

# The Continent



## Trouble is brewing

Illustration: Wynona Mutisi



**Cover:** The global price of coffee is higher than it has ever been – and the fertile plains of central Uganda produce some of the world's best beans. No wonder President Yoweri Museveni is making moves to assert control over the lucrative coffee industry. In doing so, however, he risks upsetting the country's delicate political balance. Tensions are already running high: earlier this month, a scuffle in Parliament landed one lawmaker in hospital (p13).

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## Come and work with us

*The Continent* is hiring a distribution editor (p17) and a news editor (p18). If you think you might be a good fit, please get in touch – and don't let imposter syndrome put you off.



**Pay up:** Hajji Abdul Kiyimba has been held personally liable for hate crime

## UGANDA

### Leader fined millions for torturing men in homophobic parade

A judge in Kampala ordered the administrators of a small town to pay 150-million Uganda shillings (\$40,000) to 21 men whom they paraded as homosexuals and sent to prison where they were tortured. The local leader who ordered the raid on a house the men were sharing during the Covid-19 pandemic, Hajji Abdul Kiyimba, was ordered to pay half the award out of his own pocket. The ruling, issued on Friday 22 November, was surprising given the Uganda recently passed one of the world's most draconian anti-gay laws.

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Besieged miners reportedly too weak to leave shafts

At least 31 people surfaced from disused mine shafts in Stilfontein this week, bringing the total to 90, as a standoff with police continues. Three boys aged 16 to 19, who resurfaced on Wednesday, told *Newzroom Afrika* that some of the people left underground were too weak to climb back up, having not eaten solid food in weeks. Police have blocked food supply to the people underground to “smoke out” the unauthorised miners, but have been slow to start a promised “rescue mission” for those who remain underground.

## MEDIA

### Over 250 African women journalists targeted since 2019

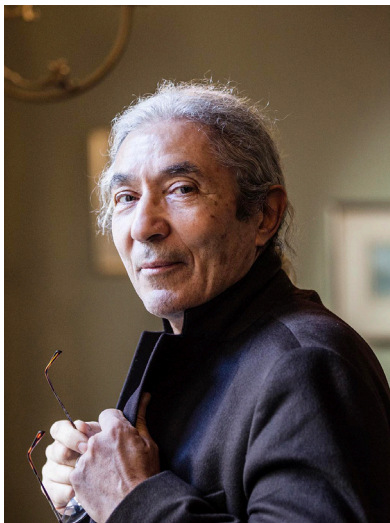
African women have been targeted for doing journalism at least 258 times in the last five years, a report by The Coalition for Women in Journalism shows. Nearly half of the cases involved physical violence, but journalists also face threats such as organised internet troll campaigns. A UK court recently awarded \$95,000 in a defamation suit, at whose heart was the misogynistic trolling of Nigerian investigative journalist Kiki Mordi.

**WESTERN SAHARA****Trump kids' visit energises Morocco**

Donald Trump's daughter and son-in-law, Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, recently visited Western Sahara, firing up Moroccans who see it as a political statement by the US president-elect. Ivanka Trump often refers to the territory as "Morocco". The African Union treats Western Sahara as a separate member state. Referring to Kushner as incoming assistant secretary of state for the Maghreb and Near East, Moroccan press speculated he would cement an act of Trump's first presidency: US acceptance of Morocco's claim to the territory.

**BURUNDI****State releases 4,000 petty criminals to ease penal crowding**

With its prisons holding more than three times the capacity they were built for, the Burundian government decided it would release 40% of the incarcerated people as long as they are accused of petty crimes. This week, President Évariste Ndayishimiye said in a post on X that 4,000 had walked free. Another 1,500 are expected to be released, but they are unlikely to include the thousands of political prisoners who might threaten the Ndayishimiye's power.



**Missing: Algerian writer and critic of the state Boualem Sansal has not been heard from in weeks.** Photo: Leonardo Cendamo/Getty Images

**ALGERIA****Has anyone seen Boualem Sansal?**

French-Algerian writer Boualem Sansal left Paris for Algiers in early November and has not been heard from since then. *Associated Press* reports that the 75-year-old man has not been seen anywhere near his home in Boumerdes. Because he is a vocal critic of the government in Algiers and "Islamism" in general, speculation is rife that state agents took him. The European Parliament passed a resolution on Wednesday demanding that the Algerian government produce Sansal.



## TANZANIA

## WHO Africa boss dies in India

Dr. Faustine Ndugulile, the World Health Organisation's director-elect for Africa,

died on 27 November while receiving medical treatment in India. Ndugulile was elected as the WHO's Africa director in August to succeed Dr. Matshidiso Moeti who had served two terms. He would have started work in February 2025.



RIP: Dr. Faustine Ndugulile

## NAMIBIA

## Technical difficulties undermine election

Even before voting began, this was shaping up to be a controversial election. The ruling Swapo party was under immense pressure from opposition parties and looking nervously at neighbouring Botswana, which elected an opposition candidate as president for the first time last month. On voting day itself, a series of technical failures, missing ballots and searing heat meant that many voters were unable to cast their ballot. The under-fire electoral commission reopened some polling stations on Friday, as the nation awaits the results.

