

South Africa's xenophobia— or, more precisely, its Afrophobia— is not a new chapter. It is a long, blood-stained novel

# Xenophobia

A History Written in Blood: The Making of South Africa's Afrophobia :



## A CONTINENT BLEEDS FROM WITHIN:

### South Africa's Xenophobia Crisis: Death, Diplomacy, and the Destruction of Pan-African Solidarity

By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande

When Africa Turns Against Itself

In the early hours of April 17, 2026, a 43-year-old Cameroonian shopkeeper in Durban, who had lived and worked in South Africa for nearly two decades, watched in horror as members of a vigilante group attacked his small business. He was not a criminal. He was not an undocumented migrant. He was a businessman, a father, and a neighbour. His crime, in the eyes of his attackers, was that he



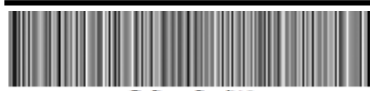
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The Scales of Destiny or Zaynab's Patience

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Muri warns Kenya's \$62 billion mineral wealth must not be sold in the dark



## How the corporate world's star Swati turned her home into a sanctuary for the voiceless

In the spiritual heart of Varanasi lives a woman whose story feels less like reality and more like a forgotten chapter of compassion in a rapidly hardening world.

Career girl Swati Ballani turned her back on life's luxuries in the corporate world to rescue animals.

Across the lanes of Kashi, she is called the "Mowgli Girl."

For Swati, loving animals was never merely a hobby. It was a gift, something deeply rooted in her soul since childhood. Perhaps that is why wounded animals trust her without fear, and abandoned

creatures somehow find their way to her doorstep as though guided by instinct itself.

Today, Swati has transformed her home into what people lovingly call a "Mini Zoo." But this is no ordinary collection of animals. Every room of her house breathes with life —res-

cued dogs, injured cats, abandoned bulls, cows, hens, birds, and even wounded eagles coexist under one roof. Each carries scars silently gifted

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# At the shrine's edge, a self-styled exorcist is drawing crowds — and alarming the Catholic Church

*Unauthorised “exorcism retreats” near Fatima expose the gap between popular religious hunger and institutional control, as Church leaders warn of exploitation and spiritual fraud*

By: Diaspora Times Team  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

## Worth Noting:

• For those who attend, the experience carries unmistakable power. “You get a great feeling of peace. It’s a liberation. I leave here cleansed, with a lighter soul,” said Lurdes Ramisio, a 56-year-old nurse who has become a regular. “I feel he has a power. His hands transmit a power to me,” she added.

• The Church is considerably less convinced. Neither the Vatican nor local Church authorities recognise Marques’s ministry, which was founded in 2006. He operates under the auspices of a self-declared Italian bishop, Salvatore Micallef, who claims to have granted him formal authority over the demonic. “When I met Francisco, I saw above all that he had the gift of driving out demons,” Micallef told AFP. “I therefore issued a decree authorising him to be an exorcist.” The Church does not recognise Micallef’s authority to issue any such decree.

A 27-year-old man wearing a black cassock and Roman collar is drawing more than 100 believers a month to a shopping centre basement steps from one of Catholicism’s holiest shrines — and neither the Vatican nor Portugal’s Catholic hierarchy recognises his right to do any of it.

The monthly exorcism retreats, held in the basement of a small shopping centre near the sanctuary of Fatima in Portugal, have raised concerns among Catholic authorities, who say they operate outside official Church oversight by self-styled religious figures and risk exploiting vulnerable believers. The scenes inside are striking: participants — mostly women — fall backwards after Francisco Marques lays his hands on their foreheads, caught by attendants and lowered onto mats on the floor.

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A self-proclaimed priest not recognized by the Catholic Church, Francisco Marques

Micallef’s authority to issue any such decree.

Exorcism occupies a complicated position within Catholic theology — neither dismissed nor freely practised. It is an officially sanctioned rite, but one governed by strict canonical rules and reserved exclusively for priests granted specific authorisation by their bishop. Church officials say cases of alleged demonic possession are approached with caution and often involve consultation with medical experts, to ensure people with illnesses such as epilepsy do not miss out on medical treatment if their symptoms are wrongly ascribed to the supernatural.

Bishop Jose Ornelas of Leiria-Fatima, the diocese in which the shrine sits, told AFP the Church treats exorcism “with great prudence” to avoid creating the impression that priests are “gurus” with special powers over demons. In 2023, his diocese warned against what it called “suspicious

retreats” organised by “a supposed seminarian friend of the pope.” The warning went largely unheeded. The retreats have continued, and the crowds have not diminished.

Ornelas said that while the Church lacks the legal authority to prohibit such gatherings, it has the responsibility to denounce “abuse” by those who “exploit” people’s suffering for their own benefit. It is a significant admission — one that exposes the institutional limits of a Church whose moral authority cannot always translate into legal enforcement in a modern secular state.

The commercial dimension of Marques’s ministry has attracted particular scrutiny. He insists participation in the retreats is free, acknowledging that donations help finance his activities. Visitors are also invited to purchase items displayed on a table near the exit: “exorcised” salt, holy water, and anointing oils prepared by Marques himself. The

display sits alongside business cards featuring a photograph of Marques with Pope Francis — a picture whose provenance has not been independently verified — a telephone number, and a bank account for contributions.

Marques rejects all criticism with vigour. He has filed a defamation complaint against Church authorities and denies any wrongdoing. “We have been slandered. We have been called false priests, false bishops, fraudsters. We must defend our dignity,” he told AFP. Beyond the monthly retreats, he conducts Sunday services in a private chapel at his home, roughly 100 kilometres north of Fatima, building what amounts to an unsanctioned parallel congregation operating in the shadow of one of the world’s most venerated pilgrimage sites.

The phenomenon points to something deeper than one man’s ambitions. Fatima draws millions of pilgrims annually, many of

them in search of healing, consolation, or spiritual encounter that formal liturgy does not always provide. In that space between institutional religion and urgent personal need, figures like Marques find their audience — and their income.

The Catholic Church has long wrestled with the boundary between authentic spiritual experience and manipulation of the suffering faithful. While exorcism is an officially recognised practice within Catholicism, it is governed by strict rules and reserved for specially authorised priests. What is happening in a Fatima shopping centre basement is neither — and when the congregation’s pain is real and the priest is not, the Church’s studied prudence may not be enough to protect those who fall.

Reach Editorial Team on:

diasporaglobalnews@yahoo.com / diasporaglobalnews@gmail.com

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The Diaspora Times Global



Group Executive Chairman  
M. Danson  
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Kenya.  
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Email: dan@mtkenyatimes.co.ke  
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(advertising inquiries only)  
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Phone 0044 330 606 1438.  
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Senior Editor Botswana & S.  
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Africa Plot 15215, Tshikinyega,  
Mahalapye, Botswana  
P.O. Box 20392 Mahalapye, Botswana  
Tel/WhatsApp:  
+267 77 458 029  
Email: paula200500293@gmail.com



Senior Editor India & Asia  
Sakshi Agrawal  
10, Balughat Main Road,  
Near Shubham Poultry Farm,  
Muzaffarpur, Bihar, India. Pin  
Code: 842001  
Tel/WhatsApp: +91 74882 30902  
Email: agrawalsakshi684@gmail.com



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## Children

## Children Who Are Not Seen Equally

By: Rajabova Zebo Sobirjon  
xxxxxxxxxxxxx

## Worth Noting:

• A child growing up in such an environment may look ordinary from the outside. They laugh, talk, and even argue. But inside, they live with a constant question: "Why am I seen differently?"

• Often, parents do not notice this difference. They label one child as "more responsible" and another as "more problematic." This judgment slowly turns into behavior. As a result, one child is always justified, while the other is constantly forced to prove themselves.

• The most painful impact comes through words. Every reminder of the past, every reopening of a mistake strengthens the thought in the child's mind: "I will not change." Eventually, they stop trying, because in their view the outcome will always be the same.

The family, which is the smallest unit of society, is considered the most important place where a person is formed. It is in this environment that a child first experiences what love, justice, and relationships are. According to experts, psychological experiences in childhood have a direct impact on a person's future life. Therefore, every interaction and every word within the family leaves a mark in the child's inner world.

Every child hopes to grow up with love. This is their need, even their right. However, in some families, love is not distributed equally. Someone is listened to more, while someone else gradually becomes accustomed to silence.

A child growing up in such an environment may look ordinary from the outside. They laugh, talk, and even argue. But inside, they live with a constant question: "Why am I seen differently?" Often, parents do not notice this difference. They label one child as "more responsible" and another as "more problematic." This judgment slowly turns into behavior. As a result, one child is always justified, while the other is constantly forced to prove themselves.

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There are children like this — they do not speak much.



Children

They cry inside. They restrain themselves so that no problems arise in the family. But no one sees the pain accumulating in that silence. They are often labeled as "good children," but in reality, they have simply learned to live without speaking up. There are also those who do not choose silence. They resist. They argue. They try to defend themselves. Often, they are labeled as "ill-mannered." In reality, this is an attempt to be heard, a way of proving that they also have value.

Unfortunately, many families overlook one simple truth: justice for a child does not mean loving someone more, but not loving anyone less. A single wrong

word, a single comparison, or neglect can accumulate over the years and turn into a deep wound. According to research, about 65% of children who are constantly criticized in childhood show low self-confidence. Another study shows that 70% of adolescents who do not receive equal attention in the family feel "undervalued." Experts also note that more than 50% of those who grow up in such environments tend to struggle with decision-making in adulthood. Psychologists say that constant criticism and neglect in childhood can reduce a person's self-confidence and affect their ability to make decisions later in life. Time passes. And these chil-

dren grow up.

Some become people who lack self-confidence and constantly feel guilty. They become used to blaming themselves in every situation. Even when injustice is done to them, they think, "Maybe it is my fault."

Others, on the contrary, become strong very early. They learn not to rely on anyone. They find their own path. They build their own life. A decision forms within them: instead of accepting this environment, they must leave it.

This strength is not a choice — it is a necessity-born strength.

But behind this strength lies a hidden truth: no child should be forced to become

strong because of a lack of love.

A family is not just living under one roof. It should be a place where a person feels accepted, understood, and valued.

If that feeling is missing, even when the child grows up, filling that inner emptiness is not easy.

And the question remains open: Where will a child who is not seen equally find a place where they feel "complete"?

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# Trump pledges India visit as G7 meeting signals thaw in strained US-Modi ties

*Trade talks near conclusion, sailors' deaths raise tensions, and a trust deficit hangs over the most consequential bilateral relationship in the Indo-Pacific*

By: Diaspora Times Team  
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## Worth Noting:

The substance behind the spectacle was rather more complicated. Modi entered the meeting under significant domestic pressure, with opposition parties in India demanding he directly condemn the US military's killing of three Indian sailors in a strike targeting a tanker the Pentagon accused of violating its blockade on Iranian ports. Delhi summoned a senior US diplomat twice last week following the incident and subsequent strikes on vessels carrying Indian crew.

Modi chose a multilateral forum to raise the matter before meeting Trump directly. In a speech to G7 leaders on Tuesday, he issued a carefully worded rebuke that Indian commentators widely read as directed at Washington. "We have always said that freedom of navigation should be ensured, and we should also stress that. Lakhs of Indian seafarers are on duty in different seas of the world in the sector of maritime trade. I believe that their security is equally important," Modi said.

US President Donald Trump promised to visit India and declared the two countries were close to finalising a landmark trade deal following a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Evian-les-Bains, France, on Wednesday — their first face-to-face encounter in more than 16 months.

The warm public display masked a relationship that has endured a bruising stretch of tensions, including tariff disputes, immigration rows, and the killing of three Indian sailors by US naval forces in the Gulf of Oman last week. Yet both leaders appeared determined to project unity, with Trump reaching across to clasp Modi's hand before cameras and declaring the personal bond between them foundational to the wider alliance.

"We have the best relationship. We cannot be closer than we are. Would you say that, sir? I don't think we can be any closer," Trump said, grasping Modi's hand. "Both him and I, and our nations. But it really starts with the two of us."

The American president, who has a well-documented habit of flattering foreign counterparts for rhetorical effect, was characteristically extravagant. "He's the most beautiful-looking man. He looks so nice, like an angel. But actually, he's as tough as he is a killer. But he looks so good. So he gets you by surprise," Trump said of Modi, adding: "As long as I am President, they have a great friend in the White House." The substance behind the spectacle was rather more complicated. Modi entered the meeting under significant domestic pressure, with opposition parties in India demanding he directly condemn the US military's killing of three Indian sailors in a strike targeting a tanker the Pentagon accused of violating its blockade on Iranian ports. Delhi summoned a senior US diplomat twice last week following the incident and subsequent strikes on vessels carrying Indian crew.

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US President Donald Trump with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

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In a broader address to G7 leaders, the prime minister struck a philosophical register that nonetheless carried pointed undertones. "Today the world does not suffer from a shortage of resources; it suffers from a shortage of trust. And the future of our partnerships depends on building this trust," Modi said — remarks that resonated well beyond the conference hall.

Trump's response to the sailors' deaths was characteristically breezy. "I heard about that. This has been happening throughout time, but we work together. We love all of those people, and they're great people," the president said. Modi, for his part, indicated he was satisfied the matter would be addressed in the context of any final agreement. "I'm confident that the issue of seafarers will receive the highest priority during the implementation of this agreement," he

said.

The bilateral's most consequential output was the signals on trade. The relationship had deteriorated sharply after the Trump administration imposed tariffs of up to 50 per cent on certain Indian goods, before reducing them to 18 per cent following an interim deal reached in February. Rates currently stand at 10 per cent after the US Supreme Court struck down large portions of Trump's broader tariff regime as unlawful. New import taxes targeting countries judged to be insufficiently tackling forced labour — a measure that places India among those under scrutiny — have added further complexity.

Trump described the state of play as highly advanced. "We're doing trade deals... A lot of things are happening between the United States and India," he said, adding that the prime minister "is building a lot in the United States." Officials from both countries are scheduled to meet in Delhi next week, with India's commerce secretary describing the negotiations as being at the stage of "final touches."

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer is expected to travel to India next week in a bid to finalise the agreement, according to

Reuters. India was among the first countries to enter trade talks with Washington after Trump's return to office, though the process has proved considerably more arduous than either side originally anticipated.

The geopolitical backdrop adds further weight to the bilateral's significance. India imports approximately 90 per cent of its oil, and the war in Iran — together with the disruption to the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil and gas ordinarily flows — has inflicted serious economic pain on New Delhi. Even if the strait reopens in the near term, analysts expect global energy supply chains to take months to stabilise fully.

Relations have also been complicated by Trump's repeated claims that he personally brokered the India-Pakistan ceasefire following a brief conflict in 2025, and his offer to mediate on Kashmir — a position that has irritated Delhi across party lines. Modi has so far declined to publicly rebuke Trump over either matter, a restraint his domestic critics have characterised as excessive deference to Washington.

The two leaders' last in-person meeting took place in February last year, when

Modi travelled to the White House. Wednesday's encounter in Evian was their first scheduled bilateral since that visit. Trump's pledge to visit India — described only as "sometime in the future" — would potentially occur in the context of a Quad meeting also involving Japan and Australia, though no date has been confirmed.

On the question of India's security, Trump offered an unambiguous commitment: "If anybody attacks that man, we're going to be there," he said of Modi, before adding a pointed rider: "Now, if there's a new leader, I'm not sure about it" — a remark that underscored the extent to which the alliance, for all its institutional depth, remains tethered to personal chemistry between two men whose political clocks are both ticking.

When trust between great powers rests so heavily on the handshake between individuals rather than the durability of institutions, it is not an alliance — it is a gamble.

