



NIAS Area Studies

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South Africa Elections

About NIAS Global Politics

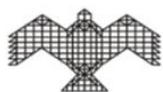
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Africa Monitor is an academic initiative under the area studies programme of STIR. It is an advanced form of Africa Weekly that used to be published earlier. The monthly publication includes commentaries, short notes and daily developments on a monthly basis.

<https://globalpolitics.in/africa/>

AFRICA MONITOR

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Image Source: Al Jazeera

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South Africa Election 2024: Course, Issues and Outcomes

Vetriselvi Baskaran

On 29 May, South Africa held its seventh national and provincial elections. The Electoral Commission of South Africa reported that 27.79 million voters registered for this election compared to 26.74 million in 2019. However, only 16.2 million cast their votes, resulting in a voter turnout of 58.64 per cent. This year, the ANC failed to secure an absolute majority of 50 per cent. The ANC's vote share was 40.18 per cent, the Democratic Alliance (DA) secured 21.81 per cent followed by the MK party with 14.58 per cent and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) with 9.52 per cent.

Following the declaration of the results, the ANC recommended a National Unity Government. Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) agreed to partner with the ANC and the DA to form a Unity Government.

Meanwhile, on 14 June, the first Parliamentary session re-elected Cyril Ramaphosa as President with 283 votes.

The electoral process

South Africa follows a proportional voting system. The winning party requires a simple majority in the National Assembly to form the government. In South Africa, the president is elected indirectly. South Africans elect the members of the National Assembly who then elect the president by simple majority. The National Assembly holds its first sitting within 14 days of the results announced where members will swear in and elect the speaker and then the president. The president, the leader of the state and the government, is elected for a five-year term.

This year, for the first time independent candidates contested in the elections. This brought changes in the electoral

procedures. People voted for three ballots—two for the National Assembly and the third for electing the provincial legislature.

Major parties contested

The major parties are ANC, the DA, the MK and the EFF. Since 1994, the ANC, which led the movement against the Apartheid regime, has been in power. President Cyril Ramaphosa is the leader of the party.

The Democratic Alliance (DA), a liberal party, is the principal opposition to the ANC, led by John Steenhuisen.

The UMkhonto weSizwe party was formed in December 2023 by former President Jacob Zuma. He left the ANC and formed his party with the name of ANC's former military wing. However, Zuma was declared ineligible to contest the contempt of court and the corruption charges.

The other major parties are Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) under Julius Malema and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

Major issues

First, socio-economic issues. The country is grappling with the unemployment crisis reaching 32.4 per cent in 2023. Besides, a larger issue for South Africans is the power outages. The state utility, Eskom, is unable to generate sufficient electricity. The series of corruption scandals involving high profiles is another issue. Corruption was prevalent during the presidency of Jacob Zuma. He was charged with corruption and money laundering in April 2018. In December 2022, President Ramaphosa was accused of corruption charges for illegally stacking a large sum of money at his farm.

According to Statistica, the crime rate in South Africa records the world's third-highest at 75.4 per cent. The urban regions are known for assaults, rape, and homicides. According to the World Bank, South Africa ranks first in terms of inequality. Ten per cent of the population owns 80 per cent of wealth. The remaining of the Apartheid continue to shadow society through racial and spatial segregation. Public dissatisfaction increased against the ruling government's inability to address the underlying issues.

Second, the decline of the ANC. The ANC secured a single majority in all the six elections held since 1994. However, there has been a strong decline in the percentage since 2004. In 2009, the figure was 66 per cent from 70 per cent in 2004. In 2014, it further declined to 62 per cent. In 2019, the party secured only 57.5 per cent. In the current election, it lost the absolute majority. The decline is attributed to the party-led government's failure to address the socio-economic issues. The factional troubles within the ANC resulted in the degeneration of many other parties including the EFF and MK, which divided the ANC's votes.

Outcomes

First, the successful elections. The electoral process was fair and smooth, says the country's election commission. Since the end of Apartheid, the country has conducted seven free and fair elections. This year highlighted the high voter

turnout of 58.64 per cent showing a high level of citizen participation. When compared to Chad and Senegal, which conducted elections this year, the South African election was peaceful. The results further brought a new change and challenge to the country. This term, South Africa will have a unity government. This change implies a victory of democracy which is anticipated to push the government and ANC to put effort to gain public by addressing the social and economic challenges.

Second, challenges for the first-ever unity government. The unity government would face major ideological differences. The differences between the DA party and the ANC against the race-based transformation policies are challenging to function at ease. All parties of the unity government have been vocal of ANC's 30-year rule and corruption allegations. It is anticipated that the coalition government would experience challenges in terms of national and foreign policy-making alongside internal ideological differences.

Third, evolving public stance. According to South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission, 4.4 million out of 11 million eligible voters registered. The majority of the younger generation did not vote, which implies their apathy toward the political system. The younger generation, born post-apartheid, is not influenced by the ANC's anti-apartheid credentials.

COMMENTARY

South Africa: The decline of the ANC

Neha Tresa George

The African National Congress (ANC), initially known as the South African Native National Congress, was founded in 1912 to fight for voting rights for coloured (people of mixed race) and black Africans. From 1943, it fought against apartheid, racial segregation and discrimination. In 1994, with the end of the apartheid regime, Nelson Mandela, the leader of the ANC, was elected as the country's first black President.

Although the party had consecutive victories until 2024, the per cent of the vote share has declined since the 2004 elections. The party's vote share declined from 70 per cent in 2004, to 66 per cent in 2009, 62 per cent in 2014 and 59 per cent in 2019. The ANC was at its peak in 2004 with 279 seats out of the 400 in the National Assembly. In 2009, it went down to 264 seats followed by 249 in 2014. This year it secured only 40 per cent of votes with 159 seats. This year, for the first time since 1994, the ANC lost simple majority. ANC remained in power for 30 years by maintaining its charm and popular support. However, the party which had been at the forefront of apartheid could not address the public socio-economic grievances.

The following are the causes behind the ANC's decline.

1. Socio-economic issues and ineffective governance. The unemployment rate in the country is recorded at 33 per cent in 2022. According to the World Bank, ten per cent of the 60 million population controls 80 per cent of the wealth. The forecasted GDP growth in 2024 between 0.7 per cent and 1.5 per cent is insufficient for the government to mitigate the challenges of unemployment, inequality, and poverty. Increasing living costs implied economic regression faced by the people. A report by

the World Bank in 2022 identified that 60 per cent of people are living in poverty. The Blacks still live in townships and the Whites in the suburbs. People are affected by the scheduled load cuts and widespread crimes, making it one of the countries having the highest crime rates. Underlying socio-economic issues have increased popular distrust in an ANC-led government.

