

The measure passed on Wednesday by a margin of 215 votes to 208, a result that required four Republicans to break with their party and side with a united Democratic bloc

## US-Iran war

The resolution marks the fourth attempt by the House to rein in Trump's prosecution of military action against Iran :



### US House votes to restrict Trump's Iran war powers in rare bipartisan rebuke:

Four Republicans break ranks as Congress challenges the president's authority to wage an undeclared war that has driven up fuel prices, destabilised the Gulf and tested the limits of executive power

The United States House of Representatives has passed a resolution seeking to curtail President Donald Trump's military authority over Iran, delivering the most significant congressional challenge yet to a conflict that began in February and has drawn the country into its most consequential Middle Eastern confrontation in a generation — one that has closed a vital global waterway, pushed fuel prices to painful highs and revived a constitutional debate about who, in America, truly holds the power to make war. The measure passed on



Illustration of US-Iran war

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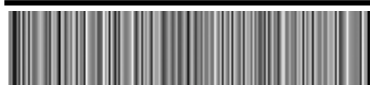
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Happiness Behind Hardships: The Journey of an Uzbek Girl

News Backpage

Demand for civic space holds strong across Africa as supply of freedoms wanes



The Diaspora Times Global

### Sulphuric Acid and Lead from Used Car Batteries in Ghana's Soil

The trailer had broken down in the middle of a major highway in the southern part of Ghana. Drivers honked impatiently as traffic piled up behind it. Among those called to the scene was Agya Appiah (not his real name), a veteran mechanic who has spent nearly four de-

acades working with vehicle batteries in one of Ghana's busiest automobile repair hubs. After inspecting the vehicle, he traced the problem to its two 24-volt batteries. "The heads were torn," he recalled. He removed the batteries and trans-

ported them to his workshop for repairs, a routine task he has performed countless times over the years. Yet before touching any damaged battery, he follows a ritual born out of experience and fear. "Before I open any battery, whether diesel or petrol, I first fetch water

and put it beside me as a precautionary measure. I do this because some batteries can explode and burn your entire skin," he said.

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Vatican in Madrid: Pope Leo XIV becomes first pontiff to address Spanish parliament Europe



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Zelensky calls for face-to-face talks with Putin in renewed push for peace deal

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# Senegal enacts law doubling jail terms for same-sex relations

*New legislation criminalises promotion and funding of homosexuality, drawing swift condemnation from rights groups and Western governments*

By: Norman Mwale  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

## Worth Noting:

- A government official, speaking to local media after the signing, defended the move as a matter of national identity. "This law protects our cultural and religious values," the official said. "The people of Senegal have spoken clearly on this matter."
- The legislation passed through Senegal's National Assembly last month after months of debate. Lawmakers who backed the bill argued it reflects genuine public sentiment in a country where Islam is the dominant religion and where traditional and religious leaders carry considerable political weight. "We are legislators elected by the people, and the people reject the imposition of foreign lifestyles," one MP told the chamber during the parliamentary session, according to reports from Dakar.

Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye has signed into law legislation that doubles the maximum prison term for same-sex relations to ten years, while extending criminal liability to anyone accused of promoting or financing homosexuality — a move that has drawn immediate condemnation from human rights organisations across the world.

The law, signed this week, increases both prison terms and fines, broadens the definition of related offences and introduces new penalties for promoting or funding same-sex relationships. It continues to classify such acts as misdemeanours rather than felonies, but the practical effect is stark. Until now, Senegal's penal code punished "an improper or unnatural act with a person of the same sex" with up to five years in prison. That ceiling has now been doubled.

A government official, speaking to local media after the signing, defended the move as a matter of national identity. "This law protects our cultural and religious values," the official said. "The people of Senegal have spoken clearly on this matter."

The legislation passed through Senegal's National Assembly last month after months of debate. Lawmakers who backed the bill argued it reflects genuine public sentiment in a country where Islam is the dominant religion and where traditional and religious leaders carry considerable political weight. "We are legislators elected by the people, and the people reject the imposition of foreign lifestyles," one MP told the chamber during the parliamentary session,



according to reports from Dakar.

Rights groups moved quickly to condemn the law. Amnesty International's West and Central Africa office said the legislation "institutionalises discrimination and puts LGBT people at even greater risk of arrest, harassment and violence." A Dakar-based activist, who asked not to be named for security reasons, was more blunt. "This is not about culture," the activist said. "It is about criminalising existence. People will be forced deeper into hiding."

The new statute goes further than simply criminalising sexual acts between people of the same sex. It creates specific offences for anyone who "promotes, funds or facilitates" same-sex relations — a clause that activists fear will be used to target non-governmental organisations, healthcare workers and journalists. Penalties for those offences were not detailed in the government's initial release, but are understood to carry heavy fines and custodial

sentences.

Senegal has long maintained that homosexuality runs contrary to its cultural and religious norms, though prosecutions under the previous law were sporadic. The tougher measures represent a meaningful hardening of policy under President Faye, who came to power in April 2024 on a platform of sovereignty and social conservatism. Since taking office, he has consistently positioned himself as a guardian of what his administration describes as Senegalese values against external pressure.

Diplomatic reaction was swift. Several Western governments expressed concern, with one European foreign ministry spokesperson noting that "laws that criminalise consensual same-sex conduct violate international human rights obligations." The United States State Department has previously imposed visa restrictions on foreign officials deemed responsible for undermining human rights, though no specific

measures have been announced in relation to Senegal at this stage.

The regional context is significant. Uganda enacted its sweeping Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2023, a law that caused an international uproar and triggered the suspension of some donor funding. Ghana's parliament has passed a similar bill that is still awaiting presidential assent. Senegal's law stops short of the death penalty, which Uganda's legislation controversially introduced in aggravated cases, but it places Dakar among the countries operating some of the strictest legal regimes on the continent regarding same-sex conduct.

The Senegalese government has not confirmed exactly when the law will take effect, though a presidential signature typically leads to promulgation within days. Legal challenges are widely expected. "We will test this law in the courts," said a lawyer with a Dakar civil liberties group. "Senegal is a signatory to the African Charter on Human and

Peoples' Rights. This law cannot stand."

Whether those challenges succeed remains to be seen. Courts across the region have proven reluctant to strike down legislation on such grounds when it carries popular and political backing. In the meantime, the effects on LGBT Senegalese are likely to be immediate and deeply personal — a community already operating largely out of public view now faces a legal landscape that is measurably more hostile.

For now, the statute sends a message that goes beyond its specific provisions. In a region where debates over sovereignty, identity and human rights are increasingly charged, Dakar has placed itself firmly on one side of that argument. As one opposition MP who voted against the bill put it on the floor of the National Assembly: "Today we legislated fear. Tomorrow we will count the cost."

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## Education

# JA Africa delivers 1.6 million learning experiences in a year, marking twelfold growth in five years

By: Diaspora Times Team  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Junior Achievement Africa has delivered more than 1.6 million learning experiences in a single financial year, its annual impact report shows, capping a five-year run that has transformed the organisation from a modest continental presence into the fastest-growing member of the global JA Worldwide network.

The figures, released in Accra on 5 June 2026, cover the fiscal year ended 30 June 2025. JA Africa recorded 1,637,137 learning experiences in that period — more than twelve times the 131,260 it delivered in FY2021. Across the full five years, the organisation has reached young people with a cumulative 4,269,881 learning experiences spanning entrepreneurship, financial literacy, work readiness, STEM and sustainability, operating across 23 African countries compared to just 12 when the cycle began.

The report closes what JA Africa called its “Boundless” strategic cycle, a five-year framework developed in partnership with Accenture and built around four pillars: Accelerate Digital, Empower the Underserved, Cultivate Partnerships and Strengthen OneJA. The growth it documents — from 200,000 learning experiences a year in a dozen countries to more than 1.5 million across nearly two dozen — was not accidental. It was the product of deliberate investment in governance structures, digital infrastructure and what the organisation describes as a shared culture of execution.

Simi Nwogugu, President and CEO of JA Africa, was careful to frame the numbers in those terms. “Scale was never the goal in itself — impact was,” she said. “What stands out most is not only how much we

have grown, but how intentionally we have grown.”

That intentionality is perhaps most visible in the Social Equity Program, supported by the Z Zurich Foundation, which was designed to reach young people not in education, employment or training — a population that standard youth programming often misses entirely. In FY2025, the programme did not merely meet its targets; it surpassed them comprehensively. It delivered learning experiences to 53,970 young people across seven countries, reaching 115 per cent of its set target, and ran 476 bootcamps — double the number originally projected.

The results beyond the training rooms were equally striking. Some 554 participants launched social enterprises tackling real community problems including water scarcity, malnutrition, waste management and climate vulnerability. Another 1,006 graduates secured employment within six months of completing the programme. Through enterprises created by SEP participants, 521 additional jobs were generated, and 3,618 social impact projects were designed by young people who, not long before, had no formal pathway into economic life. In Burkina Faso, the momentum produced something more durable still: a formalised three-year partnership between JA Africa and the Ministry of Youth and Entrepreneurship Promotion, a signal that national governments are beginning to see youth entrepreneurship education not as a donor-funded add-on but as a policy priority worth owning.

The organisation’s Digital Entrepreneurship Education Programme, known as JA DEEP and launched with Citi Foundation support before being upgraded with Z Zurich Foundation backing, posted its highest-ever participation figures this year. Some 66,546 young people completed core modules, with



Illustration of learners in class

women accounting for more than half of all participants — a statistic that carries weight in a continent where girls and young women are disproportionately excluded from economic opportunity. More than 2,000 participants went on to pitch business ideas formally or transition into internships and apprenticeships.

One graduate’s story captures the programme’s potential in human terms. Mohammed Salim Suleiman, a JA DEEP alumnus in Tanzania, used his entrepreneurship training to build Akili Hub LMS, a digital learning platform designed for secondary school students. He was subsequently selected for the Mastercard Foundation EdTech Fellowship 2025 — a recognition that places him among a cohort of Africa’s most promising education technology innovators.

The breadth of institutional support underpinning JA Africa’s work

is substantial. The Z Zurich Foundation, ExxonMobil Foundation, Prudence Foundation, the Project Management Institute Educational Foundation, Delta Air Lines, Boeing, FedEx, Johnson & Johnson and the Citi Foundation are among the partners whose sustained investment has made the numbers possible. The Citi Foundation merits particular note: this year marks three decades of partnership with JA Africa, a thirty-year relationship that has shaped countless entrepreneurial journeys across the continent and stands as one of the longer-running commitments to African youth development in corporate philanthropy.

What the FY2025 report ultimately documents is an organisation that has moved well beyond proving its concept. JA Africa is no longer asking whether entrepreneurship and financial education can be delivered at scale across a diverse and

logistically complex continent. The answer, the numbers suggest, is emphatically yes. The question now is what the next strategic cycle looks like — and whether the systems, partnerships and institutional trust built during “Boundless” can carry the organisation to the next level of reach and depth.

For the 1.6 million young Africans who passed through JA programmes in FY2025 alone, that question is less abstract than it might seem. Many of them are now running businesses, holding jobs that did not exist before they joined a bootcamp, or designing solutions to problems their communities have lived with for generations. The architects of Africa’s future, it turns out, were already there. They just needed a door.

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# The Jewelry Of Uzbekistan Prose: My Favorite Author – Abdulla Qahhor



By: Xudayberganova Diana Vladimirovna  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

is that he was able to fit the entire human destiny, the painful points of society and the tragedy of the era into a tiny story of just two or three pages.