## KENYA

## 'Big Brother better pay me to watch you'

Mary Wachuka Maina, a Kenyan-Canadian software developer, is suing four of President William Ruto's allies, including state treasurer Chris Kiptoo, for breach of contract and financial loss. That's after she produced spyware and propaganda software for the administration. The spyware, valued at \$925-million, was reportedly meant to support Ruto by shaping public opinion, monitoring journalists and countering opposition ahead of 2027 elections. *Nation Africa* said it had seen court documents showing public funds were set aside for the software development.



**Not digging it: No water, no power. No power, no mine**

## ZAMBIA

# Trapped miners rescued after hydro power evaporated

Emergency workers have rescued miners who were trapped underground after a countrywide power outage, the Zambian energy ministry said on Monday. A protracted drought, affecting Zambia and neighbouring Zimbabwe, has stymied hydroelectric power generation at Kariba Dam. Both countries are experiencing electricity rationing and prolonged power outages. While the exact number of miners was not given, Energy Secretary Peter Mumba said all of the trapped miners had been brought to the surface.

## MALI

# Mali replays top hit as mine-the-miners strategy pays off

The four Barrick Gold employees in Mali who were detained in September were re-arrested this week, the Canadian mining company said on Tuesday. After the September detentions, Barrick Gold agreed to pay \$85-million. Now Malian authorities say that the company actually owes \$500-million in back taxes. Mali also detained three employees of Resolute Mining Ltd, including CEO Terence Holohan. With its share price plummeting, the Australian company agreed to pay \$160-million in back taxes.

## KENYA

# Court halts Gates Foundation privileges

The High Court in Nairobi issued an order halting the implementation of a legal notice issued on 4 October which gave the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation diplomatic privilege in Kenya. The Law Society of Kenya challenged the notice saying it shielded the foundation from legal scrutiny, which undermines the public interest. Among other things, the notice would have exempted the foundation from paying tax on staff salaries, and shielded staff from being sued for official actions.

# Big Tech

## Give us our data back, says AU

**Tech companies are hoarding African data. The African Union wants them to hand it over.**

### Marché Arends

**S**aying that it is “concerned by data exploitation practices mainly by the private sector, particularly by big tech entities”, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights is asking African Union member states to ensure the data held by big entities is “publicly available by default”.

The commission, an arm of the African Union, adopted a watershed resolution to this effect earlier this month. Should it trickle down to inform national policies, companies like Google, Meta and TikTok could be compelled to give their African users what Europeans already get: greater access to their own data.

If a TikTok user from the US or Europe wants any of their data that the platform collects, they can request it from the company. The same is not true for African

TikTok or YouTube users, who aren’t even given the option to apply.

“Africans are entitled to data just as much as anyone else,” said Guy Berger, a former journalism professor and Unesco director, now an independent expert on media and the internet.

The resolution asked data holders – including public institutions, bodies that receive public funds, and private actors, when there is an overriding public interest – to align their practices with the principle of maximum disclosure.

Companies are reluctant to do that because, as *The Economist* said in 2017, data is the most valuable resource on earth, surpassing long-time holder of the title: oil. Those who hold and control access to data are the most powerful people on earth, and to expand access to that data is to dilute their own power.

But African governments also hold citizen data that is inaccessible to the very people it concerns. “It doesn’t help to push for access to data held by foreign entities if your own African governments aren’t making their data available,” Berger noted.

If all these entities opened up access to the data they hold, it would become easier to monitor elections, hold powerful people to account, and create African language AI models, among other things.



# Sport

## The Beeb says Babs is best – no lie detected

Barbra Banda adds yet another accolade to her growing collection.

Firdose Moonda

**B**arbra Banda is accurate, brisk, creative, daring and an example of women's sporting excellence – so it's no surprise she has the footballing world at her feet. On Tuesday, she was named *BBC's Women's Footballer of the Year*, an award voted for by readers of their website in recognition of performances from September 2023 to August 2024.

In that time, Lusaka-born Banda led Zambia to a second successive Olympic Games where she scored her third Olympic hat-trick to become Africa's highest-ever goal-scorer at the Games.

She earned a \$740,000 transfer to Orlando Pride in the American National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), which is the second-highest fee of all-time. She was named the NWSL's most valuable player. She scored 13 goals in the regular season and four in the playoffs to take the Pride to their first title.



**High bar: Zambia's Barbra Banda (left) is *BBC's Women's Footballer of the Year*. Photo: Saeed Khan/AFP**

Her sporting ability showed itself from a young age when, as a six-year-old, she played with and against boys because the educational institution she was at did not have a girls' team.

When her mother tried to stop her playing football, she would sneak out of her home. She told *AFP* that she would throw her boots out of the window and pretend to be going out, only to collect them and head to training.