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## Motivation

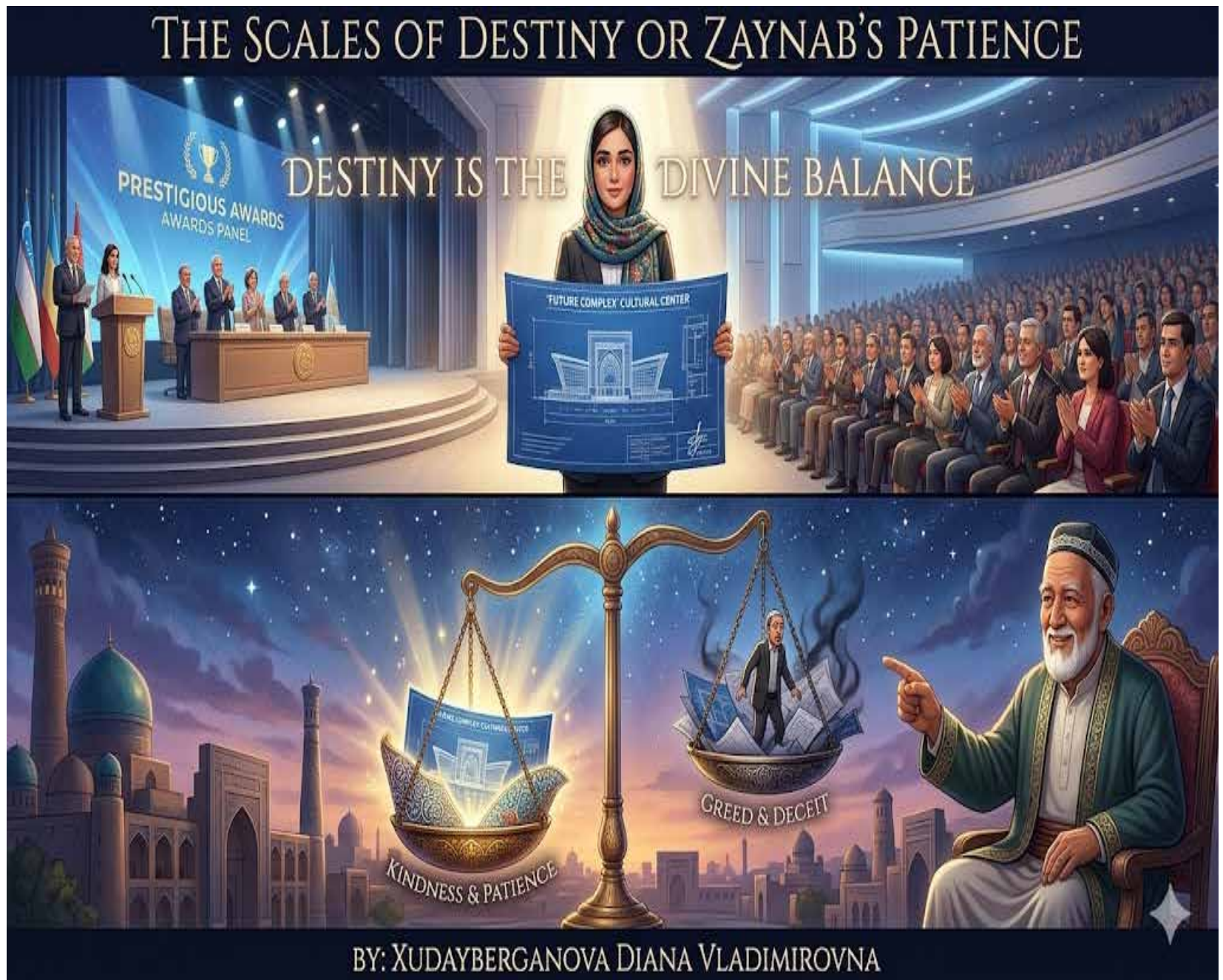
## The Scales of Destiny or Zaynab's Patience



By: Xudayberganova Diana Vladimirovna  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

## Worth Noting:

- One day, an international competition was announced for the "Future Complex" cultural center, a massive construction project destined for the city center. The architect who won this competition would not only receive a prestigious national prize but would also carve their name into the country's history. Farhod Aka walked into Zaynab's office and showered her with sweet promises. He assured her that if they won, he would appoint her as his deputy and triple her salary.
- Once again, with her characteristic innocence, Zaynab threw herself into the work. For three months, she forgot what sleep was. She stayed up through the nights drawing blueprints, performing complex calculations for the building's foundation, and pouring her entire heart into every single detail. The project turned out flawless.



BY: XUDAYBERGANOVA DIANA VLADIMIROVNA

Zaynab's life resembled the changing of the seasons—she bloomed like spring, scattering blossoms of sincerity all around, yet the biting frost of winter always arrived to wither her joy. However, destiny has its own ways of balancing accounts. After a series of grueling trials, the light of justice finally shone upon her. Although Zaynab worked as a skilled city architect at the architectural bureau, she was naturally a very timid and gentle girl. The person who exploited her kind-hearted nature the most was her department chief, Farhod Aka. For years, he had been masking his own incompetence and laziness behind Zaynab's genius. Time and again, he presented the strategic projects crafted by her hands as his own to the upper management, betraying her hard work. Every time, Zaynab would weep and feel heartbroken, but out of sheer modesty and respect, she could never bring herself to speak up. One day, an international competition was announced for the "Future Complex" cultural center, a massive construction project des-

tinued for the city center. The architect who won this competition would not only receive a prestigious national prize but would also carve their name into the country's history. Farhod Aka walked into Zaynab's office and showered her with sweet promises. He assured her that if they won, he would appoint her as his deputy and triple her salary. Once again, with her characteristic innocence, Zaynab threw herself into the work. For three months, she forgot what sleep was. She stayed up through the nights drawing blueprints, performing complex calculations for the building's foundation, and pouring her entire heart into every single detail. The project turned out flawless. However, just one day before the presentation, Farhod Aka erased Zaynab's name from all the documents and replaced it with his own. He then dismissed her from the room, callously telling her that the committee members would never trust someone as young as her. Tears welled up in Zaynab's eyes. Completely devastated, she carried her grief and sorrow to a city park and sat

down on a bench.

At that moment, an elderly man dressed in somewhat worn-out clothes, yet with eyes radiating a profound light, came and sat beside her. Suddenly, the old man accidentally dropped the papers he was holding, but the passersby didn't even notice. Forgetting her own grief, Zaynab immediately rushed to help him. As she was gathering the papers, she noticed the blueprints for a free children's library in a remote neighborhood. Seeing that the project was drawn in a very old-fashioned style, Zaynab offered to redesign it into a modern style for him for free, out of pure goodwill. Even during those agonizing days, working day and night, she perfected the children's library project alongside her main work. As the old man accepted the drawings, he looked into her eyes, blessed her, and said that the reward for kindness always arrives as an unexpected joy, and that justice eventually finds its rightful owner. Finally, the long-awaited day of the competition arrived. The luxurious hall was packed with the country's

most prominent architects and foreign investors. Farhod Aka took the stage, displayed the complex designs Zaynab had spent sleepless nights drawing on the screen, and began to boast as if he were the sole creator. The jury was left spellbound by the sheer beauty of the execution. Right then, a voice echoed through the microphone from the head of the jury—the most respected chief architect and main investor of the country, who had just entered. Sitting in the very back row of the hall, Zaynab froze in disbelief. The man speaking was none other than the old man she had helped for free, now sitting broad-shouldered and imposing in a highly expensive suit. The old man looked at Farhod Aka and asked about the unique feature in the foundation and what the small symbolic mark in the right corner signified. Having stolen the project and being completely ignorant of its intricate details, a stammering Farhod replied that it was merely a decorative element. The old man stood up and declared to the audience:

"This is not a decoration. It is the personal signature of the true author who created this from the bottom of their heart. It is the exact same signature found on the children's library project." As a stunned silence fell over the entire hall, he called Zaynab up to the stage. With a racing heart, Zaynab walked up to the stage. She explained every line of the design and the underlying philosophy behind every brick with such passion and mastery that the hall erupted into a river of applause. Farhod Aka's fraud was exposed; consumed by shame, he slunk off the stage, was stripped of his professional license, and was banned from the industry forever. Zaynab, on the other hand, was appointed as the Chief Architect of the mega "Future Complex" project. On that day, life balanced the scales. Zaynab realized that while human beings might fail to appreciate one's kindness, the justice of the Creator always prevails. Through her hard work and pure heart, she emerged from the trials of life with her head held high.

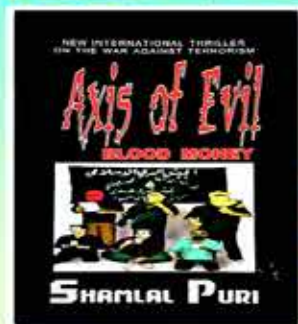
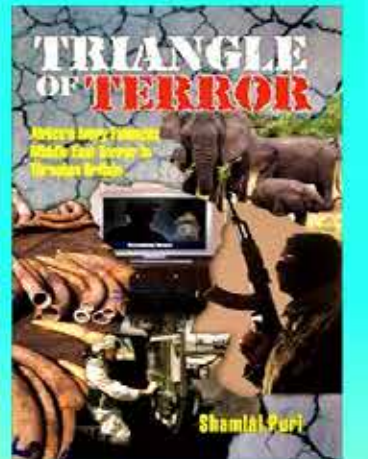
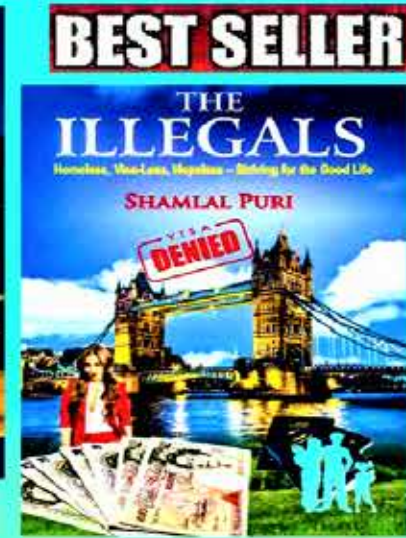
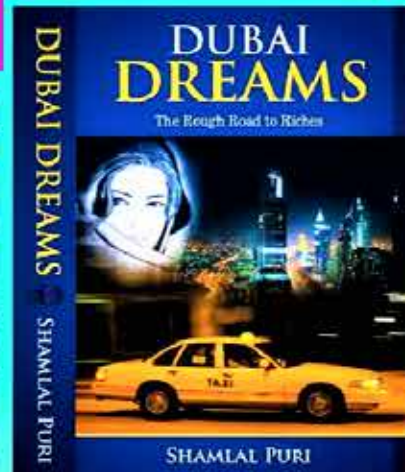
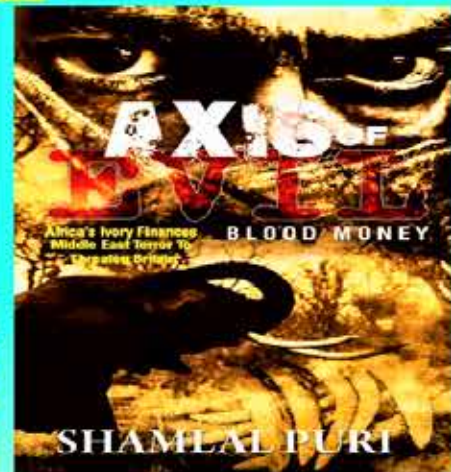
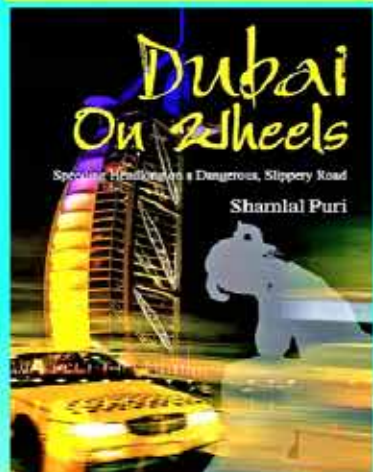
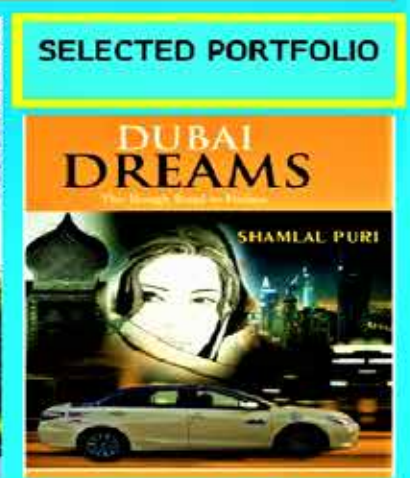
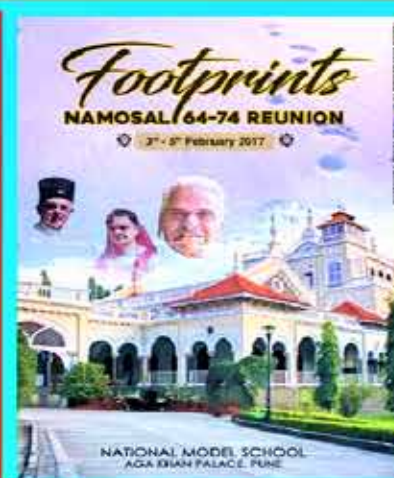
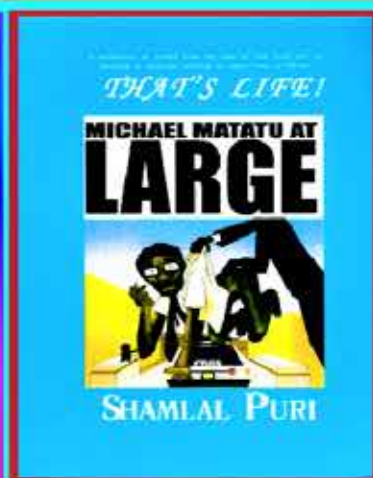
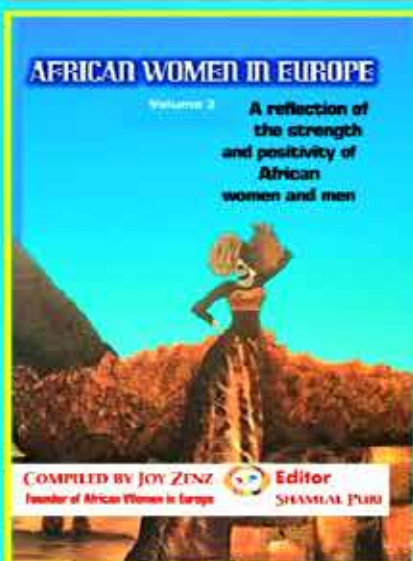
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## African News

# A CONTINENT BLEEDS FROM WITHIN: South Africa's Xenophobia Crisis: Death, Diplomacy, and the Destruction of Pan-African Solidarity



By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande  
@themtkenyatimes

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## Worth Noting:

To understand xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa, one must understand the society that apartheid created. For nearly half a century, the apartheid state engineered a politics of exclusion, racial hierarchy, and resource competition. Black South Africans were stripped of citizenship, confined to homelands, and trained to see themselves as contestants in a zero-sum game for survival. When democracy arrived in 1994, it dismantled the racial architecture of exclusion, but it could not immediately dismantle its psychological legacy. The instinct to identify a threatening 'other' did not disappear; it merely redirected.

By the mid-1990s, as South Africa opened its borders and positioned itself as a beacon of African freedom, migrants from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and other nations began arriving in significant numbers. They came for the same reasons migrants anywhere in the world move: to escape conflict, economic collapse, and hopelessness.

was foreign. That single incident encapsulates a crisis that has festered for three decades, grown more lethal with each passing year, and now threatens to unravel the very foundations of African unity.