- Turobjon's helplessness in the story "Pomegranate" and the social inequality hidden behind a pomegranate;
- Scenes of prejudice, poverty and despair in "The Patient";
- The ugly face of colonialism through the tragedy of Qabil Baba in the story "The Thief"...

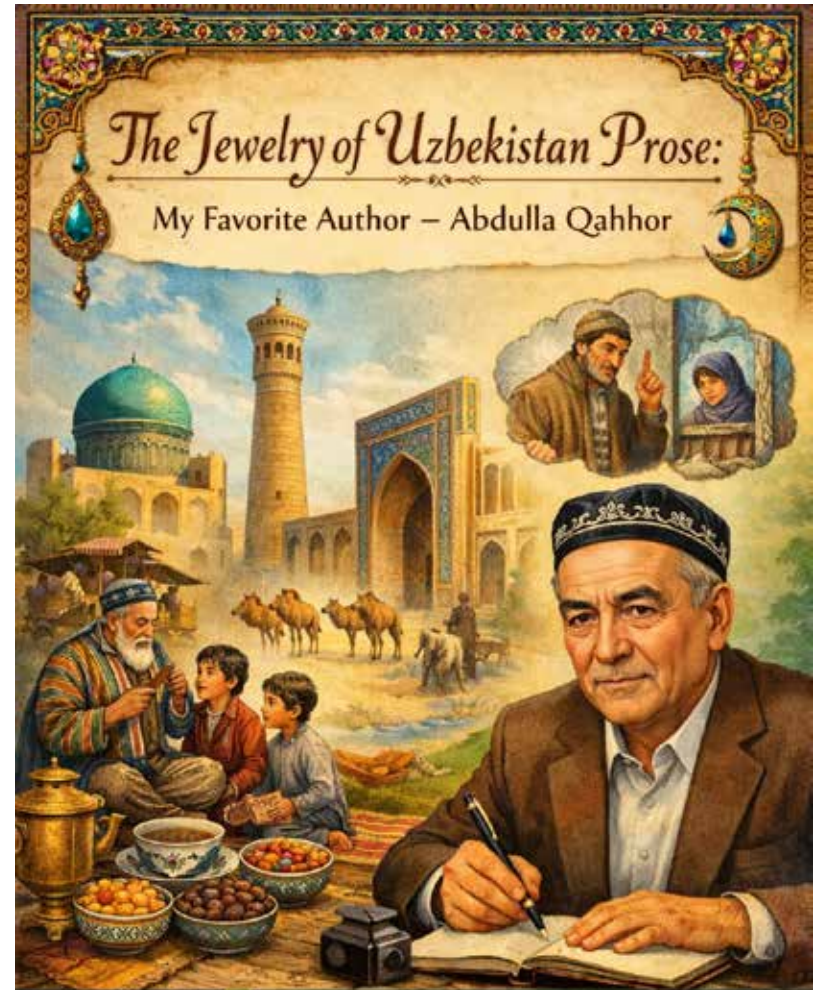
When reading these works, one does not read them, but lives with those characters, suffers. Qahhor was a writer who did not waste words. Each of his sentences shines like a diamond, directed with jewelery precision.

The most attractive aspect of Abdulla Qahhor's work is its uncompromising truthfulness. The era in which he lived coincided with the most repressive and ideologically rigid Soviet regime. He did not fit into these molds. Whether it's his story "Sinchalak", the novel "Mirage" or the comedy "Sounds from the Coffin", they all open up human freedom, bureaucracy and falsity in society like a surgeon's knife.

"Literature is stronger than an atom, but its power should not be spent on splitting wood." — Abdulla Qahhor Following this advice of the writer, he never sacrificed his creativity for cheap slapstick or lofty slogans. He wrote about the pain of his people, striving to open the eyes of the nation.

I love this writer for the beauty of language and uniqueness of character. The heroes he created are not fiction, they still walk among us today. The language in his works is a living treasure that proves how rich, juicy and sharp our native language is. In today's age of rapid information, the works of Abdulla Qahhor bring peace to the soul like a breath of fresh air. He teaches us to write briefly, to think concisely, and most importantly, to remain human in any situation.

Abdulla Qahhor is a great master who raised Uzbek national prose to the level of world standards. His legacy has stood the test of time and will take a deep place in the hearts of the new generation of writers. The writer I love is eternally alive with his works.



## Happiness

# Fortress of happiness



By: Otanazarova Mehriniso Abdusharif  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

rectly affects the fate of the child, his future successes and his place in society. Children who grow up in families where love and respect reign, usually grow up to be responsible, patriotic, and spiritually mature people.

From the very first moments of their birth, a child is immersed in the ocean of love and affection of the family. The love of the mother, the love of the father, and the prayers of grandparents plant the seeds of goodness in their hearts. It is in this place that a person begins to understand the value of good and evil, black and white, honesty and justice. Therefore, the family is not only a source of happiness, but also the first school of human perfection.

In today's fast-paced world, technology is becoming an integral part of our lives. However, even the most modern devices cannot replace the love of parents, sincere conversations, and family affection. Because the human heart lives with love. And where there is no love, happiness does not last long.

Especially in the upbringing of the younger generation, the role of the family is incomparable. A child learns more from their way of life than from the advice of their parents. Therefore, every parent is not only a teacher for their child, but also a role model.

Young people who grow up in families where a healthy environment prevails will become the pillars of society in the future.

Today, let each of us look at our own

family. Aren't the blessings of our parents, the joy of our children, the loving glances of our loved ones the greatest wealth given to us? Material blessings are temporary, but family love and loyalty are the light that illuminates the human heart throughout life. Therefore, there is no need to look for happiness from afar. It knocks on our door every day, it lives with us in our family circle. Appreciating, preserving and strengthening it is the most important task of every person. After all, when the family is strong, society is strong. When the family is happy, the future is bright.

May families that are the bastions of happiness increase, and may their lamps full of love and affection never go out!



Where is the dearest, most valuable and most sacred place for a person in the world? Everyone can answer this question differently. Someone mentions their homeland, someone the street where they spent their childhood, and someone else the place where their dreams came true. But there is one truth that unites all the answers: a person's true happiness begins with the family. That is why the family is a fortress of happiness. When we think of a fortress, we imagine strong walls, reliable protection and peace of mind. The family is also such a fortress that protects the human soul from various worries, trials and cold winds of life. Although the fierce flow of life continues outside, a person feels safest and happiest when he returns to the bosom of the family.

The family is the first destination of the human soul. A person first of all gets to know the world through the family, learns to distinguish good from evil in the family. Therefore, the environment in the family di-

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## Motivation

# Happiness Behind Hardships: The Journey of an Uzbek Girl Who Refused to Give Up



By: Rahimberdiyeva Shohzodabonu Umrbek  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

## Worth Noting:

• These words became a painful part of her childhood. Many relatives and even family members believed that investing in a girl's education was unnecessary. They saw little value in her dreams and ambitions. As a result, she was not given the same educational opportunities that many children deserve. However, there was one person who never stopped believing in her—her mother.

• Her mother became her greatest supporter, encouraging her to continue learning despite all obstacles. When the family later moved to another city and eventually settled in the capital, new opportunities began to appear. For the first time, she found herself surrounded by better educational resources and a more inspiring environment. She studied harder than ever before.

• While others slept, she stayed awake reading books, improving her skills, and preparing for her future. Days turned into months, and months into years of relentless effort. There were moments when she felt exhausted and questioned whether all her efforts would ever pay off. Watching others advance more quickly, she sometimes wondered if she was falling behind.

Success is rarely born in comfort. Behind every achievement lies a story of struggle, sacrifice, and perseverance. This is the story of an ordinary Uzbek girl who turned her difficulties into opportunities and proved that determination can change a person's destiny.

Born into a large family with several daughters, she was the eldest child. Instead of receiving encouragement, she often heard words that hurt her deeply. "If only you had been a boy, you could have supported the family financially."

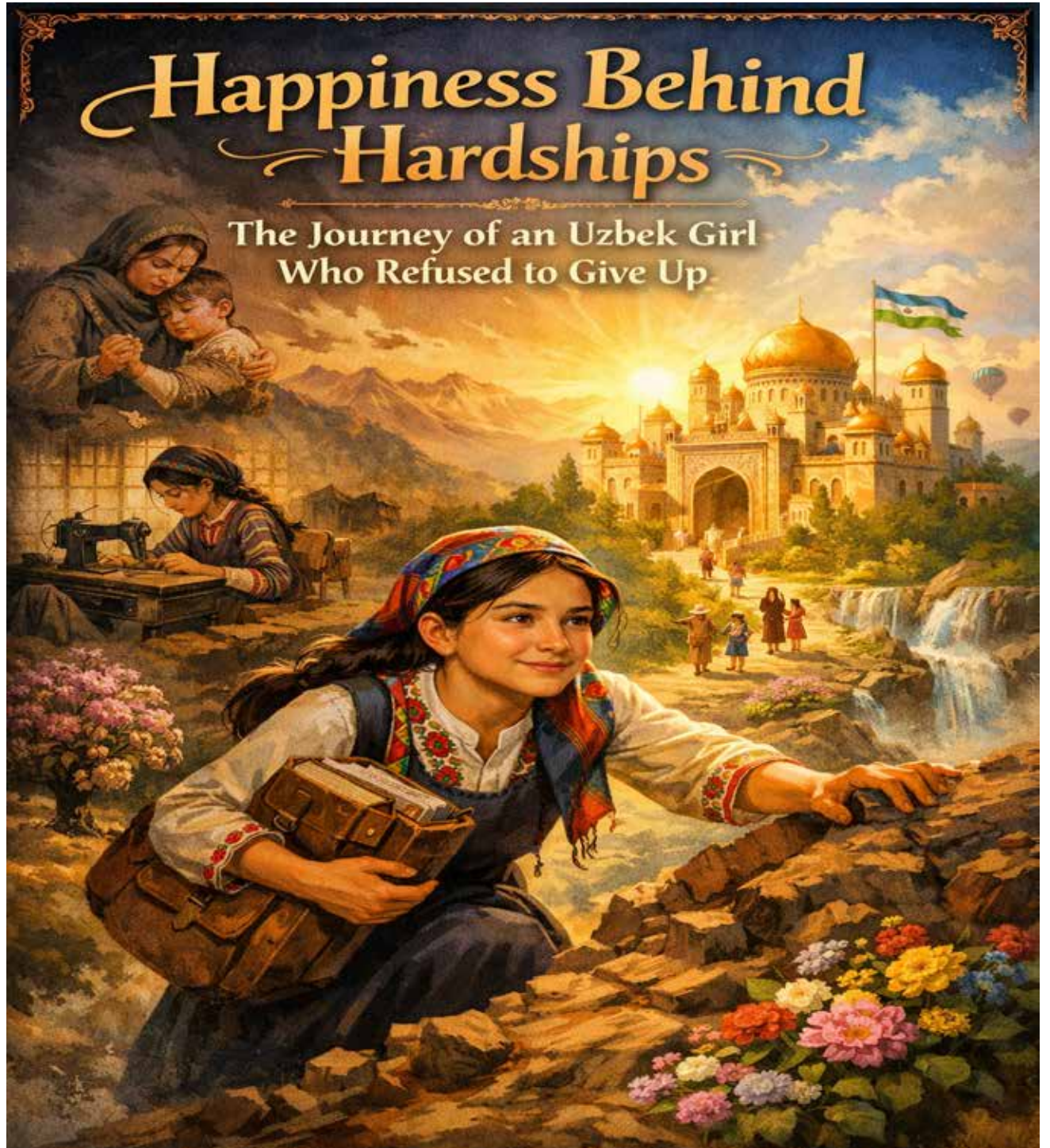
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Yet every challenge became a lesson, and every failure became a source of strength. Instead of allowing difficulties to discourage her, she used them as motivation to work even harder. She understood that success is not measured by how quickly one reaches a destination, but by the courage to continue moving forward despite setbacks.