Banda's mother did eventually convince her to give up the game (temporarily), so she became a boxer



instead. She was 14 as an amateur and 17 when she turned professional, and was unbeaten with five wins in the latter category before football called her back.

By then, Banda's father, who supported her sporting ambitions, had passed away and she wanted to honour him by playing the game he loved.

She signed with Lusaka's Green Buffaloes, the country's most successful side, and it only took a year before she was scouted for a club in Europe. Banda was the first Zambian to play in Spain, for EDF Logrono, and went on to play in China for Shanghai Shengli.

Just when it seemed that not even the sky was the limit, Banda was stopped in her tracks. She was not able to lead the team at the 2022 African Women's Cup of Nations because her own country's football association said she had failed gender eligibility tests.

Neither the continental body, CAF, nor the international football body, Fifa, has ever disqualified Banda from competition and she has since returned to take over the

leadership role in Zambia. But allegations like these don't go away easily.

After her recent *BBC* accolade, Banda faced a massive social media backlash, mostly from the United Kingdom. Renowned author and transphobe JK Rowling, former footballer Joey Barton and former swimmer Sharron Davies have all been vocal and vitriolic in their criticism of Banda. Outside of the right-wing, she is wrapped in support.

Her club team, Orlando Pride, for whom she scored the only goal in the match that gave them the title two days before she was given the *BBC*'s recognition, said they were "incredibly proud" of her. Megan Rapinoe, a World Cup winner with the United States, also rallied behind her. "This is so deserved," she posted on an Instagram story.

And Banda herself has accepted the role of a mentor on the continent. "To the young girl in Africa dreaming big, keep that dream and work hard, I am telling you it does come true," she posted.

She is living proof of that. ■



**Pitch perfect:**  
Zambia's Barbra Banda manoeuvres around China's Li Mengwen during the 2020 Olympics.  
Photo: Kohei Chibahara/AFP

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# Mozambique

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## Hubris among the elites, chaos on the streets

**Civil disobedience and urban warfare are immobilising Maputo as the nation's election dispute continues.**

**Luis Nhachote and Kiri Rupiah**

**M**aria Matisse, the Maputo protester seen in a viral social media video lying prostrate on a road after being hit by a military vehicle, miraculously survived the horrific scene. Many have not been as lucky: scores of people have been killed in the protests disputing Mozambique's 9 October presidential election.

Plataforma Eleitoral Decide, a nonprofit based in Mozambique, reported 67 deaths between 21 October and 21 November, while the US-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Database logged 85 casualties. Human Rights Watch said on Monday that 10 of those killed were children.

Matisse was sitting on a chair on Eduardo Mondlane Avenue, Maputo's main road, when a speeding armoured vehicle hit her. She is one of many who responded to Venâncio Mondlane's call to bring vehicle traffic to a standstill on Wednesday through Friday. This is the latest wave of protest called by the candidate declared second in the disputed

9 October election. People are "cooking in the middle of the streets, doing regular activities they would do at home to show that the roads are blocked," Professor Adriano Nuvunga, chairperson of the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, told *The Continent*.

The street blockades saw the incumbent, President Filipe Nyusi, use a helicopter for the 2km commute between his office and the presidential palace.

Not even Graça Machel, the former education minister and widow of Mozambique's first president, was spared. In a widely circulated video, Machel was heckled by young protesters who had gathered to watch her struggle to make her way through blockaded streets.

Often regarded as the "mother of the nation", Machel is highly respected, but that respect has been dented by her reluctance to condemn the disputed election result.

Earlier this week, Machel appealed for calm and dialogue, stressing the importance of respecting the law and the rules of the democratic process, even when one disagrees with the authorities.

Many were unimpressed by her call.

“There is a sense that the elders are doing nothing to end the chaos,” Nuvunga said. “What people want is electoral justice. [When they speak] there’s still this element of protecting Frelimo rule.”

### Urban warfare unleashed

In response to the civil disobedience, security forces “have used excessive force,” said Nuvunga. The vehicle that hit Matisse was part of a military column sent to unblock roads, a defence ministry press statement said, adding that the vehicles were “properly signalling.”

Security forces have also used tear gas and live bullets, killing three protesters in Nampala in northern Mozambique on Wednesday. Social media videos show security forces working alongside plain clothed shooters to search for and shoot at suspected protesters.

President-elect Daniel Chapo, the Frelimo party candidate who was

announced as the winner of the election, has yet to address his country on the dispute and violence in the streets.

The current president, Nyusi, called a meeting with the four presidential candidates to address the political impasse but Mondlane said he could not attend because Nyusi did not respond to his proposed terms, including an offer to attend virtually. Mondlane has not revealed his location since 21 October, but is understood to have left Mozambique, saying he faced death threats. As the protests raged, the government has opened legal proceedings against him.

The other candidates – Chapo, Lutero Simango and Ossufo Momade – showed up for Nyusi’s meeting but postponed substantive talks, understanding that Mondlane’s presence is crucial.

