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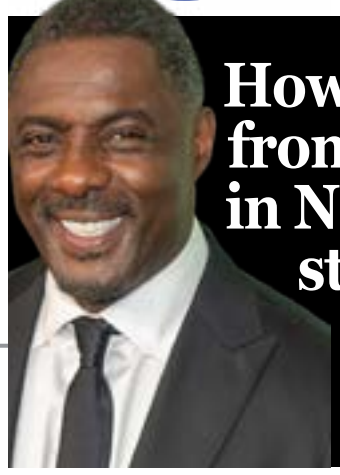

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Tragedy as Colombian lawmaker, 14 others die in plane crash

By African Telescope

A Colombian lawmaker, Diogenes Quintero, and 14 other people have died after a twin-propeller aircraft crashed in a mountainous region near Colombia's border with Venezuela, authorities have confirmed.

The aircraft, which was on a domestic flight, departed from the border city of Cúcuta and lost contact with air traffic control shortly before it was scheduled to land in the nearby town of Ocaña at about 5:00 p.m. on January 28. After hours of uncertainty, aviation officials confirmed that there were no survivors.

An official of Colombia's civil aviation authority said the aircraft was carrying 13 passengers and two crew members at the time of the crash. Search and rescue teams later located the wreckage in a remote and difficult-to-access area.

The Colombian Air Force was immediately deployed to assist in locating the aircraft and recovering the bodies. Military helicopters and ground teams were involved in the operation, which was hampered by rugged terrain, dense vegetation and poor weather conditions.



President of the Republic of Kenya, William Ruto, interacting with beneficiaries of the National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement (NYOTA) Start-up Capital from Nyamira, Migori, and Kisii counties, Kisii County recently.

Quintero was a serving member of Colombia's Chamber of Deputies and a well-known political figure in his region. He was travelling alongside aides and other passengers, including Carlos Salcedo, a political candidate preparing for upcoming elections.

Local parliamentarian Wilmer Carrillo expressed concern and grief over the incident, saying colleagues had received the news with deep shock. He described Quintero as a committed public servant whose death would be felt strongly within Colombia's political community.

The region where the plane went down is notorious for its challenging geography. The mountainous landscape, coupled with unpredictable weather, has long posed risks to

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Nigerian Army probes coup plot as officers head for court martial

By African Telescope

Nigerian military authorities have confirmed that a group of serving officers will face trial over an alleged plot to overthrow the administration of President Bola Tinubu.

The Defence Headquarters said the decision followed the conclusion of an investigative panel set up to examine what it described as acts of indiscipline and serious breaches of military regulations.

At least 16 officers were arrested in October 2025 amid reports of a failed coup attempt, raising concerns across the region at a time when several West African countries have witnessed military takeovers.

Speaking on Monday, military spokesman, Brigadier General Samaila Uba, said the investigation uncovered evidence linking some of the officers to a plot aimed at destabilising the government.

He said the findings showed conduct that was inconsistent with the ethics, values and professional standards expected of members of the Armed Forces of Nigeria.

According to him, officers found culpable will be arraigned before a military judicial panel and tried in line with established military procedures. The Defence Headquarters did not disclose the identities of the officers involved and did not clarify how many of those arrested would eventually face trial.

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Ukraine-Russia: Putin has agreed to ceasefire, says Trump

By African Telescope

President Donald Trump announced on Thursday that the Kremlin had agreed to a temporary halt in missile attacks on Kyiv, citing the extreme cold in the Ukrainian capital.

The move, if confirmed, could signal progress in Ukraine-Russia peace negotiations.

There has been no official confirmation from either Russia or Ukraine regarding a partial cease-fire. However, both countries have hinted that some form of pause might be in effect.

Speaking hours after Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked the United States for its efforts to halt Russian strikes on critical energy infrastructure but did not confirm a reprieve.

He said, "We hope the United States can make this happen. The situation tonight and over these days, the real

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University of Ibadan tops Nigerian universities in 2026 global rankings

By African Telescope

The University of Ibadan has retained its position as Nigeria's leading university in the newly released Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026.

The institution ranked within the 801–1000 band globally, ahead of other top Nigerian universities including the University of Lagos, Bayero University Kano, Covenant University, Landmark University, Ahmadu Bello University, Federal University of Technology Minna, University of Ilorin, University of Jos, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The Times Higher Education rankings, compiled in partnership with Elsevier, evaluate institutions worldwide based on teaching, research environment, research quality, industry impact, and international outlook.

This year's list features 2,191 universities across 115 countries and territories, providing a trusted benchmark for students, academics, governments, and industry experts.

The University of Ibadan's continued lead reflects its commitment to academic excellence, research innovation, and global engagement, solidifying its status as a premier institution in Nigeria and Africa.



(L-R): Vice Chancellor of the University of Global Health Equity, Prof. Philip Cotton; First Lady of Rwanda, Mrs Jeannette Kagame; the Chancellor, Dr Jim Yong Kim at the presentation of an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters awarded by University to the first lady recently. Photo: Office of the First Lady

Uganda Army chief warns foreign powers against helping Bobi Wine

By African Telescope

Uganda's army chief, Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, has warned foreign governments against attempting to smuggle opposition leader Bobi Wine out of the country, saying such actions would "create a serious rupture in relations."

The warning comes as Wine, real name Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, continues to evade capture following Uganda's disputed presidential election on January 15.

Wine rejected the official results that declared President Yoweri Museveni the winner of a seventh term and has been in hiding for over a week, taunting the army in videos posted from his family graveyard.

"The whole army is looking for one person. It's now coming to 10 days, but they have failed to find me," Wine said, claiming his evasion proves the government is not as strong as it portrays.

Kainerugaba, the president's son and presumed heir, has called Wine a coward and a "terrorist," and has led the hunt for him.

Wine's supporters fear that any forceful attempt to capture him could trigger unrest, particularly among the country's young population, many of whom are dissatisfied with decades of Museveni's rule.

Tensions have escalated after a recent raid at Wine's home in which his wife, Barbara Kyagulanyi, was hospitalized following an encounter with soldiers.

She described the intrusion as violent and threatening, though the army denies harming her.

Wine remains a central figure in Uganda's political opposition, and

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University of Lome leads open research networks

By African Telescope

The University of Lome hosted a major symposium on open science and digital research networks on January 28, 2026, at the Regional Center of Excellence for Avian Sciences. The event, co-organized by the West and Central African Research and Education Network and TogoRER, aimed to boost digital tools in higher education, enhance research collaboration, and expand access to scientific results.

The symposium featured two sessions. The first gathered administrators and network engineers from TogoRER member institutions to discuss digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and service performance. The second, a community-focused session, concentrated on strengthening ties among researchers and mapping future priorities for the network.

In his opening remarks, Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research Gado

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Tinubu hails ex-Western Region Premier Akintola as bold leader at 60th memorial

By African Telescope

President Bola Tinubu has described the late Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, former Premier of the Western Region, as a courageous leader who acted boldly in difficult times, saying history will remember him as a key figure in Nigeria's nation-building journey.

Tinubu, represented by the Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelabu, spoke on Thursday at the 60th remembrance of Akintola in Ibadan, which brought together political leaders, traditional rulers, jurists, and members of the late premier's family.

In his address, Tinubu said, "History does not always offer us perfect heroes. Instead, it offers us human beings who acted boldly in difficult times. Chief Akintola was one such man."

He praised Akintola's clarity of purpose, oratory brilliance, and unwavering commitment to federalism and regional autonomy.

The event was attended by top dignitaries, including the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume; the Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Rashidi Ladoja; Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde; Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's representative; and other prominent figures.

Governor Makinde urged leaders to prioritize public interest over party

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Togo-India trade hits $3.48bn

By African Telescope

Trade between Togo and India reached $3.48 billion in 2025, making the West African nation India's 32nd largest trading partner, according to data from the Indian Embassy in Lomé.

The figures highlight growing economic exchanges, with India emerging as the main destination for Togolese exports outside West Africa.

Trade spans raw materials, industry, and services, while Indian companies continue to expand production in Togo, supporting the country's drive for local processing and industrial development.

In 2023, Togo exported about $619 million worth of goods to India, dominated by natural calcium phosphates, petroleum products, soybeans, sawn wood, metal scrap, and raw cotton.

Imports from India totaled $3.6 billion, led by refined petroleum products, rice, machinery, textiles, and chemical products, reflecting a significant trade imbalance in India's favour.

