

Your fun depends on how much money

Wealthy Britons

Oh yes, Christmas is back again, and many people stop to take a breath and reflect on how fast the year has gone by:



Wealthy Britons in high spirits have jetted out to feast in the tropics; strugglers are staying put: HOORAY! HOORAY! IT'S HOLI-HOLIDAYS, CHRISTMAS IS BACK HO-HO-HO

By: Shamlal Puri
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& Senior Editor – UK
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A happy salesgirl at a toy store getting ready for Christmas sales at a market in London. Photo SHAMLAL PURI.

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Colorado Supreme Court kicks Trump off ballot, citing 'insurrection'

Donald Trump
America



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Rebel attack in western Burundi kills at least 20

RED-Tabara rebels
Crime



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Feted abroad, ignored in Nigeria: The story of Mami Wata's voyage to Oscars

Nigeria:
Africa



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Watching the watchdogs: Why the West misinterprets Middle East power shifts

Middle East



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Climate change campaigns: optimistic Somali journalists on a mission

News Backpage
Rwandan doctor given 24-year jail sentence in France over 1994 genocide



Continued gender disparities in peace processes highlighted at 4th High Level African Forum on Women, Peace, and Security

A major peace conference has drawn attention to a prevailing tendency where women continue to experience challenges while seeking inclusion in peace initiatives, unlike their male counterparts.

Despite compelling evidence indicating women's participation accel-

erates peace building and security initiatives, the meeting was told women are still predominantly excluded from all-important processes. It is against this backdrop that the office of the African Union Envoy on Women Peace and Security Mme Bineta Diop, recently convened the

4th High Level African Forum on Women, Peace and Security (WSP) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Speaking during the forum, Diop maintained that women play an immeasurable role in preventing or de-escalating conflict, brokering local ceasefires, promoting cultures

of peace and coexistence, and preventing recruitment of children as combatants. She said there is a need to have more women participating in

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Various African Models For Volta Fashion Week 2023



Paula.O.M Otukile
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Senior Editor Botswana & S. Africa

Well international guests from UK, Russia and other Asian countries are being expected to grace the events, as they were also part of the casting of the models prior to the beginning of the competition.

Media from Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Local and other various countries are expected to grace and cover the event too. It has been a blessing to have Kenya daily newspaper called Mount Kenya times dedicating a daily column on profiling the nominees without fail, it shows a tremendous support of African countries on our awards initiative.

The ramps, lights, sound systems, and organizing teams are well prepared just awaiting the final day of the beautiful event. A wonderful thank you to all the partners and sponsors who made this fashion week a success as it is not easy to bring Africa under one roof.

We expect nothing but a great fashion experience on the 30 first and a great networking and growth amongst nominees and designers as well.

On the thirty of December 2023, Ghana will be hosting African designers, models, humanitarians, high achievers on arts and creative industry as well as stylists makeup artists from various countries across Africa. The event shall be held in Accra the capital city. The competition shall be between fashion designers, models but the main part shall be done through voting on-line which shall be closed on the 27th of December.

Fashion is growing in Africa as we see much growing talent and beauty as well as the wide variety of clothes being designed each year.

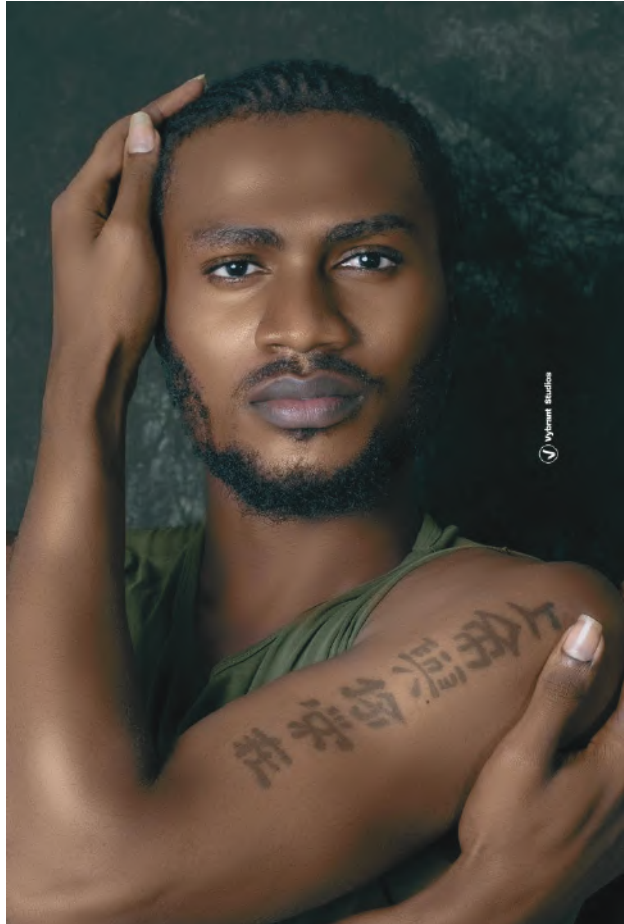
The great part of the industry is to see more males now taking the lead and getting comfortable with designing and modeling which break the traditional theories of women being the apple of the fashion industry.



Dolly Masiloamangwe- Botswana



Akate Latina-Ghana model



Joshua Cosby Brew-Ghana



Adjara Wanda
-Ivory Coast



Kaba Junior Konaté- Guinea



Adjara Wanda-Ivory Coast

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Kenya - DR Congo

Kenya 'disassociates' from DR Congo rebels alliance after diplomatic row

Worth Noting:

In response to the development, DRC on Saturday recalled its ambassadors to Kenya and Tanzania for consultations. The envoy to Tanzania was recalled because Tanzania hosts the headquarters of the East African Community bloc, to which DRC also belongs.

In a statement, Kenya's foreign minister, Musalia Mudavadi, said Kenya was aware some DRC nationals had addressed the press in Kenya and made statements that were "inimical to the constitutional order of the Democratic Republic of the Congo".

"Kenya strongly disassociates itself from any utterances or activities likely to injure the peace and security of the friendly nation of DRC and has commenced an investigation," he said.



A man sleeps under an election campaign banner in Kinshasa [File: Patrick Meinhardt/AFP]

Kenya's foreign ministry says it 'strongly disassociates' with a DRC opposition figure who forged an alliance with rebels in Nairobi. Kenya has "strongly disassociated" itself from a Congolese opposition figure who forged an alliance with rebels in Nairobi, spurring a diplomatic row with Kinshasa.

The Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday said it would investigate the political-military alliance after the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) recalled its ambassador in protest. The so-called Congo River

Alliance, launched on Friday, includes DRC politicians and groups such as the M23 rebels, who have seized territory in eastern DRC, and Corneille Nangaa, a former DRC election commission chief.

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"Kenya strongly disassociates itself from any utterances or activities likely to injure the peace and security of the friendly nation of DRC and has commenced an investigation," he said.

The probe, the minister said, would try "to determine the identities of the makers of the statement and the extent to which their utterances fall

outside constitutionally protected speech".

The new alliance, which Nangaa said aimed to string together various Congolese armed groups, militias, and social and political organisations, is an additional concern in a region where insecurity has persisted for decades, fuelled by ethnic rivalries and a tussle over resources.

'Subversive activities'

The diplomatic row comes amid growing security tensions ahead of the December 20 presidential elections in the DRC, which has been

engulfed in civil strife for decades.

After several years of dormancy, M23 rebels took up arms again in late 2021 and seized large parts of the eastern province of North Kivu. The conflict has displaced some seven million Congolese within their own country.

According to the Human Rights Watch, more than 1.5 million Congolese will be unable to vote in zones affected by the conflict and millions more internally displaced people will face the same challenge.

Nangaa, justifying the formation of the new alliance, said the state is too "weak" to ensure order in the impoverished and war-battered country, and that a new movement needs to fill the void.

DRC government's spokesman Patrick Muyaya accused Nangaa of being "unpatriotic" and launching "subversive activities".

The head of the UN's peacekeeping mission in the DRC, Bintou Keita, said she was "extremely concerned" by the newly announced alliance.

"I call on all political actors to operate within the framework of the Constitution and to respect human rights and the rule of law," she wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

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Hamas says no more hostage releases until war ends

By: BBC
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Hammas, the group which controls the Gaza Strip, has ruled out any more hostage releases until Israel agrees to a "full cessation of aggression".

Israel says it has killed more than 2,000 Hamas fighters in Gaza since a truce earlier this month when more than 100 hostages were freed.

Around 120 people abducted from Israel on 7 October are believed to be still in captivity in Gaza.

Efforts continue at the United Nations to pass a resolution on the war. The US has said it still has serious concerns over the draft UN Security Council resolution, with voting now postponed to Friday.

Fighting continues in Gaza, with Israel bombarding the north and south of the territory and Hamas firing rockets at Tel Aviv.

Among the Palestinians reported killed were the director of the police station in the southern city of Khan Younis and a daughter of the head of the Gaza health ministry.

The week-long truce this month brought an increased flow of aid into Gaza, where the UN has warned that the population is at risk of famine if

the war between Israel and Hamas continues.

Negotiations on a new truce have been taking place in Cairo, Egypt, though initial talks on Wednesday bore no agreement.

In a statement, Hamas said: "There is a Palestinian national decision that there should be no talk about prisoners or exchange deals except after a full cessation of aggression."

It is unclear to which other Palestinian factions the statement was referring. Islamic Jihad, a smaller group in the Gaza Strip, is among those known to also be holding Israeli hostages.

The Hamas statement puts the Israeli government in a very difficult position.

It has said it thinks the best way to get the release of hostages is military pressure on Hamas and by staging rescue operations.

But so far that approach has not really worked. Only one hostage – Ori Megidish – has actually been rescued.

The government is also under huge pressure from the relatives of the hostages still being held, with some telling it the strategy of force is not working.

Hammas is putting pressure on Israel to stop the war altogether but without any guarantee that the group is



Israeli soldiers on patrol in the Gaza Strip.

going to stop its armed actions. So the Israeli government is extremely reluctant to stop fighting until it feels it has completely degraded Hamas capability and it has not done that yet.

This will be a huge disappointment

for the people of Gaza, who are desperate for this war to stop.

Early on Friday, the territory's Hamas-run health ministry put the overall death toll there since 7 October at 20,057, including at least 8,000 children and 6,200 women.

When Hamas and their allies broke through the heavily guarded perimeter with Israel on 7 October they killed 1,200 people.

China

China holds central rural work conference

Chinese president Xi Jinping made important instructions on work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers

The annual central rural work conference was held in Beijing on Tuesday and Wednesday, mapping out priorities of rural work in 2024.

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made important instructions on work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers.

In 2023, China overcame comparatively severe natural disasters and other adverse conditions, secured a new record in grain output, ensured a relatively rapid increase in farmers' income, and maintained harmony and stability in rural areas, Xi said.

To advance Chinese modernization, the country must make unremitting efforts to strengthen the foundation of the agricultural sector and advance rural revitalization across the board, he said.

With the experience of the Green Rural Revival Program, efforts must be made to implement specific policies based on actual conditions, take steady and incremental steps to sustain progress, and achieve tangible results in the interest of the people, he said.

Xi stressed that food security must be safeguarded by stabilizing the land acreage for grain production and increasing the yields per unit. Work should be done to establish a diversified food supply system, and the quality of arable land should be improved.

To inject momentum and vitality into agricultural modernization, it is important to strengthen the driving forces of science and technology as well as reform, intensify efforts to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies, and improve work mechanism for agriculture, rural areas and farmers, Xi said.