Eventually, she was admitted to a university in her hometown region. Although it was not the prestigious institution she had once



imagined, she embraced the opportunity with gratitude and determination. Soon, she realized that university was not only a place to gain knowledge—it was a gateway to countless possibilities. Her academic excellence earned her a scholarship, easing the financial burden on her family. She actively participated in educational, cultural, and social events, becoming one of the most engaged students on campus. Her enthusiasm and leadership inspired many of her peers.

Remarkably, from her very first year at university, she began teaching in a learning center related to her field of study. Sharing knowledge with others strengthened her own expertise and helped her achieve financial independence at a young age.

Yet she did not stop there.

She understood that language is a bridge to the world. Therefore, she devoted herself to learning for-

eign languages. Every new language opened another door to global opportunities. Through discipline and continuous self-improvement, she earned the chance to study abroad. Moving to another country was not easy. She had to adapt to a new culture, a different educational system, and unfamiliar surroundings. Nevertheless, the same determination that had guided her throughout her life helped her overcome every challenge. Abroad, she achieved what once seemed impossible. She worked with internationally recognized companies, gained valuable professional experience, and traveled to places she had only dreamed of visiting as a child. Each journey broadened her perspective and strengthened her confidence. As the years passed, her achievements began to change the attitudes of those around her. The same people who once doubted her abilities started to admire her determination and accomplishments. She became

a role model for her younger sisters and for many young girls in her community. Through her example, she showed that education is one of the most powerful tools for transforming lives and creating opportunities. Beyond academic success and professional growth, she never forgot her roots. Whenever possible, she shared her experiences with students from small towns and villages, encouraging them to dream bigger and believe in their potential. She wanted others to understand that a person's background does not define their future. What truly matters is the willingness to learn, grow, and persevere.

Today, she stands as a symbol of resilience and hope. The girl who was once told that she should have been born a boy has proven that talent, intelligence, and determination know no gender. Her success was not the result of luck but of years of hard work, courage, and unwavering belief in herself.

For countless young women across Uzbekistan and beyond, her journey serves as a reminder that dreams are worth pursuing. No matter how many barriers stand in the way, determination and education can open doors that once seemed impossible to reach. Her life is living proof that happiness is often found on the other side of hardship.

Her story teaches us a powerful lesson: hardships are not barriers; they are stepping stones. Sometimes the road to happiness is long and difficult, but those who refuse to give up eventually discover that their greatest struggles become the foundation of their greatest achievements.

This Uzbek girl's journey reminds us that dreams do come true when they are supported by perseverance, education, and faith in one's potential.

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## WORLD News

## US House votes to restrict Trump's Iran war powers in rare bipartisan rebuke: Four Republicans break ranks as Congress challenges the president's authority to wage an undeclared war that has driven up fuel prices, destabilised the Gulf and tested the limits of executive power

By: Diaspora Times Team  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Contd from Page 1

### Worth Noting:

• “The passage of this measure today signals a significant turning point,” Meeks said after the vote. “More and more Republicans are listening to their constituents who do not want another open-ended war in the Middle East.” The phrase “open-ended” was deliberate. It is the phrase that haunts American foreign policy from Iraq and Afghanistan, the phrase that turns public support into exhaustion, and the phrase that Republican strategists running competitive House races in 2026 are acutely aware of.

• The conflict that prompted the resolution began on 28 February, when the United States and Israel launched coordinated strikes against Iranian military and nuclear infrastructure. The operation had been months in the making, shaped by intelligence assessments that Tehran was approaching a critical threshold in its nuclear development programme, and executed with the kind of precision that left little ambiguity about intent. Iran's response, however, was broader and more damaging to the regional order than many in Washington had anticipated.



US-Iran war

Wednesday by a margin of 215 votes to 208, a result that required four Republicans to break with their party and side with a united Democratic bloc. It was a narrow victory, but politically it was anything but small. In a House where Republican loyalty to Trump has been near-absolute since he returned to the White House, the defection of even a handful of members on a matter as grave as war powers carries a weight that the raw numbers alone do not convey. Majorities in the House of Representatives have been built and broken on slimmer margins, but few votes in recent memory have carried this particular combination of constitutional gravity and political risk for those who cast them. The resolution marks the fourth attempt by the House to rein in Trump's prosecution of military action against Iran — action that critics across party lines argue has been conducted without the formal congressional authorisation that the United States Constitution requires for a declaration of war. The previous three attempts had failed, each time falling just short or collapsing before a full floor vote. This one did not, and the shift in mood it reflects is being watched closely in Washington, in Gulf capitals, and in Tehran.

The Republicans who crossed the floor were Thomas Massie of Kentucky, Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, Tom Barrett

of Michigan and Warren Davidson of Ohio. Each represents a different strand of Republican unease with the direction of the conflict — Massie from a principled libertarian scepticism of foreign military entanglements, Fitzpatrick from a moderate suburban district where the politics of endless war play badly, Davidson and Barrett from a more traditional conservative conviction that the Constitution means what it says about the separation of war powers. On the Democratic side, Jared Golden of Maine — who had voted against similar measures in the past, reflecting the instincts of a conservative-leaning district — added his name to the resolution this time, a signal that the politics of the Iran conflict are shifting even among those who had previously given the administration room to manoeuvre.

Barrett, speaking to reporters after the vote, was direct about his reasoning and notably untroubled by the prospect of consequences. “Congress alone declares war — that's something certainly we need to be protective of,” he said. Asked whether he feared reprisals from a president with a long memory and a well-documented intolerance for disloyalty, Barrett did not flinch. “I vote my conscience for what I think is right and am willing to accept that.” It was a measured statement, almost understated in its delivery, but in the context

of Trump-era Republican politics — where crossing the president has ended careers and triggered primary challenges — it amounted to something considerably more than routine dissent. Representative Gregory Meeks, the senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and a co-sponsor of the resolution, was considerably less restrained. He described the outcome as “a significant bipartisan rebuke of President Trump's illegal and costly war in Iran and the first step toward ending it once and for all.” Meeks argued methodically that the administration had failed on every front: it had not achieved the war's stated objectives, it had driven fuel prices higher for American consumers, and it had made a negotiated resolution of Iran's nuclear programme — the original justification for military pressure — considerably harder to reach. The strikes, he argued, had not weakened Iran's strategic position so much as hardened its posture and provided its government with a nationalist rallying point it could not have manufactured on its own.

“The passage of this measure today signals a significant turning point,” Meeks said after the vote. “More and more Republicans are listening to their constituents who do not want another open-ended war in the Middle East.” The phrase “open-ended” was deliberate. It is the phrase that haunts American foreign

policy from Iraq and Afghanistan, the phrase that turns public support into exhaustion, and the phrase that Republican strategists running competitive House races in 2026 are acutely aware of.

The conflict that prompted the resolution began on 28 February, when the United States and Israel launched coordinated strikes against Iranian military and nuclear infrastructure. The operation had been months in the making, shaped by intelligence assessments that Tehran was approaching a critical threshold in its nuclear development programme, and executed with the kind of precision that left little ambiguity about intent. Iran's response, however, was broader and more damaging to the regional order than many in Washington had anticipated.

Tehran struck Israel and US-allied states in the Gulf, targeting military installations and, in several cases, civilian-adjacent infrastructure. More consequentially still, Iran moved to close the Strait of Hormuz — the narrow, strategically indispensable waterway between the Omani coast and Iran through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil supply passes on any given day. The closure sent immediate shockwaves through energy markets. Oil prices surged. Shipping insurance rates spiked. Tanker operators rerouted vessels on journeys thousands of miles longer, adding costs that rippled

through supply chains from Asia to Europe. At petrol stations across the United States, the numbers on the pumps went up, and they have not come fully back down.

By April, Washington had escalated further, announcing a naval blockade on vessels travelling to or from Iran's coastline — a step that transformed what had begun as a military confrontation into an economic siege, with legal and diplomatic implications that scholars of international law are still working through. An initial ceasefire agreement was reached on 8 April, offering a brief window of cautious optimism. Diplomats in several capitals described it as fragile but functional. Within weeks, it had effectively broken down.

In the days immediately preceding Wednesday's House vote, the United States carried out fresh strikes on Iranian territory. Tehran responded by launching attacks on Kuwait, a US ally whose government had carefully maintained a posture of studied neutrality in the hope of being spared exactly this kind of entanglement. The attacks on Kuwaiti territory changed the calculus for several Gulf states, deepening anxiety in Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Doha about where the conflict's boundaries actually lie and whether Washington's

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## WORLD News

## US House votes to restrict Trump's Iran war powers in rare bipartisan rebuke: Four Republicans break ranks as Congress challenges the president's authority to wage an undeclared war that has driven up fuel prices, destabilised the Gulf and tested the limits of executive power

By: .....  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Contd from Page 10

### Worth Noting:

- Trump, speaking to reporters at the White House on Wednesday morning, before the House vote had concluded, offered his characteristically expansive account of the situation. "We hit them pretty hard the night before, and actually last night," he said, referring to the most recent American strikes inside Iran. He appeared untroubled by the sequence of events. "Some people would say they were slightly provoked because we took a strong action for a different reason, so they were reciprocating." It was a formulation that acknowledged Iranian retaliation while declining to assign it any particular strategic significance.
- He was more measured when the conversation turned to diplomacy. Most members of his administration, he said, were hoping to bring the conflict to a close through a negotiated agreement rather than continued military escalation. "In theory they're pretty close to signing a paper," Trump said, referring to Iranian and American negotiators.



US-Iran war

assurances of protection remain credible.

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conspicuously reluctant to confirm publicly, and one that has been offered and missed before.

The resolution's path to becoming law remains formidable. It must now pass the Republican-controlled Senate, where a similar measure advanced in May after seven previous failed attempts, but where it has not yet been brought to a full floor vote. Senate Majority Leader John Thune has shown no urgency in scheduling such a vote, and the White House has made clear it views congressional attempts to limit the president's military authority as unconstitutional overreach. Even if the Senate were to pass the resolution — itself far from guaranteed — its practical ability to halt ongoing military operations would be constrained. American presidents have a long history of finding legal and operational space to continue military action even when Congress has formally sought to limit it.

What the vote does, however, is something that statute alone cannot accomplish: it shifts the political weather in ways that matter. The resolution arriving in the Senate with a bipartisan House majority — however slim — makes it substantially harder for Republican senators to dismiss it as a purely partisan exercise mounted by Democrats who oppose

the president on principle. Seven of their Senate colleagues had already voted for a comparable measure in May. The House result adds pressure, changes the public framing, and gives political cover to senators who may privately share the reservations that Barrett and his colleagues expressed publicly on Wednesday.

The Iran conflict has come to sit at the intersection of several of the most charged issues in contemporary American politics simultaneously. There is the constitutional question of war powers, unresolved since the passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973 and litigated imperfectly through every significant military engagement since. There is the economic question of energy costs, which fall most heavily on working-class Americans and which Republican members of Congress from industrial districts are hearing about in town halls and constituent correspondence. There is the strategic question of whether military pressure is bringing Iran closer to or further from a verifiable agreement on nuclear activity. And beneath all of it, there is the longer historical memory of Iraq and Afghanistan — the lessons of interventions that began with clear stated objectives and ended without them, at enormous human

and financial cost.

