not start the violent project of Africa's colonisation. Rather, it codified the rules of the game to avoid conflict between European powers, who were at the time mainly jostling for coastal Africa and had already conquered about 10% of it. The scramble greatly intensified after the meeting. By 1914, Europe had invaded, plundered, and subjugated nearly 90% of African territory.

Central to the colonial quest was the looting of important ritual artefacts –

some not meant to be seen or touched by mere mortals, others spiritually useful only for a time period. Looting was often the sole motivation, scholars Felwine Sarr and Benedicte Savoy wrote in a 2018 paper. To blur the blood-soaked mass robbery of “primitive objects”, colonisers used words like “harvest” or “collect”.

For African communities, that cultural theft was as painful as the physical domination of their land, an identity looting that violently interrupted spiritual memories. Now, more than a century later, African activists are calling loudly for those spoils of war to be returned – with some success in recent years.

But if the taking was problematic, the return too is riddled with challenges.

## The looting continues

The Berlin Conference declared the land of the Nso kingdom in present-day Cameroon to be part of the German empire. But actual contact between Germans and the Nso didn't happen until 1902. Months after first contact, the Europeans invaded and burned down the Nso king's palace and stole Ngonso, a regal idol made of cowries, named and

modelled after the kingdom's female founder. Sylvie Njobati, daughter of Nso, began campaigns for Ngonnso's return on social media, and through protests, to fulfil her grandfather's dying wish. In 2022, the German government promised to give the statue back. But two years later, Ngonnso is still locked up in Germany's Humboldt Museum.

The German government is negotiating the return with Cameroon – a state created by colonisation, and which didn't exist in 1902 when Ngonnso was stolen – and not the native activists who kickstarted the movement.

Yaoundé isn't nearly as invested in Ngonnso's return as Njobati. "The government formed a commission to oversee the return process but there's no clarity on how they want to go about it," Njobati told *The Continent*.

Where the Nso would prefer a careful repatriation that includes a formal apology, talks on other looted items, and compensation for the crimes of conquest,

Yaoundé wants to negotiate a one-off return which Njobati said is "shallow" – akin to ticking a box. "They're not negotiating with care. I fear community representation is threatened. It's likely that people will protest decisions made on their behalf."

Ticking the box has often been enough for modern-day governments. In January, to the chagrin of art scholars, Ghana accepted gold treasures looted from the Asantes "on loan" from the British who have tied their own hands with antiquity laws forbidding outright returns.

**In January, Ghana accepted gold treasures looted from the Asantes "on loan" from the British who have tied their own hands with antiquity laws forbidding outright returns.**

And return has not always been an unqualified good. In at least one case, it destabilised modern-day local communities.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo – where Belgian King Leopold II oversaw a vast slave operation, the deaths of as many as 10-million people, massacres, rape campaigns, and punitive maiming – colonisers also stole the sacred Kakungu Mask.

Its owners, the Suku and Yaka people, believed it granted them invincibility.

International monitors have linked its 2022 return to intensifying conflict between the Tekes and the Mobondo, a Yaka-Suku militia which appears emboldened by the mask's presence. ■



**Slice up lives: The Congo conference 1884-1885- Berlin codified Europe's colonial scramble for Africa**



Ignorance is bliss: The luxury Dainfern Estate in Johannesburg is a favourite destination for dictator dollars

# A presidential guide to stashing dodgy cash

What to do with all those ill-gotten gains?  
A new report offers some clues.

**T**he biggest corruption scandal in Mozambique's history happened before Filipe Nyusi became president. Nonetheless, he benefited.

The “tuna bond” scandal, a scam concocted by Swiss bankers, ruling elites and a handful of dubious middlemen, diverted billions of dollars intended for development into the pockets of individuals. Bribed Mozambican individuals got at least \$200-million from it. Nyusi's cut was around \$1-million, which he received as “campaign donations”, according to court documents in both the United Kingdom and United States. Some of the officials have been and will be tried. But lawyers argued that presidential immunity protected Nyusi from prosecution for the scam, which left

Mozambique's exchequer was crushed under the weight of crippling debt, and has stunted the country's economic growth.