Efforts must be made to ensure smooth restoration and reconstruction work after disasters, enhance the capabilities for disaster prevention, reduction and relief, and avoid the large-scale relapse into poverty, Xi said.

Xi also urged efforts to improve rural industrial development, rural construction and rural governance, and to strive for substantive progress in promoting rural revitalization across the board.



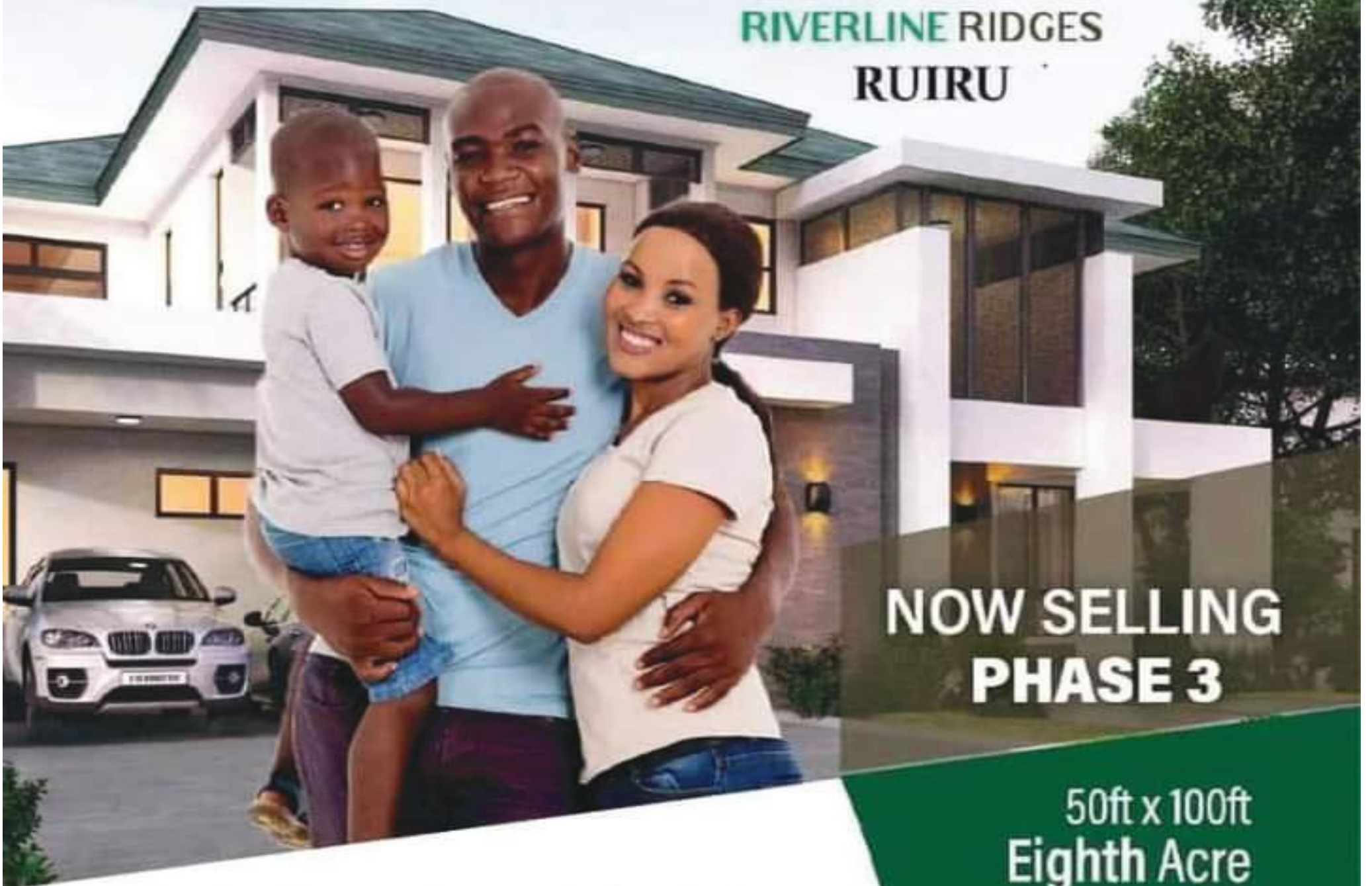
(Cover: A farmer drives a combine harvester in a rice field in Taizhou, east China's Zhejiang Province, November 6, 2023. / CFP)

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Climate

Climate change campaigns: optimistic Somali journalists on a mission

By: Martin Mwanje
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

- Determined and dedicated to change the narrative, a team of journalists drawn from Bilan Media, have been traversing parts of Somalia – from Baidoa, Afgoye to Kisimayu among other areas – highlighting the effects of climate change.
- Fakat, who works with Bilan Media, an outlet dedicated to the course of championing climate matters in the East African nation, says what they saw firsthand during their visit was heartbreaking.
- “It was so painful to witness the situation,” Fakat said as she recounted the predicament of a woman who was forced to leave the flooded Baidoa city in search of clean water several kilometers away.
- She spoke during a panel discussion on Understanding and Covering Climate Change Issues that was held during the 6th Kenya Editors Annual Convention held in Mombasa between November 30th – December 1st, 2023.



Photo courtesy of CNN

Somalia has over the decades been faced with civil war that has left thousands of people dead while millions of others have been displaced.

Journalist Kiin Hassan Fakat who works for Bilan Media is a victim of such displacement.

Fakat was brought up in Kenya's largest refugee camp, Dadaab after her family fled Jubaland, her birthplace in Somalia due to civil war in the 1990s.

At the end of 2020, she returned to Jubaland only to realize that beyond civil war, there was another catastrophe that was causing human displacement to unprecedented levels: climate disasters.

Just like many African nations, Somalia has borne the brunt of floods, drought and famine that usually cause displacement of millions of people whenever such natural phenomenon strikes.

This year alone, over 100 people were reported dead while over 1 million others were rendered homeless after heavy downpour linked to El Nino weather phenomenon pounded Mogadishu.

However, amid the threats posed by climate change, the phenomenon has usually been relegated to the periphery with media space dominated by conflicts and incessant political crises that are synonymous with Somalia.

As a result, many people in the country have little or no understanding of climate change, notwithstanding its devastating impact upon their lives.

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clean water several kilometers away.

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Faiza Mohamed Ali is a young climate activist based in Mogadishu, Somalia. She says they are on a mission to create climate change awareness and make a difference in the community.

“When it comes to solutions, the youths of Somalia, we do awareness of the community and also we do engagement with the people that have been evicted by floods,” she contends.

She also underscores the need to ensure journalists get a deeper understanding of climate issues that are scientific in nature and are usually characterized with a lot of disinformation.

“The reporters have to understand climate change, the impact. When they understand that, the impact of climate change, they can report. But if they don't un-

derstand anything about climate change, it is too hard to report that,” adds Ali who together with her colleagues have embarked on a mission to train journalists on climate matters.

According to Mary Harper, an Independent Journalist, climate related issues have often not been given the prominence they deserve because they are regarded as boring or the science behind them is rarely understood.

“When it comes to climate change, I think one of the challenges is how do you make those stories interesting, and also there is a lot of study that show that people, because they are frightened about climate change, there is news avoidance. They don't want to look at those stories,” adds Harper, an ex-BBC employee.

However, she notes that though they face incredible challenges in the course of their work, efforts being made by journalists like Kiin Hassan Fakat and her colleagues at Bilan Media to create awareness in the community, together with activists like Faiza Mohamed Ali are beginning to bear fruit.

“I must say because I am often in the Somali territory, this year for the first time, I have noticed people using in English the term climate change and they never used to talk about climate change before. Journalists must be making a difference there,” says Harper.

She is of the view that there is need to form climate desks in media houses that should be charged with the solemn responsibility of ensuring the echoes of climate issues reverberate far and wide.

Fakat, who herself was placed in one of Kenya's mainstream media to cover climate issues, concurs.

“It could be good to have a special desk for climate change so that it contributes in creating more awareness about climate change and its impact,” she says.