Wednesday's vote arrived, too, against a backdrop of fresh turbulence within the Republican coalition itself. Just days earlier, a revolt by conservative House members had forced Trump's administration to abandon plans for a 1.8 billion dollar fund that would have channelled resources to political allies under the rubric of anti-weaponization efforts. That retreat, combined with the Iran war powers resolution, suggests a Republican conference that is not in open rebellion — that would be far too strong a characterisation — but that is increasingly willing to define the perimeter of its deference, quietly and selectively, on issues where the political cost of unlimited loyalty has become difficult to absorb.

For now, the war continues. Strikes are being exchanged across a conflict that has already lasted longer than many in the administration initially projected. A ceasefire that was supposed to hold has not held. A deal that the president describes as days away has been days away before. The Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical commercial passages, remains a theatre of military tension rather than a reliable conduit for global energy supply. In Kuwait, a government that wanted nothing to do with

this conflict is now counting the cost of proximity.

And in Washington, a Congress that has spent years largely deferring to a president who treats every institutional constraint as a negotiating position has voted, by the narrowest of margins, to say that some constraints are not negotiable — that the power to take a nation to war belongs to the legislature, not the executive, and that four hundred years of constitutional history do not bend to the preferences of any single administration, however forcefully expressed.

Whether the Senate agrees will determine whether Wednesday's vote is recorded as a genuine turning point in the relationship between the branches of American government, or as a moment of conscience that produced a headline and little else. That answer will come in the weeks ahead. What is already clear is that four Republican members of Congress decided, on a Wednesday in June, that on this particular question, their reading of the Constitution mattered more than their relationship with the president. In the current political climate, that decision alone is remarkable. What it produces next will be the real story.

Spain

# Vatican in Madrid: Pope Leo XIV becomes first pontiff to address Spanish parliament

*Historic joint session hears calls for AI governance and human dignity as secular groups protest outside*

By: Norman Mwale  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

## Worth Noting:

• “Never before has the head of the Catholic Church addressed Spanish parliamentarians, giving this visit special political and public significance,” Vatican sources had confirmed ahead of the session. The observation landed with force. Though John Paul II visited Spain five times and Benedict XVI made two trips, neither man ever spoke inside Congress. Francis never came at all.

• The address was the institutional centerpiece of Leo XIV’s seven-day apostolic journey to Spain, running from 6 to 12 June and taking in Madrid, Barcelona, Gran Canaria and Tenerife. Monday’s Madrid programme was a marathon of engagements: a private audience with Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez at the Apostolic Nunciature at 09:30, the parliamentary speech at 10:30, a meeting with Spanish bishops, Marian prayer at Almudena Cathedral and, to close the day, a diocesan gathering at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium.



Pope Leo arrives in Spain

Pope Leo XIV stood at the lectern of Spain’s Congress of Deputies on Monday and made history, becoming the first Pope ever to address the country’s parliament in a joint sitting of the Cortes Generales.

The pontiff took his place at the central lectern of the hemicycle at 10:30 on 8 June 2026, speaking to deputies and senators gathered for a specially convened joint session. The programme was deliberately spare: two speeches only — one from the Pope, one from Congress President Francina Armengol — with no parliamentary debate to follow. The simplicity of the format only sharpened the occasion’s weight.

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The invitation itself had broad backing. Representatives of the Spanish episcopate confirmed it was unanimously supported by both chambers. The head of the Episcopal Conference said the Pope’s speech would focus on “dialogue, unity, and the pursuit of the common good, which today goes beyond national boundaries” — language that set the tone for what followed.

Five themes had been expected to shape the address: artificial intelligence and human dignity, migration, Catholic social doctrine, peace and disarmament, and integral ecology. The priorities were consistent

with Leo XIV’s first encyclical, *Magnifica humanitas*, published on 25 May 2026, which calls for international governance frameworks for AI that place the human person at the centre.

The joint Bureaus of Congress and Senate, chaired respectively by Armengol and Senate President Pedro Rollán, formally convened the session. Both received the Pope at the main entrance on Carrera de San Jerónimo. The speech, expected to run for around 50 minutes, was relayed live to the Senate chamber via screens. No reply from parliamentary groups was scheduled.

The initiative had been set in motion by the Holy See and formally requested in writing by the Spanish bishops on 26 February. Parliamentary and church sources said the Monday date was chosen deliberately: no ordinary plenary sessions are held then, meaning the historic sitting would not disrupt the regular parliamentary calendar.

The Congress has previously opened its doors to foreign heads of state — among them Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and

leaders from France, Portugal and Latin America. On 8 June, a Pope joined that list for the first time, speaking explicitly in his capacity as head of state of the Holy See, a distinction that framed the encounter as much diplomatic as pastoral.

The session was broadcast live on Canal Parlamento, TVE La 1 and Canal 24 Horas, as well as on Vatican Media platforms. The full text of the address was to be published on [vatican.va](http://vatican.va) once delivered.

Beyond Parliament, the visit carried broader protocol weight. Leo XIV met King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia at the Royal Palace. The Spanish Bishops’ Conference described the journey as having a “double register”: pastoral, aimed at strengthening faith and communion with the See of Peter, and official, carrying full state-level protocol implications.

Not everyone welcomed the occasion. Sixty organisations grouped under the Europa Laica association protested the plan and submitted a memorandum urging deputies to reconsider attending. The association called it “unacceptable that parliament, for the first time

in its history, should invite and welcome a religious leader as if he was simply another legislator.” The protest was peaceful, but the objection was pointed.

The Vatican, for its part, was unmoved. The address, it said, was a reminder that the Holy See continues to operate at the intersection of faith and diplomacy — a claim Monday’s events did little to contradict.

# NEWS PAPER



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## WORLD

# Sulphuric Acid and Lead from Used Car Batteries in Ghana's Soil

By: Afia Agyapomaa Ofosu  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Contd from Page 1

## Worth Noting:

- When released into the environment, the acid does more than damage the soil. It creates conditions that allow toxic metals to dissolve and spread more easily through surrounding land.

- Lead can remain in soil for decades. It can contaminate crops, poison livestock, affect wildlife, and expose children through direct contact or through contaminated food and water.

- "There are a lot of sources of lead that we keep discovering. We have done some work with the Environmental Protection Authority and discovered that some vegetables are being grown around these smelters, causing damage, especially to children and pregnant women," said Esmond Quansah, Programme Director of Pure Earth Africa.

- The danger is not limited to a few isolated workshops.

- A recent study by the Centre for Global Development titled Beyond Hot Spots: Estimating Population Lead Exposure from Battery Recycling estimated that approximately 33 percent of lead exposure in low- and lower-middle-income countries may be linked to unsafe battery recycling activities.

The scars of the trade are familiar to mechanics like him.

For years, Agya Appiah has earned a living repairing batteries. He has trained apprentices, hired workers, and helped young mechanics establish their own businesses. His knowledge has become a source of livelihood for many. But hidden within this trade is a practice that rarely attracts public attention.

When battery plates become damaged, he melts lead and uses it to replace worn parts. To reactivate batteries, he mixes distilled water with sulphuric acid.

The process keeps old batteries working longer.

But when asked what happens to the acid removed from old batteries, his answer comes quickly.

"I dig a hole behind my shop, pour the acid into it, and cover it with soil."

For him, it is normal.

For environmental and public health experts, it is alarming.

Across many informal battery repair and recycling sites in Ghana, sulphuric acid and lead waste often end up in the ground. In some places, workers do not even bother digging holes. The liquid is simply poured directly onto bare soil and left to seep into the earth.

What appears to be a simple disposal method can leave behind contamination that lasts for generations.



Acid Stains Workshop Soil

Poison That Does Not Disappear

Used lead-acid batteries contain two dangerous substances: sulphuric acid and

lead.

When released into the environment, the acid does more than damage the soil. It creates conditions that allow toxic metals to dissolve and

spread more easily through surrounding land.

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The contamination often remains long after the source is gone.

"Once lead is deposited into



Lead-Acid Battery Before Repair

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WORLD

# Sulphuric Acid and Lead from Used Car Batteries in Ghana's Soil

By: .....  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Contd from Page 14

## Worth Noting:

- “The lead drains gradually until it reaches the water table. When it gets there, there is no technology to dissolve it. Unless you bring out all the water, you cannot treat it underneath. Also, with most of our water treatment systems, lead is able to escape.”
- Once groundwater becomes contaminated, communities can be exposed for years without realizing it.
- The consequences are already showing.
- In 2021, more than four million children in Ghana were estimated to have unsafe blood lead levels. A blood lead survey conducted in 2022 across three regions found that over 53 percent of children tested had unsafe blood lead levels.
- For many children, exposure begins long before symptoms become visible.
- Lead attacks the body quietly. Even small amounts can interfere with brain development, learning ability, behaviour, and physical growth. The effects can last a lifetime.

soil, it remains there forever if it is not removed. It becomes a multi-generational poisoning site,” Mr. Quansah said.

His warning points to a troubling reality. While workshops repair batteries to extend their life, the pollution left behind can outlive several generations of the families living nearby.

The Threat Beneath Our Feet

The contamination does not stop at the surface.

For many households that depend on groundwater for drinking, cooking, washing, and other domestic activities, polluted soil can become the starting point of a deeper crisis.

“Lead can travel deep into groundwater,” explained Dr. Sampson Atiemo, a private environmental consultant.

“The lead drains gradually until it reaches the water table. When it gets there, there is no technology to dissolve it. Unless you bring out all the water, you cannot treat it underneath. Also, with most of our water treatment systems, lead is able to escape.”

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Lead attacks the body quietly. Even small amounts can interfere with brain development, learning ability, behaviour, and physical growth. The effects can last a lifetime.

To better understand the scale of the problem, health researchers conducted blood lead surveys between 2022 and 2023.

The findings shocked even the experts.

### Children Paying the Price

Dr. Carl Osei, Programme Manager for Occupational and Environmental Health at the Ghana Health Service, described the results of the survey.

“In the Northern Region,

the findings were interesting because the levels were elevated in both areas, irrespective of whether it was a contaminated site or a control site. We had a prevalence of about 79 percent in Yendi and 74 percent of children with elevated blood lead levels. This was very surprising because globally, we know that about 33 percent of children should have elevated blood lead levels.”

“In the Greater Accra Region, we realised that children staying near contaminated sites had a higher risk of elevated blood lead levels. Those staying around Ashaiman had levels around 56 percent, which is quite high.”

“We also looked beyond the informal industries and assessed facilities that were supposed to be operating under formal conditions. These were well-regulated factories recycling used lead-acid batteries. To our surprise, the children living near those facilities also had very high levels of lead exposure. In some communities, prevalence was around 89 percent, while others recorded levels between 70 percent and 79 percent.”

The findings reveal that exposure is not confined to informal recycling operations alone. Communities living close to both informal and formal recycling facilities may face significant risks.

According to the World Health Organization, elevated blood lead levels in children can cause irreversible brain damage, lower IQ, attention and behavioural problems, delayed growth, anaemia, hearing loss, kidney damage, stomach pain, and reduced earning potential later in life.

The damage often begins during the earliest stages of development.

“Lead poisoning affects how a child develops,” said Dr. Emmanuel Kyeremanteng Amoah, Public Health Physician and Environmental Health Specialist at UNICEF Ghana.

“For example, you give birth to a child and expect that by six months, the child should be crawling. At some point, the child should be able to sit by themselves and move from one chair to another. But in severe cases, you see that the developmental milestones of the child are seriously impaired.”

In many auto repair centres across the country, children



Discarded Battery Casing Remains

can often be seen playing nearby, picking up objects from the ground or helping adults with small tasks. Without knowing it, they may be touching contaminated soil, dust, or battery waste.