Outside court, the sheer brazenness of the corruption displayed in the “tuna bond” scandal cemented public perceptions that Frelimo, the country's liberation party, was deeply and possibly irredeemably corrupt. Those sentiments are playing a major role in ongoing anti-government protests – sparked by allegations of a stolen election – which have been repressed with deadly force by Nyusi's security forces.

## Into South Africa's laundromat

A million dollars of unknown provenance is nice but brings its own problems: Where to store all that money, and how to make



it look legitimate. The Mozambican elites found a solution in South Africa.

Shortly after Nyusi got those “campaign donations”, a R3.9-million (\$360,000 then) house in Constantia, an upmarket Cape Town suburb was bought in the name of Nyusi’s son, Jacinto Ferrão Filipe Nyusi. He was just 20 years old at the time. This is revealed in a new investigation by Open Secrets, a campaigning group that investigates financial crimes.

In 2015, Jacinto Nyusi bought a second South African property: a R17.5-million (\$1.55-million then) mansion in Sandhurst, Johannesburg, on a quiet street “lined with mansions concealed behind towering walls and 24-hour guard posts”, says Open Secrets in *For Sale: South Africa’s Property Laundromat*.

The first property was sold in 2018 for R4.5-million (\$340,000 then). The second appears to have been hastily sold in March 2022 for less than half its purchase price. The timing is relevant: at the time of the fire sale, back home in Mozambique, court proceedings were under way that would eventually convict the son of Nyusi’s predecessor, president Armando Guebuza, of corruption.

According to court records in the United States, the former president’s son, Ndambi Guebuza, took \$33-million in bribes in the tuna bond scandal. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison by a Mozambican court in late 2022, in relation to these illegal activities.

By then, however, Ndambi Guebuza had already bought two lavish properties in Johannesburg: a R9.3-million house (\$540,000 then) in the ultra-luxurious



**Open secret: The Nyusi family’s South African property portfolio had a fishy air to it.** Photo: Alfredo Zuniga/AFP

Dainfern Estate, and a R10.8-million property in Kyalami Estate. So too had president Guebuza’s daughter, the late Valentina de Luz Guebuza. According to property records viewed by Open Secrets, she owned two properties in Dainfern, purchased for R15-million each.

The Nyusi family did not respond to Open Secrets’ request for comment on these findings.

### **Good neighbour for the corrupt**

“Gated communities and high-walled mansions line luxury neighbourhoods in South Africa’s big cities. These fortified homes have one goal for their rich, powerful owners: to keep criminals out. But what about the criminals who live inside them?” asks Open Secrets.

The question is rhetorical.

Although South Africa has tough laws designed to prevent money laundering, these are not always enforced – especially in the real estate sector.

That’s why it remains an attractive

destination for potentially dodgy cash, which is part of why the country has been “greylisted” by international watchdogs. Anti-money-laundering laws are not always enforced.

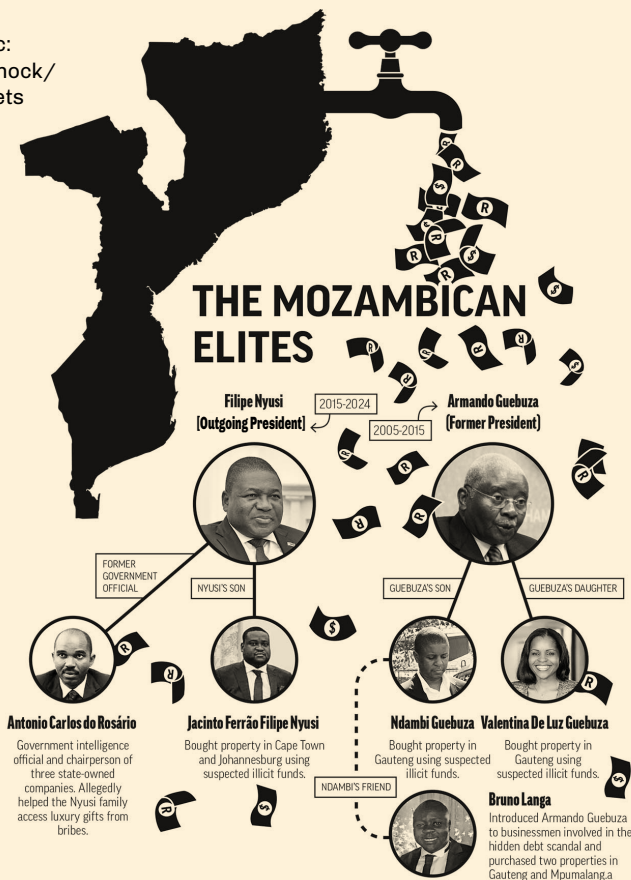
In addition to the Mozambican examples, the Open Secrets report documented how ruling elites in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea also invested the proceeds of alleged corruption into luxury