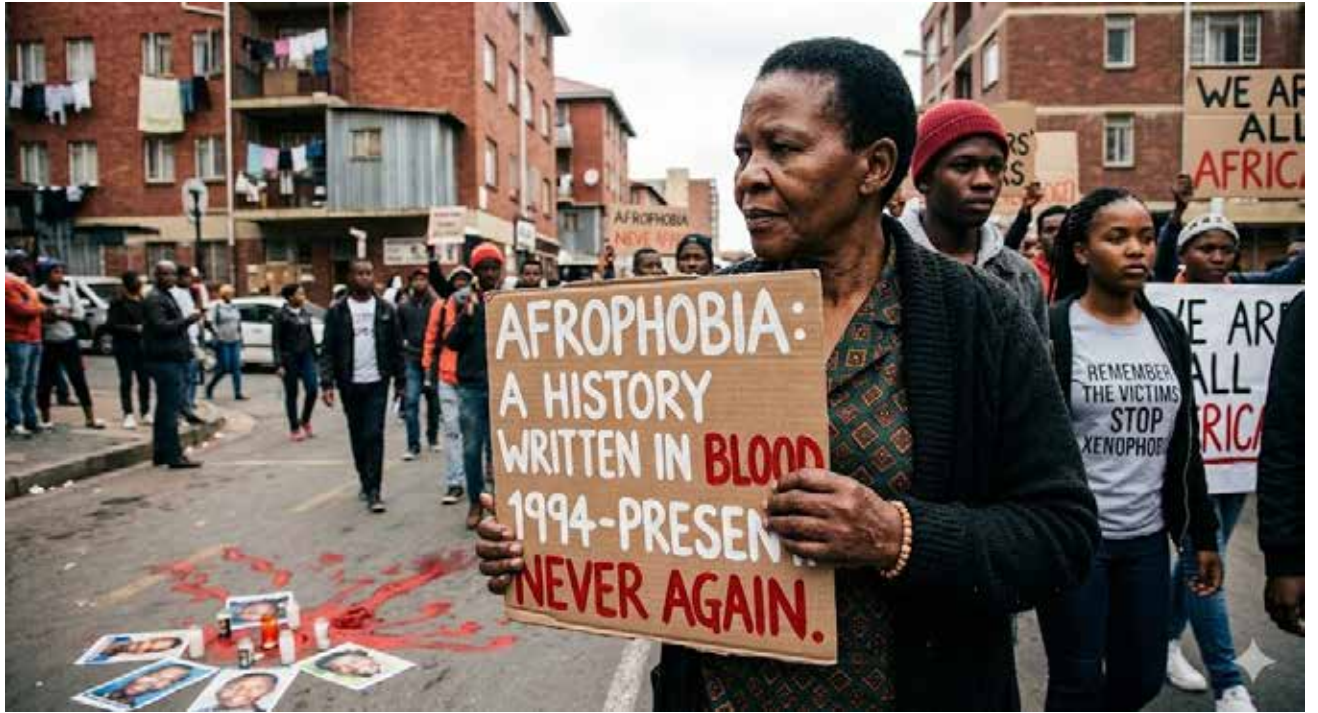
South Africa's xenophobia— or, more precisely, its Afrophobia— is not a new chapter. It is a long, blood-stained novel. Between 1994 and March 2024, xenophobic attacks resulted in 669 deaths, 5,310 looted shops, and the displacement of 127,572 people, according to Xenowatch, a monitoring project at the University of the Witwatersrand. The most catastrophic single episode occurred in May 2008, when violence erupted in at least 135 locations across the country, killing more than 60 people. Since then, the violence has never truly stopped. It has merely paused to reload.

What distinguishes the current crisis from previous waves is its scale of organisation, its brazenness, its political emboldening, and its growing diplomatic consequences. In 2026, South Africa is not just a country with a xenophobia problem. It is a country whose xenophobia problem is rewriting its relationship with the African continent, threatening its economic standing, and exposing a fundamental contradiction at the heart of its national identity: a nation that was liberated by African solidarity now hunts down Africans in its streets.

This article examines the historical roots, the current explosion, the geopolitical fallout, the economic paradoxes, and the path forward. It does so not to condemn South Africa, but to confront it with the truth it urgently needs to hear.

**A History Written in Blood: The Making of South Africa's Afrophobia**

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By the mid-1990s, as South Africa opened its borders and positioned itself as a beacon of African freedom, migrants from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and other nations began arriving in significant numbers. They came for the same reasons migrants anywhere in the world move: to escape conflict, economic collapse, and hopelessness. They settled in the same townships and informal settlements where the poorest South Africans lived. And in those crowded, under-resourced communities, friction was inevitable. What was not inevitable was the violence. The 2008 pogrom demonstrated that xenophobic violence in South Africa was not spontaneous combustion; it was organised, targeted, and purposeful. Research by the African Centre for Migration and Society consistently showed that attacks were not random but structured. Local 'committees' identified foreign targets, coordinated attacks, and enforced a logic of ethnic cleansing in the township. The motive was not merely criminal. It was ideological.

That ideology — that foreign Africans are an existen-

tial threat to South African Black people — has proven stubbornly persistent. It resurged in 2015, killing seven in Durban and Johannesburg. It returned in 2019, when attacks in Johannesburg triggered retaliatory violence against South African businesses in Nigeria. And it has now returned with renewed ferocity in 2026, emboldened by organised movements, social media amplification, and the dangerous silence of political leaders.

**The 2026 Crisis: Organised Hatred in the Age of Social Media**

The current wave of violence did not arrive without warning. Since 2024, South Africa's deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, including an unemployment rate hovering above 31 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025 and youth unemployment reaching a catastrophic 43.8 percent, have provided fertile ground for anti-immigrant mobilisation. Two vigilante formations have emerged at the centre of the current storm: Operation Dudula and a newer movement called March and March.

Operation Dudula, whose name derives from the isiZulu word meaning 'to push back' or 'to bulldoze', was founded around 2021 in Soweto. Its stated priorities include constitutional reforms, the mass deportation of undocumented migrants, and what it terms 'economic

empowerment'. In November 2025, the South Gauteng High Court issued an injunction against Operation Dudula, prohibiting members from blocking foreign nationals from accessing healthcare facilities. Judge Leicester Adams, in ruling against the group, declared without ambiguity: human dignity has no nationality.

The court order did not stop the violence. In April and May 2026, March and March organised demonstrations across South Africa targeting foreign-owned businesses, demanding, in their own words, that 'all foreigners, documented or not' leave the country. The organisation's communications on social media platforms were unambiguous. 'We are xenophobic,' read one widely circulated message. Social media became an accelerant. Videos showing migrants— including legal residents— being harassed, having their documents demanded, and being expelled from their homes spread across WhatsApp groups and social media platforms, triggering diplomatic protests from multiple African governments.

Human Rights Watch, in a report released in May 2026, documented a pattern that extended well beyond physical violence. Foreign nationals reported sustained intimidation, unlawful evictions from their homes, workplace discrimination, police extortion, and denial of access to healthcare and other basic services. The organisation's warnings were echoed

by Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia, whose media coordinator Mike Ndlovu stated that 'reports of intimidation, threats, harassment, unlawful evictions, workplace discrimination, police extortion, and denial of access to healthcare and other basic services' were arriving continuously through community networks.

What makes the 2026 crisis particularly alarming is the mainstreaming of anti-migrant language. Anti-migrant campaigns have increasingly framed their activities as community protection, 'clean-up operations', or responses to legitimate security concerns. This linguistic strategy is not innocent. By couching xenophobia in the vocabulary of civic responsibility, these movements legitimise exclusion, lower the threshold for violence, and make it easier for ordinary people to participate in what is, in essence, ethnic persecution.

**The Economic Fallacy: Will Foreigners Leaving Create Jobs?**

The central argument of the anti-immigrant movement— that foreign nationals steal South African jobs, drain public services, and drive up crime— is the most emotionally powerful and the most empirically hollow claim in the entire debate. It deserves rigorous exam-

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## African News

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• That ideology — that foreign Africans are an existential threat to South African Black people — has proven stubbornly persistent. It resurged in 2015, killing seven in Durban and Johannesburg. It returned in 2019, when attacks in Johannesburg triggered retaliatory violence against South African businesses in Nigeria. And it has now returned with renewed ferocity in 2026, emboldened by organised movements, social media amplification, and the dangerous silence of political leaders.

ination, because millions of South Africans believe it sincerely, and their belief, even if mistaken, reflects a real experience of economic suffering.

South Africa's unemployment crisis is real, structural, and severe. An official unemployment rate of 31.4 percent in Q4 2025, combined with youth unemployment at 43.8 percent, places the country among the most economically distressed in the world. Millions of South Africans live in poverty, lack access to quality education, and compete for a shrinking pool of formal employment. In that context, the presence of visible foreign traders, shopkeepers, and workers creates an understandable sense of displacement.

But correlation is not causation, and grievance is not analysis. South Africa's unemployment crisis is rooted not in immigration but in structural economic failure: a growth rate too weak to absorb its expanding labour force, an education system that produces graduates without market-relevant skills, logistical and energy infrastructure that throttles business expansion, and the long-unaddressed spatial inequality inherited from apartheid. Removing every foreign national from South Africa tomorrow would not create a single new job unless the underlying structural failures were simultaneously addressed.

The research evidence on this point is unambiguous. Studies consistently show that migrants do not take jobs from South Africans but rather fill niches in the labour market that South Africans are either unwilling or structurally unequipped to occupy. In many townships, foreign-owned small shops extend operating hours, offer credit to poor customers, and provide goods at competitive prices. Their removal would not enrich local communities; it would impoverish them.

A study in the South African Social Attitudes Survey found that citizens dissatisfied with government performance were still, to a significant degree, welcoming of immigrants. This suggests that the anger driving xenophobia is primarily directed at government failure, with migrants functioning as a proxy target—easier to see and confront than the ab-



South Africa's Afrophobia

stract failures of the state. As researcher Carolyn Chisadza observed, xenophobia in South Africa appears to be a result of negative spillovers from false narratives surrounding immigrants, particularly in a climate where competition for economic resources intensifies under conditions of scarcity.

By 2022, South Africa had approximately 2.4 million immigrants in a population of 63 million—roughly 3.8 percent of the population. The notion that this relatively small percentage of people, many of whom are themselves vulnerable and living in poverty, is responsible for South Africa's decades-long economic underperformance is not merely incorrect. It is a dangerous fiction that serves to protect the actual architects of South African poverty—failed policy, state capture, corruption, and apartheid's unfinished economic legacy—from accountability.

South Africa's business landscape tells a further story. South African corporations — MTN Group, Standard Bank, Shoprite, SABMiller — have expanded aggressively across the African continent for three decades, generating billions of rands in profit from markets across Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and beyond. South African investors, South African brands, and South African workers depend on continental access. That access is now under direct threat from the very violence that

anti-immigrant groups promote as economic liberation.

Diplomatic Earthquake: When Pretoria Loses Africa

The geopolitical consequences of South Africa's xenophobia crisis have now moved from the realm of diplomatic concern to active crisis management. In 2026, South Africa is no longer merely embarrassed on the continental stage. It is diplomatically isolated, economically threatened, and forced to answer to its neighbours as though it were the accused rather than the continental elder.

Ghana moved first and most loudly. Accra summoned South Africa's acting High Commissioner over xenophobic incidents targeting foreign nationals, framing the move explicitly as a betrayal of the African solidarity that Ghana extended to South Africa during the anti-apartheid struggle. The diplomatic protest carried a moral weight that no amount of South African government assurance could deflect. Ghana's message was clear: you were liberated by African solidarity, and you are repaying that solidarity with machetes and evictions.

Nigeria followed. The Nigerians in Diaspora Commission issued urgent calls for South African authorities to act against the violence. Nigeria's Federal Government began evacuating affected

citizens, with at least 270 Nigerians expected as the first batch of returnees. Mozambique and Malawi, whose nationals have historically formed large parts of South Africa's migrant population, also raised formal concerns through diplomatic channels. Zimbabwe condemned the violence and urged its large diaspora population in South Africa to exercise caution.

The economic dimensions of the diplomatic fallout are significant. South African companies, including MTN Group and Standard Bank—both of which derive substantial revenues from operations across Africa—faced calls for boycotts in multiple countries. South African artists reported cancelled performances and growing public hostility across the continent. In Ghana, protesters formally called on their government to reconsider the future of South African business interests, including Gold Fields' significant mining operations. The message was unmistakable: African states are prepared to use economic leverage to respond to the mistreatment of their citizens.

South Africa's Justice Minister, Mmamoloko Kubayi, acknowledged that recurring xenophobic violence is damaging the country's international reputation and weakening regional relations. Yet acknowledgement without decisive action is insufficient. South Africa currently holds significant

institutional weight in African governance structures, including the African Union and the Southern African Development Community. That weight is eroding. A country that cannot protect African migrants within its borders forfeits the moral authority to lead African institutions.

The timing could not be more damaging. The African Continental Free Trade Area, which positions Africa as a \$3.4 trillion economic zone built on free movement of people, goods, and capital, depends fundamentally on a culture of regional solidarity and mutual respect. South Africa, as one of the continent's most industrialised economies, was expected to be among the primary architects and beneficiaries of that integration. Instead, it has become the most powerful argument against it. As one analysis from African Vibes noted pointedly: how can Africa unite its markets if it cannot protect its people?

The Role of Political Leaders: Silence as Complicity

Leadership in a democracy has two dimensions: what leaders do and what they say. In South Africa's xenophobia crisis, political leadership has failed on both counts, though the failure is not uniform.

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## African News

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## Worth Noting:

• The current wave of violence did not arrive without warning. Since 2024, South Africa's deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, including an unemployment rate hovering above 31 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025 and youth unemployment reaching a catastrophic 43.8 percent, have provided fertile ground for anti-immigrant mobilisation. Two vigilante formations have emerged at the centre of the current storm: Operation Dudula and a newer movement called March and March.

• Operation Dudula, whose name derives from the isiZulu word meaning 'to push back' or 'to bulldoze', was founded around 2021 in Soweto. Its stated priorities include constitutional reforms, the mass deportation of undocumented migrants, and what it terms 'economic empowerment'. In November 2025, the South Gauteng High Court issued an injunction against Operation Dudula, prohibiting members from blocking foreign nationals from accessing healthcare facilities. Judge Leicester Adams, in ruling against the group, declared without ambiguity: human dignity has no nationality.

During the May 2024 general elections, several candidates for political office adopted harmful anti-immigrant rhetoric, scapegoating foreign nationals in ways that heightened the risk of xenophobic violence. Operation Dudula emerged as a political party contesting elections on an explicitly anti-migrant platform. The mainstreaming of anti-immigration politics — the transformation of hatred into campaign strategy — marks a dangerous inflection point. When political parties compete for votes by promising to remove foreigners, they normalise the idea that violence against those foreigners is, at worst, a misguided but understandable response to legitimate grievances.

The *Frontiers in Political Science* journal noted this dynamic with precision: the securitisation of African immigrants is being used as a deflection strategy to camouflage failures of governance. Immigrants are scapegoated to allow the government to posture as taking action on citizens' concerns— specifically crime and unemployment— while avoiding accountability for its own failures in delivering economic opportunity and public services.

President Cyril Ramaphosa and responsible members of the cabinet have spoken out against xenophobia on multiple occasions. The South Gauteng High Court's intervention against Operation Dudula demonstrates that legal institutions retain both the capacity and the will to act. But institutional responses have been insufficient to change the culture. Words from the presidency have not been matched by prosecutions of vigilante leaders, the systematic dismantling of anti-immigrant networks, or an honest national conversation about the structural failures that have made scapegoating so politically profitable.

Africa's continental leaders have also been conspicuous in their restraint. The African Union, an institution founded on the principle of African solidarity, has been slow to apply meaningful institutional pressure on Pretoria. Beyond individual government protests, there has been no coordinated African response: no emergency summit, no for-



South Africa's Afrophobia

mal censure, no structured framework for protecting African migrants in member states. This institutional silence is itself a form of complicity. The world is watching. The leaders are watching. And what they are watching is inaction dressed as diplomacy.

Is South Africa Becoming a Lone Wolf?

The question is uncomfortable but necessary. Is South Africa, the continent's most powerful economy and its most celebrated post-colonial democracy, in the process of severing itself from the Pan-African family that sustained its liberation?

The evidence suggests that, at the community and political level, a significant segment of South African society has already answered this question in the affirmative. The slogans of Operation Dudula — 'Put South Africans First', 'South Africa for South Africans' — carry an unmistakable echo of the exceptionalism that historically defined apartheid South Africa's relationship with the rest of the continent. The irony is not lost on those who remember that anti-apartheid movements operated from Lusaka, Harare, Dar es Salaam, and Luanda, and that African states provided sanctuary, training, and political recognition to the ANC in exile for decades.