Workers themselves can also carry lead particles home on their clothes, shoes, skin, and tools, creating another pathway of exposure for their families.

The Enforcement Gap Experts say preventing contamination is possible.

Safer recycling methods exist. Protective equipment can reduce exposure. Hazardous waste can be collected and treated properly instead of being dumped into the ground.

The challenge, however, lies in ensuring that these mea-

sures are consistently followed.

Dr. Atiemo believes Ghana's regulatory system faces significant capacity and enforcement challenges.

“There are capacity gaps in the system. People are employed to work in regulatory agencies, but the knowledge about these specific matters is not always there. Meanwhile, the older officers who have the expertise and experience are leaving the system and are not passing their knowledge on to the next generation,” he said.

His concerns point to a larger problem.

While battery recycling helps keep vehicles running and creates jobs for thousands of people, weak oversight can allow dangerous practices to continue unno-

ticed. Behind many workshops are small patches of earth where sulphuric acid has been buried. To the naked eye, they appear harmless. Grass may grow over them. Dust may settle on them. Life may continue around them.

Yet beneath the surface, toxic substances can remain for decades, silently moving through soil, water, food, and human bodies.

The hole dug behind a workshop may take only minutes to fill.

The damage it leaves behind can last for generations.

*The writer is a science journalist.*

*Email: prissyof@yahoo.com*

America

# Zelensky calls for face-to-face talks with Putin in renewed push for peace deal

By: BBC  
xxxxxxxxxxxx

Volodymyr Zelensky has called for a face-to-face meeting between himself and Vladimir Putin in a renewed bid to end the war.

In an open letter to the Russian president, the Ukrainian leader said it would be “wrong to simply wait” until the war in Europe becomes the focus of the US’s attention once more, adding peace could only come “through direct engagement between” Ukraine and Russia.

He also called for a full ceasefire for the duration of proposed negotiations – something Putin ruled out earlier on Thursday.

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday he thought “it would be great” if the two leaders met.

The Kremlin confirmed it had received the letter and Putin would be briefed on it.

The tone of the letter was defiant, even mocking, drawing attention to Ukraine’s recent strikes on Russian territory.

Zelensky stated that “after 26 years in power, age is beginning to take its toll” on Putin.

The letter also provided an invitation.

“Ukraine proposes ending this war through direct engagement between us – and you. I am proposing a meeting,” Zelensky wrote.

It’s not a new offer from Ukraine’s leader.

As it has before, the Kremlin responded, saying Zelensky was welcome to meet Putin in Moscow.

What was notable was Kyiv’s public acknowledgement



that the US “is fully focused on the issue of Iran”.

“It would be wrong to simply wait until the war in Europe returns to the centre of its attention,” Zelensky wrote.

Speaking to foreign journalists in St Petersburg, without apparently having seen the contents of the letter, Putin said he was “certainly prepared and willing to reach an agreement with Ukraine”, but said compromises needed to be made.

Putin suggested that as Trump was busy with Iran, the EU could talk Zelensky into surrendering territory.

Putin’s longstanding position has been that Ukraine should withdraw from four regions largely occupied by Russia – Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia – and give up its efforts to

join Nato.

Ukraine has ruled out ceding territory, saying it would embolden Russia to invade again, as it had in 2022 when it launched its full-scale war eight years after illegally annexing Crimea.

Ceasefire negotiations have stalled in recent months, and previous peace talks in Geneva, Abu Dhabi and Istanbul have failed.

In the letter, which is more than 1,800 words long, Zelensky said: “It is not as if we in Ukraine are concerned about the fate of Russian soldiers after everything your war has brought to our country.

“But I do care about Ukrainians. We are losing our people, and every loss is painful to us.”

Putin remains uncompromising on Ukraine, but is

public discourse on war changing in Russia?

Zelensky said Russians had become tired of Ukrainian drone and missile attacks, petrol shortages and rising prices, as well as war.

“Do not be afraid to take the path out of this war. That is the main thing that is required of you now,” he implored.

He said Ukraine was proposing to end the war “through direct engagement between us”.

Zelensky said face-to-face negotiations could take place in a country such as Switzerland or Turkey.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha said “this open letter is a serious and meaningful proposal to end the war”.

“We expect a meaningful response to this proposal. It’s time to end this war. It’s time to choose peace,” he added.

The Ukrainian president’s letter came on the same day Putin was in St Petersburg, where a major economic forum is taking place.

The previous day Kyiv had launched a drone attack on the city’s outskirts, a strike mentioned in Zelensky’s message as “paying a visit”.

Separately Russian-backed authorities in occupied Crimea blamed Ukraine for the death of four people in attacks on the regional capital, Simferopol. Ukraine said it had hit a fuel depot.

During his press conference on Thursday, Putin appeared to immediately cast doubt on whether a meeting or deal could ever take place.

“Whether Mr Zelensky is a legitimate representative of Ukraine, this is a question for the lawyers, for a legal analysis,” he said – a repetition of a Russian line that there has been no presidential election since Zelensky’s term expired in May 2024.

However, elections have been suspended in Ukraine since martial law was declared after Russia’s invasion.

Trump said he thought the US had been instrumental in bringing the two countries closer to peace.

“I think it would be great if they met. They should. Get it done,” he said.

Asked about the compromises the two sides would have to make, he said he would “rather not say”.

“I want them each to make certain compromises, and I think they’re going to do it.”



Putin insists Russia is winning the war and Ukraine must surrender territory

## Worth Noting:

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- The Kremlin confirmed it had received the letter and Putin would be briefed on it.
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- What was notable was Kyiv’s public acknowledgement that the US “is fully focused on the issue of Iran”.

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## Diaspora

# China-US call for stable military ties at Shangri-La Dialogue amid global security risks

Major General Meng Xiangqing, a professor at China's National Defense University, made the remarks on Saturday during a parallel session of the three-day Shangri-La Dialogue, which concluded on Sunday.

By: China Daily  
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Major General Meng Xiangqing of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) National Defense University and the Chinese delegation attend a meeting on the sidelines of the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore May 29, 2026. REUTERS/Edgar Su

## Worth Noting:

- Meng said the level of attention the two leaders' meeting received at the forum showed that stability in China-US relations serves not only the interests of the two peoples, but also regional stability and world peace.
- The most important political consensus reached by the two sides is to build a constructive relationship of strategic stability between China and the US, Meng said.
- "We expect China and the US to meet each other halfway, translate the consensus into concrete actions, and push military-to-military relations toward healthy, stable and sustainable development," he said.
- Responding to a question from a member of the Chinese delegation after his speech, Hegseth said the new vision of building a constructive US-China relationship of strategic stability is "real, substantive and meaningful for the history of peace in the region and the world".

China and the United States should implement the important consensus reached by the two countries' leaders and work toward a stable and sustainable military-to-military relationship, Chinese scholars said at a high-level security forum in Singapore, as global security faces rising risks from hegemonism, disorder of global governance and emerging technologies.

Major General Meng Xiangqing, a professor at China's National Defense University, made the remarks on Saturday during a parallel session of the three-day Shangri-La Dialogue, which concluded on Sunday. His remarks came after US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth referred to the recent China-US top leaders' meeting in Beijing and their consensus, during a plenary speech earlier on Saturday. Meng said the level of attention the two leaders' meeting received at the forum showed that stability in China-US relations serves not only the interests of the two peoples, but also regional stability and world peace. The most important political

consensus reached by the two sides is to build a constructive relationship of strategic stability between China and the US, Meng said.

"We expect China and the US to meet each other halfway, translate the consensus into concrete actions, and push military-to-military relations toward healthy, stable and sustainable development," he said.

Responding to a question from a member of the Chinese delegation after his speech, Hegseth said the new vision of building a constructive US-China relationship of strategic stability is "real, substantive and meaningful for the history of peace in the region and the world".

Hegseth said he was present when the leaders discussed constructive strategic stability. "I think that was a great framing from both leaders about what they want from that relationship," he said, adding that there is "a mutual respect, a recognition of capabilities and power and how that could be most usefully leveraged in the world today".

Wang Dong, a professor at Peking University's School of International Studies, said that Hegseth's speech this year contained far fewer negative references to China compared with speeches by US defense chiefs in previous years, and did not mention Taiwan or the South China Sea, two hot topics that had often been cited in the past.

Wang, who participated in the security summit, said the change in Hegseth's tone reflected a more cautious approach by the US in handling relations with China after the two countries agreed to build a constructive relationship of strategic stability.

"Over the past year or so, China, through engagement and struggle, has made the US realize that it cannot gain an advantage in a trade war with China, and may even face countermeasures from China," he said. "The US is working with China to build a new paradigm, which is very important for the two countries to find the right way to get along." In his speech, Meng, the PLA professor, also warned

that global strategic stability faces unprecedented challenges, including the impact of hegemonism on regional security, rising risks of global nuclear conflict, serious erosion of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation systems, and disorder in global governance.

Some countries are engaging in power politics, seeking absolute strategic superiority and provoking bloc confrontation, he said, adding that such moves have intensified arms races and regional conflicts.

"These risks are intertwined and mutually reinforcing, making current strategic stability highly fragile," Meng said, noting that countries, especially major powers, should shoulder their due responsibilities in safeguarding strategic stability.

He called for firmly defending the postwar international order, saying that it is essential to building the political foundation for strategic stability.

"As the world again stands at a crossroads, countries must stay alert to any revival of

militarist thinking and firmly safeguard the outcomes of World War II and the postwar international order," Meng said, criticizing recent actions by the Japanese side in the security and military fields.

On emerging technologies, the scholar warned against a "rules vacuum" in their military use.

"Allowing algorithms to control matters of life and death could very likely lead to technological loss of control," he said. "At all times, control over war and related weapon systems must be firmly kept in human hands."