South African properties.

“South African public and private sectors seemingly facilitated stolen wealth from Mozambique, the DRC, and Equatorial Guinea to be hidden in luxury properties.

In doing so, South African institutions became complicit in facilitating corrupt transactions that harmed the most vulnerable communities in these countries,” the report concludes. ■

Infographic:  
Gaelen Pinnock/  
Open Secrets





**Grin and bear it: Venâncio Mondlane's easygoing public persona has endeared him to voters.**  
Photo: Alfredo Zuniga/AFP

## Meet the man who probably should be president

**Opposition leader Venâncio Mondlane claims to have won the presidential election last month. He's probably right. But instead of preparing to take office, he has been forced to flee Mozambique.**

### Luis Nhachote in Maputo

**T**here is no familial relation between Venâncio Mondlane – the opposition leader who claims to have won last month's presidential election – and Eduardo Mondlane, the revolutionary and liberation war hero who was assassinated before independence was achieved.

They just share a surname – and, in the younger Mondlane's reading, a shared

commitment to fighting against a corrupt and unjust political system.

Eduardo Mondlane's assassination is one of the country's greatest "what if" moments. How different might Mozambique be today if he had stayed alive to guide the country through its formative years? Could Frelimo, the political party that he founded, have become a party that served the people rather than an indifferent, corrupt elite?

In that hypothetical world, Venâncio Mondlane – the son of an ordinary Frelimo member, schooled on the values of Samora Machel – would probably be a senior figure within the ruling party, which has governed Mozambique since independence without interruption. Instead, he is trying to topple it – and coming closer to doing so than anyone else before.

“After the assassination of Eduardo Mondlane in 1969, they didn’t imagine that a ‘Mondlanito’ would emerge 55 years later,” said Venâncio, while on the campaign trail in Zambezia province prior to the 9 October election.

This prompted Eduardo Mondlane’s family to issue a stern rebuke against the “improper use” of his name by “some citizens, in bad faith and for purely electoral purposes”.

Nonetheless, over the past few months, “Mondlanito” – more commonly known by his moniker VM7, styled after Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo – has led a wave of popular resistance against Frelimo’s leadership.

It began with crowded campaign rallies all over the country, which resulted in a strong showing for his Podemos party on election day. Just how strong is a matter of deadly debate.

The electoral commission gave Frelimo candidate Daniel Chapo more than 70% of the vote. But the opposition party’s tabulation, based on tallies from polling stations, suggests that Venâncio Mondlane won an outright majority and should be Mozambique’s next president.

Mondlane alleges that the result was

rigged, and civil society groups have also raised concerns about electoral fraud.

Mondlane called for massive protests, and his call was heeded – hundreds of thousands of people have turned out nationwide, but especially in Maputo, to demonstrate against the official result.

**‘Mondlanito’ has led a wave of popular resistance against Frelimo’s leadership. It began with crowded campaign rallies all over the country, which resulted in a strong showing for his party on election day.**

In response, outgoing president Filipe Nyusi mobilised police and military. Civil society groups say that at least 40 people have been killed so far by security forces.

### **A political powerhouse**

Venâncio Mondlane is a relative nobody. He did not grow up in the corridors of power, but in a poor suburb on the outskirts of Maputo. His family is from Lichinga in Niassa province, and his father was a businessman who rose through the ranks to become CEO of a large insurance company. Mondlane studied forestry at Eduardo Mondlane University – Mozambique’s largest and oldest tertiary institution.