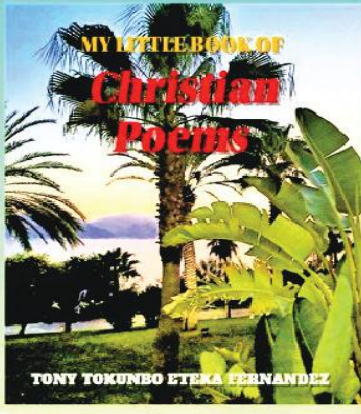
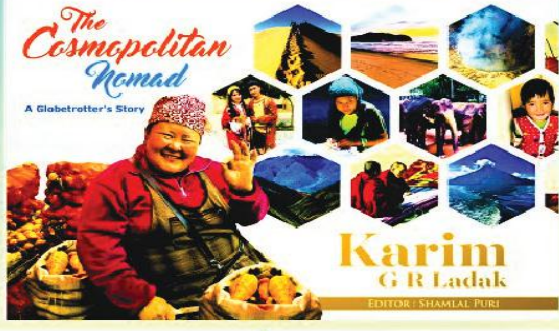
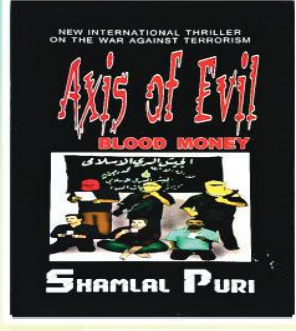
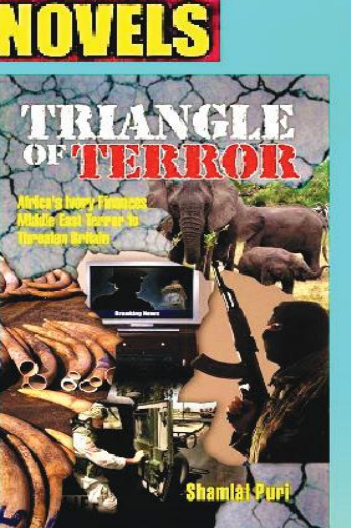
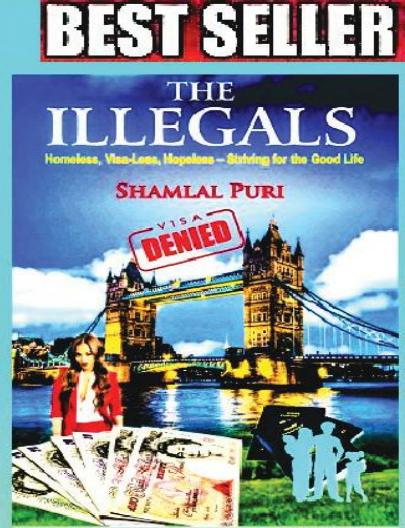
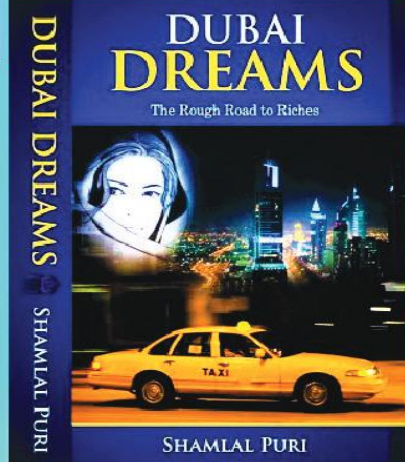
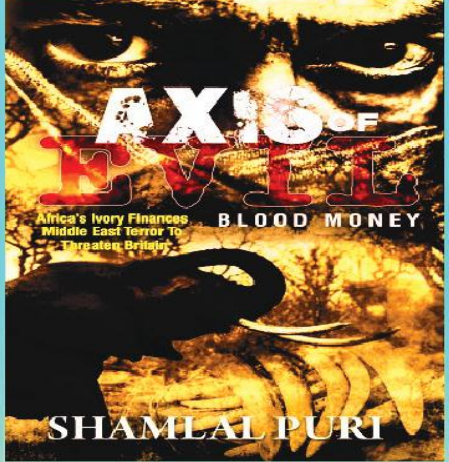
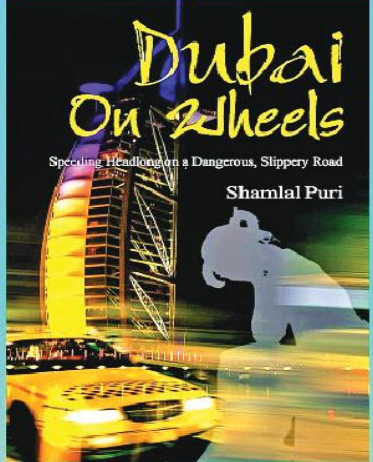
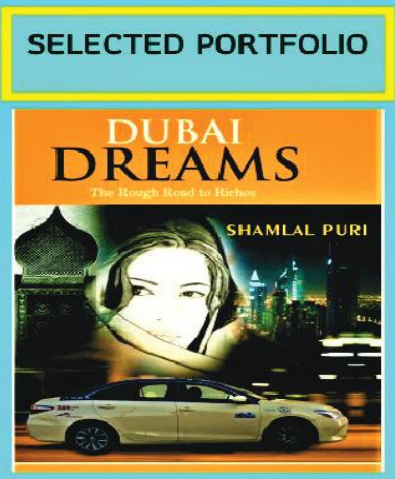
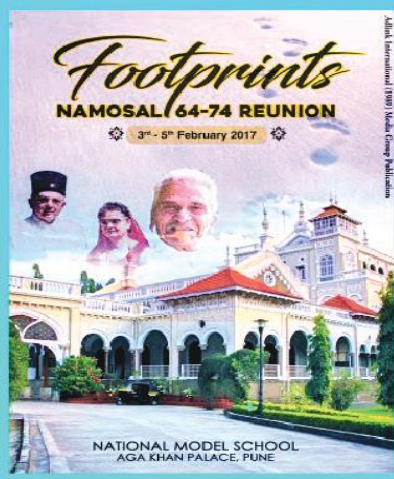
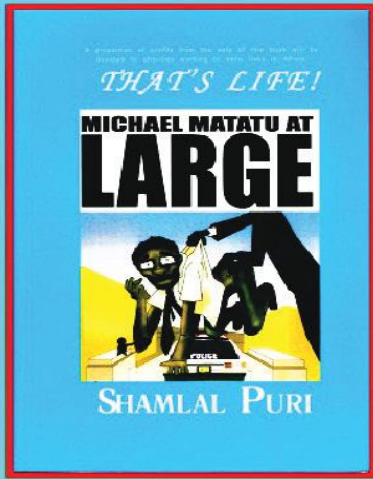
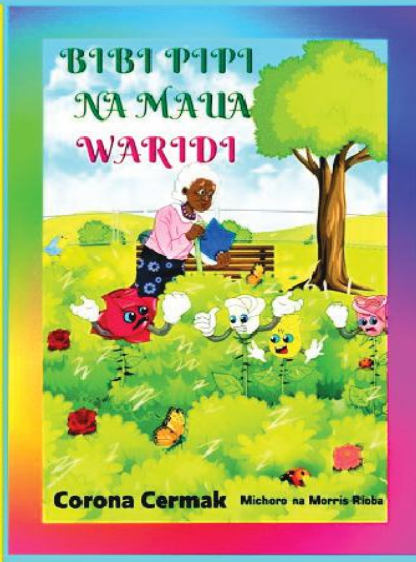
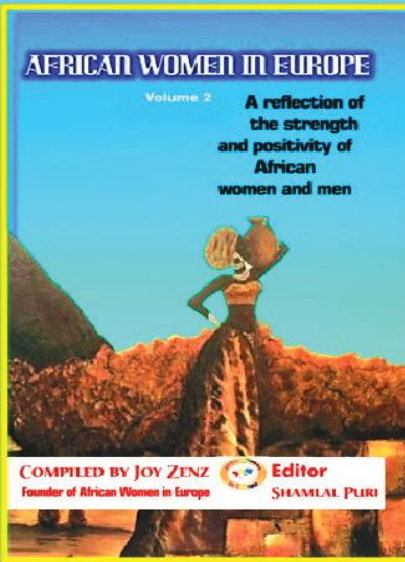
Hopefully, with the effects of climate change being evident in Africa as is the world, the efforts being spearheaded by the likes of Fakat and Ali will help in the prioritization of Africa's adaptation needs in the global climate discourse during COP29 expected to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan next year.

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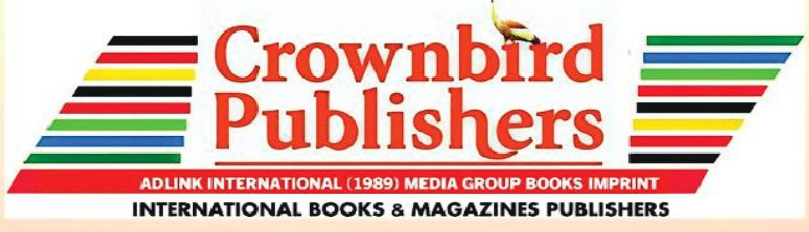
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UK News

Wealthy Britons in high spirits have jetted out to feast in the tropics; strugglers are staying put:**HOORAY! HOORAY! IT'S HOLI-HOLIDAYS, CHRISTMAS IS BACK HO-HO-HO**

By: Shamlal Puri
Associate publisher
& Senior Editor - UK
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Contd from Page 1

Worth Noting:

- Your fun depends on how much money you have in your bank account and cash stashed away in the empty coffee jars for the rainy day.
- Money is the barometer of how much fun one can have during Christmas.
- The general rule is: Have money and enjoy the fun; no money, stay at home, munch discounted-price or buy-one-get-two packs, mince pies, moan about the weather, curse the politicians and have a low-key celebration.
- The rich, who booked their Christmas holidays earlier, have already jetted off to the tropics to enjoy a Christmas feast on the golden sandy beaches under the swaying palms in the Caribbean, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius, Australia, Dubai and Maldives, where luxury rooms can cost an arm and leg - quite far from the pockets of middle-class Britons.

from academia on the most significant issues to counter misinformation,

He writes, "December 25, as we all know, is Jesus Christ's birthday, a Christian celebration in which the myth of three kings who travelled far and wide to give gifts to the "newborn king" inspires the modern Christian tradition of gift giving. Early gifts used to be fruits or nuts, but as this act took on more importance, gifts became larger and less modest and were placed under a tree.

"Midwinter has been a period of festivities for millennia, but Christmas as we know it today has its origins in Victorian Britain. It was in Victorian times that the idea of Christmas as a family holiday, with gift-giving, a tree, and an intimate dinner, became central to this celebration. Britons traditionally celebrate Christ's birth with a religious mass. Hence, the words "Christ" and "mass" coming together to form the word Christmas."

These days, the Yuletide season is so commercialised that your pocket sets the rules on how much fun you can have. These days, even the wallets of the strugglers send out May Day signals. Your fun depends on how much money you have in your bank account and cash stashed away in the empty coffee jars for the rainy day. Money is the barometer of how much fun one can have during Christmas.

The general rule is: Have money and enjoy the fun; no money, stay at home, munch discounted-price or buy-one-get-two packs, mince pies, moan about the weather, curse the politicians and have a low-key celebration. The rich, who booked their Christmas holidays earlier, have already jetted off to the tropics to enjoy a Christmas feast on the golden sandy beaches under the swaying palms in the Caribbean, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius, Australia, Dubai and Maldives, where luxury rooms can cost an arm and leg - quite far from the pockets of middle-class Britons.

They start their holidays five days before Christmas and return to work on January 4. Fifteen full days of fun! There are no pesky meetings or calls to interrupt their pleasure; they remain in high spirits.

Back in Britain, there are glittering Christmas lights

in the main shopping streets and some areas in the main cities are drowned in neon lights.

On the other end of the scale, it is dark in most residential areas as most suburbanians, the strugglers, conserve energy as part of their cash cutbacks.

A huge four-ton Christmas tree, around 30 metres high, has been given as a gift from Norway every year since 1947. It is lit on the first Thursday of December in the Trafalgar Square, radiating its Yuletide joy in all directions. It attracts many local visitors to the area.

On the main roads, pubs are alive, with office workers clinking glasses of their favourite drinks and munching mince pies to usher in the yuletide season. Warmth and cheerful voices are ringing in the pubs.

What exactly happens at office parties? Generally, there is a lot of goodwill, but things can sometimes go awry.

Sometimes, the celebrations go a bit far, and goodwill goes out of the window.

What exactly is the agenda at these parties? Fun and laughter, oh yes, but also at some parties, there's plenty of ill-will - gossiping, back-biting against colleagues, backstabbing the boss (if he has skipped the party) and spitting venom, flirting and irresponsible revellers getting uninhibited.

Oh yes, it's the Yuletide season - all moods are accepted.

Some people binge drink, ending up on the floor of the pubs or their offices.

Sometimes, the celebratory mood goes for a toss as drunk colleagues pick a bone and erupt into fights, the likes one sees among rowdy football fans during games at the stadiums.

Colleagues who see the funny side of the fight whip up their cellphone cameras and video the fights, which can include fisticuffs, for social media!

So much for technology! It's not easy to separate them; at times, besides puking, they have a sequel to their fight in the washroom!! When they return to work after the holidays, they have



Celebrating with gusto, Londoners join in the fun of Christmas. Photo SHAMLAL PURI



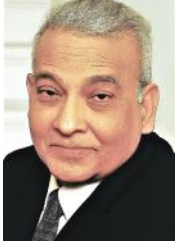
With love from Norway...Christmas Tree in London's Trafalgar Square, where there is an annual programme of carol singing. Photo Courtesy.



There's plenty of choice of drinks during the festive season. Photo SHAMLAL PURI.

Contd Page 11.

UK News

Wealthy Britons in high spirits have jetted out to feast in the tropics; strugglers are staying put:**HOORAY! HOORAY! IT'S HOLI-HOLIDAYS, CHRISTMAS IS BACK HO-HO-HO**

By: Shamlal Puri
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Contd from Page 10

Worth Noting:

- On their shopping list, the essentials include turkey, mince pies, bubbly, wine with high-sounding French names, the poor man's champagne, vegetables – sprouts, broccoli, parsnips, carrots, mushrooms and the lot.

- These days, some people even go for Chinese stir fry even though the Chinese do not celebrate Christmas, and oh yes, they don't even eat chips, the favourite of Brits.

- (I once made the mistake of asking for potato chips in a restaurant in Beijing only to be politely admonished by the waitress, "We Chinese don't eat chips, Sir.")

- The religious types in Britain will make it a point to attend Christmas mass.

- At home, they open their wardrobes, pull their Christmas caps stored (and almost forgotten) from the kast Christmas and don them to add flavour to the festivities.

no recollection of the event. All indiscretions are forgiven, well, almost.