Ghana's diplomatic formulation was the sharpest articulation of this irony: that South Africa's current treatment of African migrants constitutes a betrayal of the solidarity that made South African freedom possible. Nigeria sacrificed. Mozambique sheltered exiles. Tanzania gave land. And now South Africa is driving their nationals from its townships with machetes.

The lone wolf metaphor, however, requires qualification. South Africa's civil society, its judiciary, its academic institutions, and significant portions of its political class continue to resist xenophobia and advocate for migrants' rights. The High Court ruling against Operation Dudula is not a trivial event; it reflects an institutional refusal to surrender to vigilante nationalism. Organisations such as Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia represent South Africans who understand that the violence committed in their name does not represent them.

South Africa is not uniformly xenophobic. It is a country in which xenophobia has been allowed to organise, mobilise, and act while institutions respond too slowly and leaders speak too quietly. That distinction matters because it determines whether the country can be pulled back from the edge or whether it has already fallen.

The Deadly Ground: Hu-

man Rights in Collapse

For African migrants in South Africa, the country has, in significant parts, become exactly what the question posed at the opening of this article suggests: deadly ground. The statistics compiled by Xenowatch — 669 deaths, more than 5,000 looted businesses, and over 127,000 displacements between 1994 and 2024 — describe not an occasional crisis but a sustained campaign of terror against a specific demographic category. That campaign has continued and intensified since 2024. The violence is not limited to physical assault. Foreign nationals report being evicted from their homes by mobs in the night. They describe police officers who stand by during attacks or who demand bribes rather than offering protection. They report being denied access to public hospitals by groups affiliated with Operation Dudula, even as courts issue injunctions against such conduct. They describe discrimination in the formal labour market that pushes them into the informal economy and then face further attack for operating there.

For refugee and asylum-seeking populations, the situation carries additional legal dimensions. South Africa is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

It is bound by the African Union's 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The denial of healthcare, education, and basic services to refugees and asylum seekers, as documented by Human Rights Watch and Xenowatch, constitutes a violation of South Africa's binding international legal obligations. It is not merely a moral failure; it is a legal one.

Children of foreign nationals in South Africa face particular vulnerability. Reports document incidents of school-age children of migrants being denied access to public education. In a country that has itself enacted laws to ensure access to basic education, the exclusion of children from schooling on the basis of their parents' nationality is a profound institutional failure. Children do not choose their parents' nationality. They should not pay the price for it.

A Path Forward: Solutions for a Continental Crisis

The xenophobia crisis in South Africa is not unsolvable. It is, in fact, the kind of problem that responds to sustained political will, institutional reform, economic investment, and cultural transformation. What

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## African News

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it does not respond to is silence, half-measures, or the management of appearances. The following recommendations are addressed to South Africa, to the African Union, and to the international community.

## 1. Political Leadership Must Be Unambiguous and Sustained

South Africa's president and cabinet must move beyond periodic condemnations toward a sustained, public, and politically costly rejection of anti-immigrant violence and rhetoric. This means refusing to compete with anti-immigrant parties on their own terrain, explicitly naming and condemning vigilante groups by name, and making the prosecution of hate crimes and vigilante violence a national priority. It also means commissioning and publicly responding to a National Xenophobia Commission with investigative powers and binding recommendations.

## 2. Prosecute the Organisers, Not Just the Perpetrators

South Africa's criminal justice system must distinguish between the individuals who participate in xenophobic attacks and the networks that organise them. The leaders of March and March and Operation Dudula who have incited, coordinated, and celebrated violence must face criminal accountability. The High Court injunction against Operation Dudula is a necessary but insufficient step. Sustained prosecution of the leadership structures is required to dismantle the organisational capacity of these movements.

## 3. Address the Structural Economic Crisis as the Urgent Priority

The most sustainable solution to xenophobia is a South African economy that generates enough employment to reduce the scarcity that makes scapegoating politically viable. This requires substantive structural economic reform: fixing the energy infrastructure that has cost South Africa an estimated two percentage points of annual growth, investing in technical and vocational education that matches labour market demand, tackling the spatial exclusion that traps millions



South Africa's Afrophobia

of Black South Africans far from economic opportunity, and prosecuting the corruption and state capture that have hollowed out public services.

## 4. Reform Immigration Management Without Militarising Borders

South Africa has a legitimate interest in managing its borders and enforcing immigration law. The problem is not that it enforces immigration rules; it is that immigration enforcement has been effectively delegated to vigilante groups whose methods are illegal and whose targets include documented migrants and long-term residents. The government must invest in a professional, rights-respecting immigration service capable of distinguishing between undocumented migrants and refugees, and between criminals and traders. It must also provide clear, accessible pathways to legal status for migrants who have long-standing ties to South African communities.

## 5. Education and Cultural Transformation

The false narratives that drive xenophobia — that migrants take jobs, drive crime, and drain resources — are sustained by ignorance and amplified by social media. South Africa's education system must incorporate migration literacy and human rights education as core components of citi-

zenship education. Community dialogue programmes that bring South African citizens and migrant communities into structured contact have shown early evidence of effectiveness in changing attitudes. The research by Freirean-inspired education scholars suggests that dialogue, rather than confrontation, is the most durable tool for humanising migrants in the eyes of communities that have been taught to fear them.

## 6. The African Union Must Act Institutionally

Individual government protests, however justified, are insufficient to compel a change in South Africa's behaviour. The African Union must develop a binding framework for the protection of African migrants in member states, with monitoring mechanisms, reporting requirements, and consequences for non-compliance. The free-movement of persons protocol under the AfCFTA must be accompanied by a protection protocol that guarantees the safety of African citizens living outside their countries of birth. The AU cannot campaign for continental integration while remaining institutionally silent when its citizens are killed for crossing borders.

## 7. The International Community Must Not Look Away

South Africa's international partners, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the European Union, the Commonwealth, and bilateral partners, must be prepared to link diplomatic and development relationships to measurable progress in protecting migrant rights. Travel advisories from affected countries, while disruptive, have a role to play in signalling international disapproval. But beyond signalling, South Africa's international partners must offer technical and financial support for the structural economic reforms that represent the long-term solution to the crisis.

## Conclusion: The Mirror South Africa Must Face

South Africa stands before a mirror, and what it sees must disturb it. A nation that achieved its freedom through solidarity is destroying the solidarity of others. A nation that was sheltered in the townships of Lusaka and the universities of Dar es Salaam is burning the shops of those who might be the children of those who once offered shelter. A nation whose Constitution is one of the most progressive in the world is watching that Constitution be mocked by vigilantes in the streets of Johannesburg and Durban while its leaders manage public relations.

The crisis is real. The deaths

are real. The displacements are real. The diplomatic damage is real. The economic threat is real. And the solution, while difficult, is knowable.

South Africa must choose what kind of country it wishes to be. It can continue to allow xenophobia to organize and escalate until it faces economic isolation, diplomatic expulsion from continental institutions, and an irreversible fracture in its relationships with 53 African neighbours. Or it can confront its demons with the same moral courage that characterised its negotiated transition from apartheid—acknowledging historical failure, building new institutional frameworks, and investing in the long-term project of a truly non-racial, non-xenophobic democracy.

The continent is watching. The world is watching. African migrants are watching— from their hospital beds, from their burned-out shops, from the police stations where they sought refuge, from the airports where they are being evacuated. They are watching to see whether South Africa remembers what it owes. They are watching to see whether 'Africa for Africans' is a principle or merely a slogan. The answer will define South Africa's place in Africa—and Africa's future—for a generation.

## Worth Noting:

- Human Rights Watch, in a report released in May 2026, documented a pattern that extended well beyond physical violence. Foreign nationals reported sustained intimidation, unlawful evictions from their homes, workplace discrimination, police extortion, and denial of access to healthcare and other basic services. The organisation's warnings were echoed by Kopanang Africa Against Xenophobia, whose media coordinator Mike Ndlovu stated that 'reports of intimidation, threats, harassment, unlawful evictions, workplace discrimination, police extortion, and denial of access to healthcare and other basic services' were arriving continuously through community networks.

- What makes the 2026 crisis particularly alarming is the mainstreaming of anti-migrant language. Anti-immigrant campaigns have increasingly framed their activities as community protection, 'clean-up operations', or responses to legitimate security concerns. This linguistic strategy is not innocent. By couching xenophobia in the vocabulary of civic responsibility, these movements legitimise exclusion, lower the threshold for violence, and make it easier for ordinary people to participate in what is, in essence, ethnic persecution.

## WORLD

# How the corporate world's star Swati turned her home into a sanctuary for the voiceless

By: Pragatee Gupta  
@themtkenyatimes

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## Worth Noting:

- She rescues voiceless beings where most walk away, treating their wounds, nursing them back to health, and giving them dignity and a second chance at life.
- In a time when compassion often survives only in words and social media captions, Swati lives it every day.
- What makes her story extraordinary is not fame, wealth, or institutional backing. Without government support or large funding, she continues her mission purely through courage, sacrifice, and unconditional love for the voiceless. Maybe that's what makes Swati different.
- In Kashi, amid temples and prayers, lives a woman quietly proving that humanity still exists, sometimes in the form of someone who chooses animals over comfort, kindness over convenience, and love over everything else. Salute to such a spirit, a woman whose heart became a home for the abandoned.

by human cruelty, neglect, or abandonment.

The most remarkable part of her journey is this: none of these animals was bought. Every single one was rescued, showing her resilience and inspiring the audience to consider their own role in animal welfare.

Behind their wounded bodies lie untold stories of betrayal. Their scars speak of stones thrown in anger, roads crossed in pain, hunger endured in silence, and humanity forgotten at the hands of those meant to protect them.

Yet Swati chose differently. She rescues voiceless beings where most walk away, treating their wounds, nursing them back to health, and giving them dignity and a second chance at life.

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In Kashi, amid temples and prayers, lives a woman quietly proving that humanity still exists, sometimes in the form of someone who chooses animals over comfort, kindness over convenience, and love over everything else. Salute to such a spirit, a woman whose heart became a home for the abandoned.

Born on 10 October 1980 in Varanasi, Swati's family hails from Darbhanga (Bihar). Though her journey later took her across some of India's biggest cities and corporate spaces, her emotional connection with animals began long before success, degrees, or professional titles entered her life.

She completed her schooling at Sunbeam School, Bhagwanpur, before pursuing higher education in Jaipur and later management studies in Delhi, where she completed her post-graduation.

Her career reflected ambition, versatility, and achievement. She was an air hostess with Air India and later gained experience with leading corporate brands, in-



A rescued female monkey named Ramaiya inspired a mission of compassion.

cluding Reliance Industries and Mumbai's renowned Grand Hyatt Mumbai.

Alongside her corporate career, Swati quietly volunteered for animal welfare organisations. Even during the busiest phases of professional life, whether working in hospitality, media-related projects, management roles, or multinational Companies, her connection with rescued animals never faded.

She has also pursued an MBA in Mumbai and worked with media and entertainment platforms, including Pogo, building a career many would describe as successful and dynamic. Yet despite exposure to glamour, travel, and corporate achievement, her heart consistently returned to one purpose: caring for beings who could not speak for themselves.

Swati's family today is spread across different parts of the world, including a sister settled in Canada.

Interestingly, beyond her corporate and rescue work, Swati is also associated with the medical field, another reflection of her instinct to heal and care.

Her story started much earlier, before degrees, careers, and city life.

Swati explains her love for animals was innate, not learned, highlighting her deep-rooted compassion that guides her actions every day.

When Swati was two or three years old, the family had a German Shepherd at

home. At an age when most children feared large dogs, little Swati would crawl fearlessly toward him and quietly fall asleep on the dog's stomach.

When her mother entered the room, she would gently lift her away, but the comfort and trust between the child and the animal spoke volumes.

Growing up, Swati spent time at her grandparents' home surrounded by animals, horses, elephants, dogs, birds, and countless living beings who were treated not as possessions, but as family.

Watching elders care for animals with respect and affection touched her heart. That childhood affection transformed into something far greater: an emotional bond, a responsibility, and eventually, a life mission.

For Swati, animals were never "just animals." They became emotions, companions, and souls worthy of love.

Compassion arrived naturally, quietly becoming part of everyday life long before she even realised it.

As a child, Swati lived with her family in different parts of Varanasi. Yet no matter where the family moved, caring for stray dogs and cats continued. They became part of her world.

While most children spent their afternoons playing with toys, Swati spent hers feeding street animals outside her home. Sometimes there was little food to spare, but that never stopped her.



Comfort zone for depressed street dogs, Swati Blellani is always there to ensure their welfare.



A moment of trust between wounded wings and healing hands

She admits that on many occasions, she would secretly take milk and bread from the kitchen to feed hungry animals waiting outside.

Slowly, an unusual bond formed. The stray dogs and cats grew attached to her: they no longer remained "outside animals." They started entering the house freely, sitting near her doors and windows as though they belonged there. Some even trusted her enough to give birth to their babies inside or around her home, choosing safety in the presence of a little girl whose kindness they somehow understood. Wherever Swati's family moved, animals followed her emotionally. New streets meant new rescues, new feeding routines, and new silent friendships. Caring for injured or hungry animals did not feel extraordinary to her.

There were days when Swati would even share her own

meals with animals before eating herself. Her parents often worried and scolded her for becoming too emotionally attached, unable to understand why their daughter constantly prioritised stray animals over her own comfort.

But she was quietly lost in a world where love for voiceless beings felt completely normal to her. Perhaps even then, without knowing it, the "Mowgli Girl of Kashi" was already beginning to take shape.

For Swati, leaving behind the structured world of multinational companies was never a sudden rebellion against corporate life. In many ways, the transition had already begun quietly within her long before anyone noticed it.

Even while studying or

Contd Page 15

WORLD

# How the corporate world's star Swati turned her home into a sanctuary for the voiceless

Contd from Page 14  
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working outside Varanasi, one habit remained constant wherever Swati travelled: she instinctively sought out organisations working with injured and abandoned animals.

While others explored cities through cafés, malls, or tourist attractions, Swati explored them through rescue networks. She recalls that during her years in corporate roles and professional studies, she often connected with local animal welfare teams to help rescue animals.

Whether it was feeding, treatment support, emergency rescues or basic care, she never wanted to remain distant from the world she belonged to emotionally. She volunteered with several NGOs and animal shelters, offering her time without seeking recognition.

She already knew how to comfort frightened animals, handle injured strays, and build trust with creatures most people feared or ignored.

She joined shelters and rescue groups with the humility of a learner eager to deepen her knowledge, understand medical care, improve rescue techniques, and contribute more effectively to animal welfare.

For Swati, this was never "social work" performed occasionally for satisfaction. It was a lifelong emotional responsibility that quietly followed her through every phase of life, from classrooms to corporate offices, from airports to rescue shelters. And perhaps that is why the decision to move closer toward rescue work never truly felt difficult to her. Perhaps the most difficult phase of her life was not financial struggle, professional pressure, but the growing realisation that the life she was living and the life she truly wanted were slowly diverging.

Amid the fast-moving world of Mumbai's multinational companies and corporate expectations, an uncomfortable truth began to take shape within her. Deep down, she knew that if she continued to chase corporate success endlessly, she might never be able to dedicate herself to what her heart had wanted since childhood: serving animals.

She imagined owning a large home someday filled not with luxury, but with life. Dogs, cats, cows, goats, hens, birds, and injured creatures living safely under one roof.

Years later, around the age of thirty-three, that childhood dream began turning into reality. The deeper she entered the world of rescue work, the more strongly she felt an emotional connection with animals. She believed that just as she could sense their fear, suffering, and emotions, the animals, too, somehow understood her presence, voice, and silence.

From then on, it became part of her



Swati Bellani and our writer Pragtee Gupta (left) with the street dog named Gattu, who was rescued after a hard kite string accidentally wrapped around his neck.

life. The journey, however, was never free from struggle.

Financial pressure, emotional exhaustion, and social criticism hit her.

Yet perhaps the hardest part was continuing despite the lack of meaningful support from the systems meant to protect animals. She said neither society nor government institutions consistently stood beside people working to rescue animals.

She is visibly upset about situations where stray animals were removed from streets and confined to overcrowded shelters in the name of control.

In these places, freedom, safety, and proper care often vanished. For someone who believed animals deserved dignity, not imprisonment, it was deeply disturbing.