“The political crisis is worsening every day that passes,” said political analyst Felisberto Pondja. “Dialogue must be the solution.” ■



**Just not cricket: A protester hurls a stone at riot police in Maputo on 27 November. Photo: Alfredo Zuniga/AFP**

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**The Continent**





**Bitter brew:**  
Fortunes have been  
made and lost over  
Uganda's coffee  
plantations. Photo:  
Getty Images

## Coup de Latte: Inside Uganda's coffee wars

**The link between coffee and anxiety is well established. This time, however, it's not the caffeine that is making Ugandan farmers nervous, but the government's plans to take control of the country's biggest cash crop.**

### Kalungi Kabuye in Kampala

**E**arlier this month, on the day parliamentarians were due to debate one of the most sensitive issues in Ugandan politics, there was a heavy security presence around the Parliament building in Kampala.

“From the word go, as we arrived at Parliament, the situation was different,”

opposition leader Joel Ssenyonyi told the *Daily Monitor*. He complained that the lights in the building had been switched off, as was the internet; and that a bunch of vest-wearing “hooligans” were shoving MPs around.

When the debate finally started, tensions rose higher yet. Two parliamentarians engaged in a physical fight over seating arrangements; one of

them, Francis Zaake, ended up in hospital. He had earlier complained to the speaker of the house that an unidentified man with a gun was wandering around the chamber.

Despite this intimidating atmosphere – or perhaps because of it – it took just one round of voting to pass the National Coffee Amendment Bill 2024.

The new legislation still needs to be signed into law by President Yoweri Museveni, whose National Resistance Movement (NRM) dominates the assembly. When he does so, it will give his government control over the local coffee industry – just as coffee hits its highest price since 1977 on global markets.

But the president, like his predecessors, might not have it all his own way. Trouble is brewing. Coffee is not just the country's most lucrative cash crop, it is also the most political.

## The coffee wars

For centuries, farmers in the central, lakeside Buganda region have been growing coffee. The British colonial government turned it into a cash crop, giving Buganda households an enormous income advantage over the rest of the population. In fact, Britain built its colonial project around the Buganda Kingdom; they were the favoured partners in the local iteration of the Empire's 'divide and rule' strategy.

These economic and political advantages have given the region a privileged position in modern Uganda. Its people, the Baganda, take their exceptionalism in the Uganda



**Big gulps: Buganda PM Charles Peter Mayiga sips coffee outside Parliament.**  
Photo: Buganda Media

arrangement pretty seriously. And, thanks to their continued domination of coffee exports – the top forex earner for most of Uganda's history, overtaken only recently by gold – they have the economic muscle to make their feelings heard.

The Buganda region, which includes the country's capital Kampala, is home to 10% of the population but contributes nearly half of Uganda's GDP. All Ugandan rulers must therefore answer the so-called "Buganda Question"; either negotiating for the consent of the Baganda, or breaking their power to resist.

Milton Obote, the first post-independence prime minister, chose the latter option. In 1963 he defied demands to increase the price paid to coffee farmers in Buganda; and, as hostilities increased



**Stand your grounds: Ugandan lawmakers argue over the Coffee Bill, which Baganda leaders believe will threaten their autonomy and agency in coffee-growing regions.** Photo: Ugandan Parliament

in the mid-1960s, dispatched an army battalion to attack the palace of the Kabaka of Buganda, driving the king into exile. That battalion was led by a young army officer called Idi Amin Dada.

For Obote, this was a very temporary victory. In 1971, Amin led a coup d'état – with support from Buganda – that forced Obote into exile.

Later, Amin would launch his own “coffee war”. An unseasonal frost in the 1970s wiped out much of Brazil’s coffee harvest. Prices skyrocketed. Amin’s government was too preoccupied with its own survival to take advantage. As public institutions like the Coffee Marketing Board collapsed, individual farmers and traders smuggled coffee out of Uganda and sold it at much higher prices.

Amin declared coffee smuggling a treasonous offence, punishable by death

by firing squad. Some coffee smugglers were executed, but the smuggling continued; those who did not get caught became millionaires.

### **Museveni stirs up a storm**

President Yoweri Museveni’s coffee policy since taking office in 1986, has been as delicate as his more overtly political answers to the “Buganda Question”.

His first big move was to get rid of the state’s monopoly on coffee exports, replacing it with the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) – a semi-autonomous body that, in exchange for 1% of export income, certified coffee quality for private exporters, supported research and provided resources to some farmers, such as seedlings.

This proved to be a great deal for coffee farmers, and for the Ugandan economy.



Ezra Suruma, a former deputy governor of the central bank, described it as one of the “most daring and far-reaching economic measures taken by the NRM government” in his memoir. Until now, Museveni appeared to agree.

The new coffee bill – passed during those chaotic parliamentary proceedings – will absorb the coffee authority into the Ministry of Agriculture, giving direct control to the state. The timing is interesting: after another crop failure in Brazil, coffee reached a record high this week on global markets.