2. The corruption scandals. Several ANC leaders were involved in several corruption scandals. It worsened under Jacob Zuma, the former President of South Africa. The officials at all levels of government were accused of corruption. Although when Cyril Ramaphosa came to power, he promised to clean the ANC out of corruption, he himself was involved in a scandal where a stack of money was found at one of his farms.

3. Internal divisions. Many leaders have left the ANC to form their own parties over power play and ideological differences including Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and uMkhonto weSizwe (MK), led by Julius Malema and Jacob Zuma respectively. The disintegration of the ANC divided the interests of different groups and thereby the votes.

4. Role of populist leaders. Although Jacob Zuma was convicted for several allegations of corruption, supporters consider him to be a "man of the people," who fights for the well-being of people. His party's success could be traced to his popularity and charisma. Similarly, Ramaphosa and Malema have placed themselves as populist leaders who can fix South Africa. However, increasing socio-economic woes have led to the declining popularity of populist leaders.

5. *The born-frees.* South Africa's born-free generation includes the population born after 1994. They account for 40 per cent of the population, devoid of the struggles of freedom and apartheid. Unlike the older generation, the youth are resistant to the 'ANC-loyalty.' More than half of the youth have lost their faith in the political system. Six million people under the age of 30 have not registered on the electoral roll. Unaddressed issues of unemployment, inequality, and a degraded quality of living with a lack of facilities are the reasons behind the resistance. In 2015, young

activists began a hashtag movement, #FeesMustFall, protesting against tuition fees across the universities. They called on the party to either 'evolve' or 'die.' The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party has been gaining the youth's attention through their call for economic transformation, push for land appropriation from the whites and nationalisation of banks and mines. The growing discontent among the born frees have sufficient potential to determine the future of the ANC.

COMMENTARY

South Africa Elections 2024 and the Zuma Factor

Ayan Datta

On 19 June, the African National Congress (ANC) leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, was sworn in for his second term as South Africa's President. The presidential and provincial elections were held simultaneously on 29 May. The ANC lost majority support for the first time securing 40 per cent of the vote. The ANC's long-time opponent, the Democratic Alliance (DA), won 22 per cent. The ANC lost its 30-year-long electoral dominance and announced the formation a National Unity Government.

The 2024 polls were Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party's first major election. It secured third place with 14.58 per cent of the votes. Zuma formed the party in 2023. On 17 June, with 58 seats, Zuma announced that his party would lead the opposition alliance with the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and other minor parties.

Jacob Zuma: A political profile

Jacob Zuma began his political career as an anti-apartheid freedom fighter. From 1962 to 1990, he was a counterintelligence

operative for uMkhonto weSizwe, the ANC's armed wing (Zuma named his party after this armed group). Since the 1990s, Zuma involved in ANC's activities in his home province, KwaZulu Natal (KZN). He expanded the ANC's support base among the Zulu tribe in KZN.

In 2007, Zuma won the ANC's presidency at the 52nd National Conference in Polokwane. He defeated Thabo Mbeki, then leader of the ANC. Zuma became the party's presidential candidate in the following election. From 2009 to 2017, Zuma served as the President of the country.

In December 2017, Cyril Ramaphosa defeated Jacob Zuma's candidate, Dlamini-Zuma, to become ANC's President. As per the ANC's conventions, Zuma was supposed to resign as South Africa's President and make way for Ramaphosa. However, he refused to resign. In February 2018, he was forced to resign.

In 2023, after breaking away from the ANC, he founded the uMkhonto we Sizwe party (MKP). However, on 21 May 2024, the Constitutional Court disqualified Zuma from contesting the election. In the 2024 elections, the MK party became the major challenger to the political scene.

Zuma's ANC leadership, controversies and support in KwaZulu Natal

The ANC's popularity steadily declined under Zuma's leadership. The party's vote share declined from around 70 per cent in 2004 to 65 per cent in 2009. In 2014, it further dropped to around 62 per cent.

Zuma's ANC leadership was more left-leaning and populist compared to his predecessor Mbeki. However, his presidency terms were marked by corruption controversies. Since 2006, Zuma has been tried multiple times for accepting bribes from the French defence company Thales, which the country had arms deal with. Besides, he was alleged to have a corrupt nexus with the Indian Gupta business family. In 2016, the Justice Zondo Commission accused Zuma of state capture along with the Gupta family. Corruption in South Africa increased under Zuma. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, in 2009, South Africa ranked 56 out of 180 countries. By 2017, its ranking dropped to 71. Despite the allegations, Zuma has maintained his popularity using his charm, charisma, and Zulu support base.

Zuma Factor in the 2024 elections

During the 2024 elections, the MK party was widely discussed. First, analysts predicted that it would gain support in KZN at the expense of the ANC. In February 2024, the think tank Social Research Foundation reported that the MK could secure around 50 per cent of the ANC's support base in KZN. Second, Zuma's promised to address the issues of

unemployment, lack of access to healthcare, and persistent blackouts or "load sheddings." Third, in March 2024, the MK outperformed the EFF and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in a by-election in the Mpumalanga province. This was the MK's debut election. Its victory indicated that Zuma was on the rise.

In the 2024 presidential elections, the ANC lost the majority for the first time. The Zuma is said to be a factor behind this. Comparing the 2019 and 2024 elections, the parties other than the ANC and MK saw no substantial change in their support levels. While the ANC's share declined from around 57 per cent in 2019 to 40 per cent in 2024, the MK secured 14.58 per cent of the votes in its first elections. The MK's vote share was approximately equal to the share of votes lost to the ANC.

The MK's rise was evident in the KwaZulu Natal province. During the 2019 presidential elections, the ANC secured nearly 55 per cent of votes in the province. However, in 2024, the MK routed the ANC's votes securing around 45 per cent of the vote, pushing the ANC to third place with 18 per cent. MK has won 58 seats in the National Assembly. Of these, 19 belong to KZN. In 2019, the ANC had 24 seats in KZN; in 2024, it secured only seven.