Most small employers will give time off to their staff to celebrate but will shirk from financing their drinks as they cut corners on their spending.

Office parties are organised through staff funding or a whip around from colleagues.

It is a different matter with the giant corporations who host parties at their cost, inviting their prominent customers to join them for a bubbly. These parties are less rowdy as the bosses are around.

It's different if the bosses have one too many...then diplomacy takes the back-seat.

Few would gather the guts to stop the bosses going haywire! In this day and age, no one would hazard losing their job. To them, the boss is the boss and the King! And, one doesn't have the guts to question the King of the Corporation.

Christmas mood comes just once a year unless you have won the UK National Lottery or the Euromillions in the middle of July...

How do ordinary Brits celebrate Christmas?

The more adventurous, well almost, monied class and homemakers too lazy to cook usually book dinner dates at local hotels or go coastal resorts for a few days of staycation.

Their meals cost anything from £50 to £200 a head, depending on the class of the place they visit.

Days before the event, they would visit the supermarkets for their festive shopping.

On their shopping list, the essentials include turkey, mince pies, bubbly, wine with high-sounding French names, the poor man's champagne, vegetables – sprouts, broccoli, parsnips, carrots, mushrooms and the lot.

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The religious types in Britain will make it a point to

attend Christmas mass.

At home, they open their wardrobes, pull their Christmas caps stored (and almost forgotten) from the kast Christmas and don them to add flavour to the festivities. Then, they would exchange gifts decorated under the ubiquitous Christmas tree before tucking into an evening of merry-making, including roast dinner with turkey and trimmings lashed with Bisto gravy.

They pray their holidays to be inspired by joy, marinated in peace with good tidings.

The tradition of exchanging Christmas cards has all but dried up –these days, e-greetings and phone calls have taken their space.

No wonder the traditional High Street stationers selling Christmas cards are complaining of poor business! Only some old-fashioned senior citizens would go out and buy Christmas cards.

Who rakes in the most cash? The businesses, of course. Most of them go laughing all the way to the bank with stashes of money.

Experts forecast that Christmas retail sales could reach £84.90 billion, growing by 3.3% over the 2020 figure of £79.70 billion.

An average British family spends around £550 to £800 on Christmas shopping.

According to an analysis by Finder, Brits are expected to spend an average of £602 each on Christmas gifts in 2023, an increase of 40% from an average spend of £429 in 2022.

The UK plans to spend a total of £27.6 billion on Christmas gifts in 2023, up 37% from £20.1 billion in 2022. 45.8 million adults in the UK (86%) plan to buy Christmas gifts in 2023, a decrease from 89% of adults in 2022.

Almost 23 million Brits (43%) plan to use credit cards to pay for their Christmas spending this year, spending over £14 billion on credit cards using plastic cards.

Christmas credit card spending is expected to reach £627 per cardholder in 2023, almost a quarter (23%) of the average UK monthly salary (£2,730). Generation Z plans to fork



Mince pies are a must for every family at Christmas. Photo SHAMLAL PURI.



London is decorated for Christmas. Photo Courtesy.



Many Britons fly out abroad to enjoy their Christmas as this picture taken on board QE2 in Dubai shows. Photo Courtesy.

Contd Page 13

USA

Colorado Supreme Court kicks Trump off ballot, citing 'insurrection'

Colorado's Supreme Court has ruled that Donald Trump cannot run for president next year in the state, citing a constitutional insurrection clause.

By: BBC News
xxxxxxxxxxxx



Worth Noting:

- That same lower court judge also found that Trump had participated in an insurrection in the US Capitol riot. His supporters stormed Congress on 6 January 2021 while lawmakers were certifying President Joe Biden's election victory.
- The Colorado Supreme Court's decision does not go into effect until 4 January 2024. That is the eve of the deadline for the state to print its presidential primary ballots.
- Steven Cheung, a spokesman for the Trump campaign, called the ruling "completely flawed" and lambasted the justices, who were all appointed by Democratic governors.
- "Democrat Party leaders are in a state of paranoia over the growing, dominant lead President Trump has amassed in the polls," Cheung said in a statement.
- "They have lost faith in the failed Biden presidency and are now doing everything they can to stop the American voters from throwing them out of office next November."

Colorado's Supreme Court has ruled that Donald Trump cannot run for president next year in the state, citing a constitutional insurrection clause. The court ruled 4-3 that Trump was not an eligible candidate because he had engaged in an insurrection over the US Capitol riot nearly three years ago. The Trump campaign called the decision anti-democratic and vowed to appeal. It is the first ever use of Section 3 of the US Constitution's 14th Amendment to disqualify a presidential candidate. Similar attempts to kick Trump off the ballot in New Hampshire, Minnesota and Michigan have failed. Tuesday's decision – which has been placed on hold pending appeal until next month – does not apply to states other than Colorado. The ruling only applies to the state's primary election on 5 March, when Republican voters will choose their preferred candidate for president, though it could also affect the general election in Colorado next November. The justices wrote in their ruling: "We do not reach these conclusions lightly. We

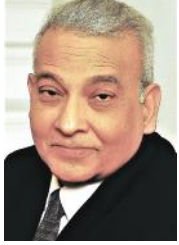
are mindful of the magnitude and weight of the questions now before us. "We are likewise mindful of our solemn duty to apply the law, without fear or favor, and without being swayed by public reaction to the decisions that the law mandates we reach." The decision reverses an earlier one from a Colorado judge, who ruled that the 14th Amendment's insurrection ban did not apply to presidents because the section did not explicitly mention them. That same lower court judge also found that Trump had participated in an insurrection in the US Capitol riot. His supporters stormed Congress on 6 January 2021 while lawmakers were certifying President Joe Biden's election victory. The Colorado Supreme Court's decision does not go into effect until 4 January 2024. That is the eve of the deadline for the state to print its presidential primary ballots. Steven Cheung, a spokesman for the Trump campaign, called the ruling "completely flawed" and lambasted the justices, who were all appointed by Dem-

ocratic governors. "Democrat Party leaders are in a state of paranoia over the growing, dominant lead President Trump has amassed in the polls," Cheung said in a statement. "They have lost faith in the failed Biden presidency and are now doing everything they can to stop the American voters from throwing them out of office next November." Cheung added that Trump's legal team would "swiftly file an appeal" to the US Supreme Court, where conservatives hold a 6 to 3 majority. Representatives for Biden's re-election bid declined to comment on the Colorado ruling. But a senior Democrat affiliated with the campaign told CBS News, the BBC's US partner, that the decision would help Democrats by supporting their argument that the US Capitol riot was an attempted insurrection. The source said it would also aid Democrats in showcasing "the stark differences" between Trump and Biden. Republican lawmakers condemned the decision, including House of Representatives Speaker Mike

Johnson, who called it "a thinly veiled partisan attack". "Regardless of political affiliation, every citizen registered to vote should not be denied the right to support our former president and the individual who is the leader in every poll of the Republican primary," he said. On the campaign trail Trump's Republican primary rivals also assailed the ruling, with Vivek Ramaswamy pledging to withdraw his name from the ballot if Trump's candidacy is not reinstated. Trump, speaking at a campaign event in Iowa on Tuesday night, did not address the ruling. But a fundraising email sent by his campaign to supporters said "this is how dictatorships are born". The Colorado Republican Party also responded, saying it would withdraw from the state's primary process if the ruling was allowed to stand. Trump lost the state of Colorado by a wide margin in the last presidential election. But if courts in more competitive states followed suit on Tuesday's ruling, Trump's White House bid could face serious problems. During a one-week trial in

Colorado last month, the former president's lawyers argued he should not be disqualified because he did not bear responsibility for the US Capitol riot. But in its ruling, the Colorado Supreme Court majority disagreed. They said Trump's messages before the riot were a "call to his supporters to fight and... his supporters responded to that call". Carlos Samour, one of three justices who dissented, argued the government could not "deprive someone of the right to hold public office without due process of law". "Even if we are convinced that a candidate committed horrible acts in the past – dare I say, engaged in insurrection – there must be procedural due process before we can declare that individual disqualified from holding public office," he wrote. Trump is facing four criminal cases, including one federal and one state case in Georgia related to his alleged election subversion efforts.

UK News

Wealthy Britons in high spirits have jetted out to feast in the tropics; strugglers are staying put:**HOORAY! HOORAY! IT'S HOLI-HOLIDAYS, CHRISTMAS IS BACK HO-HO-HO**

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Worth Noting:

• UK supermarket chains are cashing in using nostalgic 1980s and 1990s music in adverts. Music has near universal power in influencing shoppers' decision-making in the same way as they snap up music tapes and videos in music shops.

• Tom Garner, Senior Lecturer of Human-Computer Interaction at Sheffield Hallam University, is convinced that music, which features prominently in people's everyday lives, plays a vital role in the retail sector's Christmas sales strategy.

• Research has shown that big retailers are all too aware of this – as demonstrated by their Christmas strategies that consistently aim to establish, refine or reinforce a sense of brand loyalty. So, how does music factor into this equation?

• He gives interesting examples of supermarkets' success stories with their cash tills ringing.

out the most on Christmas gifts, with an average spend of £828 each.

Shoppers are lured by several methods... old-fashioned advertising and old-time hit music.

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He gives interesting examples of supermarkets' success stories with their cash tills ringing.

"This year, Tesco's Christmas advert tells the tale of a teenager resisting the urge to succumb to the Christmas spirit to the tune of OMC's 1995 song, How Bizarre."

Another chain, John Lewis's publicity, sees a young boy raise a giant – and troublesome – Venus flytrap to the score of Festa, a new composition performed by Andrea Bocelli.

"Popular chain stores Morrisons and Waitrose both opt for 1980s hits, featuring Starship's Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now, and Depeche Mode's Just Can't Get Enough, respectively."

At the same time, Marks & Spencer presents Rita Ekweré's contemporary cover of Meat Loaf's 1993 anthem, I'd Do Anything for Love.

The travel industry in Europe is booming. This year is better than the last Christmas as rich people are determined to enjoy their holidays.

Most Britons prefer European holidays as the countries are closer. The more adventurous venture out to long-haul destinations.

Paris and Munich are among the top destinations for British holidaymakers travelling with their families.

In some parts of Europe – Italy, Austria, Spain, Greece,



Hyde Park Wonderland in London festive paradise in the heart of the city with exciting attractions.



Christmas dinner with all its trimmings adds spice to the Yuletide spirit. Photo Courtesy



Spoilt for choice. Mouth-watering goodies on display at a supermarket in London. Photo SHAMLAL PURI.

Cyprus, Malta, Portugal and Sweden – Christmas holidaymakers have increased by over 25% yearly, according to holiday industry experts.

Holiday firms are set to earn more revenue in the Covid-19 post-pandemic holiday season, making up for the losses during the pandemic.

Christmas is in the winter when the Brits expect snowfall.

Talking of snowfall, these days, just a few drops of white powder falling on London raise false hopes of the British capital under a blanket of snow... after the heavy-weight talk of climate change.

Many northerners and Scottish people joke that when a drop of snow falls, Londoners rush to their homes in the fervent hope of watching postcard-type white scenes from their windows.

They are often disappointed when the weak winter- sun

comes out to show off that it's still around.

Weather is a gamble in southern England; Sometimes, we pay a lot of attention to TV and radio weather folks telling us that the gift of snow will be there on



Market traders add flavour to the shopping list of Londoners. They, too, celebrate. Photo SHAMLAL PURI



The Royals Blenheim Palace decorated for Christmas 2023, had many visitors.