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Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development, Mr Elias Magosi (Middle); Minister of Foreign Affairs & Diaspora, Mr Barry Faure during a courtesy visit to the minister recently. Photo: SADC

Cyber scam, bullying, misinformation increase social media fears – Survey

By African Telescope

A national survey by the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA), in collaboration with the University of Nairobi, has revealed that a majority of Kenyan internet users are increasingly concerned about online safety.

The study, presented during the Data Privacy Conference 2026, examined trends in digital behaviour, device usage, parental involvement, and public attitudes toward risks such as cyber scams, AI-driven misinformation, and cyberbullying.

Communications Authority Director-General David Mugonyi said the findings will guide policy and improve parental controls, cybersecurity frameworks, and digital citizenship initiatives.

"Collaboration is central to the work we do, with over 50 stakeholders involved, including government, law enforcement, and civil society," he noted.

The three-day conference, convened by the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODPC) and officially opened by Cabinet Secretary William Kabogo, focused on emerging technologies, evolving regulatory frameworks, and ethical data use.

Mugonyi described the forum as a "catalyst for meaningful change," empowering organisations and individuals to build a safer and more inclusive digital environment.

Governments and organisations worldwide are prioritising online safety as digital

...Cont. on www.nationaltelescope.com

300 refugees repatriated from Cameroon

By African Telescope

Borno State Governor Babagana Zulum has repatriated 300 Nigerian refugees from Cameroon to Gwoza Local Government Area in a carefully coordinated homecoming.

The returnees, comprising 74 households, spent nearly 11 years at the Minawao refugee camp in Cameroon before returning to their homeland. The exercise, described by officials as voluntary, safe, and dignified, was part of the state's broader plan to restore stability and livelihoods in insurgency affected communities.

Represented by Lawan Abba Wakilbe, Chairman of the Borno State Sub Committee on Repatriation (BOSCR), the governor emphasized that the exercise was about more than returning people—it was about reigniting hope. "We are not just moving people; we are restoring lives by reigniting hope in our communities," Wakilbe said.

On arrival in Pulka, the returnees were warmly received by local authorities and security officials. Many offered prayers and touched the soil of their homeland, while children, who had spent most of their lives in

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Outrage in Lagos as slum demolitions spark protests

Protests erupted in Lagos this week after demolitions in the Makoko waterfront settlement and other low income communities displaced residents and destroyed homes, triggering clashes with police.

Hundreds of demonstrators from Makoko, Oworonshoki, Owode Onirin and Oko Baba marched to the Lagos State House of Assembly in Alausa on Wednesday to demand an immediate halt to the demolitions, proper relocation plans, and compensation for affected families.

They carried placards reading "Stop Forced Evictions Now" and "Makoko Lives Matter," and accused the Lagos State Government of carrying out evictions without adequate notice or resettlement support.

Police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd after protesters refused orders to move, and one person was injured and taken to hospital, authorities said.

The Lagos State Police Command has denied discharging firearms, insisting injuries stemmed from tear gas and the resulting chaos.

The demolitions in Makoko, a historic stilt community home to tens of thousands of mostly poor residents, are part of an urban renewal push by the state government, which argues that illegal structures near high tension power lines pose safety hazards.

Critics say the exercise has gone far beyond agreed safety limits, uprooting families and destroying livelihoods without compensation or alternative accommodation.

Rights groups and community leaders have condemned the demolitions as human rights violations and called for an immediate halt to forced evictions, emergency shelter for displaced families, and justice for those affected.

CAF rejects Morocco protest withdraw Senegal's AFCON title

By African Telescope

The Confederation of African Football has dismissed Morocco's protest seeking to strip Senegal of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations title following chaotic scenes during the final in Rabat.

CAF, in a ruling by its Disciplinary Board, rejected the complaint filed by the Fédération Royale Marocaine de Football, which accused Senegal of breaching Articles 82 and 84 of the AFCON Regulations during the TotalEnergies AFCON Morocco 2025 final.

The decision confirms Senegal's 1–0 extra-time victory and maintains the Teranga Lions as African champions.

Morocco had argued that misconduct by Senegal during the heated final warranted sanctions severe enough to affect the outcome of the competition. The match was marred by confrontations involving players, officials and supporters from both sides.

While throwing out the protest, CAF imposed heavy disciplinary sanctions on both teams and several individuals, citing

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Convicted child sex offender arrested by ICE in US

By African Telescope

United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement has arrested a convicted child sex offender in Minnesota, the agency said in a statement on Thursday.

ICE said its officers apprehended Vong Chai Xiong, a citizen of Laos described as a criminal illegal alien, on January 29 in Maplewood, Minnesota.

According to the agency, Xiong was convicted of sexually abusing a child aged between 13 and 15 years, a crime that led to the loss of his lawful permanent resident status.

ICE said Xiong entered the United States as a refugee and became a lawful permanent resident in 2007, but was later placed in removal proceedings following his conviction.

The agency added that an immigration judge issued a final order of removal against him in 2019.

ICE said the arrest was part of ongoing efforts to locate and detain non-citizens with criminal records who are subject to deportation under US immigration laws.



Cross section of 17 Ghana police officers promoted recently by the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Mr Christian Yohuno, in recognition of their outstanding professionalism and dedication in the discharge of their duties. Photo: Ghana Police

Drone-backed ISWAP fighters kill soldiers in Nigeria

By African Telescope

Islamic State West Africa Province fighters backed by armed drones attacked a Nigerian Army base in Borno State, killing several soldiers in a pre-dawn assault, the military has said.

The militants struck the Sabon Gari military base near Maiduguri in the early hours of Thursday, storming the perimeter and briefly breaching part of the facility, according to the Army spokesman, Lieutenant-Colonel Sani Uba.

Uba said the attackers deployed drones during the raid, marking what he described as a dangerous escalation in the tactics used by insurgents operating in the North-East.

During the clash, the militants destroyed several military vehicles, including an excavator and a low-bed trailer, through drone bombardment.

The Army said reinforcements were later deployed to the base, forcing the

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Burkina Faso junta scraps political parties

By African Telescope

Burkina Faso's military-led government has dissolved all political parties and scrapped the legal framework regulating their activities, deepening its control more than three years after seizing power.

The decision was approved on Thursday by the country's council of ministers, according to a decree cited by state authorities.

Interior Minister Emile Zerbo said the move was part of efforts to "rebuild the state," arguing that the multiparty system had become riddled with abuse, dysfunction and deep divisions that weakened social cohesion.

Zerbo said a government review found that the proliferation of political parties had fuelled instability rather than unity in the West African nation.

Before the September 2022 coup, Burkina Faso had more than 100 registered political parties, with 15 represented in parliament following the 2020 general election.

Under the new decree, all political parties and formations are dissolved, while their assets will be transferred to the state. The government also plans to repeal laws governing party financing and the status of the opposition leader, with the proposed legislation to be forwarded to the transitional council.

Political activities had already been suspended following the coup that brought the current military rulers to power.

Burkina Faso, alongside neighbouring Mali and Niger, has faced years of deadly Islamist insurgency linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State groups, a conflict that has killed thousands and displaced millions across the Sahel.

Trump's deadly enforcement: Inside the ICE shooting that shook America



For President Donald Trump, one of the second-term major agenda was to tackle illegal immigration. However, a poet and mother was shot dead by a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent, a young protester was left blind, and citizens are been swept up in aggressive raids. This report traces the final moments of Renee Good, the protests that followed, and how hardline enforcement has ignited fear, outrage and a national debate over the use of force, Deborah Odekola writes.

She was a poet, a wife, a mother. Then a shot ended her story

On a cold January evening in Minneapolis, Renee Nicole Macklin Good sat in her car, an ordinary moment that would become the last of her life. She was 37. A writer. A poet. A mother to a six-year-old child. A wife who had built a quiet home with her partner in a city she loved.

Minutes later, she was dead.

Good was shot by an officer of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement during an encounter that has since shaken America and ignited a fresh wave of anger over the use of force by federal agents. Within hours, her name was trending across social media. Within days, candles, flowers and handwritten poems filled sidewalks in Minneapolis and beyond.

Born in Colorado Springs on April 2, 1988, Renee grew up with a love for words. She studied English at Old Dominion University and later settled in Minnesota, where she wrote poetry, mentored young writers and raised her child. Friends describe her as gentle, thoughtful and deeply committed to justice.