Post-election, although the MK gained massive support, Zuma claimed the elections were rigged. He asserted that the MK's votes had been undercounted and called for a re-poll. The MK categorically refused to ally with the ANC as long as Ramaphosa was in charge. Zuma is likely to use his support base to pressure the ANC and remove Ramaphosa from its leadership. However, the ANC's decision to form a national unity government with the Democratic Alliance (DA) precluded Zuma's plans. The MK would likely become the country's largest opposition

party. Zuma would potentially partner with the EFF to form the opposition coalition. With the ANC in decline, support for the

Zuma-led MK is set to rise in South African politics.

COMMENTARY

South Africa's 30 years of democracy

Ken B Varghese

This year South Africa marks 30 years of democracy and the end of apartheid. In 1994, South Africa held its first inclusive democratic elections where Nelson Mandela became the first President. It was the first election where citizens of all races were allowed to vote.

On 29 May, South Africa held its seventh national and provincial elections. This election changed South African politics significantly, with the ANC losing its simple majority. The ANC secured 40.18 per cent, the Democratic Alliance (DA) 21.81 per cent followed by the MK party securing 14.58 per cent and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) 9.52 per cent. The voter turnout was recorded at 58.64 per cent. While support for the ANC seems to be declining, the newly joined Zuma's MK party has made an impact on the elections. This year's results call for the country's first coalition government. ANC has announced a National Unity Government with the DA. Zuma has said that his party would lead the opposition coalition.

While South Africa marks 30 years of democracy, multiple political and social changes are a test of the same.

Thirty years of democracy: The hits and misses

1. A successful transfer of power for the past 30 years. Since 1994, South Africa had seven successful transfers of power. This year also elections were peaceful and successful. Compared to several other African countries, which are marked by military coups and illiberal democracies,

the country's successful transfers of power are a victory of democracy and a model to the continent. This year, apart from South Africa, Senegal and Chad conducted elections; they were marked by instances of violence and vote rigging. According to the Clean Election Index, the South African election is considered to be one of the highest democratic practices as it is rated 0.77 by the clean election index.

2. The change: A strength to democracy. With the ANC losing its simple majority for the first time, the 2024 elections brought a major change to South African politics. A change deemed by a generation which does not carry the baggage of loyalty to the party which led the apartheid movement. The change has strengthened South African democracy by keeping the polity under the public checks and balances.

3. Freedom of expression and press. South Africans enjoy free media and had instances of exposing the government's malpractice and efforts to infringe on freedom of expression. However, journalists are not protected from lawsuits and are often intimidated and silenced. Recently, former president Jacob Zuma engaged in litigation against legal journalist Karyn Maughan which was seen as an attempt to discourage her and the media from reporting his corruption trial. Supported by the South African National Editors' Forum, the courts decided in Maughan's favour as the judiciary took a stance in favour of the media.

4. Corruption. South Africa's public sectors are underfunded due to corruption and illicit financial flows. South Africa is ranked 83 out of 180 in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2023. High-profile corruption scandals involving political leaders and public officials have become common in the country. President Ramaphosa was involved in a corruption scandal in 2023 after a stack of cash was found at his farm. Corruption and interference by the non-elected actors in the functioning government- the Gupta business family during the Zuma administration - has caused a blow to democracy.

5. Economic crisis. According to the South African government, the inflation rate in the country is recorded at 5.6 per cent in 2023. According to the World Bank, 62.7 per cent of the population live in poverty. Limited job opportunities, skills mismatch, and structural barriers contribute to the high unemployment rate and social and economic inequalities.

6. Existing inequalities. According to the 2022 World Bank report on inequality, South Africa is considered to be one of the most unequal countries in the world. The report stated that 80 per cent of the country's wealth belongs to ten per cent of the population. Besides, the majority of the black population belongs to the poorest

category which suggests that the income disparity is directly based on race. The UN The High Commissioner for Human Rights stated in April 2024: "The legacy of colonialism and Apartheid rooted in racial and spatial segregation continues to reinforce inequality."

7. Increasing crime rates. Crime and violence are at an all-time high in South Africa. According to Statista, crime rates in the country peaked in all categories to reach a total number of 184,020 reports between October and December 2022. According to SAPS (South Africa Police Service), there were reports of 12,211 cases of rape from October to December 2023 and 4,783 arrests for sexual offences. Inadequate law enforcement and socio-economic issues are the causes behind the increasing crime rate. This has undermined the public sense of security and trust in the democratic government.

In sum, after 30 years of democracy, a successful electoral process implies a democratic victory. Compared to several other democracies in Africa, which gained colonial independence along with South Africa, democracy has succeeded in terms of the electoral process, and access to rights. However, rampant corruption, unaddressed economic crisis and inequalities are major challenges to exercising the expected results of democracy.

COMMENTARY

Nelson Mandela's South Africa: The dream and the reality

Mugdha Chaturvedi

In 2024, South Africa marks 30 years of democracy and the end of apartheid. African National Congress under Nelson Mandela led the apartheid movement, envisioning a better country. As the leader of the apartheid movement and first President, he dreamed of a country where values of peace, justice, and equality prevailed; where there was equality of opportunity for everyone, irrespective of gender, race and background. 30 years of democracy, it remains a question whether South Africa has been able to realise Mandela's dream.

The development of South Africa and the realisation of Mandela's dream is reviewed through the following indicators.

Economic crisis, poverty and income inequalities

Under the apartheid regime, the country faced high levels of racial, ethnic and gender inequalities and poverty with unequal access to education, healthcare and jobs. Even after 30 years, the country seems to struggle with the legacies of the apartheid regime. According to the World Bank, the richest decile holds 65 per cent of the national income and more than 80 per cent of the national wealth. The poorest half of the population accounts for only six per cent of the national income. Poverty elevation programs were introduced by the post-apartheid regime through national policies including the Reconstruction and Development Program in 1993 and the National Development Plan of 2011. They were supported by fiscal policy and redistributive measures. Initially, these measures exhibited positive results and a reduction in poverty levels, but after the 2007 Global Financial Crisis,

the schemes failed. According to the UN, 55 per cent of the people live in poverty.

In February 2022, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa stated: "The problems with the South African economy were structural and deep. Electricity supply can't be guaranteed, our railways and ports are inefficient when innovation is held back by a scarcity of broadband spectrum, and water quality deteriorates in our municipalities and where we live. Companies are reluctant to invest and the economy can't function properly."