Without stable financial backing, she sacrificed her comforts, arranging food, medicines, treatment, and shelter for so many rescued lives.

Sometimes, support came quietly from family members, close friends, relatives, and even strangers who stepped forward to help.

This strengthened her faith that kindness existed in the world.

At times, social judgment followed

her. People questioned her choices constantly. Why spend life cleaning after stray dogs and cats? How long could a single woman continue living this way? Why remain surrounded by rescued animals instead of building a "normal" life? The remarks were often cruel, personal, and dismissive. It was easy to criticise; people seldom offered support. It was tough for a woman managing not only wounded animals but also the emotional weight of human behaviour, balancing compassion, loneliness, responsibility, and resilience with remarkable strength.

Despite years of rescue work, she admits there is always a limit to how much one person can physically handle.

Her doors remain open at all hours for any voiceless creature in need. On an average day, she rescues nearly six to eight animals or birds, depending on the emergency.

Many of these rescues occur on the city's streets, where injured strays are often left to suffer unnoticed beside busy roads and crowded lanes. She frequently treats the wounded animals on-site whenever possible. But when their condition appears critical, she brings them home, turning her living space into an emergency healing area.



Love does not ask species before showing kindness. This street dog survivor has chosen love over fear.



Rescued street cats and kittens find solace in the Bellani household under the watchful eye of Swati

She has strong connections with doctors and vets who provide treatment tailored to each animal's medical condition. Medicines, recovery care, feeding schedules, and emotional comfort all become part of a routine that rarely pauses.

But sadly, for many abandoned animals, help does not first arrive through institutions. It arrives through one woman's rescue mission around the clock.

When asked whether there was one particular rescue that remained closest to her heart, she said that choosing just one was impossible. She says every voiceless soul that entered her home carried a story of its own. Some arrived broken and healed against all odds. Some brought laughter, leaving behind unforgettable moments.

Others became silent miracles as she continued to struggle to explain in words. And there were also those whose journeys ended naturally, leaving behind memories so deep

that even today their absence is quietly felt inside the home they once occupied.

They became chapters of life. Each scar carried a history. Each recovery carried emotion. Each goodbye carried pain.

Behind the walls of this unusual sanctuary exist stories far more powerful than rescue statistics or social media photographs, stories of survival, loyalty, loss, healing, and a form of love rarely spoken about in modern life.

*Pragatee Gupta is a national award-winning Indian journalist, writer and photographer. Photos by Pragatee Gupta*

*Editing: Shamlal Puri, Senior Editor, London*

## Diaspora

# What we do not know about Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh

*The first translation of the Quran into the Azerbaijani language was an idea proposed by German Emperor Wilhelm II*



By: Prof. Dr. Tarana Turan Rahimli  
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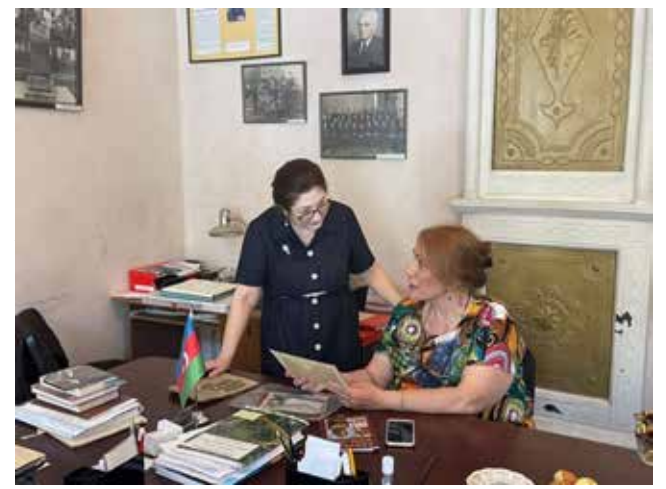
## Worth Noting:

- Numerous scholarly works have been written about the distinguished representatives of the Talibzadeh family. Following the collapse of the Soviet Empire, many truths became clear, and important facts and documents were brought to light.
- Among such developments were the compilation and publication in 2004 by his son, Academician Kamal Talibzadeh, of Abdulla Shaig's collection "From Araz to Turan" (Arazdan Turana), consisting of poems that had remained hidden from the literary world for many years and that promoted the ideology of Turkism; the writing of Professor Dr. Minakhanim Asadli's fundamental scholarly study on the life and activities of Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh, whose name had been prohibited for seventy years; the simultaneous opening of a Yusif Ziya exhibition at the Abdulla Shaig House-Museum;

The Talibzadeh family, which made significant contributions to Azerbaijani literature, science, military affairs, and politics, has played an exceptionally important role in the national and cultural history of the East as a whole. Beginning with Suleyman Talibzadeh, one of the distinguished intellectuals and religious scholars of his era; Akhund Mustafa Talibzadeh, Deputy Sheikh ul-Islam of Transcaucasia, Chief Qadi of the Caucasus Province, and author of comprehensive Sharia textbooks; General Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh, a prominent Turkist, Islamist, publicist, translator, educator, poet, playwright, military officer, diplomat, and the First Military Commissar of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic; Abdulla Shaig, one of the leading figures of twentieth-century Azerbaijani culture, one of the founders of schooling in the native language, the teacher of a great generation of intellectuals, a prominent representative of national Romanticism, an enlightened intellectual, poet, playwright, prose writer, publicist, and public figure; Academician Kamal Talibzadeh, the founder of the school of criticism studies in Azerbaijani literary scholarship, who enriched our literary and theoretical heritage through his multifaceted scholarly activity; and extending to representatives of the younger generation, including Associate Professor Ulkar Talibzadeh, PhD in Art Studies, and the young diplomat Farah Acalova, members of this great family have honorably served the development of Azerbaijan in various fields of activity. Numerous scholarly works have been written about the distinguished representatives of the Talibzadeh family. Following the collapse of the Soviet Empire, many truths became clear, and important facts and documents were brought to light. Among such developments were the compilation and publication in 2004 by his son, Academician Kamal Talibzadeh, of Abdulla Shaig's collection "From Araz to Turan" (Arazdan Turana), consisting of poems that had remained hidden from the literary

world for many years and that promoted the ideology of Turkism; the writing of Professor Dr. Minakhanim Asadli's fundamental scholarly study on the life and activities of Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh, whose name had been prohibited for seventy years; the simultaneous opening of a Yusif Ziya exhibition at the Abdulla Shaig House-Museum; the discovery in archival records in 2019 of historical documents confirming that Abdulla Shaig, together with Ahmad Javad and Tagi Nagizadeh, was one of the founders of the "Turkish Hearth" (Türk Ocağı) in 1918; and many other facts and innovations of a similar nature. The visit in May 2023 of our compatriot Rayana Malikaslanova, who resides in the Netherlands, to the Abdulla Shaig House-Museum also brought to light a number of interesting facts concerning the Talibzadeh family that had previously been unknown to the Azerbaijani public. Meeting with the Museum's Director, Associate Professor Ulkar Talibzadeh, PhD in Art Studies, and granddaughter of Abdulla Shaig, Rayana Malikaslanova revealed previously unknown truths about the Talibzadeh family and also spoke of highly significant historical events related to Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh. A compatriot who spoke about the relations between Abdulla Shaig and Akhund Yusif Ziya and the Nasirbeyov family—one of the long-established families of Karabakh—stated that her grandmother's father, Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov, was originally from Qubadli, while her mother, Mina khanum Zohrabbeyova, was from Shusha. Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov, who worked in Baku as the police chief (pristav) of the Second District and owned a house in Chemberekend, on the site of today's Cabinet of Ministers, had three daughters—Sona khanum Nasirbeyova (after marriage, Malikaslanova), Tovuz khanum Nasirbeyova (after marriage, Vezirova), and Malak khanum Nasirbeyova (after marriage, Cuvarlinski)—and one son. After losing his son at a very young age, the father placed great importance on the upbringing and

education of his daughters and entrusted their religious and secular education to the most prominent teachers of the time, such as Abdulla Shaig and Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh. Speaking about the connections of her great-grandfather with the Talibzadeh family, Rayana Malikaslanova's remarks about the personality of Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov and his love for his people demonstrate the shared values from which these friendly relations originated. Speaking about Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov, who had earned great respect among the people and held a distinguished position within the Azerbaijani elite of his time, she states: "Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov was a great philanthropist. He had a mosque built in Fuzuli (the city of Fuzuli in the Karabakh region), and the architect of that mosque was a man named Karbalay Safikhan. He also had a qanat (underground water channel) constructed next to the mosque, as well as a cultural club in Fuzuli and a mill in the village of Shikhimli. After Haji Alekbar bey passed away, the people of Fuzuli, out of their immense respect for him, buried him inside the mosque that he had built. In fact, during his lifetime, Haji Alekbar bey had bequeathed that he be buried at the entrance of the mosque so that people coming to pray would step on his chest as they entered the mosque. However, the local people did not agree to this, and he was buried inside the mosque. Unfortunately, that mosque no longer exists today, and we have no information whatsoever about the current condition of my great-grandfather's grave." During the years when Haji Alekbar bey served as a district police chief (pristav) and lived in Baku with his family, Abdulla Shaig taught his daughters language and literature, while Shaig's brother, Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh, instructed them in Sharia studies. These distinguished educators, who taught the Nasirbeyov sisters at home around 1901–1902, left an indelible impression on their memories. Throughout her life, Sona khanum, the eldest daughter of the Nasirbeyov family,



own money. Let the children in Azerbaijani Turkish (to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ulkar Talibzadeh and Rayana Malikaslanova

of poor families attend that school." What Rayana Malikaslanova heard from her grandmother about her great-grandfather also sheds some light on the question of who initiated the first translation of our sacred book, the Holy Quran, into the Azerbaijani language. Interestingly, the idea of translating the Holy Quran into our language for the first time was not proposed by a Muslim, but by a historical figure who professed the Christian faith—German Emperor Wilhelm II. As is well known from history, this German emperor was recognized as a friend of the Turkic-Muslim world. Although he ascended the imperial throne at the age of twenty-nine, Wilhelm II astonished the world with his vigorous foreign policy. His support for the Ottoman Empire provoked discontent in many countries and even

together with its commentary, tafsir). The person who entrusted him with this honorable mission was Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev. For this purpose, Yusif Ziya traveled to Turkey in 1910, and in connection with that journey he wrote and published his "Letters from Turkey" (Türkiye Mektupları). Our compatriot living in the Netherlands notes that Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh was directly involved in the process of translating the Quran into Azerbaijani and in the implementation of this remarkable proposal made by German Emperor Wilhelm II. Rayana Malikaslanova states: "My grandmother's father, Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov, and Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev met German Emperor Wilhelm II either in Turkey or in Germany. While they were performing prayer there, Wilhelm



Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh

## Diaspora

# What we do not know about Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh

*The first translation of the Quran into the Azerbaijani language was an idea proposed by German Emperor Wilhelm II*

By: Diaspora Times Team  
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## Worth Noting:

- Speaking about the connections of her great-grandfather with the Talibzadeh family, Rayana Malikaslanova's remarks about the personality of Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov and his love for his people demonstrate the shared values from which these friendly relations originated.

- Speaking about Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov, who had earned great respect among the people and held a distinguished position within the Azerbaijani elite of his time, she states:

- "Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov was a great philanthropist. He had a mosque built in Fuzuli (the city of Fuzuli in the Karabakh region), and the architect of that mosque was a man named Karbalayi Safikhan. He also had a qanat (underground water channel) constructed next to the mosque, as well as a cultural club in Fuzuli and a mill in the village of Shikhimli. After Haji Alekbar bey passed away, the people of Fuzuli, out of their immense respect for him, buried him inside the mosque that he had built.

asked why the Quran was in Arabic and why it had not been translated into Azerbaijani. My grandfather and his companions explained to him that the Quran was in Arabic and that everyone performed prayers in Arabic. He then told them that if the Quran were translated and a copy were presented to him as a gift, he would be very pleased and would bestow generous rewards and valuable gifts upon the person who brought it to him. After they returned to Baku, Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev said to Haji Alekbar bey: 'Haji Alekbar bey, perhaps you could find someone capable of translating the Quran?' As one of the educated intellectuals of his time, possessing a university education and knowledge of several languages, my grandmother's father knew very well who could carry out this task with dignity and at the required level. He replied: 'I will approach Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh.' Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh introduced them to the person who translated the Quran, and the Quran was translated into Azerbaijani. This was the first Quran translated into Azerbaijani and it was published in 1904. One copy of that Quran is in our family and is now with my brother; yesterday I also saw another copy at the Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev House-Museum. According to my grandmother, one copy was presented to the Turkish Sultan and another to the German Emperor. These two copies—the Qurans gifted to the Turkish Sultan and the German Emperor—were adorned with precious jewels, and they were delivered to both rulers by Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh." Rayana Malikaslanova states that the first translation of the Quran into Azerbaijani was published in 1904. Studies devoted to Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh emphasize that the Quran which Yusif Ziya presented to Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II in 1910 had been printed in 1907. In reality, Mir Muhammad Karim Agha al-Bakuvi, the Qadi of Baku, who was the first person to translate the Holy Quran into Azerbaijani and to prepare a three-volume commentary (tafsir) on the sacred text, published the first and second volumes of

these works in 1904 and the third volume in 1906 at the Bakhariyeh Printing House of the newspaper Kaspi, with the support of Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev. It is also known that, as remuneration for this translation, Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev presented Mir Muhammad Karim Agha with an amount of gold equal in weight to the Quran and the three volumes of commentary. There are also sources indicating that this three-volume work—Kashful-Haqayiq ("The Unveiling of Truths"), the first Azerbaijani translation and commentary of the Quran, preserved among the rare books of the National Museum of Azerbaijani History of ANAS—was written by the same author between 1904 and 1918. An important new piece of information that we learn from Mrs. Rayana's account is that Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh was directly involved in the translation process and personally delivered the translation to the German Emperor. In order to determine whether this first translation into Azerbaijani was presented to the German Emperor in Turkey or in Germany, Rayana Malikaslanova has written to Germany and states that she is currently awaiting a reply. She has also traveled to the city of Utrecht in search of that Quran and notes: "Near the city of Utrecht there is a House-Museum of German Emperor Wilhelm II. After the First World War, he was expelled from Germany. The Dutch monarchs invited him to the Netherlands and gave him one of their palaces. I visited that palace in the hope of finding the Quran there. I spoke with the relevant individuals about it, but so far I have not received a response from them. I have also written to Germany regarding this matter. This is history—the history of our Azerbaijan. If that Quran is there, I would like it to be known in Germany that it was a gift from Azerbaijan. As I have heard, the Quran that was presented to the Ottoman Sultan is now in a museum in Turkey. I have not yet been there, but I intend to go, see that Quran as well, and share with them what I know." Ulkar Talibzadeh, grand-

daughter of Abdulla Shaig, Director of the Abdulla Shaig House-Museum, Associate Professor, and PhD in Art Studies, states that although she learned many facts about Yusif Ziya from her father, Academician Kamal Talibzadeh—the author of some of the most valuable studies on the Talibzadeh family—this information is new to her as well. She notes: "In the year my father was born, Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh was martyred. On 18 May 1923, he was seriously wounded in one of the battles against the Red Army and, while attempting to swim across the Amu Darya River together with his comrades, was shot in the back by the Bolsheviks. Later, Yusif Ziya's name was banned as that of an 'enemy of the people' and a bitter enemy of the Soviet state. People were afraid even to mention his name at home. Therefore, the children in the family scarcely heard his name at all. They knew only that they had such a relative. However, my father possessed certain information. Because he was the eldest son, Abdulla Shaig told him many things. Everything that is currently known about Yusif Ziya originates from what my father recounted. He, in turn, knew what he had heard from his own father, Abdulla Shaig. All documents relating to this great personality had been destroyed. Even his books were collected from private homes. The disappearance of his book About Russia, published in Russian, and of many of his other works, which are no longer available to us today, is connected with this. The fact that Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh is not sufficiently known and remains familiar only to a narrow circle of intellectuals is also a consequence of the deliberate effort to erase his name for many years. At present, the most important source on Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh is the doctoral dissertation and monograph written by Minakhanim Asadli. Regarding the Quran, we know that Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev was a close associate of Abdulla Shaig. Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh, meanwhile, was the teacher of Taghiyev's wife in the subject of Sharia. After the Quran had been translated, Taghiyev entrusted



Emperor Wilhelm II

Yusif Ziya with delivering it to Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid. Yusif Ziya led a group of people, and together they ceremonially presented the Quran, bound in a silver cover, to the Turkish Sultan." In her conversation with Ulkar Talibzadeh, Rayana Malikaslanova also emphasizes that it was Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev and Haji Alekbar bey Nasirbeyov who introduced the brothers Abdulla Shaig and Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh to one another. At the same time, she shares another interesting fact she learned from her grandmother Sona khanum. According to her account, when Yusif Ziya presented the Quran to the German Emperor, Wilhelm II rewarded him with numerous valuable gifts and precious jewels. However, upon Yusif Ziya's return to Azerbaijan, the authorities of the Russian-controlled state confiscated those gifts. Deeply offended by this incident, Yusif Ziya subsequently departed for Iran. Ulkar Talibzadeh notes that Yusif Ziya went to Khorasan and, after returning to Baku, was appointed Military Commissioner of Nakhchivan by Nariman Narimanov. However, after serving there for only five or six months, his irreconcilable stance toward the Soviet government led him, once again with Narimanov's assistance, to obtain a

travel permit and depart for Turkestan. Thus, what Rayana Malikaslanova—the visitor from the Netherlands to the Abdulla Shaig House-Museum—heard from her grandmother Sona khanum not only acquaints us with fascinating facts, but also calls upon our researchers to follow the traces of the mysterious life journey of Akhund Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh into the archives of Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey, Russia, and Germany. We believe that the truths which the storms of time have buried beneath deep layers eventually come to light. Just as today, more than a century later, it has become known that the translation of the Quran into Azerbaijani at the beginning of the twentieth century was inspired by the idea of German Emperor Wilhelm II, and that it was Yusif Ziya Talibzadeh who recommended the translator and delivered the sacred book to both rulers.