Museveni claims that he is merely trying to rationalise the business of government, and that the move is part of a broader push to reduce the number of ministries and departments, and eliminate corruption. He described the UCDA as a “parasitic agency” and a “disgrace to the nation”.

But critics suggest a more sinister motivation. “These manoeuvres point to unclear motives, more so when the

stakeholders’ views are not respected,” Charles Peter Mayiga, the prime minister of Buganda, told *The Continent*. (Another element to the contemporary settlement of the “Buganda Question” is that the kingdom gets to run a parallel but subordinate government, led by its traditional monarch. Mayiga is the current civil head of that government).

Mayiga suggested that Baganda farmers, who still grow up to a third of Uganda’s coffee, will find other ways to stay ahead of the politicians. “We shall miss UCDA and its economies of scale, of course, but we have to work with what we have,” he said.

Those same farmers, along with the other major coffee-growing communities in the country’s south-central regions, may also make their feelings known next year, when Museveni faces yet another electoral test. Will voters look past Museveni’s attempts to take control of the coffee industry? Or will they decide that he is not their cup of tea? ■



**Bean there:** Uganda's coffee crisis has been percolating since colonial times.  
Photo: Getty Images



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- Ability to think strategically and break that down to monthly goals;
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- Wordpress, newsletter and SEO experience; and
- Capacity to flexibly work 40 hours a week, and work remotely.



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*The initial contract will be for \$3,000 a month for one year, starting in February 2025.*

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*If you think you can drive our growth, send your CV and a 100 word note on what you would do to get *The Continent* to more people to [jobs@allprotocol.org](mailto:jobs@allprotocol.org). The deadline for applications is 10 December 2024.*

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- Comfortable working with online team tools like Slack and Google Docs;
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# The Last Resort: So close to Fortress Europe's African outposts, yet so far

**Fnideq, like other Moroccan towns near the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla, has become a beacon for Africans trying to head north.**



## Imane Bellamine in Fnideq

**F**Fnideq is the closest Moroccan town to Spain's Ceuta – a tiny sliver of Europe on mainland Africa. In September, social media fuelled a frenzy in which hundreds of Morocco's 1.5-million unemployed 15- to 24-year-olds descended on Fnideq, attempting to cross to Ceuta and claim asylum in the European Union.

Now it's a ghost town – entirely barricaded, the beaches are closed, the neighbourhoods are heavily militarised and checkpoints abound. It is testament to the might that protects Fortress Europe.

Looking at a map, you would be forgiven for thinking that Ceuta is part of Morocco. It is geographically, just not legally. Drive seven hours east on the Moroccan coast along the Mediterranean

sea and you will go from Ceuta to another Spanish city: Melilla. Spain refused to give the two up when it recognised Moroccan independence in 1956. It argued, in part, that its rule over these lands pre-dated its hold on the rest of Morocco, and even some parts of mainland Spain.

Today, when European nations are fervent about keeping African migrants out, having territory that touches African borders is proving complicated for Spain.

Young people camp in Moroccan towns between or near Ceuta and Melilla, looking out for a chance to cross over.

This might entail a dangerous swim when the sea is too rough for coast guard patrols; an attempt to breach under-guarded sections of the physical barriers; or gathering a critical mass of people to storm the fortress walls.

## Mohammed V mosque in Fnideq, Morocco







**Harsh life: Oussama, 24, from Fnideq, made it into Ceuta once – but fell on hard times and was deported**

To keep these people out, Ceuta is now separated from Morocco by an 8km wall that is nearly 6m tall. Melilla is fortified with a similarly high razor-wire fence that stretches over 11km, topped with sensors to alert Spanish watch-posts of intruders.

In addition, the EU pays the Moroccan government hundreds of millions of euros to do more on its side of the border: €234-million between 2015 and 2021, according to an official report published early last year. This tactic is effective: Moroccan authorities said in August that they had thwarted more than 11,300 attempts to cross into Ceuta and 3,300 to Melilla since the start of 2024, part of the 45,000 migrants they prevented from reaching the EU.

### **Still trying, still hoping**

During the day, Fnideq's city centre is eerily quiet, controlled and devoid of young people. But when evening comes, the young, unemployed or underemployed emerge to sit at cafés and share their stories.

Abdellah, 20, first attempted to cross into Ceuta in 2021. At the time, the borders were more open: one could get a special pass from Spanish consulates in the Moroccan towns of Tetouan and Nador to spend 24 hours in Ceuta or Melilla. A childhood visit to Ceuta had left him thinking of moving there permanently, and maybe even going on to mainland Spain to build a new life.

"We all want a better life," says Abdellah, who dropped out of school in 2016 to support his family, working as a kitchen hand and a bartender.



Tanger Med Port



When he crossed into Ceuta in 2021, he spent four days there with family, hiding from the police, so he never fully experienced the city. Then he was caught and violently removed.