He first made a public name for himself as a commentator, appearing regularly on TV panel shows and contributing columns to independent publications. His friendly, easygoing persona was complemented by a passion for politics.

**Through the roof: Support for Venancio Mondlane has continued to grow. Photo: Alfredo Zuniga/AFP**



Mondlane's first foray into formal politics was in 2013, when he ran for mayor of Maputo on the ticket of the Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (MDM), which was at the time a relatively new opposition party.

He led the opposition coalition to its best-ever result, although the city remained under Frelimo control, and this marked him out as a rising star. Parliamentary positions followed, first with MDM and then with Renamo, the oldest and – until now – strongest opposition party.

But when Renamo declined to make him its presidential candidate, Mondlane joined the relatively minor Podemos party – and turned it into a political powerhouse.

This was in large part due to the force of his own personality, and his mastery

of modern social media messaging. His regular “lives” on YouTube and Facebook, attract millions of views and have been instrumental in driving the post-election protests.

This online influence continued even when Mondlane was forced to flee into exile after receiving death threats – first to South Africa, and then to an undisclosed “part of the world”.

But perhaps the most significant explanation for Mondlane's popularity is timing. After more than five decades of Frelimo rule, a brutal and interminable conflict in Cabo Delgado and billions of dollars wasted in brazen corruption scandals, the ruling party is less popular than it has ever been.

Mozambicans want real change – and, like Eduardo Mondlane before him, that is exactly what VM7 is offering. ■

PARTNER CONTENT

# A very big year for democracy



WORLD  
MOVEMENT  
FOR  
DEMOCRACY

All illustrations: Nzilani Simu

# Democracy is having a moment

*But it's not all going exactly to plan. Let's fix that – and recognise the people on the front lines of the fight for a brighter democratic future.*

**T**his year has been a big year for democracy – perhaps the biggest ever, with elections in 64 countries around the world. More than two billion people will have voted, representing a staggering 49% of the world's population. That's more ballot papers printed, checked, cast, and counted this year than ever before in history.

So, democracy is thriving, right?

It's complicated.

In October, general elections in two southern African nations showed both the promise and the perils that come with exercising one's democratic rights.

For nearly six decades, ever since it became independent, Botswana has been ruled by a single party, which won every general election in the country's post-independence history. Until now. In a result that shocked pollsters and political analysts – and even some voters, who now realise the scale of their power – a newly-formed opposition group won a resounding victory at the polls. The people had spoken, and the incumbent president conceded within hours.

In Mozambique, meanwhile, deadly protests are still raging after the announcement of the results of the presidential election in early October. The official tally gave the ruling party – which has governed the country, uninterrupted,

since independence in 1975 – more than 70% of the vote. Both opposition parties and civil society groups have cried foul, alleging widespread vote rigging, but protests have been brutally suppressed. At least 24 civilians have been killed by security forces during the unrest. The result prompted a front cover in this very newspaper which proclaimed, "Nothing is harder than voting out the liberators."

## Getting democracy right

Maria Ressa, the Filipino journalist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, says 2024 "is a tipping point year for democracy". She chairs the steering committee of the World Movement for Democracy, which this year hosts its biannual Global Assembly in Johannesburg. "We meet in South Africa in November to find hope and strength, learn from each other, and build the future we want," says Ressa.

South Africa is a fitting location: the country is celebrating 30 years of multiracial democracy, and had its own elections this year, resulting in a government of national unity.

More than 500 delegates from nearly 100 countries will gather at the assembly to examine how democracy is evolving to meet the challenges, and the opportunities, of the 21st century. It is one of the largest-ever gatherings of pro-

democracy movements from around the world.