Unemployment

South Africa is one of the most industrialised economies in the continent. However, the most industrialized country in Africa faces the highest unemployment rate. The South African government recorded an unemployment rate of 34 per cent during the second quarter of 2022. The unemployment rate reached an all-time high of 35.3 per cent in 2021 as a result of COVID-19. Frank Blackmore, South Africa's leading economist said: "As long as the economy continues to grow below 1 per cent, with a population growth of 1.5 per cent, the unemployment rate will continue to rise." The total number of unemployed people stands at more than 8.2 million. The unemployment rate is high among the youth and the black population.

Literacy and education

According to the Harvard Kennedy School blog, South Africa has spent on its education much more than several other countries in the continent. However, the outcomes are not close to the spending. A BBC article on 17 May 2023 reports that eight out of ten children struggle to read by the age of ten. South Africa ranked last

out of the 57 countries, according to the assessment by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, which tested the reading ability of 400,000 students globally in 2021. The Basic Education Minister of South Africa, Angie Motshekga, called these results “disappointingly low” and stated: “The country’s education system was faced with significant historical challenges including poverty, inequality, and inadequate infrastructure.” The study showed that 81 per cent of the people in South Africa could not read and comprehend any of the 11 official languages of the country. The long-standing struggles with the education system point to the inequalities and segregation between white and black students.

Health care

Russell Rensburg’s article at the University of the Witwatersrand describes the challenges of the healthcare system in South Africa.

Firstly, the per cent of money invested in the public healthcare system does not meet the needs of people dependent on them. The public sector is underfunded and underdeveloped. Several people cannot afford private healthcare. To counter the imbalance, the government launched the National Healthcare Insurance Scheme under which the government would buy the services from the private players and provide them to the poor at cheaper rates.

Secondly, the majority of the population lacks awareness of their health. This delays the access to proper treatment and care.

Thirdly, Rensburg describes that there are two tiers of the healthcare system in the country. The first was the state-funded which catered the needs of approximately 70 per cent of the population. The second tier was the private sector with medical schemes and health insurance which catered for the needs of 27 per cent. He claims that spending on public sector healthcare mechanisms is meagre. The public system lacks efficiency and modern healthcare access. The minority rich population can afford private health care.

These challenges increased the risk of severe illness, the spread of diseases and increased the number of deaths in the country, especially during the pandemic.

In sum, these indicators and the facts imply that South Africa faces additional challenges and issues compared to 1994. 30 years into democracy and seven transfers of power, all governments failed to hinder emerging issues and provide impacting solutions for the lasting problems. It can be understood that the country has not been able to live up to the South African dream which Nelson Mandela had.

AFRICA IN BRIEF

1 May-31 May

By Anu Maria Joseph, Vetriselvi Baskaran and Ayan Datta

TUNISIA

Kais Saied meets Xi Jinping in Beijing

On 31 May, Africanews reported that China's President, Xi Jinping, met Tunisia's President Kais Saied in Beijing. Xi said: "Under the new circumstances, China is willing to work with Tunisia to continue the traditional friendship, deepen exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and promote China-Tunisia relations." Following the meeting, the two sides signed a cooperation agreement covering various fields. (["Tunisia's Kais Saied meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing," Africanews, 31 May 2024](#))

ALGERIA

US opposes Gaza resolution at the UNSC

On 30 May, Africanews reported that the US opposed an Algeria-sponsored UNSC resolution on Gaza initiated on 29 May. Algeria's resolution called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to Israel's military operations in Rafah. The US Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs to the UN, Robert Wood, said that "another resolution is not necessarily going to change anything on the ground." (["US calls Algeria's proposed UN resolution on Israel's Rafah offensive," Africanews, 30 May 2024](#))

EGYPT

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi visits China

On 29 May, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi visited Beijing, China. During the visit, the countries penned an agreement on strengthening cooperation.

Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sameh Shoukry, accompanied

President Fattah. Both countries discussed bilateral issues and tensions in the Middle East. The agreement aims at collaboration on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China has invested billions in Egypt's state projects including the Suez Canal Economic Zone, and the new Administrative Capital. The investments between the countries total USD 14 billion in 2023 compared to USD 16.6 billion in 2022. (["Egypt and China deepen cooperation during el-Sissi's visit to Beijing," Africanews, 29 May 2024](#))

SUDAN

Blinken and Burhan discuss ceasefire and humanitarian access

On 28 May, the Sudan Tribune reported that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) leader, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, to end the ongoing conflict, de-escalate and facilitate humanitarian access. Matthew Miller asserted that the two leaders additionally discussed resuming peace negotiations. (["Blinken, Burhan discuss ceasefire and humanitarian access in Sudan," Sudan Tribune, 28 May 2024](#))

SAF intensifies airstrikes in North Darfur and Khartoum

On 28 May, the Sudan Tribune reported that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) carried out airstrikes on North Darfur and to the north of Khartoum. The SAF additionally struck the RSF positions in Khartoum, Bahri, Kober, Halfiya, Shambat farms and the DAL company headquarters. The SAF aims to prevent RSF reinforcements from reaching El-Fasher.

([“Sudanese army escalates airstrikes in North Darfur and Khartoum - Sudan Tribune,” Sudan Tribune, 28 May 2024](#))

UNSC criticised for not focussing on “UAE’s aggression”

On 24 May, the Sudan Tribune reported that the country’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Al-Harith Idriss, criticised a closed-door UN Security Council meeting for not focussing on the UAE’s aggression against Sudan. Idris stated: “We sought a dedicated meeting to address the acts of aggression perpetrated by the UAE against the Republic of Sudan.” He argued that the meeting “trivialises the focus and urgency” of Sudan’s concerns. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) has been alleging the UAE of assisting the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in the civil war. ([“Sudan criticises Security Council for lack of focus on UAE’s aggression,” Sudan Tribune, 24 May 2024](#))

130 people die at hospital amid city siege

On 26 May, BBC reported that over 130 people died at the South Hospital in Sudan’s besieged city of El Fasher. The city is currently under the control of Sudan’s army, which has been fighting the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The intense fighting has caused 979 casualties. According to the UN, the hospital is running low on supplies. A UN expert warned that civilians in El Fasher were being targeted based on ethnicity and that the Darfur region was facing the risk of genocide. ([“El Fasher: Single hospital in Sudan city records 134 deaths,” BBC, 27 May, 2024](#))