"She believed in the power of words to heal," one friend said at a vigil. "She never believed her life would end in violence."

But it did. And the manner of her death has reopened a national wound.

Renee's husband is left to explain to a six-year-old why his mother is not coming home.

Her notebooks remain on desks. Her poems, once about love and hope, are now being read at memorials.

Protests erupted in several cities, with demonstrators demanding accountability and an end to what they described as a culture of excessive force. The response was tense. Some protesters were arrested. Others were dispersed with tear gas. Many left with injuries and trauma.

Among them was 21-year-old Kaden Rummler in Santa Ana, California.

He went out to protest the killing of Renee Good. He went home blind in one eye.







According to accounts, Rummler was struck in the face at close range by a projectile fired by a federal agent during a demonstration. Doctors later told him the damage to his eye was permanent.

"From what I have heard the doctors say, I will be blind for life," he said from his hospital bed. "They said it was a miracle I survived."

His words carry the weight of a future suddenly altered. A young man who went to raise his voice now lives with darkness in one eye, and with memories that may never fade.

Two lives, changed forever. One ended. One scarred.

ICE agents on rampage

In the days that followed Renee Good's killing, fear seemed to spill from the streets into homes, workplaces and even cruise cabins. What began as grief soon hardened into something else: a growing sense that federal power was being exercised with little restraint, and that anyone could be caught in its path.

Under President Donald Trump's second-term immigration drive, enforcement has taken on a more

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aggressive face. The Department of Homeland Security announced what it described as the largest single immigration operation in U.S. history, deploying about 2,000 agents to the Minneapolis–Saint Paul area alone. The aim, officials said, was to flush out undocumented migrants and suspected fraudsters. But on the ground, the operation felt to many like a show of force.

Videos circulating online showed masked agents storming streets, yanking people from cars, smashing on windows and issuing threats. In one clip, an ICE officer was seen pounding on a vehicle and shouting at a man who insisted he was only trying to get home.

"This is a warning. Stop following us. This is the United States federal government. Go home to your kids. I will arrest you. I guarantee you, you are not going to like the outcome. Have you not learnt from what just happened?" the agent barked, a chilling reference to the killing of Renee Good.

"I live over here," the man, his voice trembling. "I am to get to my house."

The sense of intimidation has been limited to migrants.

In New York, a City Council employee, Rafael Andres Rubio Bohorquez, was detained during what was supposed to be a routine immigration appointment. City officials described it as an "egregious government overreach." Federal authorities later claimed he was in the country illegally and had an alleged criminal record, though no detailed evidence was made public. An emergency court order was eventually filed to stop his removal.

For activists trying to document arrests, the consequences have been swift.

Joshua Long, a volunteer who films ICE operations to verify identities and ensure accountability, said he was handcuffed and pinned to the ground simply for recording. In a video, he is seen being forced into an unmarked vehicle.

"When I was on the ground, I was in shock," he did documenting their d to this?"

the trauma has cut even

Joey" Martinez, a U.S. citizen, a Coast Guard veteran, a man who thought a Caribbean cruise would be a gift to himself for his 50th birthday. Instead, he woke before dawn to federal agents bursting into his cabin in Miami, shining flashlights into his face, ordering him out of bed and handcuffing him.

"I had no idea what was going on," he said. "It was just confusion and fear."

His wife, Tamara Verhas, said an agent wrestled her to the bed and seized her phone when she tried to record the scene.

They were told it was a case of mistaken identity. Martinez's name, common and Hispanic, allegedly matched that of someone wanted for drug-related offences. Despite his passport, military record, TSA Pre-Check and FBI background clearance, he was taken to a holding cell and fingerprinted before being released.

There was no apology.

"They knew it could be a mismatch and still went ahead," Martinez said. "It was dehumanizing. It's not the country I served."

A viral video captured another moment that deepened fears in Minneapolis. A U.S. border patrol agent approached a US citizen, Ramon Menera outside his home and detained him because of his accent.

The agent demanded for Menera's papers, saying it was because "you have an accent." When Menera replied that the agent also had an accent and asked why he was being questioned, the officer grabbed and detained him in front of his five-year-old daughter.

The agent insisted that hearing his accent was reason to believe he was not born in the country. Menera was photographed and checked in a database, which showed he had been a U.S. citizen since 2019. Only then was he released.

Speaking later, he said the experience left him shaken. "Even though I am a citizen, I am still afraid," he said. "They don't care if you are a citizen or not. Because of how I look and how I speak, I know I can be a target."

In Minneapolis, another U.S. citizen, Mubashir, said he was tackled outside his apartment building during his lunch break by a masked agent who did not identify himself.

"He dragged me through the snow while I was handcuffed, put me in a choke hold and said they had to verify if I was an illegal immigrant," he recounted. "I felt like I was being kidnapped."

He said he was denied water and medical attention, and only released after showing his passport and submitting to fingerprinting. Even then, he was left to walk back alone in the cold.

"The way they treated me was inhumane," he said. "If this is what they do to a U.S. citizen on camera, imagine what happens when no one is watching."

From a poet killed in her car, to a young protester blinded, to veterans and city workers handcuffed over names and assumptions, the human cost of the current enforcement drive is being written in fear, blood and unanswered questions. And across the country, families are asking the same thing: how did a search for "illegal immigrants" turn into a sweep that seems to spare no one from its shadow?

A disabled woman, Aliya Rahman, was forcibly removed from her car by federal agents. A viral video shows

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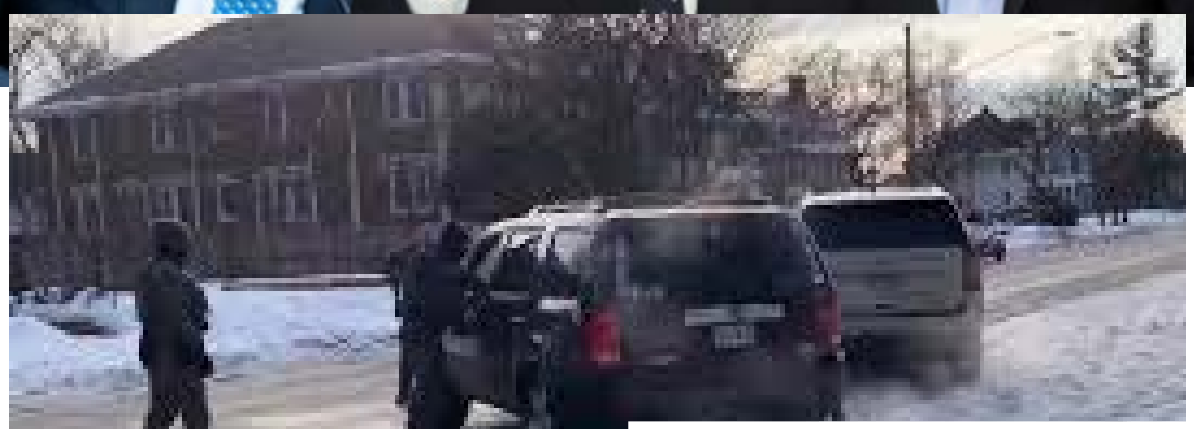
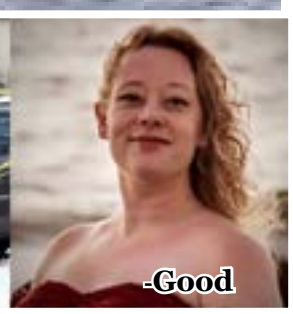

-Footage before ICE agent shot


-Bohorquez


-Car crashed after shooting


-Good

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officers cutting her seat belt with a knife and dragging her from the vehicle as she repeatedly shouted that she was disabled and heading to a doctor's appointment. "I'm disabled trying to go to the doctor up there. That is why I didn't move," she cried out as she was pulled away.

Rahman said that while in ICE custody she repeatedly requested medical assistance, but her pleas were ignored. She was taken to a detention centre where she lost consciousness in her cell and was later taken to the hospital.

Reacting to the incident, a Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said Rahman had been arrested for obstruction after allegedly ignoring commands to move her vehicle away from the scene.

Speaking with CNN, Rahman described what she thought would be a routine trip to her appointment at the Traumatic Brain Injury Center as turning into "an assault by federal agents. Masked agents dragged me from my car and bound me like an animal, even after I told them that I was disabled."



Federal agents tackle two people during a protest near the Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility at 1930 Beach St in Broadview Ill on Sept. 26 2025. Credit Colin Boyle-Block Club Chicago

Official reactions and a disputed narrative

As videos of Renee Good's final moments spread online, the official response from Washington only deepened the anger.