Over three days, diverse leaders from civil society, politics, labour, business, media, and academia will try to understand what went right in Botswana, and what went wrong in Mozambique. They will do so in the aftermath of a hard-fought election in one of the world's largest and oldest democracies, the United States. They will grapple with the rise of authoritarian governments, the disorienting influence of dramatic technology-driven change in societies, and the impact of the manipulation of information on electoral processes. They will celebrate each other's successes, commiserate over setbacks, and learn from each other, even as they share war stories – quite literally, in the cases of some of the honourees of this year's Democracy Courage Tributes.

### Studies in courage

The Global Assembly will hand out four of these prestigious awards this year. The Democracy Courage Tributes recognise movements that have dedicated themselves to keeping the democratic flame burning – often at great personal risk.

Ukrainian civil society is honoured for its “extraordinary ability to organise and mobilise support from partners at home and abroad” amid Russia's full-scale invasion of the country, which is now in its third year. “We have lost colleagues in this war, some on the front line, others while doing their job duties. The thought of them is what keeps us going,” said



**Ukrainian civil society: Anastasia Rudenko, Tetyana Teren and Olga Myrovych**

Anastasia Rudenko, the editor-in-chief of *Rubryka*, a Ukrainian news outlet dedicated to solutions journalism.

The work of Rudenko, along with PEN Ukraine's Tetyana Teren and Olga Myrovych from the Lviv Media Forum, has played a vital role in strengthening the democratic institutions that Ukraine has been building since independence in 1991 – and safeguarding those same institutions from any potential backsliding during Russia's brutal aggression, which the country and its civil society continue to resist.

Similarly, in Palestine, there are independent Palestinian civil society movements who are laying the foundations today for a democratic, prosperous future. One of them is led by





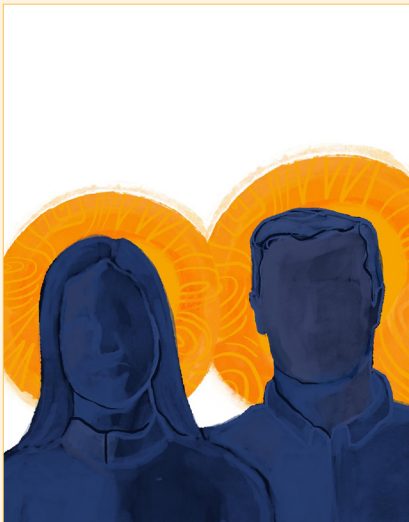
**Left: Omar Shaban, the founder of PalThink for Strategic Studies. Right: Clare Byarugaba, Richard Lusimbo and Pepe Onziema of Convening for Equality**

Omar Shaban, the founder of PalThink for Strategic Studies, an independent non-profit think tank. Even as the war intensified – and family members, colleagues, and students were killed around them – PalThink has remained on the ground in Gaza. Shaban is determined to provide the next generation of leaders with the democratic tools they will need to begin the long and difficult process of reconstructing their country and building democratic institutions.

Despite the devastation that he has lived through, Shaban has not lost hope. “Nothing compares to Gaza. I am Palestinian. It is a beautiful country. We may not have gas or oil, but we have our people. They are intelligent and talented, we have everything to build our country. We just need the opportunity.”

Holding onto hope, in the face of enormous adversity, defines the work of the LGBTQIA+ rights movement in Uganda. Last year, the Ugandan government introduced one of the world’s harshest laws against the LGBTQIA+ community, including the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality”. Even advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights was criminalised.

This did not stop Clare Byarugaba, Richard Lusimbo, and Pepe Onziema from mobilising in support of the community, under the banner of Convening for Equality, a civil society coalition. Together, they are contesting the false narrative that homosexuality is a “colonial import”, and document human rights abuses and support the health and financial needs of their communities.



### Courage: The pro-democracy movement in Venezuela

“The reason I stay is because those leading the fight against us want us to leave. They want to make our lives so unbearable that we leave,” said Byarugaba. “If being unapologetic and visible makes even one person feel okay, then for me that is a win.”

This year’s final Democracy Courage

Tribute goes to the pro-democracy movement in Venezuela. As a culmination of its long-standing and courageous commitment to democracy, in July 2024, this movement secured a critical victory for democracy in the Venezuelan general election, according to all independent observers. Impressively, democratic forces were able to demonstrate their win by documenting the results. Yet, despite the significant voter participation and the well-documented results obtained by the efforts of organised civil society, the regime-controlled electoral commission declared incumbent Nicolás Maduro as the winner. This might very well be the best-documented electoral fraud case ever.