RSF committed genocide, HRW report

On 9 May, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that there is a possibility of genocide committed in the West Darfur city of El Geneina. It mentioned that the RSF has carried out ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity against ethnic

Massalit and non-arab communities. The report stated: "The events are among the worst atrocities against civilians so far in the current conflict in Sudan." It

mentioned that the RSF and its Arab allies used several malicious racial slurs against the Massalit and other ethnic groups. ([“Possible genocide committed in Sudan, report says,” BBC, 9 May 2024](#))

SOUTH SUDAN

UNSC votes to extend arms embargo

On 31 May, Africanews reported that the UN Security Council voted on 30 May to extend an arms embargo and other sanctions on South Sudan. Alternate Representative of the US for Special Political Affairs in the UN, Robert Wood, said that the embargo "remains necessary to stem the unfettered flow of weapons into a region awash with guns." Russia’s Deputy Permanent Representative (Political Affairs) to the UN, Anna Evstigneeva, accused the US of focusing on sanctions, "which they present as a sort of panacea for all of the country's problems." South Sudan’s Ambassador to the UN, Cecilia Adeng, said that sanctions “impede our progress”. Removing the embargo would “enable us to build robust security institutions.” ([“UN extends arms embargo on South Sudan,” Africanews, 31 May 2024](#))

EU delegation denies wanting to delay South Sudan elections

On 31 May, Africanews reported that Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to South Sudan, Lothar Jaschke, denied allegations that the delegation is working to delay elections in South Sudan. Jaschke’s response came on 30 May. Earlier, South Sudan’s President Salva Kiir had alleged that Western powers wanted to delay the elections. South Sudan is set to hold its first election in December 2024. Kenyan Ambassador Charles Tai Gituai said that there were insufficient preparations for conducting

elections. ([“EU official denies allegation that Western powers want to delay South Sudan's elections,”](#) *Africanews*, 31 May 2024)

Kiir directs the advisor to enter peace negotiations with Sudan amidst the oil crisis

On 28 May, the Sudan Tribune reported that South Sudan President Salva Kiir directed his national security advisor, Tut Gatluak, to engage in peace negotiations with Sudan. Kiir wants to use the peace to get an oil pipeline repaired. South Sudan’s Undersecretary of the Ministry of Petroleum, William Anyak Deng, told reporters: “The escalating conflict has severely hindered our progress in fixing the pipeline.” South Sudan’s economy is dependent on oil revenue. The pipeline rupture occurred in an area controlled by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of Sudan. The conflict has hindered the repair of the pipeline. ([“Kiir tasks advisor with Sudan peace talks amidst oil crisis,”](#) *Sudan Tribune*, 29 May 2024)

SOMALIA

Town flooded after river overflows

On 26 May, *Africanews* reported that seasonal rains caused the Shebelle River to overflow, flooding Beledweyne town. A video by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) showed partly submerged homes and people fleeing their homes. ([“Somali town of Beledweyne heavily flooded after a river burst its banks,”](#) *Africanews*, 26 May 2024)

MADAGASCAR

Parliamentary elections

On 29 May, Madagascar held its parliamentary elections. The ruling party, Tanora Malagasy Vonona, of President Andry Rajoelina is expected to retain the majority. The party won 84 seats out of 151 in the previous election. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), 12 million people

were eligible to vote this year.

Representatives from the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) observed the elections. ([“Madagascar holds key parliamentary election,”](#) *Africanews*, 29 May 2024)

KENYA

President Ruto says friends helped pay for the private jet

On 30 May, BBC reported that Kenyan President William Ruto had argued that the private jet he used to travel to the US was funded by “some friends.” These friends offered him the plane for USD 73,000. This was significantly lower than the USD 1.5 million, the amount critics alleged was the actual cost of hiring the plane. Ruto and his government are facing scandal over the extravagance of the government while the economy is in crisis. ([“Kenya's William Ruto: Friends helped pay for private jet to US,”](#) *BBC*, 30 May 2024)

US promises “major non-NATO ally designation

On 23 May, US President Joe Biden promised to designate Kenya as a “major non-NATO ally.” The announcement was made during Kenyan President William Ruto’s visit to the US. Biden stated: “Our joint counterterrorism operations have degraded ISIS [ISIL] and al-Shabab across East Africa, our mutual support for Ukraine has rallied the world to stand behind the UN Charter, and our work together on Haiti is helping pave the way to reduce instability and insecurity.” 18 countries including Israel, Brazil and the Philippines hold the US’ non-NATO ally designation. ([“Biden pledges to designate Kenya as ‘non-NATO ally’ during Ruto visit,”](#) *Al Jazeera*, 23 May 2024)

William Ruto visits the US

On 21 May, Al Jazeera reported on Kenyan President William Ruto's visit to the US the following week. The visit aims to deepen economic and security ties. It is expected that both countries would additionally discuss the UN-led initiative to deploy a Kenya-led police force in Haiti. ("[Kenya's President Ruto visits US as police deployment to Haiti takes shape](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 21 May 2024)

Air and aqua rescue operation

On 6 May, Kenya began air and aqua operations to rescue its citizens from the western Nyando area as the river Nyando caused a flash flood. A joint team of the Kenya Red Cross, Kenya Coast Guard Services and Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) used boats and helicopters to rescue the area. Since March, 228 people have died and 72 are missing in floods caused by torrential rains. ("[Kenya deploys rescue choppers and boats as floods persist](#)," *BBC*, 7 May 2024)

MOZAMBIQUE

Attacks in Cabo Delgado

On 10 May, Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi stated that armed groups linked to Islamic State have launched a major attack in the northern town of Macomia in Cabo Delgado region. Mozambique's army has been fighting insurgent groups in the region since 2017. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) force was deployed in 2021; however, its mandate would end in July. ("[Mozambique's president says northern town 'under attack' by armed groups](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 10 May 2024)

SOUTH AFRICA

ANC set to lose parliamentary majority

On 1 June, BBC reported that the African National Congress (ANC) would likely lose its parliamentary majority. The ANC has ruled South Africa since 1994. However, its popularity has been

declining. Counting is over in 91 per cent of South Africa's voting districts. So far, the ANC has polled 40.25 per cent of the vote. The Democratic Alliance (DA) has polled 21.7 per cent, followed by Jacob Zuma's MK party at 14.4 per cent. According to election analysts, this trend would likely continue up to the polls' end. Consequently, the ANC will have to form a coalition government. MK leader Jacob Zuma has indicated that he will consider forming a coalition with the ANC if Cyril Ramaphosa quits his leadership position. Zuma had earlier left the ANC and formed his own party over differences with Ramaphosa. ("[South Africa election result: ANC looks set share power after historic loss](#)," *BBC*, 1 June 2024)