At a press conference, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem, described the shooting as an act of self-defence and went further to brand the 37-year-old poet and mother a "domestic terrorist." President Donald Trump echoed her claim, insisting that Good had attempted to run an ICE agent over with her car.

But those assertions have been sharply contradicted by footage of the incident.

An analysis of the video by African Telescope shows Good's car parked across the road as at least two ICE agents approached. Another one was moving from the other side through front of her vehicle. As she attempted to drive away, she swerved in a bid not to hit the agent in front of her. At that moment, the agent seeing the vehicle movement moved closer to the driver's side window, drew his weapon and fired at close range. The car then lost control and crashed. The sequence, analysts say, suggests she was trying to avoid the officers, not attack them.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey dismissed the federal account as a "garbage narrative" and called for ICE to leave the city and the state, saying the operation had brought fear and unnecessary bloodshed into local communities.

The Department of Homeland Security has also sought to counter rising public concern by denying that U.S. citizens are being targeted. In a tweet responding to criticism of its nationwide clampdown, the agency said, "Stop fear-mongering. ICE does not arrest or deport U.S. citizens. If a U.S. citizen is arrested, it is because they have obstructed or assaulted law enforcement. ICE does not arrest or deport U.S. citizens."

That claim, too, was challenged.

During a public hearing in California, Congressman Robert Garcia asked several U.S. citizens who had been detained in recent operations, including individuals identified as Retes, Figueroa, Chavarria, Ramirez and Velez, whether the statement was true. They all said it was not.

"Everyone agrees that this tweet was a lie," Garcia said. "Secretary Noem should be ashamed. She should resign. She should not be running any agency of the United States of America."

Facing mounting criticism, Noem defended the broader enforcement strategy, saying that while operations are "targeted," agents may question and detain people who are near those they are seeking.

"In every situation, we're doing targeted enforcement," she said. "If we are on a target and doing an operation, there may be individuals surrounding that criminal that we may be asking who they are and why they're there and having them validate their identity. That's what we've always done."

Also, Grilling DHS Secretary Kristi Noem at a public hearing, Congressman Dan Goldman did not mince words. He challenged the administration's approach to immigration enforcement and the treatment of people pursuing legal avenues like asylum.

"If you follow a lawful pathway, asylum is a lawful pathway," Goldman said.

"If you have an open asylum case, you are here lawfully. But what we are seeing across the country is that you are not following the law. Don't tell us to change the law if you don't like asylum. Bring that change to us in Congress. We will work with you. But you can't just decide you are not going to follow the law and deport people who have ongoing applications."

Goldman pointed to cases where people attending court appearances with active asylum claims were still arrested and removed, tearing families apart.

He described one heartbreaking situation in New York where, after such a hearing, an asylum seeker was taken from his wife and small children.

Then, Goldman said, "this happened to his wife," showing lawmakers a video clip of a woman being dragged away by an ICE agent as the voices of children rang out in the background.

According to him, in response to the footage, the Department of Homeland Security initially issued a statement condemning the officer's conduct as "unacceptable and beneath the men and women of ICE," saying the agent had been relieved of duty pending a full investigation.

But just three days later, the same officer was reinstated, raising fresh questions and deepening concerns among critics about accountability and fairness in enforcement actions.

More leaders speak as outrage widens

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey's response to the killing of Renee Good cut straight to the raw pain felt in a city already on edge.

Standing before cameras, his voice rose with anger and grief as he confronted the federal presence that has turned ordinary neighbourhood streets into scenes of fear.

"To U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, get the f--- out of

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Minneapolis," Frey declared, his words echoing far beyond city hall.

"We do not want you here. Your stated reason for being in this city is to create some kind of safety and you are doing exactly the opposite." He spoke not just as a political leader, but as a neighbour watching his community unravel.

"People are being hurt. Families are being ripped apart," he said, his tone heavy with disbelief and sorrow. "Long-term Minneapolis residents that have contributed so greatly to our city, to our culture, our economy are being terrorised. And now somebody is dead. That's on you."

The mayor's message went beyond blame. He held the federal agency responsible not only for the fatal shooting but for the broader atmosphere of intimidation he said it had brought to the city's doorsteps.

"It is also on you to leave," he said, urging that further loss of life and injury be prevented.

"We are going to be working towards justice as quickly as we possibly can right now. And justice is all we've got to get."

As the grief over Renee Good's killing and the fear stirred by sweeping ICE operations spread across the country, political reactions grew sharper and more polarised.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said Americans were misled about the true target of the new immigration crackdown.

"The American people thought that the Trump administration was going to target violent felons who are in the country illegally," he said. "Instead, we see an American citizen like Renee Nicole Good being gunned down in cold blood without justification. Taxpayer dollars are being used by the Department of Homeland Security and ICE to unleash extremism on the streets of America by individuals who are showing depraved indifference to human life."

In New York, Mayor Zohran Mamdani again reassured residents, particularly immigrants, that the city would stand with them. He urged people to know their constitutional rights in encounters with federal agents.

"Dozens of U.S. citizens have been taken into custody and released hours later," she said. "We have yet to see charges materialise, because in nearly all instances, no federal charges are possible. Others have been taken from their own vehicles. Abandoned cars with broken windows have become a normal sight of daily life in the Twin Cities."



Residents and protesters clash with federal agents in the East Side neighborhood of Chicago on Oct 14. (Photo: Washington Post via Los Angeles Times)

He said ICE cannot enter private spaces such as homes, schools or private areas of workplaces without a judicial warrant signed by a judge, and that residents have the right to refuse entry, remain silent and ask repeatedly if they are free to go. He added that people are legally allowed to film ICE as long as they do not interfere, and stressed that New Yorkers also have a constitutional right to protest.

Across the Midwest, Democratic lawmakers gathered in St Paul, Minnesota, for what they described as a field hearing on the impact of the federal crackdown. They condemned what they called the "trauma and terror" unleashed by the surge of immigration agents in the state and warned that formal investigations into the conduct of federal officers, including their use of deadly force, were being prepared.

Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, who represents a district in Minneapolis, said aggressive operations had swept up even U.S. citizens.

Even within President Donald Trump's own party, unease is emerging.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll found that while 95 per cent of Republicans still approve of Trump's overall performance, the party is divided over the human cost of the enforcement drive.

About 59 per cent said arrests should be prioritised even if people get hurt, while 39 per cent said officers should focus on reducing harm even if it means fewer arrests. Among Democrats, 96 per cent said preventing injuries should come first.

At the same time, the administration has moved to tighten both illegal and legal routes into the United States.

The State Department announced an indefinite pause on immigrant visa processing from 75 countries, saying it wanted to end what it called abuse of welfare and public benefits.

Immigrant visa processing has already been halted for applicants from countries including Brazil, Iran, Russia and Somalia.

In a further hardline signal, Trump said his government would seek to revoke the citizenship of any naturalised immigrant, from Somalia or elsewhere, convicted of defrauding Americans.

"We're also going to revoke the citizenship of any naturalised immigrant from Somalia or anywhere else who is convicted of defrauding our citizens," he declared during a speech in Detroit.

Reacting to these mounting incidents and the broader climate of enforcement, former U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris spoke passionately about what many see as the human toll of current policy. She highlighted families being torn apart, people being pulled from cars, homes and places of worship, and the recent killing of a mother by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent in Minneapolis.

-Harris

"When the federal government rips people out of their car, out of their home, out of their church," she said, "when families are separated and a mother of three is shot and killed by an ICE agent in Minneapolis, when rising costs and stagnant wages force working families to choose between rent and medicine, between child care and groceries, between dignity or survival, people are sick and tired of being sick and tired. We will continue the fight with determination, with resilience and, dear I say, with joy."

EDITORIAL

Coup Is Never a Solution: Africa Must Break the Cycle of Military Coups

For more than seven decades, the drums of military coups have echoed across Africa. Instead of fading with time, that rhythm has grown louder in recent years, unsettling governments and citizens alike. The overthrow of King Farouk of Egypt in 1952 marked a turning point that normalised military intervention in African politics. Since then, over 100 successful coups have occurred in more than 35 countries. While global attention has sharpened since the resurgence of coups from August 2020, the phenomenon is not new. What is new is the renewed risk that Africa may relapse into an era it once hoped it had left behind.