Since the election, more than 2,000 activists have been arrested. Nonetheless, pro-democracy campaigners – who have already been fighting this fight for two decades – continue to do the difficult, dangerous work of exposing the Maduro regime’s authoritarian nature, and documenting human rights abuses and corruption. ■

*This piece was sponsored by the World Movement for Democracy. The World Movement for Democracy is supported by the National Endowment for Democracy, which is also a donor to The Continent.*



WORLD  
MOVEMENT  
FOR  
DEMOCRACY

**12TH GLOBAL  
ASSEMBLY**

#WM12Assembly

## REVITALIZING DEMOCRACY

REFLECTION, RESILIENCE, AND INNOVATION

**JOHANNESBURG | SOUTH AFRICA | NOVEMBER 20-22, 2024**

## As (in)tolerant as usual

**F**or International Day for Tolerance (16 November), we check Africa's social-tolerance pulse and find – drum roll, please – it's about the same as ever.

That might be good news with regard to ethnic tolerance, since nine in 10 Africans (90%) across 30 countries say they would like or wouldn't mind having neighbours from a different ethnic group – about the same result as in 2014/2015 (91%).

Almost as many express tolerance toward people from different religious backgrounds (87%) and immigrants or foreign workers (81%), also unchanged from a decade ago. But tolerance for people in same-sex relationships has risen

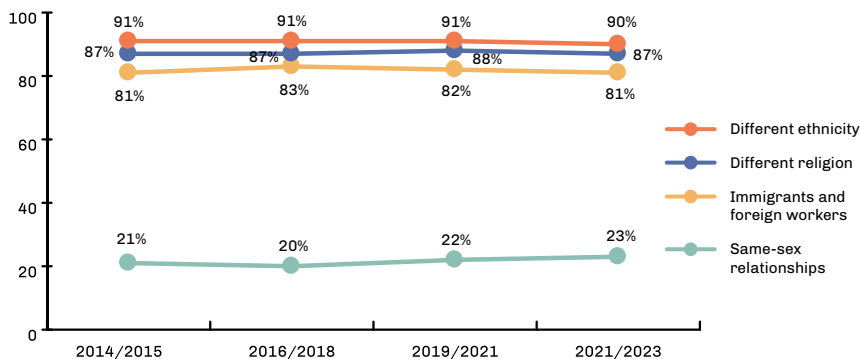
only marginally (+2 percentage points) and remains remarkably low (23%).

These findings needn't discourage activists working for a more tolerant world: They may have prevented intolerance from growing or nurtured greater tolerance at local or national levels. For example, intolerance toward people in same-sex relationships decreased substantially between 2014 and 2023 in Eswatini (-17 percentage points), Mauritius (-16), Lesotho (-13), and Zimbabwe (-11).

But it appears that on a continental level, some deep-seated attitudes don't change overnight – or over a decade.

### Trends in social tolerance | 30 African countries | 2014-2023

The figure shows the percentage of respondents who say they 'would not care', would 'somewhat like', or would 'strongly like' having people from these groups as neighbours.



**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.



## Oh, to be young and this naïve

**Maturity brings wisdom and experience. But how refreshing it is to let whim and whimsy guide your actions – if only because you don't know any better.**

**Jacqueline Nyathi**

**I**n *Casablanca* a girl of unusual beauty, born on the wrong side of the tracks, wants to escape. Stifled and trapped by her mother's decisions but determined to

get out of the life she was born into, Sarah sets her heart on Driss – as rich as the king but ugly, socially inept and apparently not even interested.

*As Rich as the King: A Tale of Casablanca* is a richly imagined, compelling, coming-of-age novel that delivers humour, sympathy and sorrow in bucketfuls. Sarah's naïvety is charming – you just know she's going to be severely disillusioned but you still have so much hope for her. Driss, the "Beast" of the story, is initially hard to read, and here and there you'll want to kick him; but he gradually finds your heart too.