Prof. Dr. Tarana TURAN RAHIMLI  
Vice President of the Union of Turkish Academicians and President of the International Commission

## Diaspora

## Kenya's Ksh375 billion airport deal demands answers, not silence

*A secret procurement process, a controversial Zimbabwean businessman, and a Chinese state giant — the JKIA expansion saga is testing Kenya's democratic institutions at their most critical juncture*

By: Diaspora Times Team  
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Kenya's government awarded a Ksh375.4 billion (\$2.9 billion) contract for the expansion of Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to a Chinese state-owned enterprise this month, triggering an immediate court challenge and a fresh national reckoning over procurement transparency, debt sustainability, and the integrity of public institutions.

The contract for the upgrade and expansion of JKIA was awarded to China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) under the newly established National Infrastructure Fund. The deal, one of Kenya's largest aviation infrastructure investments, paves the way for construction expected to begin this month, though the government has yet to formally announce it publicly.

The award marks the second attempt in three years to modernise East Africa's busiest airport. It follows the collapse of an earlier modernisation attempt involving India's Adani Group, which was cancelled in 2024 amid political backlash and legal scrutiny involving senior Adani executives in the United States.

The urgency of the project is not disputed. JKIA possesses a design capacity for 8 million passengers annually, yet the facility processed nearly 8.8 million travellers in 2025, generating severe peak-hour congestion and reduced overall service quality. Aging infrastructure, frequent power outages, leaking roofs, and systemic failures have severely damaged Nairobi's reputation as the premier aviation gateway to East and Central Africa.

What is contested — fiercely — is the manner in which the contract was awarded.

Sources within Kenya Airports Authority confirmed the tender was opened on 3 March 2026, indicating that two Chinese firms — China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and Sinohydro — submitted bids, with indications leaning towards CRBC. The Ministry of Roads and Transport has been handling the procurement. Despite the scale of the project, civil society groups, legislators and lawyers have sounded the alarm over opacity in the procurement



Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA)

of the multi-billion-shilling contract and have threatened legal action to pressure the government to reveal the parties involved.

The controversy sharpened dramatically with the emergence of a third party within the winning consortium. COFEK investigations reveal that IMC Construction Kenya Limited, identified as the joint-venture partner alongside CCCC and CRBC, is wholly owned by Wicknell Chivayo, a Zimbabwean figure who has recently become a frequent and highly visible visitor at State House Nairobi.

COFEK Secretary-General Stephen Mutoro did not spare words. "COFEK has established that joint-venture partner IMC Construction Kenya Limited is wholly owned by Chivayo — a man COFEK had already petitioned the High Court to bar from Kenya entirely, citing his fraud and money-laundering record and tender scandals in Zimbabwe, including the Gwanda solar project and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission contracts," Mutoro said.

COFEK has filed a constitutional petition at the High Court in Nairobi, seeking interim orders to stop further steps in the redevelopment of Kenya's largest airport until the government discloses key details about the project and its implementation framework. The court has certified the case urgent and directed the State to file its responses within seven days, scheduling further directions for 25 June.

COFEK argues that critical information relating to the consortium behind the project — including beneficial ownership, financing arrangements, governance structure and contractual obligations — has not been disclosed, despite the project's immense public significance.

The Kenya Human Rights Commission added its voice to the chorus of concern. "I foresee a situation where this whole process is going to be challenged in court. We must be told whoever owns the company getting this contract and the faces behind it," said Cornel Oduor, the KHRC head of communications.

Prominent lawyer Donald Kipkorir was more pointed. "Why is it so hard for our government to build a new international airport as Ethiopia and Rwanda have done in an above-board deal? Why do we like to use people with criminal pasts?" Kipkorir wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "Is it so hard to undertake a multi-billion project with open transparency?"

The government has pushed back. Transport Cabinet Secretary Davis Chirchir told journalists that neither Chivayo nor his company, IMC Construction, was among the bidders for the airport's expansion and modernisation. "We don't know this gentleman. I saw him for the first time in the media myself," Chirchir said. Chirchir had earlier publicly assured the nation that the procurement pro-

cess adhered strictly to the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal rules, stating: "We are out competitively advertising for interested bidders to come in today. And when we close the bids there are PPDA rules on opening of bids, evaluation processes that will be in line with the law."

The ministry has not, however, explicitly clarified whether IMC Construction Kenya holds a secondary or informal stake within the consortium structure — a silence that has done little to calm public anxiety.

The wider context amplifies the stakes. Under the current financial structure, the Kenyan government will contribute \$1.3 billion directly, with the remaining \$1.6 billion financed through a syndicate of local and Chinese financial institutions. For a country whose debt servicing costs remain elevated after a decade of large-scale infrastructure borrowing, the question of financial sustainability is not theoretical.

Regional competitors are not waiting. Ethiopia is advancing Bishoftu International Airport, while Rwanda continues work on Bugesera International Airport, increasing pressure on Kenya to modernise JKIA to retain its hub status within East Africa.

The project itself, if delivered cleanly, would transform Nairobi's aviation landscape. The first phase will focus on upgrading existing infrastructure — including taxiways, passenger pro-

cessing areas, access roads and airport digital systems — expected to increase the airport's annual passenger handling capacity to 12 million within 18 months. The second phase will involve the construction of a new 4,500-metre parallel runway and a 230,000-square-metre passenger terminal designed in an X-shaped configuration, accommodating an additional 10 million passengers annually.

For government planners, the expansion is framed as a necessary intervention to unlock future economic growth, support tourism and strengthen Nairobi's position as an aviation and business hub. For critics, it remains a test of how Kenya balances ambition with fiscal discipline in an era of tightening financial space.

JKIA is not merely an airport — it is a symbol of Kenya's economic ambitions and a test of whether its institutions can withstand the pressure that accompanies power and money. The Nairobi High Court will hear the COFEK petition on 23 June. Whatever the ruling, Kenya's leaders would do well to remember that transparency deferred is public trust destroyed — and no runway, however long, can outrun accountability.

## Worth Noting:

• The contract for the upgrade and expansion of JKIA was awarded to China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) under the newly established National Infrastructure Fund. The deal, one of Kenya's largest aviation infrastructure investments, paves the way for construction expected to begin this month, though the government has yet to formally announce it publicly.

• The award marks the second attempt in three years to modernise East Africa's busiest airport. It follows the collapse of an earlier modernisation attempt involving India's Adani Group, which was cancelled in 2024 amid political backlash and legal scrutiny involving senior Adani executives in the United States.

• The urgency of the project is not disputed. JKIA possesses a design capacity for 8 million passengers annually, yet the facility processed nearly 8.8 million travellers in 2025, generating severe peak-hour congestion and reduced overall service quality. Aging infrastructure, frequent power outages, leaking roofs, and systemic failures have severely damaged Nairobi's reputation as the premier aviation gateway to East and Central Africa.

# YOUR OPINION IS INVALUABLE

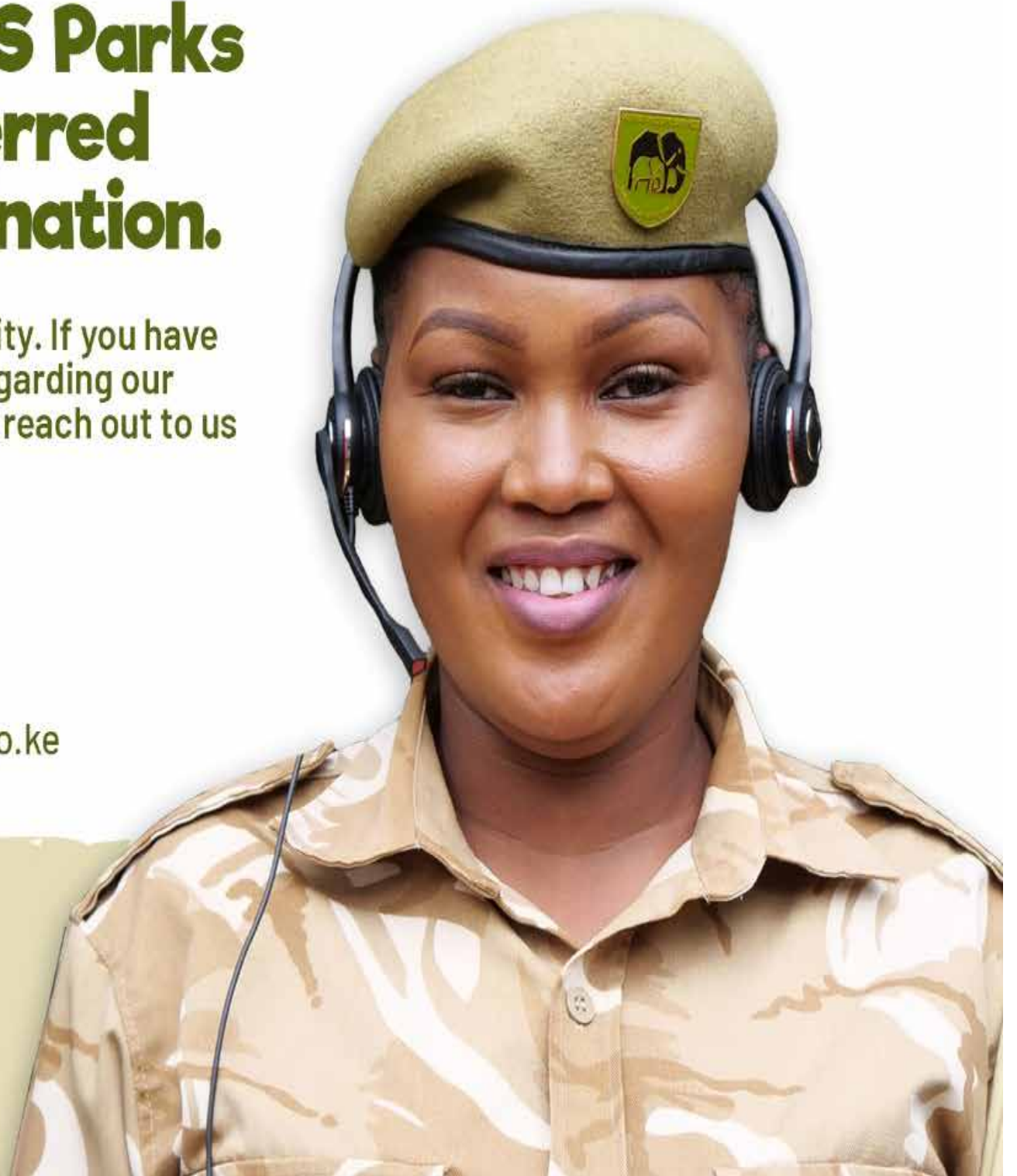
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## Aid

## THE SECOND YOKE

*How Aid Became the Architecture of a New Colonialism*

By: Silas Mwaudasheni Nande  
@themtkenyatimes

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## Worth Noting:

• **Classical colonialism required soldiers, settlers, and administrators. It needed to physically occupy land, extract minerals, and police bodies. That model became too expensive, too visible, and too morally indefensible after two world wars exposed the hypocrisy of empires fighting fascism abroad while practising racial domination in their colonies. Independence movements, from Ghana in 1957 to Namibia in 1990, dismantled the formal apparatus of occupation across most of the continent.**

• **But capital does not retreat merely because flags change. It adapts. Nkrumah's term for the adaptation was neo-colonialism: a condition in which a state has, in theory, international sovereignty, while in practice its economic system and political policy are directed from outside. The mechanisms shifted from garrisons to ledgers, from governors to consultants, from gunboats to loan covenants. Aid, in this light, is not the opposite of colonialism. It is colonialism's most successful rebranding.**

In 1965, Kwame Nkrumah warned that a state could be juridically independent, fly its own flag, sing its own anthem, and still be governed from outside through economic and political systems controlled from abroad. Sixty-one years later, that warning reads less like prophecy and more like description. The flags of the Global South fly freely. The anthems are sung without permission. Yet the architecture of decision-making in health, food, technology, education, security, and even thought itself still bends toward Washington, Brussels, London, and the boardrooms of multilateral lenders headquartered far from the people whose lives those decisions shape. This is not a call to romanticise the pre-colonial past or to deny the real and continuing value of solidarity between nations. It is a call to look honestly at a structure: aid, in its present form, has become one of the principal instruments through which the Global North maintains relevance, leverage, and presence in the Global South, at a cost far higher than the headline figures suggest. The South does not lack the capacity to recognise this. What it has lacked, until recently, is the institutional courage to act on that recognition.

From the Flag to the Ledger

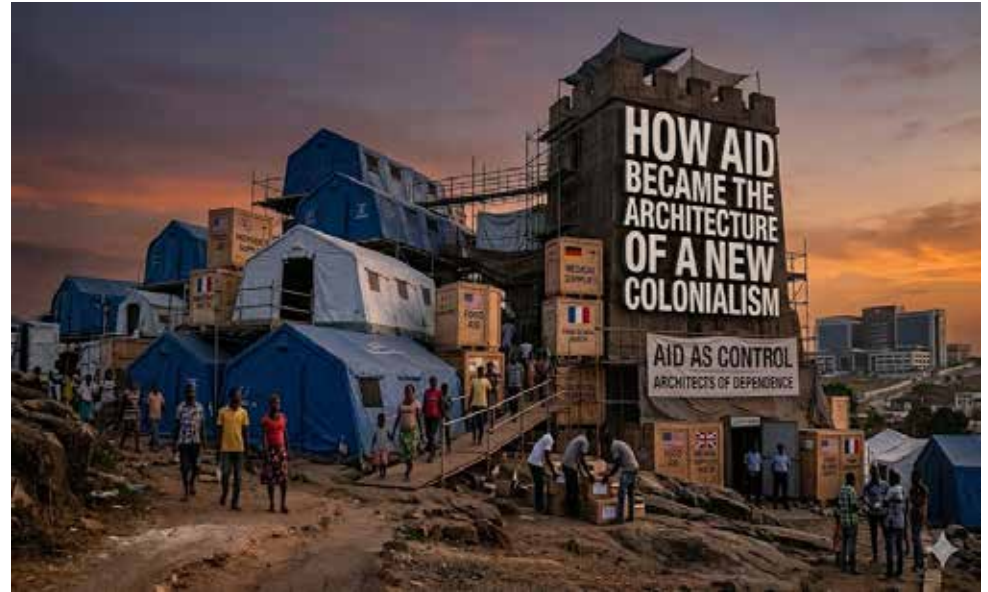
Classical colonialism required soldiers, settlers, and administrators. It needed to physically occupy land, extract minerals, and police bodies. That model became too expensive, too visible, and too morally indefensible after two world wars exposed the hypocrisy of empires fighting fascism abroad while practising racial domination in their colonies. Independence movements, from Ghana in 1957 to Namibia in 1990, dismantled the formal apparatus of occupation across most of the continent.