The Sahel has become the epicentre of this troubling trend. Mali has experienced two coups since 2020; Guinea followed in 2021; Burkina Faso endured two in 2022; Chad's transition after the death of President IdrissDéby bypassed constitutional norms; and Niger, Gabon, Sudan and Madagascar have all faced military seizures of power. Even Nigeria, long regarded as a stabilising force in West Africa, uncovered a coup plot in 2025. These events point to a dangerous contagion effect, where one successful coup emboldens the next.

The causes are complex but familiar. Persistent insecurity, weak governance, economic hardship and public frustration provide fertile ground for military adventurism. In the Sahel, coups are often justified as responses to jihadist violence. Elsewhere, they are presented as remedies for corruption, constitutional manipulation or economic mismanagement. Yet history is unambiguous: coups do not solve these problems. They merely postpone them, often in more destructive forms. Governments born from the barrel of a gun rarely evolve into accountable, democratic regimes.

The costs are severe. Democratically elected institutions are dismantled, civil liberties restricted and political participation stifled. Economies suffer as investor confidence evaporates and long-term development stalls. Regionally, coups undermine cooperation and weaken Africa's collective standing in the world. Security deteriorates as power vacuums emerge, providing opportunities for extremist groups to expand. In every sense, military takeovers poison the body politic of the continent.

This reality stands in stark contrast to the vision of Africa's founding leaders. Figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Patrice Lumumba, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Tafawa Balewa, Obafemi Awolowo and Nelson Mandela believed that Africa's progress lay in strong institutions, popular participation and accountable governance. Their struggles were rooted in the conviction that sovereignty and development could not be sustained through force alone. That vision is imperilled each time soldiers replace ballots.

Recent events in Benin offer a telling contrast. Although citizens harbour legitimate grievances against the government, particularly over the exclusion of the main opposition party from the forthcoming presidential election, the country's strong tradition of civic engagement prevailed over military ambition. Regional support, including decisive action by ECOWAS, helped defend constitutional order. Benin's history as a pioneer of peaceful democratic transition in francophone Africa remains a reminder that change is possible without violence.

Breaking the cycle of coups demands sustained, collective effort. National governments must strengthen institutions, respect constitutional limits, professionalise their armed forces and address citizens' grievances through inclusive governance and economic reform. Regionally, the African Union and ECOWAS must apply a consistent, principled stance against unconstitutional changes of government. International partners should prioritise long-term support for governance, civil society and economic resilience rather than short-term military fixes.

Preventing coups is neither simple nor swift. But Africa cannot afford to substitute the sword for the ballot. United commitment to democratic values remains the continent's strongest defence.

The African Telescope Newspaper calls on Africans everywhere to reject military shortcuts and reaffirm faith in democratic processes. To do otherwise would betray the sacrifices of the past and diminish the hopes of future generations. The time to break the cycle is now.

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Global

11 INTERVIEW



The cartels were running Mexico. It is very sad to watch and see what's happened to that country, but the cartels are running, and they're killing 250,000, 300,000 people in our country every single year.

Why we are deporting Africans, others – Donald Trump

The US President, Donald Trump, in this interview addressed the invasion of Venezuela, the relationship between both countries and broader global issues, said US forces reclaimed Venezuelan oil, a move he believes could lower global fuel prices, and criticised President Biden's handling of Afghanistan, among other issues.

Let's start with Venezuela. Narco-terrorist, indicted. We are losing 200 Americans a day to drugs, walk us through this decision in Venezuela.

Well, it wasn't a hard decision. Democrats wanted him, and Republicans wanted him, and nobody had what it takes to get him or didn't want to get him. I don't know, something happened, but he killed a lot of people. He sent a lot of bad people into our country. He emptied his prisons into the United States. He emptied his mental institutions in St. Adams into the United States and did a lot of very bad things, but he was a big drug pusher. How do you see that? Because all the boats that we shot down, they came out of Venezuela. A lot of drugs and boats, There are very few boats operating right now. There's almost no boats.

I don't think anyone would go fishing in those waters.

Not a lot of people want to go fishing anymore. But we have knocked out 97% of the drugs coming in by water, and we are going to start now hitting land with regard to the cartels. The cartels were running Mexico. It is very sad to watch and see what's happened to that country, but the cartels are running, and they're killing 250,000, 300,000 people in our country every single year. The drugs, it's horrible. It's devastated families.You lose a child or a parent. I mean, parents are dying too with drugs. So we've done a really good job. We're knocking it down. The numbers were always going to be too high if you have one person, but they're going down, just like the border. The border was a total mess for years. I did it the first time very quickly, and this time I did it even better because this was a bigger mess. This was a border like no other probably in the history of the world. There's never been a border like that where anybody could just walk into your country.



The borders are ostensibly really closed now.

Closed. They can't come in. Nobody even tries. And the people in Texas, Arizona, all these places that are won by such big numbers are so happy with the border. They had homes that they weren't even able to live in their home. Every day people were knocking on their door every hour. And it's just a great honour to be involved with it. The ICE and Border Patrol and all of the people have been so good. Tom Holman, Kristi Noem. The people have done such an incredible job. You have no idea.

You have made a number of profound announcements. Number one was 30 to 50 million barrels of oil that they will be handing over to you and you will sell it on the market at market prices. That money will be used for the people of Venezuela and the people of America. And that they will buy all of their goods from this country. Today we learned that the holdovers, since Maduro's gone, have agreed to free all of the political prisoners. It indicates they want peace with Donald Trump to me. How do you interpret it?

We asked them to do that and they have been great. Everything we have wanted they have given us. We went in, we took Maduro out. Amazingly that nobody was killed. We didn't lose ourselves. We had some people wounded, but we didn't lose a soldier. A couple of very brave helicopter pilots were wounded pretty badly, but they are in good shape and it was an amazing attack. The other side lost a lot of people, unfortunately. But, this house was in the middle of a fort with thousands of people and soldiers and everything else. So we went right into the middle of a fort. Who would think you could do that and not lose anybody? But they had it planned so beautifully. General Raizin" Caine (chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and Pete Hegseth (United States Secretary of War) were fantastic. Mark has been doing a great job, the vice president. The whole group is just a fantastic group.

You were watching the operation unfold in real

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INTERVIEW

"I rebuilt the entire military during my first term. Biden gave some of it away, a lot of it, but not a lot relative to what I bought but he gave a big chunk to Afghanistan"

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'We have blocked 97% of drugs entering US by water'

...Cont. from pg 11

time at the Situation Room direct in Palm Beach, in Mar-a-Lago. You make that ultimate call as the commander-in-chief. What is that like?

Well, I have done it now quite a bit. We took out (Qasem) Soleimani (Iranian military officer), which was a big deal, Middle East. He was very bad. He killed a lot of people. You will see about 95% of the people walking around without legs or arms, and that was caused by roadside bomb. That was his baby. He loved it. We took him out. We took out al-Baghdadi, He is the founder of ISIS. We did Midnight Hammer, which obliterated the Iran nuclear threat. The B-2 bombers are the best pilots anywhere in the world. They did it at night with no moon, totally dark. Every bomb went right down an air shaft deep into a granite mountain. It was amazing. We did this in a similar way. This seems to have gotten the imagination maybe even more than the other ones, but I think they're very equal in many ways. Maybe taking out the nuclear threat from Iran was very important, in terms of captivating attention, but this seems to be something that is beyond anything that anybody had ever seen.



Especially the operational details.

Well, the bravery involved. To have people going into an army fort with thousands of soldiers, land a helicopter right in the middle of it, break down a steel door because it was a fortified house, run through the hallway shooting, and come out 10 minutes later with the guy (Venezuela President) who wasn't quite able to get into his safe house.

I heard they got to him less than three minutes.

It was so fast. Nobody's ever seen anything like it. But the safe house wasn't safe because they had blowtorches it and go through steel like its butter. They didn't have to use them. But these are great and brave people. Even coming down those ropes. They came down the ropes off the helicopter, and they run them. I was thinking to myself wondering if I could do that. I am going to have to give it a try sometime. But they did it like it's a stairway. And they were on the ground instantly ready for action. These are brave people. We have the greatest soldiers and equipment in the world. Nobody can match us. I rebuilt the entire military during my first term. Biden gave some of it away, a lot of it, but not a lot relative to what I bought but he gave a big chunk to Afghanistan, which was just

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Global NEWSXtra

It's 'very dangerous' to deal with China, Trump warns UK

By African Telescope

U.S. President Donald Trump has warned that it is "very dangerous" for the United Kingdom to deepen business relations with China, commenting on agreements struck during Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's ongoing visit to Beijing.