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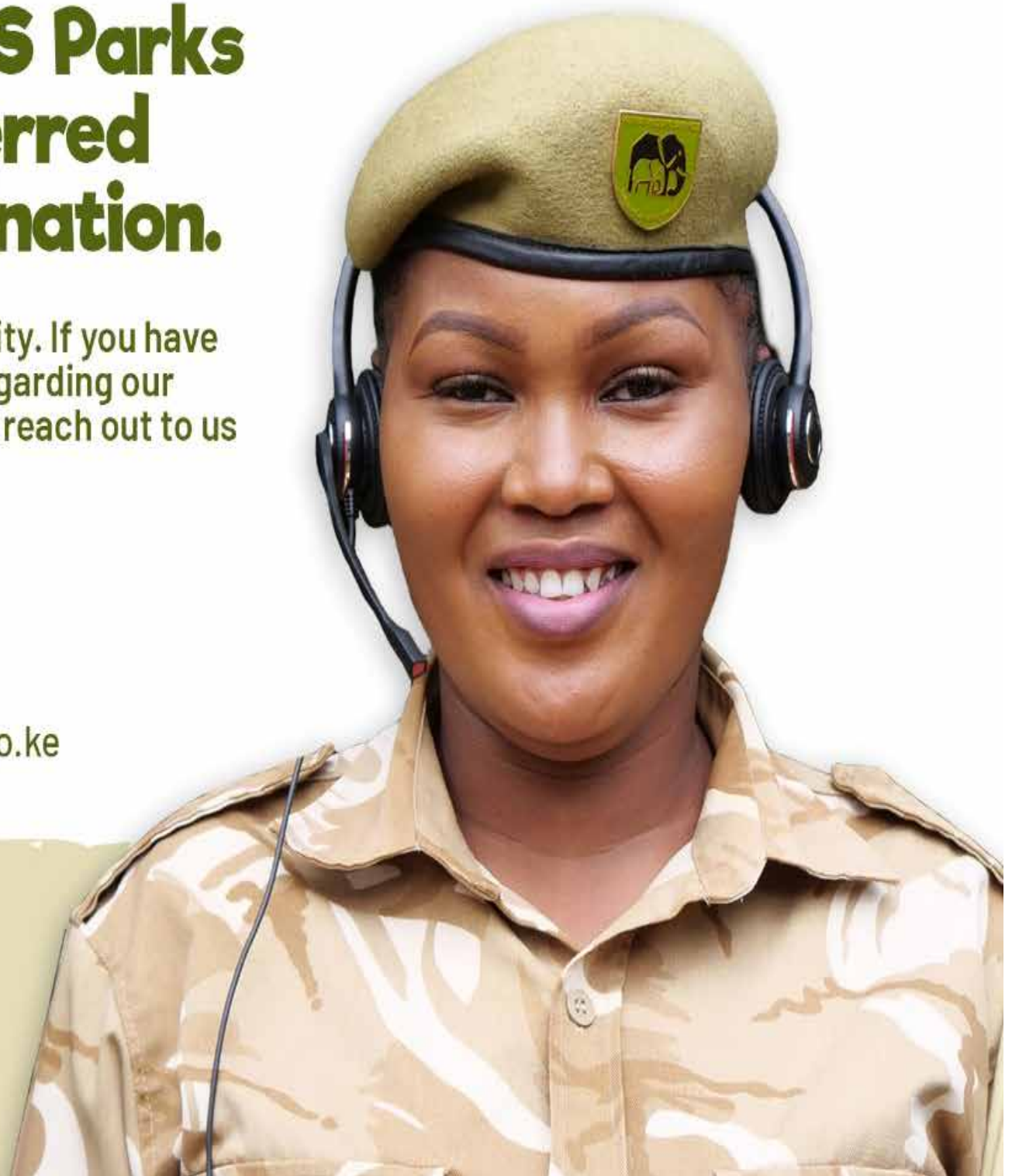
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## Diaspora

## Omtatah demands Senate probe into affordable housing projects flagged by auditor-general

*Busia senator warns Kenya's flagship housing programme risks becoming a vehicle for land grabbing as audit findings expose missing title deeds, absent public participation and questionable allocations*

By: Diaspora Times Team  
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One of Kenya's most tenacious legislative watchdogs is demanding answers about the government's flagship Affordable Housing Programme, warning that projects built on public and community land without proper ownership records could amount to state-sanctioned land grabbing dressed up in the language of social welfare.

Busia Senator Okiya Omtatah has formally submitted a request for a statement to the Senate Standing Committee on Land, Environment and Natural Resources, citing findings in the Auditor-General's report on the Affordable Housing Programme that he says expose deep and potentially criminal irregularities in how the scheme has been implemented across the country. The statement request, shared publicly on X alongside a pointed commentary, pulls no punches. "Affordable housing cannot become a cover for land grabbing," Omtatah wrote. "The Auditor-General has flagged projects built on public and community land without proper ownership records, legal processes, or public participation. Kenyans deserve answers."

At the heart of Omtatah's concerns is a pattern of alleged procedural failure that, if borne out, would place the programme in direct conflict with multiple layers of Kenyan law. The constitutional provisions he cites are not obscure or technical. Articles 10, 40, 60, 62 and 63 of the Constitution speak to foundational matters: national values and governance principles, the right to property, the principles governing land use, the classification of public land and the framework for community land. When a housing programme funded by public money and built on public or community land fails to comply with those articles, the senator argues, it is not merely a bureaucratic lapse — it is a constitutional breach.

The senator identifies two implementing agencies as bearing particular responsibility for what he calls "systemic lapses": the State Department for Housing and Urban Development and the National Land Commission. Both institutions carry statutory mandates that should have prevented the irregularities from occurring at all. The National Land Commission, in particular, exists as an independent constitutional body with oversight over public land — its alleged failure to ensure proper allocation and documentation in the context of a national housing programme is precisely the kind of question that a Senate inquiry is designed to examine.



Senator Okiya Omtatah speaks to Busia residents. Photo/Omtatah

tutional breach. Beyond the constitution, Omtatah contends that the irregularities may have violated the Land Act, the Land Registration Act, the Community Land Act, the Public Finance Management Act and the Physical and Land Use Planning Act. Taken together, these are the statutes that exist precisely to prevent the kind of opaque land dealings that have historically plagued Kenya's public sector and enriched politically connected individuals at the expense of ordinary citizens. Their alleged non-observance in a programme explicitly designed for the most economically vulnerable Kenyans would represent a particularly bitter irony.

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Omtatah's demands to the committee are specific and far-reaching. He wants a comprehensive register of every Affordable Housing project flagged by the Auditor-General for lacking proper land ownership documentation, including the location of each project and its current implementation status. He is asking for clarity on the legal status of the land on which those projects sit and whether due process was followed at every stage — allocation, reservation, conservation — before a single brick was laid. On community land, the senator is particularly insistent. The Community Land Act imposes specific requirements for public participation and community consent before such land can be used for any purpose, including government-initiated development. Omtatah wants to know whether those requirements were met. Given that community land is, by definition, collectively owned by the communities living on it, the failure to observe those requirements would mean that people may have had their land taken and built upon without their knowledge or agreement — all in the name of housing them.

The demand for accountability extends to what happens after the irregularities are identified. Omtatah is asking whether steps have been taken to regularise land ownership through the issuance of valid title deeds

or leasehold interests for beneficiaries — the people who were supposed to benefit from the programme and who may now find themselves occupying homes built on land to which nobody can establish a clean legal title. He is also asking what action has been taken against officers or entities found culpable, and what measures are being put in place to prevent the same failures from recurring in future phases of the programme. On the question of enforcement, the senator wants to know whether the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission has initiated investigations and, if so, what the current status of those investigations is. The EACC's mandate covers precisely this kind of situation — the misuse of public resources and the abuse of public office for private gain — and its presence or absence from the picture will say something significant about whether accountability in Kenya's housing sector is a genuine priority or a political talking point.

The Affordable Housing Programme was conceived as a cornerstone of the Ruto administration's social agenda, promising to deliver hundreds of thousands of affordable homes to Kenyans shut out of the property market by decades of underinvestment and runaway land prices. The housing levy, deducted from workers' salaries and matched by

employers, was introduced to fund it. That levy has been challenged in court, debated in parliament and contested in the streets. The audit findings that Omtatah is now raising add a new and more fundamental dimension to that debate: not merely whether the programme is being funded fairly, but whether the land on which it is being built was obtained lawfully in the first place.

"Public land is not for plunder," Omtatah declared. "Accountability must come before construction."

In a country where land has been the central axis of political conflict, economic inequality and historical grievance for generations, those words carry a weight that extends well beyond a Senate committee request. Whether the committee — and the government ministries it will summon to answer — rises to meet that weight will reveal a great deal about the state of accountability in Kenya's parliament at a moment when it matters most.

## Worth Noting:

• At the heart of Omtatah's concerns is a pattern of alleged procedural failure that, if the audit findings are accurate, goes well beyond administrative sloppiness. The senator's statement describes projects that were undertaken, in his words, "without lawful allocation, proper documentation or adherence to established legal procedures" — a characterisation that, if borne out, would place the programme in direct conflict with multiple layers of Kenyan law.

• The constitutional provisions he cites are not obscure or technical. Articles 10, 40, 60, 62 and 63 of the Constitution speak to foundational matters: national values and governance principles, the right to property, the principles governing land use, the classification of public land and the framework for community land. When a housing programme funded by public money and built on public or community land fails to comply with those articles, the senator argues, it is not merely a bureaucratic lapse — it is a constitutional breach.

## Diaspora

## Linguistic and Linguo-Poetic Classification of the Internal Semantic Groups of Adjectives

*The linguistic nature of internal semantic groups of adjectives—including categories such as color, shape, size, taste, and character traits—becomes especially significant when these units undergo semantic transformation within artistic contexts.*



By: Abdulboqiyeva Muhlisa  
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## Abstract

This article investigates the adjective as a lexical-grammatical category in Uzbek linguistics, focusing on its internal lexical-semantic groups and their linguo-poetic functions in literary discourse. Alongside the traditional linguistic classification of adjectives into semantic categories such as color, size, shape, taste, and qualitative characteristics, the study explores their role in text formation, imagery construction, and aesthetic expression. Through contextual analyses of examples drawn from classical and modern Uzbek literature, the research demonstrates that adjectives extend beyond their denotative functions and acquire complex connotative, symbolic, and stylistic meanings within artistic discourse.

**Keywords:** adjective, lexical-semantic group, linguo-poetics, connotative meaning, artistic imagery, aesthetic function, epithet, symbolism.

## Introduction

The contemporary development of linguistic science has shifted scholarly attention from the isolated grammatical and semantic examination of language units toward their functioning within discourse, text, and artistic communication. Within this paradigm, linguo-poetics has emerged as a significant field concerned with the aesthetic potential of linguistic elements and the manifestation of authorial intention through language.

Among the various parts of speech, adjectives occupy a particularly important position due to their capacity to express the qualities, characteristics, and attributes of objects and phenomena. However, adjectives do not merely describe objective reality. They also reflect the speaker's subjective evaluation, emotional perception, and aesthetic attitude toward the world. Consequently, adjectives function as powerful instruments in literary texts, contributing to imagery, symbolism, emotional coloring, and stylistic expressiveness.

The linguistic nature of internal semantic groups of adjectives—including categories such as color, shape, size, taste, and character traits—becomes especially signif-

icant when these units undergo semantic transformation within artistic contexts. Processes such as metaphorization, metonymic transfer, symbolic reinterpretation, and contextual expansion enable adjectives to transcend their primary lexical meanings and acquire additional aesthetic and ideological functions.

The primary objective of this study is to systematize the internal semantic groups of Uzbek adjectives and to examine their linguo-poetic potential in literary discourse. Particular attention is devoted to the mechanisms through which adjectives participate in the creation of artistic imagery, emotional atmosphere, and textual aesthetics.