This Christmas market in London attracted many visitors looking for gift ideas.

Christmas day. There is no snow.

Will London have a white Christmas?

That's a million-dollar question. Let's wait and see.

Meanwhile, snow or no

snow, be merry and enjoy these holidays despite the belt-tightening on spending.



Oh, the joy of Christmas is every child's dream.

Gender

Continued gender disparities in peace processes highlighted at 4th High Level African Forum on Women, Peace, and Security

“Despite having marked 23 years of the UNSCR1325 and 20 years of Maputo Protocol, the foundational demands for women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in peacemaking; protection from all forms of violence and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in conflict prevention measures are yet to be met.” Mme Bineta Diop, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.

By: Claire Wanja
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Contd from Page 1

Worth Noting:

- Addressing the same forum, Awa Ndiaye Seck, Special Representative of the UN Women to the AU and UNECA, urged eradication of the root causes of conflict such as poverty, which she said, expose millions of women and girls to vulnerabilities and violations that continue unabated.
- She asked for full commitment of Member States to increase women capacity, including through training and coaching structures, thus enhancing the quality of women’s participation in political processes in conflict regions and fragile contexts.
- President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Sahle Zewde-Worke maintained that attaining a lasting peace process is implausible without the inclusion of women. She gave the example of the security situation in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, East Africa, and within Ethiopia itself, where she underscored the urgent need for the inclusion and leadership of women to achieve effective resolutions.



Bineta Diop, African Union Commission, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security emphasized that the current peace and security challenges facing our continent, such as the rise in military coups, insurgency, terrorism, and political crises, highlight the ineffectiveness of our existing conflict prevention measures.



peace processes. “Statistics show that women are still grossly underrepresented in the peace process. In the Central African Republic national dialogue of 2022, only 17 percent of the 450 participants pres-

ent were women. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo peace consultations in Nairobi in April 2022, women were glaring absent. Likewise, in the 2022 Chad peace talks in Doha, only one woman was present among the over 50 participants present. In the current Sudan political process, women are glaring absent irrespective of their active role to mobilise for peace,” she said.

While making a case for women in the continent, she, for instance, called on African leaders to put measures in place to ensure successful elections in DRC, where women are included and protected from any form of electoral related violence. She also urged the leaders to accord the women of Sudan, who are disproportionately affected by the crises and who are championing for peace, a seat in the ongoing efforts of finding a lasting peace in the country. Besides Sudan, she called for lifting of sanctions in Niger, which she said have contributed to the worsening of the situation of women.

The special Envoy called for actions that will deliver transformation in the lives of women. Addressing the same forum, Awa Ndiaye Seck, Special Representative of the UN Women to the AU and UNECA, urged eradication of the root causes of conflict such as poverty, which she said, expose millions of women and girls to vulnerabilities and violations that continue unabated.

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Gender

Continued gender disparities in peace processes highlighted at 4th High Level African Forum on Women, Peace, and Security

“Despite having marked 23 years of the UNSCR1325 and 20 years of Maputo Protocol, the foundational demands for women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in peacemaking; protection from all forms of violence and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in conflict prevention measures are yet to be met.” Mme Bineta Diop, Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security.

By: Claire Wanja
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Contd from Page 14

Worth Noting:

In the endeavor to mentor the next generation of women leaders and equip them with practical skills to influence change in shaping the peace and security landscape, Dr. Joyce Hilda Banda, Former President of the Republic of Malawi and Member of the SADC Panel of Elders, expressed profound disappointment at the conspicuous absence of women at peace campaign platforms.

Dr. Banda underscored the imperative for women leaders to persevere in mobilizing and collaborating, urging them to appoint fellow women to positions of leadership.

Encouraging the involvement of women leaders in peacebuilding is becoming more essential. Their participation in peace processes often reflects a broader and more diverse representation, ensuring a democratic inclusion of various perspectives and interests in the pursuit of peace. This is why the WSP meetings launched in 2020 are held annually to review the role and leadership of women in peace and security processes.



Under the theme of “Enhancing women’s participation and leadership in peace and security processes in Africa,” the 2-day forum brought together African women leaders, women peacebuilders, and national and regional focal points on Women, Peace, and Security and other stakeholders to advocate for a significant transformation in the current strategies and efforts employed to promote women’s involvement and leadership in Africa, as well as co-create new approaches for advancing women’s inclusion and participation in peace processes.

process is implausible without the inclusion of women. She gave the example of the security situation in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, East Africa, and within Ethiopia itself, where she underscored the urgent need for the inclusion and leadership of women to achieve effective resolutions.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of Liberia and Patron of AWLN, highlighted that a crisis is currently affecting numerous regions globally, and in many instances, global structures and leaders have not adequately met the challenges. She noted that the ongoing power imbalance observed in the Security Council, along with the use of veto power, has led to the underutilization or increasing

disregard for established tools in peace-making, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping. Sirleaf reiterated that women should no longer be in a position of supplication, pleading for inclusion in these crucial processes.

On her part, Catherine Samba-Panza, Former President of the Central African Republic, underscored the importance of solidarity among women’s movements to address socio-political crises and armed conflicts causing destruction and suffering for women and girls. She noted that women in conflict zones in Africa encounter significant challenges but show initiative in reconciliation and reconstruction efforts.

Amid these calls, the African

Union reaffirmed its strong commitment to advancing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in alignment with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

AU Commission chair Moussa Faki Mahamat said this commitment is demonstrated through decisions made by the Peace and Security Council, the establishment of mechanisms such as the Panel of the Wise with full gender parity, Femwise, the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, and the AWLN Network, co-established by the Office of the Envoy on Women in Peace and Security, among other initiatives.

In the endeavor to men-

tor the next generation of women leaders and equip them with practical skills to influence change in shaping the peace and security landscape, Dr. Joyce Hilda Banda, Former President of the Republic of Malawi and Member of the SADC Panel of Elders, expressed profound disappointment at the conspicuous absence of women at peace campaign platforms.

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Rebel attack in western Burundi kills at least 20

It is the second attack in two weeks by the RED-Tabara rebels, who have been largely inactive inside Burundi since 2021.



The attack targeted nine homes in a western town along the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Jerome Delay/AP]

Gunmen have killed at least 20 people and wounded nine others near Burundi's western border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), an official has told reporters. Those killed in the Friday evening

raid on the town of Vugizo included 12 children, two pregnant women and a police officer, government spokesperson Jérôme Niyonzima said on Saturday. The attack was claimed by the

RED-Tabara rebel group, considered a "terrorist" group by the Burundian authorities. The attack targeted nine homes in the town, close to the Lake Tanganyika border with the DRC. At least

nine others wounded in the attack have been hospitalised.

The RED-Tabara rebel group, which has been battling Burundi's government from bases in the eastern DRC since 2015, claimed on the social media platform X to have killed nine soldiers and one police officer. The group denied having targeted civilians.

Local residents said they heard sounds of gunfire and explosions during the attack.

Witnesses who spoke to the Associated Press said the rebels appeared to be wearing Burundian Army uniforms and civilians were "left to their own devices" after the military and police fled.

"We realised they were attackers when they attacked the police position guarding the border," said Priscille Kanyange, a farmer.

"Many people here were injured by bullets [as they were] trying to flee." Another farmer, Innocent Hajayandi, who witnessed the attack, said security forces fled, "leaving the residents to their own devices".

André Kabura, a grocery shop owner who was wounded in both legs in the gunfire, said the military and police were slow to regroup and fend off the attackers.

Two military and security sources told the AFP news agency the attack targeted "a military position".

"The civilians were caught in the crossfire and were killed, and then the assailants retreated to DRC," a senior military official told the AFP on condition of anonymity, confirming the toll of 20.

The attack was the second in as many weeks inside Burundi by the rebels, who have not been active inside the country since September 2021, when they carried out a series of attacks, including on the Bujumbura airport.

Since then, their activities have been taking place in the DRC's South Kivu province. But on December 11, they exchanged fire with the military in northwestern Burundi.

On Friday, Burundian President Évariste Ndayishimiye told army, police and intelligence officers to remain vigilant, warning that "the enemy never sleeps even if we have security".

Source: News Agencies

DR Congo

DR Congo's Katumbi calls for election to be annulled as protests planned

Western governments call for restraint amid fears of a repeat of violence that has followed past elections.



The Democratic Republic of the Congo has a history of election-related violence [Thomas Mukoya/Reuters]

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) presidential election is facing a crisis of legitimacy amid opposition calls for the vote to be annulled due to alleged fraud. Five opposition candidates, including former provincial Governor Moïse Katumbi, said on Saturday the vote should not stand as it had

been tainted by "massive fraud." Five other opposition leaders, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Denis Mukwege and former oil executive Martin Fayulu, have called for a protest march against the result next Wednesday. "We will protest against the irregularities noted during the voting op-

erations," they said in a letter to the governor of Kinshasa, where they plan to rally. About 44 million people in the mineral-rich Central African nation were registered to vote in the elections to choose the country's president, national and regional lawmakers, and local councillors.

President Felix Tshisekedi, who had a sizeable lead in preliminary results of voting by diaspora voters, is running for re-election against 18 opposition candidates.

Western governments have called for restraint amid fears of a repeat of the violence that has followed disputed election results in the past.

In a joint statement on Saturday, 12 European embassies and the Canadian embassy called for restraint.

"As the vote counting continues, we urge all stakeholders, especially political actors, candidates and their supporters, to exercise restraint, allow the process to unfold, and raise their concerns peacefully," the embassies said.

The vote has been marred by accusations of corruption and chaotic organisation since it kicked off on Wednesday, with authorities extending the poll into Thursday after some polling stations failed to open and some voters could not find their names on registers.

While electoral authorities officially extended the vote only until Thursday, ballots were still being cast on

Saturday in remote areas.

The unscheduled extension prompted fierce pushback from opposition candidates, some of whom labelled the move unconstitutional and called for a new election.

Independent observers have raised concerns about the vote, with the United States-based Carter Center describing "serious irregularities" at 21 out of 109 polling stations it visited and noting "a lack of confidence in the process".

The DRC, which is one of the world's poorest countries despite holding vast reserves of copper, cobalt and gold, has a history of election-related violence.

At least 19 people were killed in election-related violence in the run-up to the vote.

Tshisekedi's election as president in 2018 was also marred by accusations of fraud.

At least 34 people have been killed and 59 others wounded in protests related to the vote, according to the United Nations.

Source: News Agencies



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Feted abroad, ignored in Nigeria: The story of Mami Wata's voyage to Oscars

The film, a black-and-white fantasy thriller inspired by West African folklore, is Nigeria's third entry for the Oscars.



On October 15, when C J Obasi heard that his film Mami Wata had been offi-

Mami Wata has already been a hit, screening in at least 15 festivals globally. In

no major competing films. However, during the opening weekend, it was difficult

ply not showing"? he asked. FilmOne did not respond to Al Jazeera's request for com-

cially selected as Nigeria's entry for the 2024 Oscars, he was elated.

"It felt great. I think we definitely deserve it, and everyone worked so hard on this film and bled so much for it," Obasi told Al Jazeera. "It's always a big deal when you get what you deserve here. I never take it for granted just because I deserve it. I'm super grateful to the Nigerian Oscar selection committee." Mami Wata, Obasi's third feature-length film, is a black-and-white fantasy thriller inspired by the rich folklore of coastal West Africa. Shot in 2021 and released in January, it has a running time of 107 minutes. The title is a Nigerian pidgin reference to the mermaid or all-powerful water goddess believed to provide healing, wealth and protection to her worshippers. The film is also in Nigerian pidgin.