Now sitting in Fnideq, after facing violence at the border, he has second thoughts about that promise of a better life in Spain.

Ibrahim was only 16 when he first crossed to Ceuta with a group of friends. They were apprehended and confined to a warehouse for four days before Spanish authorities sorted them out by age.

The guards were violent. “They beat us and refused to let us out for more than an hour,” recalls Ibrahim. After the



age sorting, only children younger than 13 were allowed to stay, sent to special centres for minors. Ibrahim returned to Morocco after 20 days but tried again in 2022, this time swimming to Ceuta with two friends.

“Only one of us escaped, but the rest were caught by the Spanish navy and handed over to the Moroccan police,” he says. They were taken for questioning to Martil, near Fnideq. “They threatened to jail us if we tried again.”

Now a bartender in Fnideq, Ibrahim still dreams of a safe and legal way to reach Europe: an asylum claim perhaps. “If I had the chance to go legally, I’d never say no. I want to change my life, and meet my obligations towards my family.”

Oussama, 24, lived in a state-run

children’s home in Tetouan from 2003 to 2015. When he left, he was reunited with his mother who was trading between Ceuta and Morocco. He started helping her transport her wares. But the borders were sealed, leaving the mother and son lost and desperate.

**Now a bartender in Fnideq, Ibrahim still dreams of a safe and legal way to reach Europe: an asylum claim perhaps. ‘If I had the chance to go legally, I’d never say no. I want to change my life, and meet my obligations towards my family.’**

He tried but failed several times to cross into Ceuta before finally making



it in 2018. But he had nowhere to live. Living on the Ceuta streets for more than a year, he developed a drug and alcohol addiction, before being deported back to Morocco.

Deportation was painful, but dreams of reaching Europe still fill his head. Now working as a scrap picker, Oussama says he will keep trying. “All I want is to be there, have a family, and build my own car wash,” he says. “If we had opportunities here, we wouldn’t risk our lives.”

Not everyone is driven by thoughts of material ease. “At least there, they have rights, even if life is hard,” says Issam, 18, who has worked to support his siblings since his father died, and tried many times to cross to Europe.

For all these boys, crossing the border has become a repeat ritual.

## Back and forth

Migrants’ choices are most limited when authorities on both sides of the barriers agree to press them hard.

In 2021, amid tensions with Spain over Western Sahara, Morocco relaxed its surveillance of the land border. Between 8,000 and 10,000 migrants took the opportunity to cross into Ceuta, either by swimming or climbing over the barbed wire. While most adults were sent back by Spanish authorities, around 1,500 minors were allowed to stay, many of whom made their way to mainland Europe.

Today access to Ceuta and Melilla requires a visa. Since April 2024, Moroccan authorities have refused to accept the special 24-hour pass issued by Spanish consulates in Tetouan and



**The razor's edge: Ceuta seafront, along Fnideq's coastline, is wired shut**

Nador. With these, some people could still move freely between Morocco and the two Spanish cities, at least to buy and sell goods. People used to go to Ceuta for work; some with papers, others without. Not any more.

“The new rules killed the economy so the only solution was to jump the fence or swim,” says Achraf Maymoun, president of the Tetouan Moroccan Association for Human Rights.

He says the border closure has also led to another looming crisis: access to public health support has been cut off, too. ■

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*'Borderlands' is a new series by The Continent, reporting from some of Africa's most interesting border crossings. The series was made possible with support from the African Union and GIZ. This article was published in collaboration with Egab*

## Closing out Africa's busy election year, Ghanaians want to make it work

Ghana is considered a democratic bulwark in a region marked by instability and recent military coups. So a tense atmosphere ahead of next week's presidential election has eyes on Accra, looking for a fair and peaceful contest. The United States' state department has even promised to restrict visas for anyone who undermines Ghana's democracy.

The winner will confront a citizens' agenda topped by unemployment, infrastructure/roads, and health.

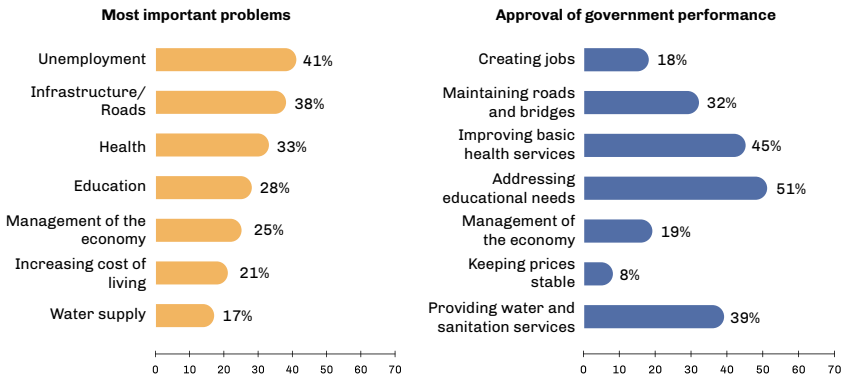
Other top concerns that Ghanaians want their government to address include education, the economy, the increasing

cost of living, and water supply, according to an Afrobarometer survey conducted in August.