## Main Part

Linguistic Classification of the Internal Semantic Groups of Adjectives

From a linguistic perspective, Uzbek adjectives are traditionally classified into two broad categories: qualitative adjectives and relative adjectives. Among these, qualitative adjectives demonstrate the greatest stylistic flexibility and linguo-poetic productivity. Their semantic structure can be divided into several principal lexical-semantic groups:

**Color Adjectives:** white, black, red, blue, yellowish, green, pink.

**Size and Dimension Adjectives:** large, small, wide, narrow, high, low, gigantic, tiny.

**Characteristic and Qualitative Adjectives:** good, bad, intelligent, simple, cunning, brave, cowardly.

**Taste Adjectives:** sweet, bitter, sour, salty, insipid.

**Shape and Form Adjectives:** round, rectangular, crooked, curved, straight, flat.

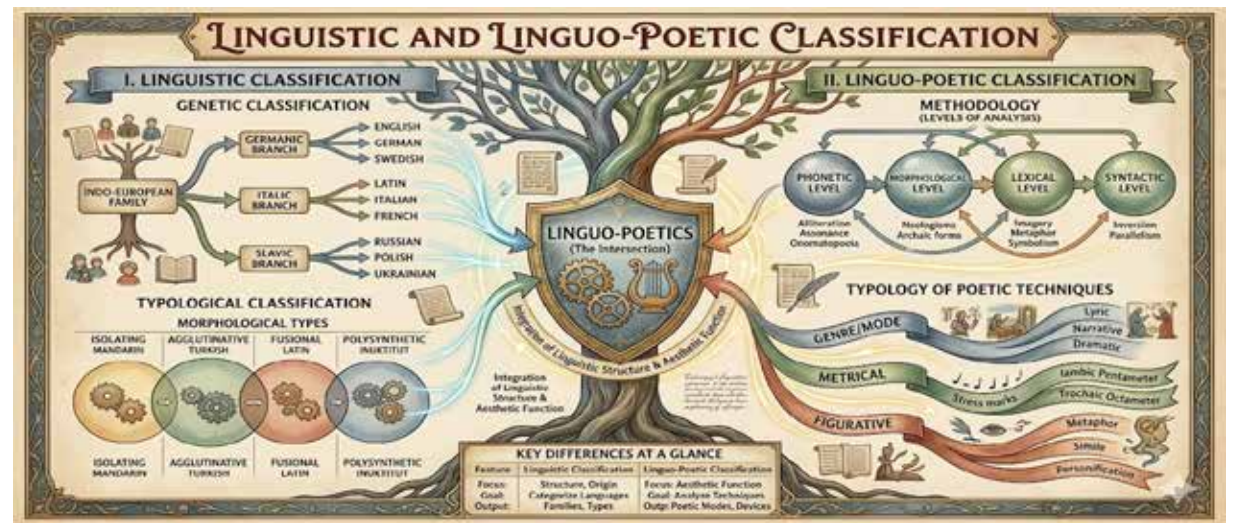
Within the language system, these adjectives perform a primarily denotative function by identifying objective features of entities. Nevertheless, once incorporated into literary discourse, they frequently acquire additional connotative and symbolic meanings, thereby expanding their semantic scope.

## Linguo-Poetic Classification and Contextual Functions of Adjectives

**Color Adjectives as Instruments of Symbolism**

Color adjectives constitute one of the most productive sources of symbolic meaning in literary language. Their function extends far beyond visual description, often serving as indicators of emotional states, psychological conditions, and ideological concepts.

In Uzbek poetic tradition, the opposition between “black” and “white” possesses archetypal significance. The adjective black commonly symbolizes grief, tragedy, oppression, and despair, whereas white evokes



purity, innocence, hope, and spiritual illumination.

For example, in Cho'pon's poetic expression, “black sorrows of the heart” no longer refers to an actual color. Instead, the adjective undergoes metaphorical transformation and conveys profound emotional suffering. Through this semantic shift, sorrow acquires visual form, intensifying its psychological impact upon the reader.

Similarly, in the poetry of Alisher Navoi, the adjective yellow frequently symbolizes the physical and emotional consequences of separation in love. The pale complexion of the lover becomes a visual representation of inner anguish and longing.

## Semantic Transposition of Taste Adjectives

Taste-related adjectives represent another highly productive semantic group within literary discourse. Although their primary function concerns sensory perception, they are frequently employed to characterize abstract concepts and emotional experiences.

Expressions such as bitter fate, bitter truth, sweet dream, sweet conversation, and sweet hope illustrate how sensory vocabulary becomes a means of conceptualizing psychological and emotional realities.

In Abdulla Qodiriy's O'tkan Kunlar, the phrase “sweet conversation” exemplifies this phenomenon. Here, sweetness does not denote physical taste but rather emotional pleasure, spiritual comfort, and interpersonal harmony. Likewise, the expression “bitter fate” transforms sensory pain into a metaphorical representation of human suffering and adversity.

Such semantic transpositions exemplify the phenomenon of synesthesia, whereby qualities associated with one sensory domain are transferred to another conceptual sphere. Poetic Amplification Through Size and Shape Adjectives

Adjectives denoting size, dimension, and form play a significant role in constructing spatial and temporal relations within literary texts. Furthermore, they frequently function as vehicles for ideological and emotional contrast.

In Erkin Vohidov's poetic image of “a gigantic eagle within a narrow cage,” the adjectives gigantic and narrow create a powerful antithetical structure. The semantic opposition between greatness and confinement generates a symbolic representation of the conflict between freedom and captivity. Through such usage, size and shape adjectives transcend descriptive purposes and become essential components of the artistic organization of literary space. They contribute to the formation of chronotopic structures and facilitate the expression of philosophical and socio-political ideas.

## Characterological Function of Qualitative Adjectives

Among all semantic groups, characterological adjectives possess perhaps the most direct relationship with literary characterization. They serve as indispensable tools for constructing fictional personalities and communicating authorial evaluations.

In narrative discourse, authors frequently employ adjectives to establish implicit systems of judgment. Positive qualities such as gentle, innocent, honest, and kind contribute to the portrayal of idealized protagonists, whereas adjectives such as treacherous, cunning, and corrupt are associated with antagonistic figures.

This characterological function enables adjectives to participate actively in narrative development and reader perception. Rather than offering explicit commentary, authors often allow descriptive adjectives to communicate moral and psychological evaluations indirectly.

## Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that the linguo-poetic potential of adjectives extends far beyond their grammatical function as modifiers of nouns. Within literary discourse, even semantically neutral adjectives may acquire poetic status through contextual reinterpretation.

Adjectives frequently appear in the form of traditional epithets such as moon-faced beauty, spring-eyed maiden, or iron will. At the same

time, literary creativity gives rise to contextual epithets such as orphaned grass or heedless world, which derive their aesthetic value from unique textual environments.

From a purely linguistic standpoint, adjectives indicate the qualities of objects and phenomena. However, from a linguo-poetic perspective, they function as central elements in the construction of imagery, symbolism, emotional atmosphere, and authorial style. Consequently, adjectives become significant contributors to the semantic architecture and artistic integrity of literary texts.

## Conclusion

The investigation of the linguistic and linguo-poetic classification of the internal semantic groups of adjectives leads to several important conclusions.

First, the traditional lexical-semantic categories of adjectives—color, size, shape, taste, and qualitative characteristics—expand considerably within literary discourse, transcending their denotative boundaries and generating extensive connotative and aesthetic meanings. Second, color and taste adjectives serve as fundamental mechanisms of symbolism and synesthetic expression, enabling writers to materialize abstract emotions and psychological experiences through sensory imagery.

Third, adjectives related to size, shape, and personal characteristics constitute essential semantic components of major stylistic devices such as metaphor, epithet, and antithesis. Through these mechanisms, they contribute significantly to the construction of literary space, temporal organization, and character psychology.

Finally, the study of the linguo-poetic capacities of adjectives reveals the remarkable expressive richness of the Uzbek lexical system and provides new perspectives for the interpretation of literary texts. The transformation of ordinary descriptive vocabulary into complex artistic symbols confirms the central role of adjectives in the creation of aesthetic meaning and poetic discourse.

# Dynasty in Paris: PSG Seal Back-To-Back Champions League Crowns

*“We’re not contenders anymore. We’ve built a dynasty.” – Marquinhos, PSG captain*

By: Norman Mwale  
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## Worth Noting:

- PSG defeated Arsenal 4-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw at the Puskás Aréna on 30 May 2026, defending the Champions League title they won last season and becoming only the second club in the modern era to win consecutive European Cups.
- It was not Munich 2025. There was no 5-0 procession. This was grit, nerve, and politics played out under floodlights. Kai Havertz struck early for Arsenal, before Ousmane Dembélé levelled from the spot on 65 minutes. Extra time could not separate them. In the shoot-out, Matvei Safonov denied Eberechi Eze and Gabriel, while Vitorinha, Achraf Hakimi, Warren Zaïre-Emery and Dembélé converted to make it 4-3.
- With that, PSG matched Real Madrid’s 2016-17 feat and became the first French club ever to successfully defend the Champions League.



PSG

For years they were the billion-euro punchline of European football. On Saturday night in Budapest, Paris Saint-Germain became the answer.

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Zaïre-Emery and Dembélé converted to make it 4-3.

With that, PSG matched Real Madrid’s 2016-17 feat and became the first French club ever to successfully defend the Champions League. “We’re so happy to reach a second Champions League final in a row,” Luis Enrique said pitchside, dedicating the victory to the club’s supporters. “The character we showed against a team like Arsenal is so positive.”

The Spaniard now stands alongside Zinedine Zidane as the only managers to deliver consecutive Champions League trophies in the modern era. His PSG, stripped of the Messi-Neymar-Mbappé era, achieved what money once could not buy. “Yet it was the post-MNM era under Luis Enrique that finally brought PSG the success they craved,” analysts noted after the final.

Captain Marquinhos, who lifted the trophy for a second year running, was blunt about the shift: “People said we could not win without the biggest names. We’re not contenders anymore. We’ve built a dynasty. From dreamers to rulers of Europe, from contenders to eternal legends”.

The victory cements a period of dominance that stretches beyond Europe. PSG have now won Ligue 1 for the fifth consecutive season and are only the third side ever to win both their domestic league and the European Cup in consecutive seasons, following Real Madrid in the 1950s and Ajax in the 1970s. Last year the club claimed a historic sextuple: Ligue 1, Coupe de France, Trophée des Champions, Champions League, European Super Cup and FIFA Intercontinental Cup.

For Arsenal, it was heartbreak. Mikel Arteta’s side had just secured their first Premier League title since 2004 but could not add a maiden Champions League. Declan Rice and Gabriel Martinelli scored their penalties, yet Safonov’s saves ended the dream.

UEFA President Aleksander Čeferin acknowledged the moment: “Back-to-back winners are rare in football. PSG join Real Madrid as the only clubs to defend this trophy in the Champions League era. That tells you the scale of this achievement”.

The politics of football were never far away. Since Qatar Sports Investments took over in 2011, PSG have been accused of sportswashing, of buying success, of lacking history. On Saturday, 18,000 fans in Budapest and millions across France watched

that narrative rewritten.

The club statement was brief: “Paris Saint-Germain have further cemented their place in European football history by winning the competition for the second consecutive season”.

But the implications are larger. PSG are the first team to reach consecutive finals since Liverpool in 2018 and 2019, and the first holders to return to the final since Real Madrid in 2018. They are no longer chasing Europe. They own it.

As fireworks lit Budapest, Luis Enrique summed up the new reality: “Now we will be hoping to also equal Los Blancos”. The threepeat beckons. The politics of football have a new superpower, and it speaks French.



# Football Trumps Politics: Washington Clears Iran for World Cup after Last-Minute Visa Drama

—“Sports transcends borders, and we look forward to welcoming competitors and fans from around the world.” – Tom Barrack, US Ambassador to Türkiye—

By: Norman Mwale  
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## IRAN ROAD TO WORLD CUP 2026

Iran's national football team

### Worth Noting:

• US Ambassador to Türkiye Tom Barrack, whose embassy in Ankara processed the applications, praised his team on X: “Proud of our outstanding team at the US Embassy in Ankara for their work processing visas for Iran’s national football team on their road to the FIFA World Cup in the United States”. He added: “Sports transcends borders, and we look forward to welcoming competitors and fans from around the world”.

• The confirmation lands as a shaky truce holds between the United States, Israel and Iran. Yet Washington drew a hard line on who could travel. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told lawmakers this week that the US would not permit individuals associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to be part of Iran’s World Cup delegation. An unnamed administration official was blunter: “We will not allow the Iranian team to abuse this system to sneak terrorists into the United States under false pretences”.

With ten days to kick-off and tensions flaring across the Middle East, the United States has handed Iran’s national team the most coveted pass in world football: visas to enter America for the 2026 World Cup.

A White House official confirmed late Thursday that visas for Team Melli’s players, coaches and essential support staff had been “finalised and issued overnight”, ending weeks of uncertainty that threatened to sideline one of Asia’s leading sides. The breakthrough came after Iran’s ambassador to Mexico, Abolfazl Pasandideh, warned earlier that day that the squad had still not received clearance to enter the US for their Group G opener in Los Angeles.