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shifted from garrisons to ledgers, from governors to consultants, from gunboats to loan covenants. Aid, in this light, is not the opposite of colonialism. It is colonialism's most successful rebranding.

This is a provocative claim, and it deserves to be tested against evidence rather than rhetoric, because not all aid is identical, and not all assistance is exploitative by design. Humanitarian relief after an earthquake is not equivalent to a structural adjustment programme. The distinction matters. But across the major categories of contemporary "aid" — financial, military, medical and pharmaceutical, technological, human capital, food, educational, and infrastructural — a consistent pattern recurs: assistance arrives bundled with conditions, dependencies, and asymmetries that outlast the assistance itself, and that reproduce the donor's relevance in the recipient's affairs long after the original justification for help has faded.

It is worth recalling how recent this entire arrangement is. The Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885, at which European powers partitioned Africa among themselves without a single African representative present, drew borders to avoid hostilities among the colonisers rather than to reflect the people who would live within them. For close to a century thereafter, the continent's resources, labour, and governance were organised around the needs of distant capitals. When formal independence arrived, from Ghana's in 1957 through Namibia's in 1990, the expectation, at least rhetorically, was that political sovereignty would translate into economic and intellectual sovereignty as well. What occurred instead, across most of the post-colonial period, was the substitution of one mechanism of external direction for another: garrisons gave way to grant conditions, and the formal apparatus of empire gave way to an informal apparatus of financial and institutional dependency that has proven, in some respects, more durable than the empires it replaced, precisely because it does not look like



How Aid Became the Architecture of a New Colonialism

domination. It arrives smiling, with a cheque, a press release, and a photograph of a handshake.

The Debt Ledger: Financial Aid as Leverage

Begin with money, because money is the oldest and still the most consequential lever.

By 2023, the African Development Bank estimated the continent's total external debt at roughly 1.152 trillion United States dollars, with annual debt service payments having risen from 61 billion dollars in 2010 to 163 billion dollars in 2024. Total debt service payments for the continent reached approximately 74 billion dollars in 2024 alone, more than four times the 17 billion dollars paid in 2010, with 40 billion dollars of that flowing to private creditors. According to a Heinrich Böll Stiftung analysis published in 2025, twenty-five African countries now spend more servicing debt than they spend on education, and thirty-two spend more on debt than on healthcare. Angola alone allocates an estimated 66 percent of government revenue to debt repayment, the highest proportion on the continent.

These are not abstractions. They are the arithmetic explanation for crumbling clinics, unpaid teachers, and overcrowded classrooms across the Global South. A UNDP working paper published in August 2025 noted that approximately 3.4 billion people globally live in countries that spend more on interest payments

than on either education or health combined. When a nation's fiscal space is consumed by debt service before a single child is taught or a single patient is treated, sovereignty becomes notional. The government still governs, but it governs within parameters set elsewhere. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have, since the 1980s, attached conditions to financing through Structural Adjustment Programmes and their successors: privatisation of state assets, currency liberalisation, subsidy removal, and fiscal austerity. Scholarly analysis of Kenya, Zambia, and Ghana has traced how these conditionalities constrained domestic policy autonomy, weakened nascent local industries, and entrenched a reliance on foreign capital that reinforced rather than resolved asymmetrical power between lender and borrower. Zambia's external debt rose by an extraordinary 1,100 percent between 2011 and 2019, from one billion to twelve billion dollars, with debt service consuming 16 percent of the national budget by the end of that period, up from just 2 percent in 2011. When the pandemic shock arrived, Zambia became the first country of that era to default, and was compelled once again to return to the very institution whose earlier prescriptions had helped produce the fragility in the first place.

There is a structural irony worth naming plainly: the institutions most often called upon to rescue African economies from debt distress are frequently the

same institutions, or close cousins of the same institutions, whose policy advice shaped the conditions that produced the distress. This is not a conspiracy. It is simply what happens when a continent's fiscal architecture is designed, financed, and adjudicated almost entirely from outside that continent. It would be dishonest to lay this entirely at the feet of traditional Western lenders. The composition of African debt has shifted substantially. China has become the continent's largest bilateral creditor, holding close to 9 percent of Africa's external debt by 2024, and private creditors now hold 42 percent of the total, often at higher interest rates, shorter maturities, and with considerably less transparency than the old Paris Club arrangements they have displaced. The lesson is not that one creditor is virtuous and another is not. The lesson is that dependency on external capital, regardless of the creditor's flag, produces vulnerability to externally imposed terms.

Nor is the debt burden distributed evenly enough to be dismissed as a general inconvenience. As of late 2025, ten African countries remained heavily indebted to the IMF, with Egypt, Kenya, and Ghana among the largest debtors on the continent. Zambia's three-year, 1.7 billion dollar Extended Credit Facility, agreed in 2022, has required repeated extensions, most recently to January 2026, with 1.55 bil-

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Aid

# THE SECOND YOKE

## How Aid Became the Architecture of a New Colonialism

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lion dollars disbursed and reforms widely described as slow. The pattern is instructive: the loan arrives to solve a crisis, the conditions attached to the loan reshape domestic policy for years, and the eventual repayment, when it comes, is frequently followed by a new borrowing cycle, because the underlying structural weaknesses that produced the first crisis were never addressed by the conditionalities, only managed by them. Some projections suggest Africa's total debt service burden may ease somewhat by 2029 as maturity schedules shift, but even the more optimistic of these forecasts depend on assumptions of uninterrupted growth and benign global conditions that the past two decades, marked by a global financial crisis, a pandemic, and a major European war, have shown little tendency to honour.

### The Withdrawal That Proved the Point

If proof were needed that aid functions as leverage rather than charity, the events of 2025 supplied it inadvertently.

On the day of his second inauguration, 20 January 2025, the President of the United States froze foreign aid pending a ninety-day review. By early May, only 891 of 6,256 operating US-AID programmes remained active, representing a fall in committed funding from 120 billion to 69 billion dollars. Across all Development Assistance Committee donor countries, cumulative official development assistance fell by 7.1 percent in 2024 compared with the previous year, the first such decline after five consecutive years of growth. Germany, Africa's second-largest bilateral donor, cut its budget for African assistance by 3.1 billion dollars, a reduction of 10.5 percent, between 2023 and 2025.

The human consequence was immediate and measurable. Within weeks of the freeze, researchers estimated 2,000 new and entirely preventable HIV infections among adults in the regions affected. UNAIDS projected that a permanent halt to PEPFAR, the United States' flagship HIV programme, could result in an addition-



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al 6.3 million AIDS-related deaths, 3.4 million AIDS orphans, and 8.7 million new adult infections by 2029.

Consider the asymmetry embedded in that single fact. United States foreign aid, at roughly 72 billion dollars annually, constitutes less than one percent of that country's gross domestic product. It is a rounding error in Washington's budget and a matter of life and death in Lilongwe, Maseru, and Windhoek. This is precisely the architecture of dependency at its starkest: a policy lever so marginal to the donor that it can be pulled on a presidential whim, yet so central to the recipient that pulling it kills people within weeks. A relationship in which one party can walk away at negligible cost while the other party cannot survive the walking away is not a partnership. It is a hierarchy wearing the language of partnership.

To be fair to the data, the Center for Global Development found that for forty-two of forty-four African countries with available figures, the 2025 USAID cuts amounted to less than one percent of gross national income; only Liberia and Somalia exceeded that threshold. This finding is genuinely important, and it cuts against any narrative of total continental collapse. But it cuts both ways. If the fiscal weight of aid is, for most countries, this marginal, then the question becomes sharper rather than softer: why has so much policy deference, so much

diplomatic posture, and so much institutional energy been organised around relationships whose financial substance is this small relative to the sovereignty they have been allowed to constrain? The mind has been colonised to value aid far beyond its measurable weight. There is also a longer trend beneath the 2025 shock that deserves attention, because a single dramatic policy reversal can obscure a slower and arguably more important pattern: the populations of donor nations are themselves losing conviction in the premise that underwrote decades of aid spending, the belief that the donor's future prosperity and the recipient's future prosperity were bound together. That premise is fraying in domestic politics across Europe and North America, for reasons that have little to do with the Global South and much to do with internal economic anxiety, migration politics, and a general retreat from multilateral commitment. Whatever its causes, the effect on the Global South is the same: a structure of dependency built over sixty years can be partially withdrawn in a single election cycle, with no mechanism by which the dependent party can appeal, negotiate, or compensate for the loss in the short term. This, in the starkest possible terms, is what it means to lack sovereignty over one's own development trajectory.

Medicine, Military, and the Manufacture of Necessity

Pharmaceutical and health aid illustrate the same pattern in sharper relief because the stakes are immediate and visible. Sub-Saharan Africa's reliance on externally funded and externally manufactured medical interventions has produced genuine, life-saving gains over two decades. It has also produced a structural fragility in which a single election result eight thousand kilometres away can reopen a path to mass death. A health system that cannot manufacture its own essential medicines, train and retain its own specialists, or fund its own disease surveillance without external grants is not merely under-resourced. It is institutionally dependent in a manner indistinguishable, in its practical effects, from the resource extraction of the colonial era, except that what is being extracted now is policy autonomy rather than raw minerals.

Military aid follows a closely related logic. Security assistance, training missions, and weapons transfers create durable relationships of influence that frequently outlast the stated security justification, embedding foreign strategic interests into national defence postures, basing arrangements, and procurement decisions for decades. The recipient gains capability; the donor gains a foothold and a client relationship that shapes diplomatic alignment on votes at the United Nations, access to ports and airspace,

and the contours of regional security architecture.

Technology aid, the newest and perhaps most consequential category, deserves particular attention because it operates on a longer time horizon than money or medicine. Digital infrastructure, cloud services, telecommunications equipment, and the platforms through which an increasing share of African commerce, education, and civic life now occur are, in large part, designed, owned, and governed by firms and standards bodies headquartered in the Global North or, increasingly, in China. When the very rails on which a nation's economy and discourse run are owned elsewhere, the colonisation is no longer of land. It is of infrastructure, of data, and, ultimately, of the categories through which people come to think about their own societies. This is the mechanism by which the framing of "occupation of the mind" finds its most literal contemporary expression: a generation that learns, banks, organises, and debates on platforms whose rules, algorithms, and commercial incentives are set in Mountain View, Shenzhen, or Brussels is a generation whose civic imagination is, in a meaningful sense, hosted rather than owned.

The Quiet Extraction: Human Capital and the Brain

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### Worth Noting:

It is worth recalling how recent this entire arrangement is. The Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885, at which European powers partitioned Africa among themselves without a single African representative present, drew borders to avoid hostilities among the colonisers rather than to reflect the people who would live within them. For close to a century thereafter, the continent's resources, labour, and governance were organised around the needs of distant capitals.

When formal independence arrived, from Ghana's in 1957 through Namibia's in 1990, the expectation, at least rhetorically, was that political sovereignty would translate into economic and intellectual sovereignty as well.

What occurred instead, across most of the post-colonial period, was the substitution of one mechanism of external direction for another: garrisons gave way to grant conditions, and the formal apparatus of empire gave way to an informal apparatus of financial and institutional dependency that has proven, in some respects, more durable than the empires it replaced, precisely because it does not look like domination. It arrives smiling, with a cheque, a press release, and a photograph of a handshake.

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Drain

No category of “aid” exposes the contradiction more starkly than the relationship between educational support and the migration of skilled professionals it indirectly subsidises.

The African Union estimates that approximately 70,000 skilled professionals leave the continent annually, one of the highest rates of skilled emigration in the world. The World Health Organization reported in 2023 that forty of fifty-five African countries face critical shortages of health-care professionals, with the continent needing an additional 4.2 million health workers to meet minimum effective-delivery thresholds. More than 135,000 African-trained physicians and 40,000 nurses currently practise in OECD countries, professionals whose training was substantially financed by the public purses of the nations that can least afford to lose them. An estimated 10,000 engineers leave the continent annually. Between 2010 and 2020, total African emigration rose by 30 percent over the preceding decade, amounting to roughly forty million people, while academic research output remained at just 2.6 percent of the global total, a figure depressed in no small part by the same outward flow of researchers.

Here is the structural cruelty of the arrangement: the Global North funds scholarships, training programmes, and “human capital development” initiatives in the Global South, and is then the principal destination for the very capital it helped develop. The donor nation gets a doctor trained at someone else’s expense. The donor nation’s universities recruit African academics trained in African public institutions, depleting precisely the faculties needed to train the next generation at home. Remittances, which reached roughly 80 billion dollars in 2022 and now support more than 200 million African family members, are real and valuable, but they are compensation for loss, not a substitute for institutional capacity. A nation cannot build a tertiary hospital system, a research university, or a defence industrial base on remittances alone. What looks like generosity, when examined as a circulating system rather than a single transaction, functions as a transfer of human capital from poorer nations to richer ones, dressed in the language of opportunity and



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merit.

The push factors behind this migration are themselves instructive, because they are rarely a simple matter of higher salaries abroad. Research on the emigration of West African physicians has identified insufficient employment opportunities, poor working conditions, inadequate infrastructure, limited professional recognition, and, in some cases, repressive governance as the dominant drivers, with the wage differential operating as an amplifier rather than the root cause. This matters for the policy response. A government that responds to brain drain solely with patriotic appeals or exit restrictions misdiagnoses the problem; a government that responds by rebuilding the conditions under which skilled work feels possible and respected addresses the actual mechanism. The fact that most African migration remains intra-continental, even as the absolute numbers leaving the continent altogether have grown, suggests that opportunity, not geography or culture, is the operative variable, and opportunity is precisely the thing institutional reform can change.

Food, Education, and Infrastructure: The Familiar Pattern, Repeated

Food aid follows a structurally similar pattern when it displaces, rather than supplements, local agricultural development. Decades of subsidised grain imports and donated surplus have, in numerous documented cases, undercut local farmers’ prices, discouraged investment in domestic agri-

cultural value chains, and entrenched a cycle in which countries with vast arable land and favourable climates remain net food importers. The emergency justification for food aid is often genuine in the moment of crisis. The long-term effect, absent a deliberate strategy toward recipient agriculture toward self-sufficiency, is the conversion of a temporary humanitarian response into a permanent commercial relationship that favours the donor’s agribusiness sector. Educational support aid, similarly, often arrives bundled with curricula, accreditation standards, language requirements, and pedagogical assumptions designed elsewhere, for different societies, different labour markets, and different epistemic traditions. Infrastructure aid, particularly when tied to the donor’s own construction firms, equipment suppliers, and engineering standards, frequently leaves the recipient nation with assets it cannot independently maintain, spare parts it cannot independently source, and contracts it cannot independently renegotiate. In each category, the structure recurs: assistance creates a standard; the standard creates a dependency; and the dependency creates leverage that persists long after the original need has been addressed or even forgotten.

Occupying the Mind: The Subtlest Colonialism

The material costs documented above are severe and quantifiable. The cost that concerns this essay most, however, resists a single line item because it is not measured in dollars but in default settings of thought.

