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PARTNERSHIPS FOR JUSTICE

AFRICA TRACKER **NEWSLETTER**

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## Keeping an eye on the big picture

From this issue, we begin our pivot toward the wider geopolitical issues in the AGA-Africa zone and Africa, to look at how they are impacting other spaces, like rule of law and human security.

To the north of Africa, in civil-war-wracked Libya, the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) backed by Turkey, finally put the forces of renegade general Khalifa Haftar to flight, despite the support of Russia, Egypt, UAE and a cast of other Gulf states. The GNA says it's now pushing to take back all of Libya. If that happened it would be the first time Libya is united under one government since the fall of long-time strongman Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011.

A triumph for Turkey in Libya will buoy it in another geopolitical theatre where all the forces contesting in the Mediterranean, and more, are amassed – the Horn of Africa. Turkey has emerged as the leading backer of the federal government in Somalia. Somalia is currently involved in an increasingly ill-tempered maritime border dispute in the Indian Ocean with Kenya. Somalia, potentially, could assume a more strident posture toward Kenya.

Further in eastern Africa, restless Burundi held a presidential election on May 20, after the surprise decision last year by President Pierre Nkurunziza to step down. It was won by his chosen successor, retired general Evariste Ndayishimiye. The opposition cried foul, and went to the Constitution Court to challenge the result. It lost. One view of Ndayishimiye is that he is more moderate than Nkurunziza, which would bode well for relations with Rwanda, which have been on ice since 2015. Nkurunziza, who was due to hand over in August, died suddenly of a heart attack on June 8, which might give Ndayishimiye greater freedom to chart a different path.

On the back of a week where Africa powerhouses saw mixed fortunes; South Africa recorded the [largest day-on-day increase](#) in new coronavirus infections; Nigeria [fared better](#); and the war talk between Ethiopia and Egypt's in the row over the filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) along River Nile (it will be the largest hydroelectric power plant in Africa and the 8th largest in the world). Later in the month, we will explore how these developments affect the ability of countries to offer effective government, cooperate in a range of challenges including the fight against the virus and, as former South African president Thabo Mbeki once put it in a slightly different context, how much they "[are] all...panels of the set on the natural stage on which [Africa] acts out the foolish deeds of the theatre of the day."

Meanwhile, as in the US, #BlackLivesMatter protests following the killing of George Floyd spread in Africa, though many didn't end happily. We will review their significance next week.



## RULE OF LAW, DICTATOR BACK IN JAIL

Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta [kicked off a storm of controversy](#), and a face-off with the Judiciary, when he signed Executive Order 1 of 2020. The order, among other things, placed the Judiciary and independent commissions, under the Office of the Attorney-General, publicly protesting.

The government says it is a necessary re-organisation during a time of COVID-19 but critics claimed the President was using the pandemic crisis to stage a power grab and is creating an "imperial presidency" likely with the aim to enable him stay in power beyond his last term, which expires in 2022. Chief Justice David Maraga [was particularly outspoken in his criticism](#) of the move.

Many likely missed the news that former Chad dictator Hissène Habré, jailed in 2016 for abuses committed when he was in power, was released from prison in Senegal where he's been held, in order to protect him from coronavirus two months ago. On Sunday, [he returned to prison](#). At least 40,000 people are estimated to have been killed under his rule in the 1980s.



## VIOLENT EXTREMISM & PEACE IN WEST AFRICA

Last week, [French forces killed Algerian national Abdelmalek Droukdel](#), the head of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), in a raid in northern Mali.

On the face of it, it looked like a blow to violent extremism in West Africa and the Maghreb, and held out the promise that the networks that control the lucrative and deadly human, drug, and arms trafficking in the vast arid region could be weakened.

But politics in these situations is always murky and complicated. The removal of Droukdel, it's reported, has [left three leaders dominating the jihadist insurgency in the Sahel](#).

Some of these groups could present new problems for countries in the AGA-Africa zone. Adnan Abou Walid Sahraoui, now the most wanted jihadist in the Sahel, heads a branch of the Islamic State group which is [reported](#) to be highly active in the border region linking Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger – bringing their threat ever closer to Ghana and Nigeria, if his power grows from occupying the vacuum left by Droukdel.

## JOBS, AND EDUCATION

Reports on the economic costs of the COVID-19 crisis in Africa so far have been broad. Nearly 20 million jobs are threatened by the COVID-19 crisis. However, because youth unemployment on the continent is twice that of adults, one analysis goes deeper and suggests that the greater [potential it poses for social unrest is real](#).

There is also deeper assessment of the impact of the pandemic on education coming through. The World Economic Forum [notes](#) that currently, [with an estimated 1650 higher education institutions in Africa and access for the relevant age group currently at 5%](#), Africa has the lowest regional average in the world, about one-fifth of the global average of about 25%. However, despite efforts to ensure smooth teaching and learning via migration to online platforms, students continue to face several challenges. According to [UNESCO, 89% of students in sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to household computers and 82% lack internet access](#). This means that online classes offered to students because of school closures cannot cater for all students.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- Almost 30,000 police brutality cases were reported in South Africa between 2014 – 2019. Complaints [increased by 30%](#) during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- WHO says that if states fail to maintain the delivery of insecticide-treated mosquito nets or keep up the supply of antimalarial medicines, approximately 770,000 Africans could die of malaria this year. That figure would be more than twice the number of malaria deaths recorded in 2018.
- Earlier this year, the wider East African region was hit by a locust invasion which laid waste to vast areas of food crops. The International Rescue Committee now warns that a huge swarm of locusts—**8,000 times larger than before**—could descend on East Africa by mid-June.
- The numbers are in. Research shows that during South Africa's hotly-contested cigarette ban during the COVID-19 lockdown, [1 to 4 million smokers used the drought to quit](#) the habit.
- The outlook isn't rosy for alcohol. The prohibition of alcohol sales and increased police and army presence during the Covid-19 national lockdown greatly reduced crimes [like murder by over 70%](#), and car accidents fell sharply. However, a few days of easing the ban has seen [alcohol-related trauma cases soaring](#), and even calls to [slap back the booze ban](#).
- Between October 1, 2019 and May 31, 2020, at least 531 civilians were killed by armed groups in Eastern DRCs Ituri province. In comparison, since March 12, the entire DR Congo has recorded just 85 deaths related to the coronavirus.

## MOTHER NATURE'S REVENGE



There is still a raging discussion about the need for humans to deal in very different and smart ways with nature, in the wake of indicative evidence COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease that likely originated in bats, then spread to pangolins and humans. This week, an intriguing study on an older zoonotic disease, HIV/AIDS, which has infected [75 million people and killed about 32 million](#) globally, was reported.

Researchers discovered a complete HIV genome in a tissue sample taken in 1966 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), [making it the oldest such sample of the virus ever found](#).

The researchers, who published their findings in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, believe the sample backs up previous estimates that HIV passed from chimpanzees to humans around 1900. This study's estimated range for the crossover—an event that scientists think might have occurred multiple times—was 1881 to 1918.

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