Starmer's three-day trip has already yielded several economic deals, including visa-free travel, reduced whisky tariffs, and a £10.9 billion investment by AstraZeneca to build manufacturing facilities in China.

Additional agreements targeted cooperation on organized crime and illegal immigration.

Trump, speaking at the premiere of a documentary about his wife Melania, cautioned against such engagements, suggesting that similar deals by Canada would be "even more dangerous."

Sir Keir, however, defended the trip, saying the meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping were "very good" and placed UK-China relations in a "strong, good place."

The prime minister emphasized that the UK has much

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Israel confirms Gaza death toll at 70,000

By African Telescope

Israel has for the first time acknowledged that roughly 70,000 people have died in its war on Gaza, a figure closely matching the 71,667 reported by the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry.

Israeli Defence Forces officials disclosed the estimate to local media, ending months of disputes over casualty numbers. The IDF has not clarified how many of the dead were militants, while the Gaza ministry counts only those killed directly by Israeli military actions.

Thewar, sparked by a Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2025, has drawn international scrutiny over the proportionality of Israel's response.

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Trump sues IRS, Treasury for $10bn

By African Telescope

President Donald Trump, his two sons and the Trump Organization have sued the Internal Revenue Service and the US Treasury Department over the unauthorized disclosure of his tax records, seeking $10 billion in damages.

The lawsuit, filed on Thursday in a federal court in Florida, accuses the agencies of failing in their duty to protect confidential tax information during Trump's first term in office.

Named as plaintiffs in the suit are Trump, Donald Trump Jr.,

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Politics

13 INTERVIEW

We must now make a law that all borrowing must be for investment. In critical areas of development, you don't borrow for consumption.



Nigeria must appoint qualified ambassadors to resolve Trump's designation – Ex-Defence Minister, Aguiyi-Ironsi

AsNigeriagrappleswithpoliticaluncertainty,socialtension, and security challenges, His Excellency, Ambassador (Chief) Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi a seasoned diplomat, former Minister of State for Defence, and later Minister of Defence speaks with rare candor. In this special interview with ***AFRICAN TELESCOPE,*** *he shares his perspectives on Nigeria's critical political, social, diplomatic, and security issues, and the path toward a stable, just, visionary, and united Nigeria.*

Your Excellency, the 60th anniversary of your late father, Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi's assassination is around the corner, take us through your reflections on his sacrifice and the state of the Nigerian society?

That's a thoughtful question. Yes, the anniversaries awaken reflection. Sixty years after my father's tragic death, Nigeria still struggles with many of the same questions that haunted his time -questions about unity, justice, leadership, and direction. I chose to speak now not merely because of remembrance, but because silence can become complicity. We are living in a defining moment-politically, morally, and historically. If those who understand Nigeria's history and institutions remain silent, then those who misunderstand them will rewrite our story. So yes, this conversation is partly personal, partly patriotic. My father's legacy calls for unity; my conscience calls for truth.



The United States recently designated Nigeria as a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) over issues of human rights and alleged religious freedom violations. As a seasoned diplomat, what does this mean for Nigeria's image and international relations? Could this have been prevented, and what diplomatic steps should Nigeria take to manage or reverse this status? Does the presence or absence of ambassadors really matter so much in this case?

First and foremost, what does it mean to be designated a "Country of Particular Concern"? Under the United States International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) is one that is deemed to have engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom. According to the U.S statement, the reasons include recurring attacks against Christian communities, alleged impunity for offenders, and perceived failures in protecting citizens' religious rights. It is not a sanction in itself but a policy designation that draws attention to serious issues of concern. Fundamentally, the purpose is to prompt dialogue and corrective action, not to isolate a nation. That designation is not a mere label; it's a diplomatic alarm. It signals that Nigeria's governance, human rights, and rule of law are under serious scrutiny. It is a statement of concern from the international community that Nigeria may not be living up to its constitutional and human rights obligations. When the U.S. makes such a declaration, other nations quietly take note -investors, donors, and international partners begin to re-evaluate our credibility. But beyond image, it is a moral indictment. It tells us that something fundamental is broken in how we handle diversity, dissent, and faith. What worries me most is that it suggests a growing perception that Nigeria tolerates impunity in issues of religious or ethnic violence. One of our major challenges is the obvious failure to manage perception and maintain active diplomatic engagement. When a country of Nigeria's size has no ambassador in Washington during such deliberations, it signals institutional negligence. We must treat our citizens with the same dignity we demand from the world. Diplomacy begins at home. If we lose moral legitimacy, no foreign policy brilliance can compensate for that. This designation could have been prevented absolutely. Early warning signals were evident. Advocacy organizations in Washington had long accused Nigeria of religious bias. Proactive diplomacy high-level visits, clarifications and engagement with Congress could have mitigated the decision. Sadly, we reacted only after the damage was done. Now, to reverse this status, we must embark on serious diplomatic dialogue, backed by concrete domestic reforms. Appoint ambassadors to Washington and the UN first, and other grade A missions- respected figures with cross-regional understanding. Engage the U.S. Congress and State Department. Show progress not propaganda – on interfaith protection, justice for victims of violence, and community reconciliation. Establish an inter-gubernatorial task force to address religious freedom and justice-sector reform. Nigeria's foreign policy must reflect moral integrity at home. The world respects nations that correct their flaws, not those that deny them. In diplomacy, silence is costly. Ambassadors are not ceremonial figures; they are national watchmen who anticipate, interpret, and influence host-nation policy. Without them, advocacy groups dominate the narrative. The CPC outcome is what happens when a country abandons its own story to others. Nigeria has well educated diplomats acting as charge d 'affairs but many meetings and even access to some officials is only available or allowed to Ambassadors. Contrary to the belief by some members of the National Assembly, Ambassadorship is not a fit for everybody and therefore, stringent vetting must take place. The case of what recently happened to the UK Ambassador to US comes to mind. We should know countries ambassadors nominated for realistic vetting and screening process.

The detention of Nnamdi Kanu has become more symbolic than legal. It represents the wider frustration of a people who feel unheard. Agitation thrives where dialogue fails.

There's renewed agitation in the South-East and the continued detention of Nnamdi Kanu. What is your honest view on this issue and how it should be handled?

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15 INTERVIEW



"I was always looking for what are the lessons to learn when you reach an obstacle and that obstacle sort of stops you from your goal.."

Why leaders must learn to lose and accept defeat – Ex-Liberia President, Sirleaf

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia's President from 2006 to 2018 and Africa's first democratically elected female head of state, is also a Noble Peace Prize laureate, honoured in 2011 for her tireless advocacy for women's rights and peace. In this interview, she reflects on her early life and

Your father was a lawyer and he was the first indigenous Liberian to sit in the national legislature. Your mom came from two communities, part German, part Crewe. What kind of boundaries broke for you growing up in a multicultural household and how that's influenced your outlook on life and influenced your leadership.

I was the third and second girl child of my parents. What that meant is I didn't get the attention of the first two, so I had to find my own way to get attention. So I did things that everyone said little girls shouldn't do that. I climbed trees; I sought where there were open fields in our community and went there to play football. I did all those things. Maybe those strengthened my character to say, I can still get attention from people if I do those things that may not be the things that they really want to see. But anyway, let's go back to your issue. The research you did about my father, my mother is so correct. Indeed, my father was an indigenous from the Gola tribe and my mother was born in one of the rural counties to an indigenous mother, Crewe, with a German father who was a merchant in the country at the time. I am pleased that throughout my early years, both my mother and father never forgot their roots. And even though both of my grandmothers were illiterate, had never been to school, did not know how to write. But because the family was together and because my mother and father believed that they could be and give credit to our system at that time, that young children could be adopted by families of the elites. That is where the education of my parents come in, in that they both were taken into the homes of those I will call Americo-Liberians, those who were those that returned on emancipation and founded the country. So they were taken in by families. That's how my father became a lawyer. My mother became a teacher, ultimately a preacher. And so those days we spent with our grandmother from Sino, from this rural county, came to Monrovia and lived in our home the same way. Our grandmother from the county, the other rural county where my father was born, never did come to the city. But we were compelled every time there was school closing that we had to go back into the rural areas of my father's place that we had to live there with the grandmother. We had to go to the farms with her, young children following into the farms. We had to help what they chose. And so this is why today I still go back to the village where my grandmother lived, where we lived with her, where today I farm. So it was for me such a wonderful time of life, young, but with parents that really not only loved you, but because they had spent time to educate themselves, their emphasis was on the education of their children to enable them to be self-sufficient. So I found those my happiest days of my life. I just love going back to both of the rural areas and just memorialise those early days with me and my siblings, just enjoy being with our grandparents. A changed country today, but those memories are still very strong with us.