ANC may lose majority, reports BBC

On 31 May, BBC Africa reported that the ruling African National Congress (ANC) could lose its parliamentary majority for the first time after coming to power in 1994. Results from 50 per cent of the voting districts have been released. The ANC is leading with 42 per cent of the votes, followed by the Democratic Alliance (DA) with 23 per cent. Former President Jacob Zuma's party uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) have secured 11 per cent and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) ten per cent. The think tank, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and the News24 media had predicted that the ANC's vote share would be around 42 per cent. ("[South Africa election results: ANC on course to lose majority](#)," *BBC*, 31 May 2024)

Zuma showcases his strength in the Soweto election campaign

On 18 May, South African President Jacob Zuma campaigned in Soweto. During the rally, Zulu warriors marched around the Orlando stadium with spears and shields. Zuma resigned from the African National Congress (ANC) and formed the opposition uMkhonto weSizwe party in 2023. His decision to host his campaign in

Soweta is crucial as it is an economic centre of South Africa. The place holds political symbolism as it was at the forefront of the fight against the apartheid system in 1994. However, the breakaway from the party is a major challenge for Zuma. In 2021, Zuma was sentenced to 15 months in jail on the allegations of contempt of court for defying an order to appear before an inquiry during his term. His eligibility to serve as a lawmaker in the next tenure is yet to be ruled by the country's court. ("[Zuma takes election battle cry to ANC's heartland](#)," BBC, 18 May 2024)

Universities face pressure to cut ties with Israel

On 27 May, Al Jazeera reported that students at the Wits University and the University of Cape Town set up pro-Palestine encampments on their campuses. The protesters demand to disclose the universities' relationship with Israel-aligned companies and universities, express solidarity with Palestine, support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement, and end censorship on pro-Palestinian activists. The University of Fort Hare is committed to not pursuing relationships with Israeli institutions. The Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Buti Manamela, told Al Jazeera: "We really want to see our universities and institutional organisations doing what most institutions did to apartheid: boycott it." The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Naledi Pandor, argued that universities should advance "critical citizenship." ("[Cut Israel ties: South Africa universities face pressure to follow gov't | Israel-Palestine conflict News](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 27 May 2024)

Top court bars Zuma from general elections

On 20 May, South Africa's highest Court barred former President Zuma from contesting in the general elections on the grounds of his 15-month sentence for

contempt of court. He was detained in 2021 for refusing to appear before the court for investigation which ended his presidency in 2018. After his release, he quit the ANC and formed a party named uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party. MK Secretary General Sihle Ngubane expressed animosity with the ruling and noted that the ruling will not affect the Party's election campaign. The election commission announced the removal of his name from the party's parliamentary candidates; however, his image will exist on ballot papers among others. Zuma is yet to comment on the ruling. Meanwhile, Cyril Ramaphosa stated: "The court has ruled, and as I have often said, that is the highest court in the land and we have given the judiciary the right to arbitrate disputes amongst us in terms of our constitution." ("[South Africa's top court bars Zuma from standing in election](#)," *BBC*, 19 May 2024)

President signs universal health bill

On 15 May, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa passed a bill providing universal health coverage. Ramaphosa stated: "The provision of healthcare in this country is fragmented, unsustainable and unacceptable." He added: "For those who would like to see (their) privileges continuing, sorry, you are on the wrong boat. The boat we are on is about equality." The National Health Insurance (NHI) Act initiates a two-tier health system which would limit the role of private insurance and create a public fund, to provide free access to healthcare. ("[South Africa's Ramaphosa signs health bill weeks before election](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 15 May 2024)

Request to ICJ to order Israel to withdraw from Gaza

On 10 May, South Africa requested the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order Israel to withdraw from Rafah. The new demand is part of seeking additional measures as Israel continues its military

operations in Rafah. The country's request for withdrawal added that the attack on Rafah poses an "extreme risk" to "humanitarian supplies and basic services into Gaza, to the survival of the Palestinian medical system, and the very survival of Palestinians in Gaza as a group." ("[South Africa asks ICJ to order Israel to withdraw from Gaza's Rafah](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 10 May 2024)

THE GAMBIA

Swiss court finds ex-minister guilty of crimes against humanity

On 15 May, Switzerland's Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona sentenced the Gambia's former interior minister, Ousman Sonko to 20 years in prison for intentional homicide, torture and false imprisonment during 2006-2016. Sonko appealed for asylum in Switzerland in November 2016. However, was arrested two months later. ("[Swiss court finds Gambian ex-minister guilty of crimes against humanity](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 15 May 2024)

CHAD

Mahamat Deby sworn in as President

On 24 May, Chad's new President and military leader Mahamat Deby sworn in. At the inauguration ceremony, Deby stated: "To my brothers and sisters who did not choose me ... I would like to say that I respect your choice, which contributes to the vitality of our democracy." Deby won the 6 May elections securing 61 per cent of votes. He seized power in 2021 after his father and former President Idriss Deby died fighting rebels. ("[Chad's Deby sworn in as president as Allamaye Halina named new PM](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 24 May 2024)

Prime Minister Masra resigns after defeat

On 22 May, Chad's Prime Minister Succes Masra resigned following his defeat against Mahamat Idriss Deby during the

presidential elections. He was appointed as the prime minister by the military government in 2021 following the coup. He stated: "I've just submitted my resignation and that of the transition government, which became irrelevant with the end of the presidential election." Deby won the 6 May elections securing 61 per cent of votes. Masra previously contested the results as fabricated. ("[Chad Prime Minister Masra resigns after disputed vote winner confirmed](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 22 May 2024)

Military leader Deby wins election

On 9 May, Chad's National Election Commission released provincial election results. Military leader Mahamat Idriss Deby has reportedly won the election securing 61 per cent of the vote against his rival Succes Marsa securing 18.5 per cent. Deby seized power in April 2021 after his father and then President Idriss Deby was killed while fighting rebels. Opposition leader Marsa has denied the results. He stated: "A small number of individuals believe they can make people believe that the election was won by the same system that has been ruling Chad for decades." ("[Chad's President Deby wins election against prime minister in heated race](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 9 May 2024)