On most of these priorities, few people will be content with business as usual. Fewer than a third of citizens approve of the government's performance on job creation (18%), road and bridge maintenance (32%), management of the economy (19%), and controlling inflation (8%). Education is the only top priority on which a majority (51%) give the government a passing grade.

But first things – a fair and peaceful election – first. ■

### Ghanaians' top priorities and ratings of government performance | Ghana | 2024



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.





## The spirit of our past stalks their corridors

**Museums of colonialists are haunted – even if their own consciences are not.**

**Jacqueline Nyathi**

**I**magine your ancestors are being held hostage by a foreign nation – so foreign that they mostly don't look like you, and live on some faraway island. They took your ancestors away after invading your land and fighting wars of conquest or

punishment; wars where they burnt down your palaces and beheaded your kings.

You've been pacified, though you won your independence back. These days you and those foreign nations profess friendship so they can continue to extract your wealth and give you handouts that you sign for in suits they taught you to wear, with handshakes and smiles.

And yet, when it comes to what was stolen, those nations will not hear anything about returning what they took from you: your gold, snuff boxes, guns, reliquaries, war cloaks, walking sticks, sceptres, and the bones of your chiefs and kings.

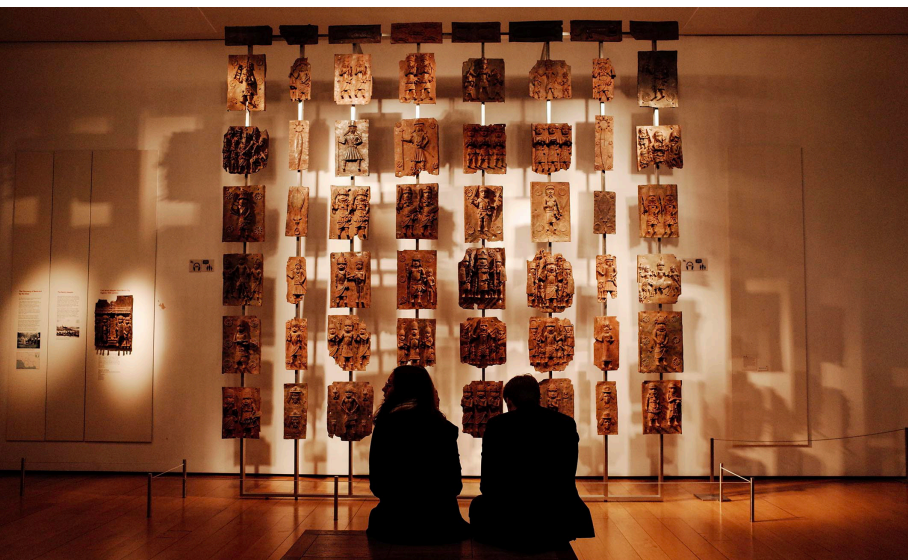
And these friends have arrangements – laws – they've promulgated so that what was looted now belongs, through murky means, to them.

Your friends don't even really know what they have – partly because they didn't ask you for meaning and context, assuming as they went; and partly because they stashed tons and tons of things in dark, dusty basements, and never kept reliable inventories.

They will also put up every barrier between you and them to prevent you from even visiting your heritage, the wealth of your people, the bones of your ancestors, the symbols of your very identity. You'll likely never get a visitor's visa to their faraway island.

This is the story of the British Museum, and similar ethnographic museums across Europe.

I've never been to the house of horrors



**Grand Theft Autonomy: Benin bronzes, looted from Nigeria in 1897, at the British Museum in London.** Photo: David Cliff/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

that is the British Museum, but Noah Angell has, and he's done the Lord's work in his book. It is the only tour, virtual or otherwise, that you'll ever need.

The British Museum, according to Angell, is full of restless relics.

There's a concept that material objects take on, for lack of a better term, "psychic vibes" – even if they were not formally used in ways that call on forces from the other side.

And that's one reason why the museum is haunted. Millions of objects from cultures all over the world are stored there – perhaps "abandoned" is a more accurate term – in plastic bags and crates.

With a mere 1% of an "estimated" eight-million artefacts on display, the museum is only marginally an exhibition

space; in material terms, it's mostly a site of disappearance.

Angell interviewed former and current workers: some curatorial staff, but mostly people like janitors and security officers, people who are there after hours and who spend a lot more time with the artefacts than anyone else.

They have grand and spooky stories to tell: doors closing by themselves, inexplicable temperature changes, haunts walking the halls and galleries, and more. There've even been a few deaths at the museum, although you won't hear much about them officially.

There's another reason for the haunting, though: the British Museum is a cemetery, a place where human remains are kept. Bones, skulls and more, some

local to the United Kingdom but much, much more from its former colonies.

It's baffling why this is still the case in the year of our Lord 2024, long after the end of colonialism. But did colonialism ever *really* end? This is an argument that it never did.