Can you tell us a little bit about some of the stories your grandmothers may have told you as a child growing up, or perhaps some of the principles that you hold onto from a childhood that is just rich and with so many different connections?

Well, , I always believed that by our situation, by the diversity of our background, we bridged so many barriers. I could easily go into any setting and say, I believe I'm also indigenous because my father is 100 per cent. My mother was 50 per cent. But I could also say that we bridged the divide of education, because even though they were both indigenous, they had the opportunity to learn under what was really a divided but elitist system. And so that provided the kind of determination. It probably carved my vision of where I should be. And the fact that our father was a first indigenous set the pace that you can be whatever

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INTERVIEW

"There is no catapulting into leadership roles. Sometimes you have to go the full way and learn how to lose and accept losing as a part of capability."

'I won senatorial election but rejected over fraudulent poll'

...Cont. from pg 15

you want to be if you are willing to apply your time and to be able to have the vision, the energy and the determination. There was one part that created another aspect of my life that I think strengthened my character. Our father got ill. He had a stroke. There were no medical facilities that could have helped him and so he stayed ill for seven years. And our mother then merely took care of him. We were still there and still going to school. Some of us were still now into high school. And I always tell people, I know what it is to come from prosperity to poverty. Because when our father got ill, all of the attributes, support, and all he did fell away. And so our mother had to do what other mothers did. Makes bread to sell, do things that other women did. But I think her strength in being able to provide that care and at the same time be able to coach her children that they stayed focused on going to school, getting an education, preparing themselves. I think therein lies my own strength of character and my own ability to be able to forge ahead if I see that there's something that would improve not only me, but improve the society in which I live.

Both your parents were extraordinary. Can we talk about a period in your life, a little later in your life, when you started to enter politics? There was a moment in 1985 when you criticised the military regime at the time, and it caused a tumult in life and you had to leave the country.

Let me go a little bit back. I was one of the young people in our high school that always took action, always found some reason to challenge the teacher on certain things. And so I started to work very early because I had to. Our families were not rich. Before we get to form 5, I was asked to give a speech at the college that I graduated from, the high school. And that's when I started a criticism of government. That was in the 70s and that criticism enabled me through a Harvard University advisory group to go and further my education, to build upon the school I had had with my husband, my children's father, but to go back and get further education. After that, my life took completely different trend. By the time we reached 85, I was already now; I had been doing some work at the World Bank at a junior level. But I was called back to form a political party. And so I campaigned for the selected candidate of our party. And, yes, criticised quite a bit the policies of government, as I did in my commencement speech way back in 1971. And ultimately, we were now in a military government. And again, I challenged the military government. That also led to problems. But what finally moved me was the fact that we were convinced that our candidate won the election and that the process of counting the vote was stopped. And a new group was formed to be able to read the ballots. And clearly, that group was a pro-military government group that we were shown. I thought we knew that it was fraudulent. And at that point, the leaders of my party decided we would not, even though I had won clearly a senatorial seat, we decided we would not honour the fraudulent elections, and we would not serve. Well, obviously, that put me into a lot of trouble. I was haunted by security agents, I had to go into different friend places to sleep and hide and all of that. Ultimately, with support from friends outside, I was able to leave the country. And to return to work at the bank. What does that say? It just says that one finds themselves in those circumstances and it brings you out based upon your own personal commitment, determination, your own self-confidence in what you're doing. My confidence was that I could be what I wanted. I could take a position in accordance with what I felt was the right thing to do and to be prepared to suffer the consequences of that. And yet it took enormous personal courage, to be able to do that, whether it was challenging that teacher or challenging the regime.

Speak more about how you draw upon that courage and that resource.

I think it comes from basically my mother. My mother was a very religious person and so in the difficulties she faced with our father's death and life, she became a Presbyterian church preacher. And so we all grew up with the belief that with God, you can conquer anything. It also speaks to finding purpose. Beyond courage, finding purpose and understanding what you're here to do. And it sounds like you had that sense or you came into that sense of what you were here to do quite early, and it was tested.

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Hospital failure: Inside Nigeria's deadly culture of medical errors


-Chimamanda


- Alozie


- Rebekah


- Aishatu

CHIBUZOR ALLI examines how a series of harrowing medical errors, from misdiagnosis and poor record-keeping to gross negligence, have shattered public trust in Nigeria's hospitals, turning places of healing into scenes of avoidable tragedy and leaving families to mourn loved ones lost to a failing healthcare system.

In the quiet aftermath of tragedy, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's voice broke through the silence, trembling with an anguish that transcended words. Her words, raw and unfiltered, carried the weight of a mother's heartbreak, an ache that pierced deeply into the conscience of a nation. She recounted, with heartbreaking clarity:

"My son was unwell, just a fever. We took him to Euracare, trusting that they would care for him, that they would heal him. But instead, something went terribly wrong." Her voice faltered, and the grief spilled over like tears in the rain.

"They sedated him, promised they were stabilizing him, but somewhere in that process, something went wrong. I saw his tiny body being pulled into procedures I couldn't understand, and then, in the stillness of that hospital room, I realized my baby was gone."

Her words, heavy with pain, echoed across social media, stirring a storm of outrage and helplessness. The trust that families had placed in the healthcare system was shattered, cracked like fragile glass.

For many, her story was a mirror reflecting the devastating reality: Nigeria's healthcare system, once a sanctuary of healing, now a place of despair and death.

Her loss became a stark symbol of systemic failure a country where innocent lives are lost not because of fate, but because of negligence, incompetence, and neglect.

In its reaction, the management of Euracare Multipurpose Hospital explained that the child was refered to its facility after receiving treatment at two paediatric centres.

According to the hospital sedation was administered where clinically indicated and that its team worked with external medical professionals recommended by the family to ensure all necessary clinical support was approved.

"Despite these concerted efforts, the patient sadly passed away less than 24 hours after presenting at our facility."

The hospital has however commenced investigation while Chimamanda has filed a law suit against the health facility.

Similarly, the Lagos State Government through Dr Kemi Ogunyemi, the Special Adviser to the state governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu has vowed to ensure that the full weight of the law is applied.

She confirmed that the doctor involved in the child's procedure had been suspended by the hospital's management.

This was not an isolated case.

Also in Lagos, Agness Oladeyinde emerged, her voice captured in a viral video that pierced through the din of

...Cont. on page 18


- Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu


- Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara


- Legal Expert, Barr. Tolu Babaleye

Hospital failure: Inside Nigeria's deadly culture of medical errors


- Alozie


- Rebekah


- Aishatu

indifference and denial.

Her words, filled with fury and heartbreak, painted a grim portrait of institutional failure.

"We have been in this hospital since morning," she began, her voice trembling with a mixture of anger and despair. "And all we have experienced are mistakes, one after another.

"My sister's records got mixed up, her blood sample was mislabeled, and our baby's identity was swapped at the mortuary. When we went to retrieve his body, we found another child's name on the form. How can this happen in a hospital meant to care for the most vulnerable?"

Her story became a mirror reflecting the endemic lapses in patient identification, record-keeping, and care delivery that plague Nigeria's hospitals across the country.

It was not an isolated incident but a symptom of a systemic malaise, rooted in underfunding, mismanagement, and corruption.

The errors mislabeled blood samples; swapped bodies highlighted a frightening reality: that in Nigeria, care is often compromised by human error, and human error, in healthcare, can be fatal.

Across the country, the narrative of tragedy continued to unfold.

In Kano, Aishatu Umar's story added another chapter a story of neglect, of a life lost because of gross negligence.

Her husband, Abubakar Muhammad, recounted how routine procedures turned into nightmares:

"She complained of severe abdominal pain, but they dismissed her," he said, voice thick with grief.

"They only gave her painkillers, and we trusted them. But after four months, scans revealed surgical scissors had been left inside her abdomen. The mistake was so gross, so unforgivable, that she died before they could operate to save her." His words echoed the horror of a preventable death an example of the catastrophic consequences of medical oversight gone wrong.