Mahamat Deby wins the presidential elections

On 16 May, Al Jazeera reported that Chad's constitutional council announced Mahamat Idriss Deby as the winner of the 6 May election after negating the challenges proposed by two lost candidates. His victory extended his family's decade-long rule. ("[Chad's Mahamat Deby confirmed as winner of disputed presidential election](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 16 May 2024)

Holds presidential election

On 6 May, Chad held its presidential elections after three years of military rule. Thereby, it became the first of Africa's junta-led country to shift to a democratic ruling. President Déby cast his vote in N'Djamena and stated: "Elections that will signal a return to constitutional order." Prime Minister Succès Masra urged "all those who have shown they want massive change must go and vote in massive numbers, peacefully." According to AFP, the polling ended peacefully except for the killing of a 65-year-old man in the southern city of Moundou by unknown gunmen after being barred from casting his vote as he did not have an identity. ("[Chad presidential vote set to end military rule](#)," *BBC*, 7 May 2024)

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

US sanctions two companies for Wagner links

On 30 May, Al Jazeera reported that the US sanctioned two CAR-based firms over links with Russia's Wagner Group. The firms included the Mining Industries and the Logistique Economique Etrangere. The firms' activities were allegedly benefitting Wagner's operations in the country. ("[US sanctions two Wagner-linked firms in Central African Republic](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 30 May 2024)

GHANA

Supreme Court hears anti-LGBTQ+ bill

On 8 May, Ghana's Supreme Court began the hearing of the appeal against the anti-LGBTQ+ bill. The bill dictates a three-year jail term for a person identified as homosexual and a period of five to ten years for their advocates. Challenging this, a prosecution was filed by an academic researcher Amanda Odoi, demanding that President Nana Akufo Addo not sign the bill into law. However, the first hearing was intense. Meanwhile, President Akufo Addo stated he would be waiting for the Supreme Court's verdict before signing the bill into law. ("[Ghana Supreme Court](#)

[hears challenge to anti-LGBTQ+ bill](#)," *BBC*, 8 May 2024)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

New cabinet after a failed coup attempt

On 29 May, Al Jazeera reported that the Democratic Republic of Congo formed a new 54-member cabinet which ended uncertainty following President Felix Tshisekedi's re-election in December. The formation of the government came after a failed coup attempt on 20 May. Guy Kabombo Muadiamvita's appointment as the Minister of Defence is considered crucial for the conflict between the Congolese army and the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels. ("[DR Congo ends impasse to appoint new government](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 29 May 2024)

Army asserts successful quashing of attempted coup

On 20 May, the Congolese army asserted that it had quashed a coup attempt by Congolese and foreign fighters against President Felix Tshisekedi. Army spokesperson Brig Gen Sylavin Ekenge confirmed the arrest of three Americans and a British citizen. On 19 May, almost 20 assailants wearing army uniforms attacked the house of former Chief of Staff, Vital Kamerhe, where two guards and an attacker were killed. Local media reported that the attackers belong to the New Zaire Movement which has links with formerly exiled Congo politician Christian Malanga. The US Ambassador to the DRC stated that she was "shocked" by knowing American involvement in the attack. She stated: "Rest assured that we will cooperate with the DR Congo authorities to the fullest extent possible as they investigate these criminal acts and hold accountable any US citizen involved." ("[DR Congo army says it has thwarted attempted coup](#)," *BBC*, 20 May 2024)

12 killed in militant attacks

On 4 May, Al Jazeera reported that at least 12 people, including children, were killed in a series of blasts in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The attacks target two of the camps for displaced people in Lac Vert and Mugunga, near the city of Goma. The UN stated that the attacks were a “flagrant violation of human rights and international humanitarian law and may constitute a war crime.” The Congolese military and the US have blamed M23 rebels for the attack. (“[At least 12 killed in bomb attacks on eastern DR Congo displacement camps,](#)” *Al Jazeera*, 4 May 2024)

BURKINA FASO

Military rule extended by five years

On 26 May, the BBC reported that Burkina Faso's military government, led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré, extended the military rule for another five years. The decision was announced after a national consultation meeting in the country's capital Ouagadougou. Additionally, he would be able to contest for the next presidential election. Captain Traoré has pledged to restore civilian government by 1 July this year. A new 60-month-long transition period would take effect from 2 July, which would be followed by elections. (“[Burkina Faso extends military rule by five years,](#)” *BBC*, 26 May, 2024)

MOROCCO

US military defends Africa strategy amidst coups and Russian involvement

On 31 May, Africanews reported that General Michael Langley, Commander of the US Africa Command, stated that Russian disinformation was responsible for anti-US and anti-French sentiment in Africa. He added that the US intends to “redouble its efforts and re-engage with these countries,” emphasising good governance and institution-building. He questioned military regimes’ ability to fight terrorism and ensure stability.

However, he added: “What the United States wants is what countries are asking for. We don’t prescribe anything.” (“[US military defends Africa strategy amid coups and Russia shift,](#)” *Africanews*, 31 May 2024)

LIBERIA

President commencing country’s first war crime court

On 3 May, President Joseph Boakai signed the establishment of the country’s first war crimes court. He stated that the country has “endured downpours of agony” and it would “help ferret the causes and effects of the violence” and bring about “justice and healing.” The move was welcomed by the international actors. The US Charged Affaires in Liberia Catherine Rodriguez expressed support for the court. Previously, the country had taken such decisions as the setting up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was bogged down with political dislikes. (“[Liberia's President Joseph Boakai to set up first war crimes court,](#)” *BBC*, 3 May 2024)

SENEGAL

Faye holds talks with Goita on ECOWAS

On 31 May, Africanews reported that Senegal’s new President, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, held talks with Mali’s military leader, Colonel Assimi Goita. The talks were held in Mali’s capital, Bamako, on 30 May. Faye discussed bilateral cooperation and Mali’s return to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Faye wants to bring Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger back into ECOWAS. Faye said: “I understand Mali's position (on ECOWAS), which, although rigid, is not totally inflexible.” (“[Senegal: President Faye says Mali 'not inflexible' on ECOWAS,](#)” *Africanews*, 31 May 2024)