Set in the fictional village of Iyi and shot in the Republic of Benin, Mami Wata is a truly West African affair. It is the story of two sisters, Prisca (played by Ivorian actress Evelyne Ily) and Zinwe (played by Nigerian actress Uzoamaka Aniunoh) who try to bring harmony back to their seaside village which is split between two groups: one that believes in their current leader, a messenger for the water goddess, and another that wants to establish a new system without the deity.

Obasi says he began writing Mami Wata in March 2016 and over the next five years, wrote the story across 10 drafts.

On the international scene,

2021, it made the final cut in the 78th Venice International Film Festival in 2021. In January 2023, Mami Wata had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival and won the Special Jury Prize for Cinematography.

The release has also come with critical acclaim internationally. Variety Magazine called the film "a stark black-and-white Oscar entry that weaves a bewitching fable with haunting images." "This visually beautiful and charismatically acted film is a fierce expressionist reverie or parable of power, shot in a lustrous, high-contrast black and white," wrote The Guardian in its review.

Eventually, Mami Wata was submitted by Nigeria for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film – the country's third-ever entry.

The road to the Oscars

Lagos-based film critic Oris Aigbokhaevbolo says Mami Wata was the only choice for the 2024 Oscars.

"It already has international exposure," he said. "So part of the hard work has been done. Again, no other film in non-English from Nigeria fits the dimensions demanded by the Oscars. Mami Wata is just more thoughtfully done than its peers."

But the road to its selection as Nigeria's entry for the Oscars was blighted by a lukewarm reception at home.

On September 8, Mami Wata made its debut in Nigeria. According to What Kept Me Up, a Nigerian film blog, the premiere came at a time when there were

to watch the film due to inconsistency in showtimes at cinemas.

Esther Nwajiaku, a Lagos-based content creator, said it took two trips to the cinema before she could watch the film. "The film showed for only two weeks, and with mostly ridiculous time slots," she told Al Jazeera. "The best chance I got to see it was by 12pm on a Sunday at the FilmHouse cinema in Surulere. The first time I went with friends to see the film at the same cinema in Surulere, it didn't show."

The average length of time that films spend in Nigerian cinemas is between four to six weeks, though some films stay up to eight weeks. But Mami Wata was reportedly pulled from cinemas after less than three weeks.

Industry insiders say even before and during the short run, its local distributor, FilmOne, reportedly did very little marketing to promote the film. The typical rollout of press screenings, premiere, and other digital marketing push were visibly absent.

"Right now, you find that the UK is doing a much better job in pushing the film than what played out back home," said Jerry Chiemeke, a London-based lawyer and film critic who described the promotion as abysmally poor.

"How do you put such a highly anticipated film in tight morning slots where viewership will be low, and even with those slots, people tried seeing the film and they were told that it's 'sim-

Party 2 (2017) earned N433 million (\$346,400), and Chief Daddy earned N387 million (\$309,600) at the box office. None of them has received as much praise from critics as Mami Wata. But not everyone is convinced.

Anita Eboigbe, co-founder of media outlet In Nollywood, does not believe popular Nollywood genres overshadow arthouse films but says it is a case of what is more accessible to the audience.

"If the audience finds a type of genre more accessible, they will grow to like it," she said. "If it is hard for the audience to build a relationship with a particular genre, they will not be easily drawn to it."

Eboigbe further explains that several factors influence what interests the audience, including what industry stakeholders feel is profitable or unprofitable.

The niche or arthouse labels have also affected the way certain films are received and promoted, says Obasi. "These labels just give the [industry] cabals the excuse to regurgitate the same narrative. Because once you put that label on it, the everyday audience doesn't want to go near it because they think it's beyond them," he said. "Try to challenge the audience with a good story, and the promise of an amazing cinematic experience, and see what happens. This is what they're afraid to do."

Meanwhile, Mami Wata is still opening in cinemas across the world, with expected premieres in Germany and Austria in January 2024. The film crew also says its theatrical release is expected soon in multiple markets including the United States and Switzerland.

The film's fans were hoping it would fare better than Nigeria's previous Oscar entries. In 2019, Lionheart, Nigeria's first entry – which was co-written by Obasi – was disqualified because of its English dialogue while the second entry, The Milkmaid (2020) did not make the shortlist in 2021.

But the Academy Awards announced a shortlist on Thursday that did not include Mami Wata, disappointing many who had been backing it.

Still, Chiemeke says the film brought a different flavour compared with previous entries.

"Mami Wata provides a conduit between old and new, digging deep into Nigerian folklore while deploying a fresh approach to storytelling," he said. "It's our best shot yet, our most realistic."

Source: Al Jazeera

Worth Noting:

- On the international scene, Mami Wata has already been a hit, screening in at least 15 festivals globally. In 2021, it made the final cut in the 78th Venice International Film Festival in 2021. In January 2023, Mami Wata had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival and won the Special Jury Prize for Cinematography.

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Opinion

Watching the watchdogs: Why the West misinterprets Middle East power shifts

Western media, leaders are unable to assess accurately the growing power of the Middle East 'Axis of Resistance' due to their deeply held prejudices.

By: Rami G Khouri

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“In Yemen, there is wisdom,” goes the medieval Arab saying. Remember that, if you’re trying to sort out how the Israel-Palestine confrontation in Gaza rattles the Middle East – because ongoing Yemeni attacks against Israel-linked ships in the Red Sea clarify one of the region’s most important political dynamics of recent times.

The rocket and drone attacks on Israeli-owned or -bound ships in recent weeks are a show of support for besieged Palestinians in Gaza by Ansar Allah (Houthis), who control most of northern Yemen. Ansar Allah say they would stop these attacks only when Israel ends its genocidal siege and bombardment of the Palestinian enclave.

These attacks are part of a coordinated military reaction by the three core Arab members of the Iran-led anti-Israel (and anti-West) “Axis of Resistance”, Hezbollah, Hamas and Ansar Allah, to Israel’s latest assault on the Palestinians.

At one point last week, Israel and the United States simultaneously exchanged direct fire with Axis of Resistance forces in both Gaza and the West Bank in Palestine, in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and also Yemen – which can also be seen as a peculiar low-intensity, indirect military engagement with Iran.

Any assessment of how the region has evolved since October 7, and what likely lies ahead, must acknowledge three critical points relating to the Axis of Resistance’s regional network, military capabilities and trajectory.

The mainstream US media and political elite tend to ignore all three points, which are:

Groups within the axis can coordinate across the region and face Israel as a united front

The widespread fear in the West that this latest Israel-Hamas confrontation would spark a full-fledged regional war between the US-Israel and half a dozen Arab-Iranian forces has not materialised. However, neither has the confrontation remained confined to Gaza – it has sparked the first serious coordinated battlefield action by the Axis of Resistance across the region. This reflects Hezbollah’s talk all year of the “unity of fronts”, ie, Axis members now coordinate and assist one another in battle, or between battles, in times of preparation.

Ansar Allah can challenge Israel/the



Houthi military helicopter flies over the Galaxy Leader cargo ship in the Red Sea in this photo released November 20, 2023. [Houthi Military Media/Handout via Reuters]

US military to deter or secure concessions from them, just like Hezbollah and Hamas

For decades, Hezbollah and Hamas were the only two Arab powers that faced down Israel militarily, and forced it into ceasefires, prisoner exchanges and other concessions. Ansar Allah’s ongoing drone and missile attacks on Red Sea shipping routes will likely similarly challenge Israel. These attacks may eventually provide the Yemeni group with important leverage against its Western adversaries, especially if, as expected, the US and Israel do not send ground troops into Yemen, but rely solely on air power in their efforts to protect trade routes

All three leading Arab members of the Axis of Resistance have significantly improved their military capabilities in the past two decades

Hezbollah was the first Axis member to prove its military prowess against Israel. The impasse between the Lebanon-based group and Israel in the 2006 war led to an informal truce based on mutual deterrence. Both parties realised that a fully-fledged war would inflict severe damage to national assets and result in unacceptable numbers of civilian casualties on both sides; they have since confined their confrontations to limited tit-for-tat attacks that result in limited casualties. On October 7, by attacking Israel at an unprecedented scale and then man-

aging to defend its assets to date, Hamas has also proved that it has built significant military prowess. Ansar Allah’s capabilities are also improving – after forcing Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates into ending their war on Yemen, in the past month it attacked at least 100 vessels in the Red Sea with high efficiency. A senior US military official called this a “very significant breadth of attacks” not seen in at least “two generations.”

We cannot yet predict what this means for the future, but this much is clear: Hamas’s new prowess in attacking Israel and defending its own assets brings it close to Hezbollah’s qualitative capabilities; and Ansar Allah’s proven competence in drone and missile attacks against Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Red Sea shipping heightens its military proficiency.

The emerging reality is that the Axis of Resistance that unites Iran with half a dozen big and small Arab non-state, armed actors is growing stronger, and will likely continue to do so if the issues that drive the partnership remain unresolved – especially the Palestine conflict, and Israeli-American aggression, threats or sanctions against Arab parties. Former American diplomat in Yemen Dr Nabeel Khoury, now a senior fellow at the Arab Center Washington, also explained to me in an interview that after the end of the war in Yemen, Ansar Allah now seem ready to act on a regional level. Yet you would be ignorant of this

if your knowledge about the region comes from the mainstream US media. For the American media largely follow the American political elite, and both tend to ignore Middle East realities that do not comply with Western preconceptions of “weak” Arabs who only respond to the use of force by “righteous” Israeli-American armies – despite the recent events in Palestine, Lebanon, and Yemen that have shattered such racist visions for good.

The increasing power, integration, and influence of the Axis of Resistance rank among the most significant geo-strategic developments in the Middle East in the last half century.

The combination of state-anchored Arab militancy by Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas (Palestine) and Ansar Allah (Yemen) alongside Iran’s resistance to American and Israeli provocations are best understood through their common underlying values of “resistance” and “defiance”. The American media and political class, and most of the West, still refuse to see or acknowledge this, because Israel, the US and their Arab allies are the ones being resisted and defied. They prefer to assess developments in the region through their imagined prism of Islamist extremism that is blindly anti-American and anti-Israeli. And they assume they can handle any Middle Eastern challenge through Israeli-American military attacks, sanctions or threats. Not surprisingly, scholars routinely

confirm, the US and Western media mostly report on Gaza through distorted frames, usually reflecting Israeli and US policies. So we should expect them also to report on Yemen and the expanding Axis of Resistance mainly through Western and Israeli fears of growing Iranian influence. This includes the recently taken steps of sending an American armada to the region and creating a 10-country task force to conduct joint patrols in the Red Sea, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden, and to provide intelligence. This aims to keep maritime traffic flowing, though top global shippers like Denmark’s AP Moller-Maersk and Germany’s Hapag-Lloyd already diverted their ships to other routes.

Washington is also actively considering military strikes against Ansar Allah, though Axis of Resistance and Yemeni history – in line with their defiance attitude – suggest this would not deter future attacks against ships.

The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect our editorial stance.