US Ambassador to Türkiye Tom Barrack, whose embassy in Ankara processed the applications, praised his team on X: “Proud of our outstanding team at the US Embassy in Ankara for their work processing visas for Iran’s national football team on their road to the FIFA World Cup in the United States”. He added: “Sports transcends borders, and we look forward to welcoming competitors and fans from around the world”.

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week that the US would not permit individuals associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to be part of Iran’s World Cup delegation. An unnamed administration official was blunter: “We will not allow the Iranian team to abuse this system to sneak terrorists into the United States under false pretences”.

For Iran’s football authorities, the visas end a diplomatic scramble. Federation President Mehdi Taj said passports were submitted through the US Embassy in Ankara on FIFA’s instruction and stressed the need for multiple-entry visas to avoid repeated applications during the tournament. “My

expectation is that all visas will be granted without issue,” he said last week.

Iran’s squad is expected to fly from Türkiye to Spain on Saturday before heading to their base camp in Mexico, which has already issued visas. The team will be based in Mexico throughout the tournament but will cross into the US solely for matches. They face New Zealand in Los Angeles on 15 June, followed by Belgium and Egypt in Seattle.

FIFA officials insist politics will not dictate play. Concacaf President Victor Montagliani said he was “not concerned” about Iran’s ability to play matches in the US despite travel restrictions on

Iranian nationals. “We already have assurances from all three governments ... that teams that qualify will be allowed to come in and participate,” he said at Leaders Week London.

The visa wrangle had become the final unresolved part of Iran’s travel plans. Mexican and Canadian visas were already secured. Still, reports from Iran’s semi-official Fars news agency noted that visas for certain technical and administrative staff had not yet been issued by Friday, while the White House official did not disclose full details.

Iran qualified as one of Asia’s strongest sides and is making its seventh World Cup

appearance. Their presence ensures the 48-team tournament will not be overshadowed by a geopolitical boycott. As one State Department official put it, the decision means Iran will compete “even as the Middle East war pitting it against the United States and Israel continues”.

For now, football has won a rare diplomatic victory. As the Iranian Football Federation noted, the clearance “removes a significant obstacle and ensures that one of Asia’s leading football nations will take its place on the global stage”.

The ball, at last, is in play.



## Demand for civic space holds strong across Africa as supply of freedoms wanes

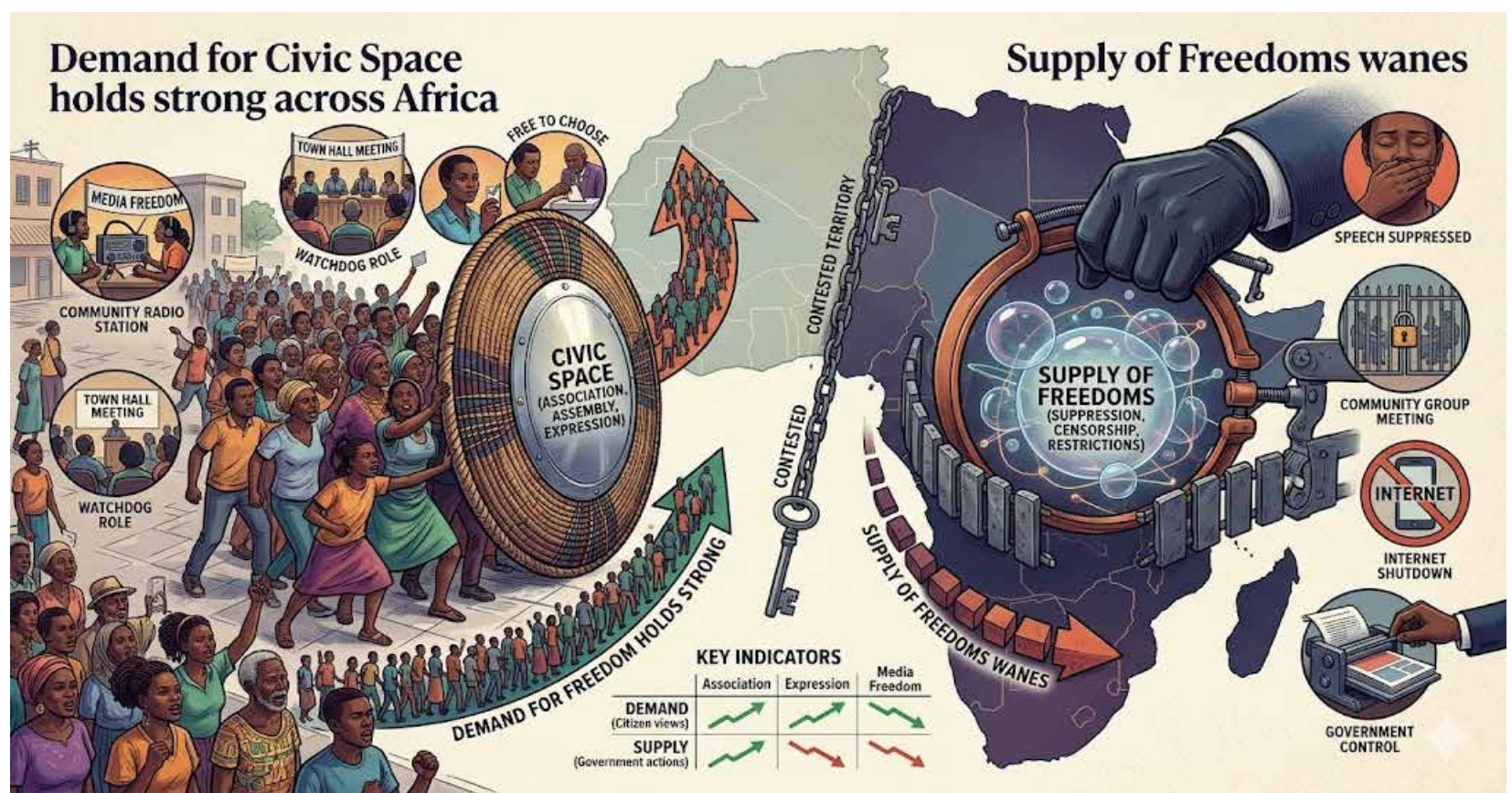
A sweeping survey of 38 countries finds Africans firmly backing free speech and press freedom — even as governments quietly narrow the room to exercise both

By: Diaspora Times Team  
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### Worth Noting:

In some countries, that fear is acute. In Eswatini, only 18 per cent of respondents said they feel completely free to speak their minds. In Togo, the figure is 15 per cent. In Comoros it falls to eight per cent, and in Congo-Brazzaville to a barely measurable seven per cent. These are not outliers to be noted and set aside. They are countries with millions of citizens navigating daily life under governments that are formally committed, through regional and international instruments, to protecting the very freedoms their people say they cannot exercise.

The trend line compounds the concern. Across the 28 countries that Afrobarometer has surveyed consistently since 2014, the sense of freedom of speech has declined by seven percentage points over the past decade. That is not a dramatic collapse, but it is a steady, sustained retreat — the kind that does not announce itself with a single dramatic event but accumulates, year by year, through laws that chill expression, prosecutions that make examples of dissidents and regulatory environments that make independent journalism increasingly difficult to sustain.



Africans want their freedoms. The trouble is, many of them no longer feel they have them.

That is the central finding of the latest Pan-Africa Profile from Afrobarometer, drawn from 50,961 interviews conducted across 38 African countries between 2024 and 2025. The report, released in Accra on 27 May 2026, presents a continent where popular demand for civic space — the right to speak, associate, vote and hold power to account — remains robust, even as the practical experience of those freedoms continues to erode. The gap between what Africans believe they should be entitled to and what they actually feel free to do has rarely been wider.

The numbers on paper are encouraging enough. Across the 38 countries surveyed, 64 per cent of respondents affirm the right to join any organisation of their choice. Support for press freedom is even stronger: 65 per cent endorse the media's right to publish without government control, and a full 72 per cent say the media should be free to investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption. These are not the attitudes of a population that has given up on accountability or surrendered to authoritarian drift. They are, in important respects,

the attitudes of people who want more from their governments than they are currently getting.

Yet the lived reality diverges sharply from those stated values. When respondents were asked not what they believed in but what they actually felt free to do, the picture became considerably darker. About two-thirds of citizens — 65 per cent — said they feel “somewhat” or “completely” free to say what they think. That figure sounds reasonable until it is unpacked. In 25 of the 38 countries surveyed, fewer than half of citizens feel “completely” free to express themselves. The word “completely” matters here. It is the difference between tolerating a climate of self-censorship and being genuinely unburdened by fear of consequence.

In some countries, that fear is acute. In Eswatini, only 18 per cent of respondents said they feel completely free to speak their minds. In Togo, the figure is 15 per cent. In Comoros it falls to eight per cent, and in Congo-Brazzaville to a barely measurable seven per cent. These are not outliers to be noted and set aside. They are countries with millions of citizens navigating daily life under governments that are formally committed, through regional and international

instruments, to protecting the very freedoms their people say they cannot exercise. The trend line compounds the concern. Across the 28 countries that Afrobarometer has surveyed consistently since 2014, the sense of freedom of speech has declined by seven percentage points over the past decade. That is not a dramatic collapse, but it is a steady, sustained retreat — the kind that does not announce itself with a single dramatic event but accumulates, year by year, through laws that chill expression, prosecutions that make examples of dissidents and regulatory environments that make independent journalism increasingly difficult to sustain.

On political freedoms, the picture is more mixed but still carries warning signs. Strong majorities say they feel somewhat or completely free to join any political organisation of their choice, at 77 per cent, and to vote for their preferred candidate without pressure, at 86 per cent. Those are significant figures and should not be dismissed. In many African countries, competitive politics and genuine electoral contestation remain real. But Comoros and Congo-Brazzaville again stand apart. In both countries, citizens report some of the lowest levels of freedom to

associate and to vote freely — a finding consistent with their near-total absence of perceived freedom of speech, and one that paints a coherent picture of political systems designed more to manage populations than to represent them.

The media freedom findings are among the most pointed in the report. A slim majority of respondents — 53 per cent — see the media in their country as somewhat or completely free to report without government interference. That majority is thin to begin with. But the trajectory is what gives it weight. In 20 of the 30 countries surveyed consistently between 2019 and 2025, perceived media freedom declined significantly over that period. Two countries in three, in other words, saw their citizens grow less confident that journalism in their country could operate without interference from the state. In a continent where independent media organisations already struggle with funding, access and safety, that perception carries consequences. Journalists who are seen to be operating under official pressure are less trusted by their audiences and less effective as instruments of accountability.

Afrobarometer's survey does not offer a single explanation for these trends,

and it would be a mistake to look for one. The forces constraining civic space across Africa are varied — some are ideological, rooted in governments that genuinely believe tight control serves stability; others are opportunistic, using security legislation or regulatory tools to silence specific critics; still others reflect the pressures of fragile states where governments lack both the capacity and the will to protect rights they nominally endorse. The common thread is the direction of travel: towards less space, not more.

What the data does offer is a reminder that citizens across the continent have not internalised that direction. They continue, in large majorities, to believe in the importance of free expression, a free press and the right to organise. They have not accepted the erosion as inevitable or appropriate. That gap between expectation and experience is politically significant. Historically, it is precisely the kind of gap that produces pressure for change — sometimes gradual, sometimes not.

The demand for civic space in Africa is not waning. It is the supply that is the problem.