It's a tale of class; they're just two young people caught up in the rigid social stratification of Moroccan society. Author Abigail Assor and translator Natasha Lehrer bring that society to life.

The poor struggle every day from sunrise to sunset: selling or panhandling on pavements, eating from dodgy cafés.

The rich, mostly idle and cruel, lounge by the sea or near pools at the exclusive club or in rich homes, waited on hand and foot.

Sarah manages to find – inveigle – her way into a circle of rich young people, her naïvety blinding her to the many ways she can never fit in. Her desperate decision to secure her future with Driss only makes it more clear how out of her depth she truly is.

But our scrappy and lovable heroine is smart and knows what to do in the end – an end that leaves us free to imagine a happy ending for these two. ■

# THE QUIZ

**0-3**

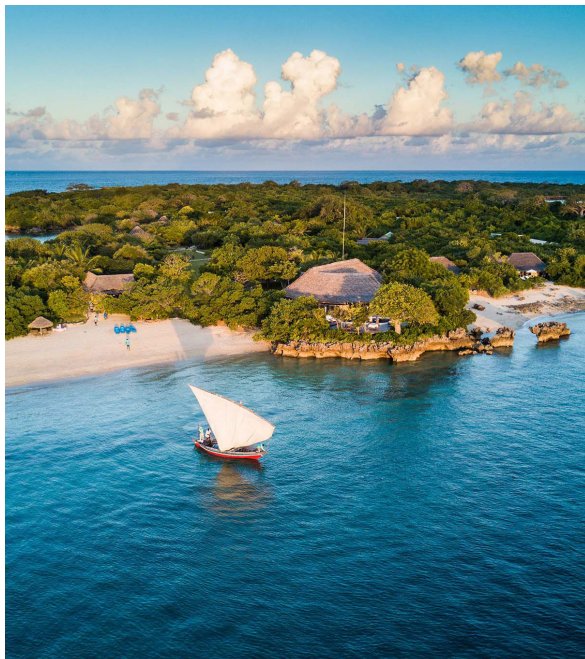
"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

**4-7**

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

**8-10**

"Try not to mention marimbas in Quirimbas – or maracas in Caracas."



- 1\_** The Quirimbas Islands (pictured) are an archipelago found off the coast of which country?
- 2\_** In which year did the Berlin Conference begin?
- 3\_** True or false: Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue is president of Equatorial Guinea.
- 4\_** True or false: Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo is the son of Equatorial Guinea's president.
- 5\_** Who was the DRC's first democratic president?
- 6\_** Which African country uses the dirham currency?
- 7\_** How many colours are on Chad's flag?
- 8\_** Which country is singer and former politician Youssou N'Dour from?
- 9\_** Twi is a language spoken in which country?
- 10\_** What is Eritrea's capital city?

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

---

# Behold, the agenda of Western media

*The one-sided reporting on violence in Amsterdam last week is a perfect example of how the international media is a Western cultural product. It fails to give nuance and pushes specific – and telling – agendas.*

---

Patrick Gathara

**I**n the run-up to the 2013 elections in Kenya, CNN published a story featuring a handful of what it described as members of a “local Kikuyu tribal militia”. Armed with crude weapons, including “guns” made of metal pipes, they comically rolled around on the ground as they supposedly prepared for war. While there was real fear at the time of a repeat of the post-election violence of five years prior, the ludicrous clip illustrated the dangers of journalists parachuting into places with a prepared narrative.

It used to be that this sort of thing only happened in the darker places of the world. But last weekend the people of Amsterdam in the nether regions of sub-Scandinavian Europe were afforded a taste.

It began on Wednesday, the day before Ajax of Amsterdam played Maccabi Tel Aviv, when Israeli football hooligans rampaged through the city. They vandalised property, tore down a Palestinian flag, chanted “we will fuck the Arabs”, and lauded their army.

During the match, Maccabi fans also booed during a minute’s silence for people who died during flooding in Spain that week.