*Rami G Khouri
Distinguished Fellow at the American University of Beirut, and a journalist and book author with 50 years of experience covering the Middle East
Rami G Khouri is a Distinguished Fellow at the American University of Beirut, and a journalist and book author with 50 years of experience covering the Middle East.*

Opinion

Criminalisation of victims of male violence needs to end – everywhere

Blaming, and punishing, women for the abuse they suffered at the hands of men is a global phenomenon.



Today, at least 57 percent of women in prison in the UK are survivors of domestic abuse, and for many of them, this abuse is directly linked to the reason for their incarceration, writes Bindel [Getty Images]

Worth Noting:

- We have undoubtedly made some progress in shedding light on the issue in the past three decades, but the criminalisation of survivors of male violence in the UK, by the courts as well as society at large, is far from over.

- Today, at least 57 percent of women in prison in the UK are survivors of domestic abuse, and for many of them, this abuse is directly linked to the reason for their incarceration (while, in most cases, their abusers remain free). The true number is likely significantly higher because many choose not to disclose their victim status, even when it could help explain the motivations behind the crimes they are accused of. Despite this, criminal justice agencies rarely acknowledge that a woman has been a victim of male violence, and treat this as a mitigating factor, when prosecuting her for a related offence (including defending herself against the perpetrator).

In the West, we are often told terrible stories about women in the Global South countries being subjected to male violence and then punished afresh by “community leaders” and the courts.

Most feminists in Europe and the US, for example, would know that premarital sex is criminalised in Saudi Arabia and that hospitals and health centres are compelled to report the pregnancies of single women to police – including those resulting from rape. They would also know about “honour killings” of women and girls in countries like Albania and Kurdistan for breaking patriarchal rules, such as having sexual relationships outside of marriage.

Some who decry such abuses and atrocities in the Global South, however, appear not to be aware that this type of sexist victim blaming is not confined to the Global South; it also happens in the Global North. So-called “honour killings” also happen in the UK, for example, within both conservative religious communities and secular ones.

I have long been working to raise awareness on this issue and prevent it happening to women in my home coun-

try, the United Kingdom. In 1990, I co-founded Justice for Women in response to the harsh treatment meted out to women who defended themselves against rape or sexual violence – by the criminal justice system, the media, and wider society. I had seen several cases of men killing their wives for spurious reasons, and walking free from court. Excuses such as “She nagged me”, or “I found her in bed with another man” were accepted by judges and jurors as reasonable grounds for men to “snap” and kill women. Meanwhile, women who were driven to kill or maim their male partners after years of violence, often in fear for their lives or those of their children, were treated as cold-blooded murderers and punished as such by British courts, targeted by the media, and shunned by society.

We have undoubtedly made some progress in shedding light on the issue in the past three decades, but the criminalisation of survivors of male violence in the UK, by the courts as well as society at large, is far from over.

Today, at least 57 percent of women in prison in the UK are survivors of domestic abuse, and for many of

them, this abuse is directly linked to the reason for their incarceration (while, in most cases, their abusers remain free). The true number is likely significantly higher because many choose not to disclose their victim status, even when it could help explain the motivations behind the crimes they are accused of. Despite this, criminal justice agencies rarely acknowledge that a woman has been a victim of male violence, and treat this as a mitigating factor, when prosecuting her for a related offence (including defending herself against the perpetrator).

Examples of such re-victimisation and criminalisation of survivors of male violence by British courts are all around us.

A film by the UK-based Centre for Women’s Justice (CWJ), titled *Stop Criminalising Survivors*, launched earlier this month tells the stories of five such women, convicted of offences ranging from perverting the course of justice to murder, all as a result of the abuse they endured at the hands of a male partner. CWJ hopes the film will help educate criminal justice agencies and women’s support services on the reasons female

victims of male violence end up in prison.

One of the women featured in the CWJ film is Fariieissia Martin who, aged 22 and with two small children, killed her extremely violent partner, Kyle Farrell. Farrell had raped her repeatedly, and she had undergone several abortions as a result. Family and friends had regularly seen her face covered in bruises. The night she killed him, he had given her another beating, convincing Fariieissia that if she didn’t do something, she was going to die at his hands. Having access to all this information, and knowing well that she acted in self-defence, the courts still convicted her of murder. Fariieissia served seven years in prison before successfully appealing her conviction. The only reason she was able to overturn her conviction was that she was represented at appeal by feminist lawyers equipped with an in-depth understanding of the effects of domestic violence.

These days feminists are routinely blamed for exaggerating male violence, making women “scared of men”, and causing them to limit their lives by taking precautions. Meanwhile, women are blamed for being

raped (“she was drinking/flirting/wearing revealing clothing”) or suffering domestic abuse (“she wound him up/enjoyed the drama”). Girls are blamed, and shamed, for being abused into prostitution. This victim blaming, still prevalent in most societies, reaches its ultimate form when women are punished and sent to prison for being victimised or defending themselves against their abusers.

When we are blamed for what men do to us, we get a double dose of punishment – while our male abusers are handed free rein. This happens routinely in the Global South, but it happens in the North too.

Lesbians in South Africa experience horrors like “punishment rape” for daring to reject men, but so do women in the UK. It is true that women are killed in Iran for supposed missteps like speaking to a man outside the family, but so do women in the UK – one woman is killed by a man known to her every three days in England and Wales.

Men’s violence towards women and girls is global, and wherever it occurs, the blame is often diverted onto the victims. It is crucial that we speak of the rapist more than we do of the raped, and of the batterer rather than the battered. Let’s place the blame firmly on the guilty, and ensure we never, ever, look to the actions of the victims in an attempt to justify such atrocities against women. Women should never be criminalised and punished, anywhere, for being subjected to male violence or defending themselves against it.

The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect our editorial stance.

Julie Bindel

Journalist, author and feminist campaigner
Julie Bindel is a journalist, author and feminist campaigner. Her book *Feminism for Women: The Real Route to Liberation*, (Constable, Robinson) was published in May 2021

The US is no country for old men

Elderly Americans struggle to survive in a country that seeks to extract profit from them till the very end.

By: Belén Fernández
xxxxxxxxxx

Worth Noting:

- According to the results of a West Health-Gallup survey published in 2022, approximately one in four Americans aged 65 and older and three in 10 Americans between the ages of 50 and 64 said they had sacrificed basic needs, such as food, to pay for healthcare.
- The study found that older women and Black Americans were disproportionately affected and that punitive health care costs constituted a significant source of stress in the daily lives of older Americans, with stress naturally only exacerbating existing medical issues.
- Add vampire-like insurance companies to the mix, and the panorama becomes ever more morbid. The prohibitive fees associated with many programmes – coupled with insurance outfits' frequent refusal to cover lifesaving treatments – means that life itself continues to be a privilege and not a right in the United States.



An elderly man crosses the street toward City Hall on October 14, 2020 in Providence, RI [File: AP/David Goldman]

Shortly prior to his death from prostate cancer in August of this year at the age of 72, my father emerged from a state of muteness to recite, with a burst of energy, the 1927 poem, *Sailing to Byzantium*, by William Butler Yeats, which begins: “That is no country for old men.” My mother, my uncle, and I were present for the impromptu performance, which took place in my father’s bed in Washington, DC, where he had commenced in-home hospice care after the chemotherapy treatments that had been forced upon him by profit-oriented doctors had accelerated his demise. This was but one of many poems my father had memorised as a young man intent on honing his intellectual credentials; my mother and uncle – who in their youth had also fallen under the influence of my dad’s cerebral pursuits – joined in on the lines they remembered. Having completed his vehement recitation, my father resumed his generally mute state, which was thereafter punctuated only by intermittent outbursts about wanting to die. I have no way of knowing what was going through my dad’s mind during that final poetic eruption, but the first line of the Yeats poem did seem to be a fitting commentary on the country in which we found ourselves – the one where we had all been born and the one my

parents and I had spent years avoiding. My mom and dad had only relatively recently returned to reside in the homeland after nearly eight years in Barcelona; I had flown into Washington in August from Turkey, which was one of my regular stops in a 20-year self-imposed exile. Indeed, my father’s final months had merely confirmed that the US is “no country for old men”. Counterproductive chemotherapy treatments were but one of the ways he had been milked for all he was worth, before being turned over as prey to the lucrative realm of funeral and cremation services. For example, for a one-month prescription of the prostate cancer drug Xtandi, a medication developed with none other than US taxpayer money, my father had been charged \$14,579.01 – ie, more than many people in the United States earn in several months. For folks lacking the means to pursue healthcare and other basic needs, US capitalism can be deadly, too. And while US society specialises in oppressing a wide range of demographics – minus, of course, the elite minority that thrives on acute inequality – the treatment of the elderly is particularly cynical. Having outlived their labour-based exploitability as cogs in the capitalist machine, older people become decaying ob-

jects from which profit must continue to be extracted until the very last minute. According to the results of a West Health-Gallup survey published in 2022, approximately one in four Americans aged 65 and older and three in 10 Americans between the ages of 50 and 64 said they had sacrificed basic needs, such as food, to pay for healthcare. The study found that older women and Black Americans were disproportionately affected and that punitive health care costs constituted a significant source of stress in the daily lives of older Americans, with stress naturally only exacerbating existing medical issues. Add vampire-like insurance companies to the mix, and the panorama becomes ever more morbid. The prohibitive fees associated with many programmes – coupled with insurance outfits’ frequent refusal to cover lifesaving treatments – means that life itself continues to be a privilege and not a right in the United States. Then there’s the \$34bn assisted-living industry, which a recent Washington Post investigation revealed to be plagued by wanton neglect despite charging an average of \$6,000 a month per resident. Since 2018, the Post reported, more than 2,000 residents have wandered off unnoticed from such facilities, and nearly 100 of them have died after doing so. So much for “assisted living”.

To be sure, the loneliness and isolation that so often attends old age in the US does nothing to increase life expectancy; nor does the unique stigma that US “culture” attaches to ageing. As the American Psychological Association (APA) has noted, institutionalised ageism in the United States entails a “host of negative effects, for people’s physical and mental wellbeing and society as a whole”. Granted, loneliness and isolation are often lifelong afflictions for inhabitants of the so-called “land of the free”, where the collective mental wellbeing is hardly helped by a dog-eat-dog insistence on individual success at the expense of communal and family bonds and the conversion of human beings into consumerist automatons. And the cutthroat, transactional nature of existence in the US culminates, appropriately, with elderly bodies being put up for grabs by pharmaceutical companies, nursing homes, and the corporate racket known as the US healthcare system. That said, the US is, in fact, a fine country for some old men – such as former warmongering diplomat Henry Kissinger, who perished at home in Connecticut in November at the ripe old age of 100 after spending a good part of his life causing the deaths of countless people worldwide.

Not long after my father’s death in August, I fell into conversation with a Bolivian man in his 50s who had resided in Washington for more than two decades and who expanded on the “no country” theme. He planned to stick it out for another 10 to 15 years before returning to his home city of Cochabamba, he told me, because he couldn’t afford to be old in the US. And while the US may be “no country for old men”, it’s not much of a country for anyone else, either.

The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect our editorial stance.

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The anatomy of Zionist genocide

What are the motivations behind Israel's genocidal acts in Gaza, and what is the way forward?