Who does this hoarding serve?

Considering that many of these remains were taken in pursuit of now-disproved race science theories, why hold onto them?

**Bones, skulls and more, some local to the United Kingdom but much, much more from its former colonies. It's baffling why this is still the case so long after the end of colonialism.**

More importantly: Should these people not be laid to rest, in their own lands, by their own people, according to their burial customs?

Shockingly, Angell also mentions last year's scandal – where Peter Higgs, a senior curator, was accused of stealing hundreds of artefacts over the course of a decade and selling them on eBay.

He was sacked when he was finally caught. It appears that the British Museum, not really knowing what they have in storage, didn't even realise the theft was happening – and is still not sure what exactly was stolen.

Some of these items, according to *The Guardian*, were “not of major importance” – which again begs the question: why did the museum have them in the first place, and who are they to judge?

It's a time of reckoning for Western museums, and the details of this book make excellent additions to the list of reasons why.

The British Museum remains the “murky prison” for foreign antiquities that former Greek president Prokopios Pavlopoulos said it is. ■



**More sekhs, please, we're British: Statues from Egypt of the goddess Sekhmet from 1390-1352 BC. Guess where they are now.**  
Photo: Yui Mok/PA Images via Getty Images

# 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**

"They call me the Barbra Banda of pan-African quizzing."

Photo: Khaled Ladjimi/Getty Images



- 1\_** In which year did Bola Tinubu take the presidency?
- 2\_** What is Namibia's currency called?
- 3\_** Name the current African president whose nickname is "M7".
- 4\_** What is Burkina Faso's capital city?
- 5\_** Bujumbura is which country's largest city?
- 6\_** Name the headland (pictured) that is considered the northernmost point of Africa.
- 7\_** Samora Moisés Machel was the first president of which country?
- 8\_** Which country is Barbra Banda from?
- 9\_** True or false: Banjul is the capital of the Central African Republic.
- 10\_** True or false: Bangui is the capital of Gambia.

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

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# We must lead the world or be damned

*To get us from the back of the global bus to its steering wheel, pan-Africanism needs to be internationalist too.*

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**Patrick Gathara**

**I**t's easy to be skeptical of pan-Africanism. The notion that Africa isn't just a geographical space but a metaphysical entity whose population, though genetically the most diverse on earth, shares culture, heritage and a common fate, can seem mystical and dubious. However, the idea is bred of necessity not genetics.

Pan-Africanism is less about how we interact among ourselves and more about how we face the world. Tanzania's wise first president, the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, once said: "Africans all over the continent, without a word being spoken either from one individual to another or from one country to another, looked at the European, looked at one another, and knew that in relation to the European they were one."

Today's world order was established in the wake of the last major European tribal conflagration and has always put us at the back of the global bus. Little wonder then that when we go to "global negotiations" like the UN's Conference of the Parties (COP) on climate, we come away with

commitments that are worth less than the paper they are printed on.

**Little wonder that when we go to 'global negotiations' like COP on climate, we come away with commitments that are worth less than the paper they are printed on.**

Months before COP29, at a meeting in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, African environment ministers called for the world to commit to providing \$1.3-trillion a year in climate finance. Africa alone needs to invest \$3-trillion by the end of this decade to adapt to the ways climate change is changing our ways of life, and to grow our economies in ways that don't make it worse, says the African Development Bank. In Baku this month, with just two days to COP29's end and with no financial deal in sight, African delegates joined others in the G77 and China grouping to lower that ask to \$500-billion a year. In the end, the Baku conference closed on just \$300-billion a year, and long faces. And if the past is anything to go by, the reality may turn





out to be even more depressing. The 2009 COP15 promised \$100-billion by 2020. That level of finance was reached not just late by two years, but with an “excessive use of loans” which essentially means the victims effectively subsidise their abusers.

We need to re-imagine the world order to one in which our concerns are taken seriously. West-centric models are not capable of reforming what the West built to deliver global justice.

Just as we cannot continue trusting the West to be custodians of global good, we cannot base our dreams of the future on its growth models: free markets, capitalism, maendeleo and other euphemisms for centuries of imperialism and colonial plunder.

It must be clear that the goal is to overthrow the current system, not find

accommodation, or a better deal within it. Neither should we be seeking to lead the current order: to sit atop oppressive systems is not equality. “Black faces in high places won’t save us,” as Professor Ruha Benjamin in the United States reminded us earlier this year.

But how do we take the wheel after an age at the back of the global bus? We should look to build allies. And here the flexibility of pan-Africanism can help too. As Kwame Nkrumah said: “All people of African descent, whether they live in North America or South America, the Caribbean, or in any part of the world, are Africans and belong to the African nation.” ■

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

# THE BIG PICTURE

Test of time: A teacher monitors pupils as they write their end-of-year exams in the northern Sudanese village of Usli, which is home to sites of archaeological renown, some dating back to 1,500 BC.

Photo: AFP



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