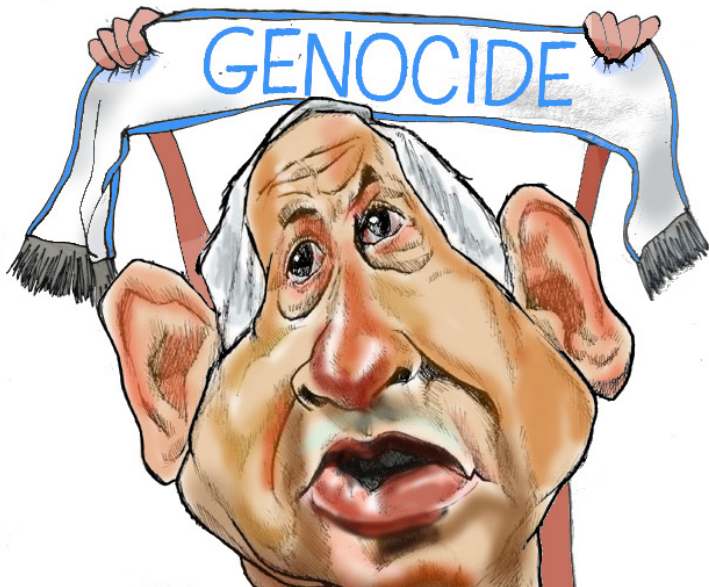
Some locals responded in kind.

But the stories pumped out by the media were stripped of that backstory. They talked of a pre-planned antisemitic pogrom targeting innocent Jewish people, with many linking it to the Holocaust, during which three-quarters of the Dutch Jewish population was killed.

Politicians across the West, who have been arming, financing and shielding the genocide in Gaza, were quick to jump on the bandwagon, condemning the violence against the Israelis but having little to say about the behaviour that provoked it.

The “Amsterdam pogrom” was only the latest pro-Israel line from Western outlets that have uncritically regurgitated Israel’s claims about its actions in Gaza, where its army has killed 43,000 people, including adding 137 dead journalists to its history of killing journalists.

In Gaza so-called “international journalists” can claim to have been shut out but access to Amsterdam is not



restricted, which makes the reporting even more egregious. While antisemitism may well have played a part in the counter-violence, and antisemitism is on the rise in Europe, to claim that it was its main driver is to cut the facts to fit the story in a manner reminiscent of what *CNN* did in Kenya over a decade ago.

This is a vindication of the complaints many have had about Western coverage of the African continent. It demonstrates that far from being objective and impartial, the international media is a Western cultural product that pushes elite agendas. The news is not an inert telling of what happened but is frequently massaged to tell a preordained tale.

It is better to rely on local journalists rather than international networks. This might seem obvious given that local journalists most likely have a better, more

nuanced understanding of happenings in their own societies. However, as Nilofar Absar explained in *The New Humanitarian*, there is a hierarchy of credibility in international press that tends to portray the outsider as the person best placed to tell the story.

And so we must invest in our own ability to tell our own stories. The rise of the internet and social media and the ubiquity of smartphones has revolutionised how the news is told and who gets to tell it. While this has provided space for nefarious actors spreading fake news, it has also created opportunities for building local reporting networks that could challenge the oligopoly of international news networks. ■

---

*Patrick Gathara is a Kenyan journalist, cartoonist and author*

# THE BIG PICTURE

No pepper at all, though: At 95% salinity (nearly three times higher than the Dead Sea's salt levels) it's almost impossible to sink below the surface of the lake at the desert oasis of Siwa, in western Egypt.

Photo: Khaled Desouki/AFP



The Continent is a member of the Press Council of South Africa. This means we adhere to its Code of Ethics. It also means that there's an independent body you can reach out to with a complaint about our reporting. That process is on their website — [www.presscouncil.org.za](http://www.presscouncil.org.za).

**all protocol observed.**

*publisher of* **The Continent**

The Continent is published by All Protocol Observed, a not-for-profit based in South Africa. Our home is dedicated to creating a space for African journalists to do quality journalism, which we then get to you wherever you are. For suggestions, queries, complaints, or to make a donation, please contact us at [read@thecontinent.org](mailto:read@thecontinent.org)