By: Yoav Litvin
xxxxxxxxxxxx



An Israeli flag can be seen inside Gaza Strip, looking in from the Israeli side of the border, on November 11, 2023 [Evelyn Hockstein/Reuters]

Worth Noting:

- Within the Israeli society grounded in land and resource theft, offensive aggression under the guise of “self-defence” (as in “Israel Defence Force”) has been rewarded and reinforced from the very beginning and consequently became a routine part of life. By reinstating fear and hijacking trauma associated with past and present negative experiences of Jewish people, Zionist leaders ensured the settler population’s continued support for aggressive, expansionist, hegemonic, genocidal policies and shielded their corruption and other criminal endeavours from public scrutiny.
- To maintain Israel’s violently oppressive status quo and expand the territory of the settler colony, Zionists opportunistically conflated their colonial ideology with Judaism.
- Citing divine dispensation, radical, far-right settlers have been encouraged to seize hilltops on Palestinian land, expel those living there, and form illegal outposts. These outposts are later fortified by the Israeli military and eventually “legalised” by the Zionist state.

On October 7, Hamas fighters breached the Gaza prison fence, launching a coordinated attack on at least seven Israeli military installations and more than 20 surrounding residential communities. Over 1000 Israeli citizens, both civilian and military, as well as dozens of foreign nationals, were killed in the attack. Some 240 others were taken captive. Caught off guard and in disarray, the Israeli military responded to the attack in a frenzy, firing indiscriminately on breached localities, slaying Israeli captives alongside Hamas fighters in the process. It took the Israeli forces nearly a day to recapture all lost territory and secure the Gaza perimeter. Following Hamas’s unprecedented incursion, Israel’s public relations apparatus launched a misinformation campaign aimed at inciting fear and fury and began to spread unverified atrocity propaganda. The campaign, involving tales of babies being “beheaded en masse”, “burned” and “hung on a clothesline”, helped transform the Israeli public’s shock into genocidal tribalism and diverted attention from Israel’s political, intelligence and military blunders that paved the way for the attack in the first place. The campaign also helped the government garner crucial public support for mass mobilisation of reserve units which made the consequent full-scale ground invasion of the Gaza Strip possible. After securing unconditional military, political and diplomatic backing of its imperial sponsors in the West, most notably in Washington, and under the pretext of countering Hamas and rescuing captives, Israel then initiated what has since been accurately described as an AI-guided “mass assassination campaign” in Gaza. Ten weeks on, most of Gaza is now destroyed, nearly 20,000 Palestinians are dead

with many more still under the rubble, and the world continues to watch a genocide unfold in real time. Examining these events through a behavioural-neuroscientific lens could offer insights into the Zionist settler colonialist dynamic in general and the particular motivations behind Israel’s current genocidal acts in Gaza, as well as potential paths forward. The pillars of Zionist propaganda In response to historical trauma, Jewish people have a deep fear of anti-Semitism. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this fear, along with disdain for oppressors, led to the formation of autonomous Jewish self-defence groups in various geographies. Zionism, a European colonial movement, recognised the potential of this dynamic. It syncretised Jewish longing for safety and self-defence with white supremacist, messianic and fascist ideologies. This synthesis birthed a new, nationalist Jewish identity that equates Jewish safety with the construction of an exclusivist homeland in Palestine through the displacement of the region’s Indigenous populations. Settler colonial endeavours typically depend on depicting the targeted territory as “uninhabited”, and its existing inhabitants as inhuman barbarians unworthy of any land. This portrayal allowed Zionists to displace the Indigenous population of Palestine without moral qualms, portraying the establishment of Israel not as the destruction of a people but as the construction of a “villa in the jungle”. Within the Israeli society grounded in land and resource theft, offensive aggression under the guise of “self-defence” (as in “Israel Defence Force”) has been re-

warded and reinforced from the very beginning and consequently became a routine part of life. By reinstating fear and hijacking trauma associated with past and present negative experiences of Jewish people, Zionist leaders ensured the settler population’s continued support for aggressive, expansionist, hegemonic, genocidal policies and shielded their corruption and other criminal endeavours from public scrutiny. To maintain Israel’s violently oppressive status quo and expand the territory of the settler colony, Zionists opportunistically conflated their colonial ideology with Judaism. Citing divine dispensation, radical, far-right settlers have been encouraged to seize hilltops on Palestinian land, expel those living there, and form illegal outposts. These outposts are later fortified by the Israeli military and eventually “legalised” by the Zionist state. Beyond justifying violent land theft, the conflation of Zionism and Judaism serves to delegitimise Indigenous resistance by equating any criticism of Zionism or Israel’s policies towards the Palestinians as an attack on Jews. Further, it hinders anticolonial resistance by portraying a political struggle over land and resources between occupying settlers backed by imperial forces and an Indigenous-occupied people as a supposed ancient religious “conflict” between equals. This conflation encourages Zionist appropriation and exceptionalisation of Jewish victimhood. Israeli hasbara presents the Holocaust as an unparalleled genocide, granting Jews special victim status. This narrative justifies privileges, discounts and allowances for Israel as the “Jewish state” constructed to ensure the safety of Jews, at the expense of Indigenous Palestinians. Notably,

Zionist revisionism often neglects and downplays Nazi crimes against other oppressed groups, including communists, socialists, Roma, disabled individuals, LGBTQI and African Germans. The liberal wing of Zionism serves to whitewash the reactionary core of the movement and conceal its true objectives – expansionism and apartheid. Misleadingly, Liberal Zionists portray Zionism as an ideology aligned with democratic, progressive values and human rights, falsely projecting a genuine commitment to peace, justice and full integration into the Middle East. Fear and genocidal fervour Until October 7, Israel upheld its founding aspiration, enforcing a doctrine of endless occupation while oscillating between implicit and explicit forms of genocide, the latter often described as “mowing the lawn” in reference to Israel’s periodical attacks on Gaza since its 2005 “withdrawal” from the besieged Palestinian enclave. During this time, Israeli Zionists reaped the benefits of Palestinian land and its resources in a modern, affluent, supposedly democratic consumer paradise, fostering robust connections and identification with white US and Europe and oil/cash-rich Gulf monarchies, rather than its immediate neighbours. On October 7, intense fear and shock gripped Israeli society, presenting Benjamin Netanyahu’s far-right government with a golden opportunity to quash rising dissent against corruption, and please his coalition members with a genocidal land grab. Fear in Israel is sustained through militarisation, anti-Palestinian narratives, reframing resistance as “terrorism”, remembering past atrocities, focusing on perceived threats and promoting segregation, ie, apartheid. Chronic fear induces symptoms akin to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), making the Israeli population prone to aggression masked as “self-defence”. The toxic mix of fear, dehumanising propaganda, rewards for aggression and intense apartheid has bred a lack of empathy in Israelis toward Palestinians. Despite claiming the Gaza conflict as “self-defence”, Israeli leaders openly blame Palestinian society as a whole, essentially sanctioning collective punishment of civilians. Daily, Israeli institutional leaders mock Palestinian culture and cheerlead the torture, displacement and annihilation of Palestinians, revealing a disturbing genocidal mindset.

The path forward On October 7, the carefully constructed Zionist facade of incremental genocide within a liberal/democratic framework collapsed, exposing Israel’s genocidal and fascist core. Zionists in Israel and beyond did not mourn the end of this charade, and instead celebrated their newfound freedom to kill and destroy Palestinians without any restraint or pretence. This development not only poses a threat of elimination to the Palestinian people but since the Occupied Territories are used as a laboratory for the development and testing of new military technology and strategies, it could also set the stage for similar violent escalations against oppressed communities in the Global South as well as against BIPOC and immigrant communities within the Global North. Israel’s genocidal behaviour in Gaza and elsewhere in historic Palestine resonates with patterns seen in the Stanford prison experiment and the Milgram obedience study. In the latter, individuals, swayed by authority, had administered potentially lethal shocks to other participants. For Zionists to break their addiction to aggression, they would need to go through a process of deprogramming and decolonisation. This would require them to embrace the truth about the history and nature of Zionism, commit to sincere accountability, recognise the humanity of Palestinians, and empathise with their suffering and plight. Once the oppressive structure, Zionism, is dismantled, it can be effectively dismantled, paving the way for a process of rehumanisation and reconciliation through the use of empathy. Liberation, reconciliation and an end to Israel’s genocidal violence can only be achieved within a steadfast and unwavering anti-Zionist framework that aligns with wider leftist, antiracist, anticolonial values. Dedicated to the late Palestinian poet Refaat Alareer. The views expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect our editorial stance.

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Rwandan doctor given 24-year jail sentence in France over 1994 genocide

Sosthene Munyemana, 68, has been found guilty on charges of genocide despite denying any wrongdoing.

A Rwandan doctor was sentenced by a Paris court on Wednesday to 24 years in prison for his role in the 1994 genocide in his home country. After a deliberation lasting nearly 15 hours, Sosthene Munyemana, 68, was found guilty of charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and participation in a conspiracy to prepare those crimes. He has denied any wrongdoing and his lawyers said he would appeal the decision. The six-week-long trial at the Assize Court in Paris came nearly three decades after a complaint was filed against Munyemana in the southwestern French city of Bordeaux in 1995.

Munyemana, who was impassive as the verdict was handed down, was immediately jailed. He is the sixth suspect to have faced trial in France over the 1994 massacres in which an estimated 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus who tried to protect them, were killed over 100 days.

At the time, Munyemana was a 38-year-old gynaecologist in Tumba, in Rwanda's southern university district of Butare.

He has been accused of co-signing in April 1994 "a motion of support" for the interim government that supervised the genocide and of participating in a local committee and meetings that organised roundups of Tutsi civilians.

Munyemana was then a friend of

Jean Kambanda, head of the interim government.

He acknowledged participating in local night patrols organised to track Tutsi people but said that he did it to protect the local population. Witnesses saw him at checkpoints set up across the town where he supervised operations, according to prosecutors.

Munyemana was also accused of detaining several dozen Tutsi civilians in the office of the local administration that was "under his authority at the time," and of relaying "instructions from the authorities to the local militia and residents leading to the roundup of the Tutsis," among other things.

Prosecutors said there was evidence of "intentional gathering meant to exterminate people," and that Munyemana "couldn't ignore" that they were going to be killed.

Munyemana arrived in September 1994 in France, where he has been living and working until he recently retired. Members of the Rwandan community in France first filed a complaint against him in 1995.

In recent years as relations improved with Rwanda, which has long accused France of "enabling" the genocide, France has increased efforts to arrest genocide suspects and send them to trial.

Source: News Agencies



Rwandan doctor Sosthene Munyemana (L) arrives with his lawyer Florence Bourg (R) at the Paris court on November 14, 2023, for his trial on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity during the 1994 massacres in Rwanda [Alain Jocard/AFP]

Malawi

Malawi reiterates support for Morocco territorial Autonomy

By: Dismas Otuke

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malawi, Nancy Tembo, reaffirmed on Monday in Rabat her country's support for the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Morocco.

This position was expressed in a joint statement issued following a meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, Nasser Bourrita, and his Malawian counterpart.

Lilongwe supports the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Morocco and backs the efforts of the United Nations as the exclusive framework for achieving a political, realistic, practical and lasting solution to the to the Sahara dispute.

Malawi also reaffirms its constant support for the Autonomy Initiative, presented by the Kingdom of

Morocco, as the one and only credible and realistic solution to solve this dispute.

On an official visit to Morocco on December 17-21 to inaugurate her country's Embassy in Rabat and to operationalize its General Consulate in Laayoune, Malawi top diplomat announced that she would be visiting the southern provinces, an opportunity to witness the economic and social boom as well as the political and democratic dynamics underway in the region.

The visit will also be an opportunity to explore the progress made in implementing the New Development Model for the Southern Provinces, launched in 2015 by His Majesty King Mohammed VI.

