Dateline Africa

Africa Diary 1 March to 31 May 2026

A selection of events from the continent that are significant or interesting, or both

Compiled by the New Agenda Editorial Collective at the Institute for African Alternatives
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May

22 May: The new Museum of West African Art (MOWAA) announced the arrival of the Drum magazine West African archives. Over 1,000 editions from Ghana and Nigeria, dating between 1954 and 1983, will be curated and made publicly accessible. This follows a partnership with the Bailey African History Archives, well known for its digital archive of Drum magazine. Born in South Africa in 1951, Drum was a defining publication of its time, documenting the social, political, and cultural life of postcolonial Africa through bold journalism and photography, shaping a generation of writers, artists, and readers across the continent. MOWAA is based in Benin City in southern Nigeria, and its programmes include heritage-related research and preservation initiatives on the continent.

18 May: Public transport operators staged demonstrations across Kenya against government moves to increase fuel prices. As usual for Kenya under President Ruto, protests quickly turned violent. Demonstrators erected burning barricades and looted businesses. Security forces responded with tear gas, live ammunition, and mass arrests. At least eight people died. The US war against Iran has driven up fuel prices across east Africa, which depends on the Gulf for oil supplies.

5 May: The RightsCon[1] 2026 Summit, a global conference on digital rights, governance, and innovation, due to be held at the Mulungushi Conference Centre in Lusaka, Zambia, was suddenly cancelled by the Zambian government, ironically one of the joint hosts. The Zambian government denied it had pulled the plug on RightsCon because of pressure from China. Promoted as "the world's leading summit on human rights in

the digital age," the previous RightsCon summit in 2025 was held in Taipei, Taiwan. Taiwan ranks 28 on the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index. Zambia is number 77 and China 178 (third last). The venue for the conference was refurbished by Chinese contractors in 2022. The Chinese Ambassador to Zambia, Li Jie, stated at the time that China would assist Zambia to hold international events.

A view of the newly completed ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. Top right: Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria Yu Dunhai and the ECOWAS Commission President, Omar Touray, at the handover ceremony on 28 April 2026.

April

28 April: In another example of "infrastructure diplomacy," the Chinese government formally handed over a new US$57million headquarters complex to the West African regional intergovernmental organisation, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja, Nigeria. Three suites will be vacant: those for Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. All run by military juntas, they withdrew from ECOWAS to form their own regional Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in 2024 − after construction on the complex had begun. China has funded, designed, and built more than 200 government and public buildings across Africa, including the African Union (AU) headquarters in Ethiopia, parliament complexes in Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, foreign ministry annexes in Ghana and Kenya, as well as conference centres, museums, hospitals, and stadiums.

26 April: South Africa's Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies made the embarrassing acknowledgement that his department's Draft National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy contained fictitious sources in its reference list. He said that AI-generated citations were included without proper verification. The policy was withdrawn "with humility".

24 April: The latest report of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) showed that Algeria maintained its ranking as the biggest military spender in Africa (and the 20th globally) at US$25.4billion. This is slightly more than the combined military expenditure of *all* the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SIPRI, 2026). Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, a Ghanaian politician who is a member of the SIPRI governing board, is currently the AU High Representative for 'Silencing the Guns'.

Fighter in Sudan. *Photo:Wikimedia Commons*

22 April: *The Economist* described the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a ruthless contender in the civil war in Sudan, as "a transnational business-cum-military empire". The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the national army, and the RSF began the conflict in April 2023. This is now the biggest war in the world today. More than 33 million of Sudan's 50 million people require aid. At least 19 million face acute hunger. Some 14 million have fled their homes and perhaps hundreds of thousands have been killed. The RSF holds half the huge country and hires mercenaries from across the world, partly using revenues from Darfur gold mines. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) denies being the RSF's chief foreign backer. The AU seems powerless to act as neighbouring countries such as Chad, Libya, and Ethiopia, as well as Kenya and Uganda, give space to RSF activities. Egypt and Eritrea support the opposing SAF.

March

25 March: The United Nations (UN) General Assembly passed a resolution spearheaded by Ghana, which described the historical transatlantic trafficking and enslavement of Africans as "the gravest crime against humanity" and called for reparations (UN, 2026). In 2025, the AU extended its existing focus on reparations for a decade, covering the period from 2026 to 2036. The President of Ghana, John Mahama, is the AU Champion for Reparations. He introduced the motion at the UN.

Republic of Ghana President Denis Sassou Nguesso at his inauguration.
Photo: Flickr

17 March: President Denis Sassou Nguesso (82) of the Republic of the Congo won a fifth consecutive term, with 95% of the vote, in the 2026 presidential election. He is the third longest ruling leader in Africa, behind President Teodoro Obiang Nguema (83) of Equatorial Guinea and President Paul Biya (93) of Cameroon.

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ENDNOTE

[1] See https://www.rightscon.org/about-and-contact/

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New Agenda is looking for contributors to our regular 'Dateline Africa' column

This is a selection of news briefs from across the continent that are significant, interesting, or both. Content is drawn from existing published sources and must be rigorously accurate and provably fact-based. The column aims to include positive news from Africa to challenge the conventional dystopian views and share news and information that is not widely published in the mainstream media.

Entries must have a specific date, can be a single sentence or a paragraph, and should be approx 50-100 words. The column includes 10-15 entries and is about 500-1,500 words.

Each column covers three months and must be submitted to the New Agenda Editorial Collective two weeks before publication date, which is at the end of each quarter. The New Agenda team, which has been compiling the diary until now, is open to suggestions and innovation, as long as they reflect the ethos and objectives of the publisher, the Institute for African Alternatives. The diary is not subject to editorial approval, beyond the usual copyediting, and the author is invited to put his or her stamp on the column.

Email us at production@ifaaza.org with your first proposed diary entry.