Mental colonisation operates through the quiet assumption, absorbed across generations of schooling, media consumption, and professional formation, that legitimacy, rigour, and modernity originate elsewhere and must be imported, validated, or approved by institutions headquartered in the Global North before they can be trusted at home. It is visible when national policy debates are organised around what the IMF, the World Bank, or a Western university’s ranking system will say rather than around what local conditions, local data, and local priorities require. It is visible when a continent’s own most capable graduates believe, with some empirical justification given the brain drain figures above, that achievement is most fully realised by leaving rather than building. It is visible when development is measured by metrics designed in Washington and Geneva, applied uniformly across societies with radically different histories, ecologies, and social structures, as though one calibration could honestly fit them all. This is the deepest meaning of “occupation of the mind”: not that people in the Global South are incapable of independent thought, but that the architecture surrounding them — the funding structures, the publication systems, the technology platforms, the credentialing bodies, the diplomatic incentive structures — has been engineered, gradually and rarely with explicit malice, to make dependence feel natural and self-reliance feel risky. Colonialism’s most durable achievement was never the occupation of land. It was the cultiva-

tion of doubt about one’s own capacity to govern, to heal, to build, and to think without external validation. Aid, where it reinforces that doubt rather than dissolving it, completes the work that the colonial administrators began.

The Counter-Argument, Honestly Stated

A serious essay owes its strongest opposing case a fair hearing, not a caricature. It is true that aid has financed extraordinary, measurable gains: HIV treatment programmes that have saved millions of lives, vaccination campaigns that have eradicated or nearly eradicated diseases that once killed children by the hundreds of thousands annually, and emergency response systems that have prevented famine from becoming genocide by neglect. It is true that some donor relationships have been genuinely structured around partnership rather than control, and that blanket condemnation of all assistance as colonial in disguise risks discarding tools that have demonstrably saved lives, simply because the broader system surrounding those tools is flawed. It is true, too, that the Global South’s own elites bear responsibility for corruption, mismanagement, and the misallocation of both aid and domestically generated revenue, and that an analysis focused entirely on external actors risks excusing internal governance failures that are just as consequential.

These are legitimate cautions, and they should tem-

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# THE SECOND YOKE

## How Aid Became the Architecture of a New Colonialism

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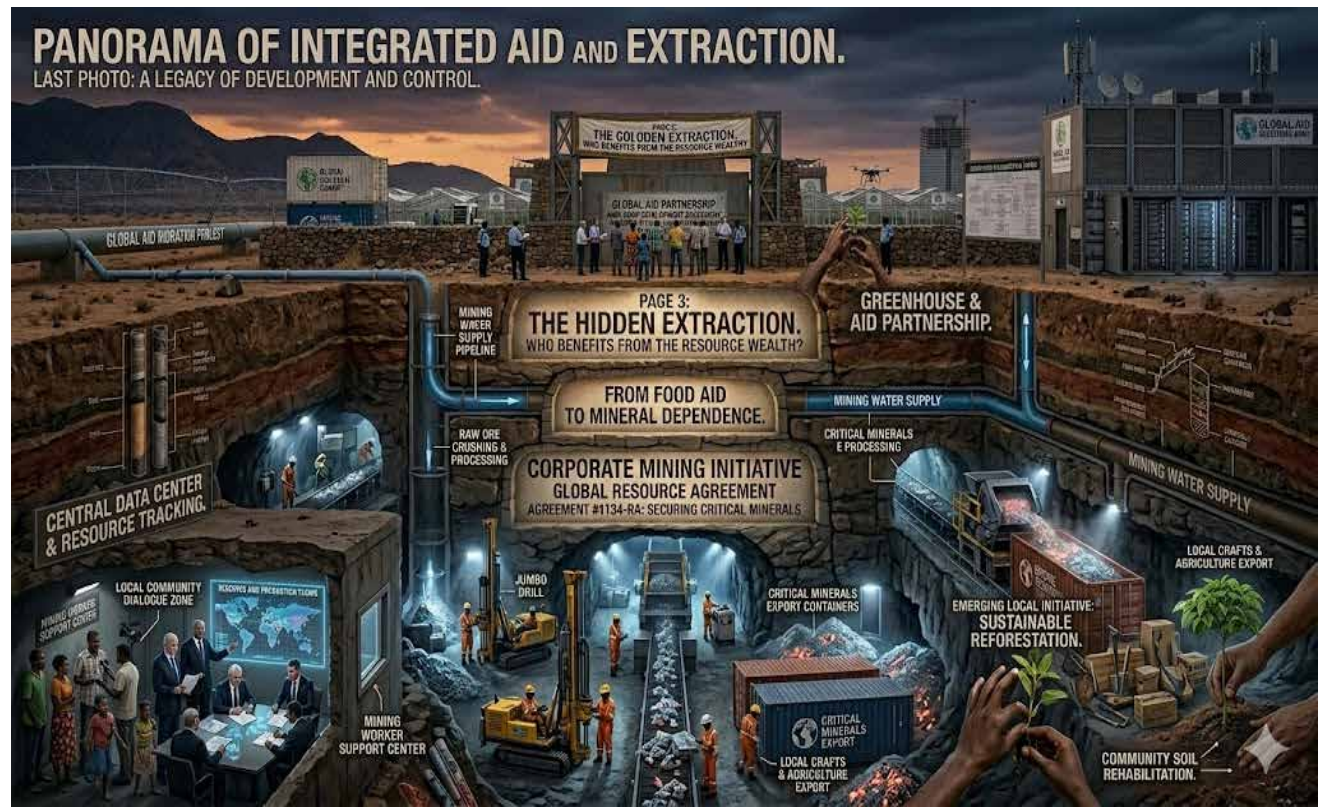
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per triumphalist rhetoric on either side of this debate. But they do not refute the central claim. The existence of beneficial aid programmes does not negate the existence of a broader structural pattern in which assistance, debt, and technological dependence collectively constrain the policy space of the Global South far beyond what the dollar value of that assistance would suggest. A system can save lives and constrain sovereignty simultaneously. Recognising the first does not require denying the second. The Revolutionary Button: What Activation Actually Requires

If the diagnosis is structural, the remedy cannot be rhetorical. A "Global Revolutionary Button" is not a slogan to be chanted; it is a set of institutional choices that already has working precedents, however incomplete, across the Global South. Regional integration over bilateral dependency. The African Continental Free Trade Area, the largest free trade area in the world by number of participating states, is projected to increase intra-African trade by more than 52 percent by 2030, creating millions of jobs and reducing the structural incentive to orient national economic policy primarily toward external donors and creditors. Every percentage point of intra-regional trade that replaces a bilateral aid relationship is a percentage point of leverage repatriated. Domestic resource mobilisation. The 2025 Ibrahim Governance Weekend in Marrakech, convened explicitly under the theme "Financing the Africa We Want," reflected a growing recognition among African leaders that the declining reliability of traditional donor commitments is not solely a crisis; it is also an opening to rebuild fiscal systems around domestic taxation, sovereign wealth instruments, and regional development finance institutions that are accountable to their own citizens rather than to foreign electorates who can, and recently did, vote to defund them overnight. Talent retention through opportunity creation, not appeals to loyalty. Digital platforms that connect skilled professionals to opportunities without requiring physical emigration, alongside deliberate investment in regional centres of medical, engineering, and scientific training with built-in retention incentives,



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offer a more durable answer to brain drain than moral exhortation. A doctor will not stay because she is told to love her country more. She will stay if the hospital has equipment, the salary is dignified, and the research infrastructure exists to make her work matter. Selective, sovereign engagement with all external partners, including new ones. The diversification of African creditors to include China and private capital markets is not, in itself, liberation; as the debt composition data show, it has, in some respects, introduced new and less transparent risks. Genuine sovereignty does not mean swapping one external patron for another. It means building institutional capacity, audit systems, and negotiating leverage to engage every external partner, Western, Chinese, Gulf, or otherwise, on terms set primarily by the recipient's own development strategy rather than by the partner's commercial or strategic interest. Reclaiming the architecture of knowledge. This includes investment in local publishing and research infrastructure so that African scholarship is not solely validated by Northern journals; investment in local technology infrastructure, including data sovereignty and domestic cloud and connectivity capacity, so that the platforms shaping civic life are not solely owned elsewhere; and, perhaps most importantly, a deliberate, unapologetic curricular emphasis, from primary school through doctoral training, on the proposition that rigorous thought, governance

theory, and institutional design can originate in Accra, Lusaka, Windhoek, or Lagos with the same legitimacy as in London or Boston. None of this requires hostility toward the Global North, nor a rejection of every form of international cooperation. It requires the same thing that every formerly colonised nation eventually had to summon to win its political independence: the conviction that dependency, however comfortable or however dressed in humanitarian language, is not destiny. What the Global North Could Choose Instead None of the foregoing is an argument that the Global North is monolithic, malicious, or incapable of change. Many individuals within donor institutions, including aid workers, diplomats, and researchers, genuinely seek a more equal relationship, and some donor governments have, at various points, taken steps toward untying aid from procurement requirements, cancelling debt, or supporting locally led development initiatives rather than externally designed ones. It is fair to ask what a less extractive version of international cooperation would actually look like, rather than simply demanding its absence. It would look like financing instruments that do not require the recipient to purchase the donor's goods, hire the donor's contractors, or adopt the donor's policy template as a condition of disbursement. It would look like debt relief structured around a nation's actual capacity to invest in its

people, rather than around the comfort of creditors. It would look like technology transfer that builds local manufacturing and maintenance capacity rather than permanent reliance on imported parts and licensed software. It would look like scholarship and training programmes explicitly designed with return-and-build incentives, rather than ones that function, however unintentionally, as recruitment pipelines for the donor's own labour shortages. None of this is utopian. Each of these alternatives has been tried, somewhere, by some donor, at some point. The question is why they remain the exception rather than the rule, and the honest answer is that the current arrangement, whatever its costs to the recipient, serves the donor's commercial, strategic, and diplomatic interests too well to be abandoned voluntarily. Which is precisely why the impetus for change cannot be expected to originate primarily from the Global North. It must originate, as every previous chapter of decolonisation did, from the South itself. Conclusion: The Yoke Is Removable Because It Was Constructed The yoke described in this essay was not handed down by history as an immovable fact of nature. It was built, deliberately and over time, through specific instruments: debt structures, conditional grants, technological dependency, and an education in deference that taught entire generations to look outward for permission

to think, to govern, and to heal. What was constructed by policy can be dismantled by policy. What was taught can be unlearned and re-taught differently. The Global South does not need to declare war on the Global North to free itself from the second colonialism. It needs to do something far more difficult and far more durable: build the institutions, the regional markets, the universities, the health systems, and the technological infrastructure that make external validation unnecessary rather than indispensable. The revolutionary button, in the end, is not a moment of rupture, and it is certainly not a single dramatic gesture of defiance that severs every external relationship overnight; such a rupture, attempted without the institutional foundations to survive it, would visit immense suffering on the very populations it claims to liberate. It is, instead, the accumulated weight of a thousand institutional decisions, made consistently over a generation, to trust the Global South's own capacity to govern itself, finance itself, heal itself, and think for itself. That is not a fantasy, and it is not a rejection of cooperation with the rest of the world. It is, in the most literal sense, the unfinished business of independence: the recognition that the flag came down from the colonial governor's residence sixty or seventy years ago, and it is past time for the rest of the architecture to follow it.

## Muturi warns Kenya's \$62 billion mineral wealth must not be sold in the dark

*As Ruto signs a preliminary US minerals deal on the G7 sidelines, opposition leaders demand the public be consulted before the nation's rare earth riches are committed to foreign powers*

By: Diaspora Times Team  
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Democratic Party leader Justin Muturi has declared that any agreement committing Kenya's strategic mineral resources to foreign governments or corporations without public participation, parliamentary scrutiny, and full constitutional compliance will be subject to review and renegotiation under a future administration — a direct warning shot fired at President William Ruto's government as it moves swiftly to monetise the country's estimated \$62 billion rare earth deposits.

"The people of Kenya are the sovereign owners of the Republic and all its natural resources. This principle is not merely political; it is enshrined in our Constitution," Muturi said in a statement that landed with considerable force against the backdrop of a preliminary minerals agreement signed between Ruto and the United States on the sidelines of the G7 summit in France on 19 June. On the sidelines of the G7 summit in France, President Ruto announced a preliminary minerals agreement with the United States, granting Washington access to the immense mineral wealth of Mrima Hill, located in Kwale County. The announcement, made abroad and without prior public notice, immediately drew criticism from civil society and opposition quarters alike. The asset at the centre of the storm is formidable. At Mrima Hill, a forested coastal ridge in Kwale County, preliminary estimates point to around 40 million tonnes of ore with approximately 5 per cent total rare earth oxide content, alongside nearly 680 million kilograms of niobium — a deposit the state values at roughly \$62 billion. The minerals found at the site — including niobium, yttrium, lanthanum, thorium and strontium — are in sharply rising demand as governments and manufacturers race to secure inputs for electric vehicles, advanced electronics and defence systems. Muturi, the former Attorney General and Speaker of the National Assembly, did not mince his words. He expressed alarm at reports that the current administration was engaging foreign governments, multinational corporations, and multilateral partners in discussions over Kenya's rare earth minerals "without adequate public participation, transparency, and parliamentary oversight." "We are deeply concerned by indications that the current administration may seek to engage foreign governments, multinational corpo-

rations, and multilateral partners in discussions concerning Kenya's rare earth minerals and other strategic resources without adequate public participation, transparency, and parliamentary oversight," he said. The former AG argued that the resources' significance — spanning renewable energy systems, electric vehicles, telecommunications infrastructure, semiconductors, and military equipment — elevated them to assets of national security relevance that demanded not transactional diplomacy but broad national consensus.

"The sovereign people of Kenya cannot be reduced to spectators while decisions are made concerning resources that belong to them and to future generations," he said. The geopolitical context driving Nairobi's urgency is not in question. China currently accounts for roughly 90 per cent of global rare earth processing, a concentration that has unsettled Western policymakers and prompted a flurry of diplomatic prospecting across Africa. Washington reportedly facilitated more than \$10 billion in critical mineral agreements across five countries within a single month, reflecting the pace of US resource diplomacy as competition with China intensifies.

The US government formally invited Kenya into a multibillion-dollar critical minerals partnership at the Kenya Mining Investment Conference and Expo 2026, citing Kenya's regulatory transparency and investment-friendly policies. A US-backed consortium, Mrima Earth Ltd, submitted a value-added proposal promising downstream processing within Kenya, local employment, and skills transfer. President Ruto made clear that Kenya would not adopt a binary posture between Washington and Beijing, pursuing what might be termed a multiple-partnerships doctrine — maximising leverage by remaining commercially attractive to competing powers.

That doctrine may be commercially astute. Whether it is constitutionally sufficient is precisely what Muturi contests. He issued a blunt warning that agreements reached outside proper legal channels will not be treated as binding by future governments. "The United Alternative Government wishes to state unequivocally that any agreements, concessions, licenses, or commitments entered into without full compliance with constitutional requirements, public participation, parliamentary scrutiny, and complete transparency will be subject to review," he said, adding

that such deals would be renegotiated to ensure they safeguard national interests and deliver maximum benefits to Kenyans. He was equally categorical about the moral dimension. "No government has the moral authority to mortgage the future of generations yet unborn through opaque arrangements that deny citizens their constitutional right to participate in decisions affecting national wealth," he said. "Bypassing the people of Kenya on matters of such strategic importance would amount to an act of political impunity and a betrayal of the public trust." The concerns are not abstract. Community sentiment around Mrima Hill is divided — for the surrounding Digo people, it is a sacred forest



Democratic Party leader Justin Muturi

holding cultural, spiritual and ecological significance. Some residents welcome the prospect of jobs and infrastructure; others fear the loss of land, medicinal plants and sacred shrines. "This Mrima is our life... Where will we be taken?" one local community leader has said.

By demanding local processing, Kenya's government says it is attempting to avoid the errors of past projects, such as the titanium mining in Kwale County, which enriched foreign shareholders while leaving local communities with minimal long-term economic benefits. Under Section 183 of the Kenya Mining Act of 2016, mineral royalties are split as follows: 70 per cent to the national government, 20 per cent to the county government, and 10 per

cent directly to the local community — a formula formally secured under the Mining Regulations of 2026. Muturi closed with a demand that brooks no ambiguity. "The era in which Kenya's strategic assets could be negotiated behind closed doors must come to an end. The people are sovereign, and their voice must be heard before any binding commitments are made regarding resources that belong to the nation," he said. Kenya stands at a rare and potentially transformative crossroads — but a nation that signs away its mineral future in hotel corridors at foreign summits, without a word to its parliament or its people, risks exchanging one form of dependency for another.

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