NIGERIA

11 killed by separatists

On 31 May, Al Jazeera reported that according to Nigeria's military, separatists killed around 11 people in a surprise assault. The attack occurred in Abia state. Six civilians and five soldiers lost their lives. Defence spokesperson Major-General Edward Buba said: "The military will be fierce in its response. We will bring overwhelming military pressure on the group to ensure their total defeat." The army blamed the attack on the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement. However, the IPOB denied responsibility and blamed politically motivated criminals. ("[Separatists kill at least 11 people in southeast Nigeria, army says](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 31 May 2024)

The new national anthem causes controversy

On 30 May, Africanews reported on the Nigerian government announcing its new national anthem. The anthem is titled "Nigeria We Hail Thee," written by Lillian Jean Williams, a British expatriate in Nigeria. The change has been controversial. Oby Ezekwesili, a former Federal Minister of Education, said: "In a 21st Century Nigeria, the country's political class found a colonial National Anthem that has pejorative words like "Native Land" and "Tribes" to be admirable enough to foist on our Citizens." Nigeria's military government introduced the old anthem, "Arise O Compatriots," in 1978. However, "Nigeria We Hail Thee" was introduced when Nigeria was under British rule. The government justified the change, arguing that the replaced anthem which was introduced during military rule. Meanwhile, critics argued that the present government was reviving the anthem from Nigeria's colonial period. ("[Nigeria's new anthem, written by a Briton, sparks criticism after a contentious law is passed](#)," *Africanews*, 30 May 2024)

160 villagers kidnapped by the bandits

On 26 May, BBC reported that ten people were killed and at least 160 villagers were kidnapped from a village in Nigeria's state of Niger. The men rode on motorcycles and looted the village. A resident told BBC that the assailants are suspected to belong to Boko Haram. Amnesty International expressed concerns about the incident. The group highlighted that the mass abduction indicates the Nigerian state's failure to protect its people. It called on Nigerian authorities to put an end to similar incidents and bring the perpetrators to justice. ("[At least 160 villagers reported taken in deadly raid](#)," *BBC*, 27 May 2024)

Measles outbreak kills 42

On 3 May, Nigeria's health commissioner of the Adamawa state, Felix Tangwami, reported that at least 42 people have died from the measles outbreak. He stated: "Measles vaccines have been released to those areas and our field teams are containing the situation." According to WHO, surging insecurity in northern Nigeria has disrupted health facilities and vaccinations since 2000. ("[Measles outbreak kills at least 42 people in northeast Nigeria](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 3 May 2024)

MALI

HRW report on armed groups committing atrocities

On 8 May, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report on Al Qaeda-linked and ethnically based armed groups committing war crimes in Mali. The report says that Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen (JNIM) and Dozo militia carried out several attacks and killed 45 people in Central Mali in January. A senior researcher at HRW, Ilaria Allegrozzi, stated: "Islamist armed groups and ethnic militias are brutally attacking civilians without fear of prosecution." He added: "The authorities need to act to end the deadly cycles of violence and revenge

killings and better protect threatened civilians.” ([“Armed groups committing atrocities in Mali: HRW,”](#) *Al Jazeera*, 8 May 2024)

NIGER

US to withdraw its troops in four months

On 20 May, the US stated that it would withdraw troops from Niger within four months. The announcement came after Niger’s military government asked them to leave in April. Niger’s military government had described the presence of 1000 US troops as “illegal.” Niger’s ties with the West deteriorated following the coup in 2023. Niger’s Ministry of Defence and the US Department of Defence reached an agreement following a five-day meeting, guaranteeing the protection of the troops until the withdrawal. They jointly stated: “The withdrawal of American forces from Niger in no way affects the pursuit of relations between the United States and Niger in the area of development. Also, Niger and the United States are committed to an ongoing diplomatic dialogue to define the future of their bilateral relations.” ([“US set to evacuate ‘illegal’ troops from Niger,”](#) *Al Jazeera*, 20 May 2024)

Russian troops deployed

On 3 May, Russian troops have been deployed in Airbase 101 at Niger’s International Airport in Niamey where the US troops were located. This development has taken place after Niger ordered the US troops to withdraw. The US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin stated that the Russians are not posing any risk. She detailed: “The Russians are in a separate compound and don’t have access to US forces or access to our equipment.” ([“Russians sent to Niger airbase occupied by US troops,”](#) *BBC*, 3 May 2024)

REGIONAL

East Africa: Devastating floods in Kenya and Tanzania

On 3 May, Al Jazeera reported on torrential rains which caused floods in Kenya and Tanzania killing nearly 400 people. Cyclone Hidaya, which is reaching closer to the eastern coast of Tanzania is expected to bring heavy rain towards Kenya. Kenyan President William Ruto’s office stated: “Crucially, the coastal region is likely to experience Cyclone Hidaya, which will result in heavy rainfall, large waves and strong winds that could affect marine activities in the Indian Ocean.” The torrential rains which began in early March in Kenya have already claimed 210 lives. The rains are reportedly caused by El Nino weather phenomenon, leading to increased heat worldwide. ([“Kenya, Tanzania brace for Cyclone Hidaya as flood death toll rises,”](#) *Al Jazeera*, 3 May 2024)

INTERNATIONAL

Equatorial Guinea: President Nguema visits China

On 28 May, Africanews reported that Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema arrived in Beijing on 27 May for a state visit. Nguema held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and announced the elevation of bilateral ties to a “comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation,” He additionally met China’s Premier Li Qiang and the chairman of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee, Zhao Leji. Nguema will visit China’s Shandong Province, a manufacturing powerhouse. ([“Equatorial Guinea, China announce elevation of ties | Africanews,”](#) *Africanews*, 28 May 2024)

Over USD 30 billion worth of gold smuggled out of Africa every year, Swissaid report

On 31 May, Africanews reported that according to a May 30 report by Swissaid, over USD 30 billion worth of over 435

metric tons of gold was smuggled out of Africa. The above figures were from 2022 alone. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, and Switzerland were the main destinations. An official from the UAE government's media office said: "The UAE remains steadfast in its efforts to combat gold smuggling and ensure the highest standards of transparency and

accountability." Switzerland's spokesperson for the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs said: "Switzerland is and stays committed to improve the traceability of commodity flows, the transparency of statistics and the quality of controls." ("[Billions of dollars in gold flows illegally out of Africa each year - report says](#)," *Africanews*, 31 May 2024

NIAS AFRICA TEAM



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