Statistics

Meanwhile, the statistics tell a stark story one that many families have lived but few have spoken about openly.

Studies published in the African Research Journal of Medical Sciences reveal that between 42 and 90 per cent of Nigerian healthcare practitioners have been involved in at least one medical error during their careers. Nearly one in three patients suffers additional injury as a result of their treatment, and about one in ten experiences harm during hospital stays.

These figures, while shocking, are only the surface of a deeper truth, an underbelly of systemic neglect, where lives are often collateral damage in the war against underfunding, corruption, and inefficiency.

More worrisome situation

Rebekah Sekidika's father, Sampson, shared how his daughter, once a vibrant, healthy girl, was lost in a routine surgical procedure.

The 24-year-old first-class graduate of Microbiology died on February 2,, 2024 at the Paragon Clinics and Image Diagnosis in Port Harcourt, following a procedure.

Sampson however alleged that his daugther died due to the negligence and incompetence of the medicl staff, who caused a uterine rupture.

"She was strong. There was nothing wrong with her," he said softly, tears welling in his eyes.

"But she bled to death in front of us because of negligence." His words are a heartbreaking reminder that what should have been a simple, routine operation turned into tragedy because of careless oversight, errors that could have been prevented with proper protocols and accountability.

The Rivers State Governmen t arraigned two doctors on a two count charge of manslaughter and negligence.

Another worrisome situation recently occurred in Lagos where a 30-year-old man, Samuel Alozie also known as Promise Samuel on Tiktok accused a primary healthcare centre in the state of causing the death of his nine-month-old twin boys after receiving immunisation.

According to him, his children Testimony and Timothy were administered fake, expired, or inappropriate drugs during a routine immunisation on December 24, 2025 and they died on the morning of

...Cont. from page 17

Christmas. Meanwhile, the Lagos State Government through the Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Primary Healthcare Board, Dr Mustafa said an autopsy has been conducted on the deceased children while awaiting the toxicology report. It stated that the cause of death would be determine after the reports have been released.

Experts react

Amid these stories, a Public Health Physician, Dr Festus Adetonwa, emphasised the urgency of honesty and transparency.

"We need the media to tell the true story our hospitals are under-resourced, our professionals are overworked, and families are suffering," he urged.

His plea was clear: Nigeria must confront its harsh realities head-on. Without transparency, reform remains a distant dream.

On his part, a human rights lawyer, Tolu Babalaye, "Medical negligence is a very serious offence under section 3:1:3 of the criminal code, law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

He explained that when negligence results in death or injury, the responsible parties must be held accountable.

"The family should pursue legal action for compensation, and the doctor should be held accountable," he insisted.

But the journey toward justice is often arduous many families remain silent, crushed by grief, fear, and the daunting legal process.

Within the cold walls of Nigerian hospitals, countless stories remain hidden silent cries of anguish, unspoken pain, and lives lost in the shadows of systemic failure.

Every mistake, every oversight, is a stark reminder that Nigeria's healthcare system is critically broken a system stretched to its limits, vulnerable to collapse, and failing the very people it's meant to serve.

How I grew from penniless in New York to stardom – Idris Elba



Idris Elba opens up about the highs and lows of his journey from London to Hollywood. From being penniless in New York City to becoming one of the most recognizable Black actors in America after The Wire.

Where there a moment in your career where you felt secred as Idris?

When I did The Wire, it was the first year explosion of my life. Before the wire, I was literally penniless in New York City and after The Wire; I was arguably the most famous black artiste in America. At that time, leaving The Wire, I didn't know my character was going to die.

What do you mean you didn't know your character was going to die?

I didn't know my character was going to die until we did the episode. That was another story altogether. But at that time I was flying high. If I go to anywhere, people were comparing me to dinsel. And when it fell off very quickly, I remember thinking , I am good. That was a tough pill to swallow. Although, it did work, but it was not the same. There used to be two to three script in a role that has been written, I think along the line I got episode seven and I was asking for eight and I was told I was not in episode eight, you should read it (seven). And I scrolled and saw it and shouted, what? And that is how I found that that my character died **in the movie and it was scary.**

How and why you know that you can play something more than the industry wants you to play?

I learned early on the power of no. When I moved to America to become an actor there, my career in England wasn't bad. It was good.

How old were you when you moved?

I was between 25 and 26 years old and there was this junction was I said I am not going to do what you want me to do in England. I am going to say no and I am going to jump ship and go to America and the power of no was my liberator. Because in England, there was this glass ceiling, you can see it coming. It is like you are going to play one kind of role and in England, it is a smaller market. Back then going to America was strange. And so post 'The Wire' every role that came my way was all gangsters and I had to say no but I am okay saying no because I thought I have got some range. I can say that was a liberator for me to be able to know that the power of no is important.

You left the UK to the US. Was the booming of your career an overnight thing for you at the US when you joined?

No. The first two or three years were just flat line.

There were rumours that you

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ShowBiz NewsXtra

Melania Trump documentary pulled from South African cinemas



By African Telescope

The documentary "Melania," executive-produced by former First Lady Melania Trump, will not be screened in South African theaters, a local distributor confirmed.

Filmfinity, the distributor, said the decision was made "based on recent developments," following heightened tensions between South Africa and the Trumpadministration. The film, which chronicles the lead-up to President Trump's second term, had been scheduled to open in South Africa this Friday.

The move comes after former President Trump publicly criticised South Africa over alleged human rights abuses against Afrikaners, claims the South African government has dismissed as baseless.

While the documentary will miss South African theaters, it is set to premiere at the Kennedy Center in the United States, with both the former president and first lady expected to attend. Amazon reportedly invested $40 million in the film, which has faced mixed reactions from critics.

Why IShowSpeed skipped parts of Ghana during visit – Wode Maya



By African Telescope

Ghanaian YouTuber and content creator Wode Maya has explained that strict live-streaming limits prevented popular streamer IShowSpeed from touring several parts of the country during his much-talked-about visit.

Speaking on Personality Profile on Joy FM with Lexis Bill on Thursday, Wode Maya said each segment of the live broadcast was limited to 15 minutes, making long-distance travel to major tourist destinations impractical.

"We couldn't tour some places because the streaming was just 15 minutes. You can't go anywhere beyond that time," he said.

He explained that the entire itinerary was built around a five-hour live stream, with movements carefully timed to avoid technical disruptions that could affect the broadcast.

Wode Maya said the constraints led many viewers to question why IShowSpeed did not visit places such as

...Cont. on www.africantelescope.com

Scholars

INTERVIEW

From Struggle to Success: PhD graduands reflect on journey

PhD graduates at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, recently celebrated the culmination of several years of rigorous academic pursuit in higher learning. The mood was one of joy and excitement as the graduands marked their hard-earned success. A special highlight of the event was the celebration of the Pan African University Scholarship, which recognized outstanding scholars from across the continent. In this interview with DEBORAH ODEKOLA and OLUMIDE OLUSEGUN, some of the graduands shared their experiences, reflecting on the challenges, triumphs, and memorable moments of their journey.

I almost gave up, but my invention became discovery – Olutosoye

Dr Christian Olutosoye, PhD Biomedical Engineering, WINNER of the Overall best doctoral research and overall PhD Awards



Winning the award as the overall best doctoral research and overall PhD student, how did this set you apart?

When we look back at history, invention has always been what sets people apart. We want to move from just research to transformative research, and I believe Nigeria needs people who will drive these changes for the country to move forward. Industries need to develop, and great minds need to be nurtured for the development of the country.

What were the challenges you faced in the course of this research?

One of the challenges I faced was funding, and secondly, there was a need to put in more hard work and perseverance. That pushed me to actualize my dream. I came up with an invention to help patients solve the problem of phisima, an obstructive lung disease. Getting adequate funding for it was one of the biggest challenges.

Was there any point that you almost gave up?

Yes, there was a point I almost gave up, and that was when I couldn't get the main part of the research. It was a surprise the very night I compared the results. I observed that it was not just an invention but actually a discovery.

What was your driving force?

Determination, perseverance, and patience kept me going. I almost gave up, but to the glory of God, I was able to complete it.

How do you feel about your emergence?

I feel very proud, happy, and grateful to God for giving me the privilege to achieve this feat. I want to thank Almighty God for helping me accomplish this, and I also want to appreciate my supervisor, Professor Ayodele Odeniyi of the Department of Pharmacy, for being my inspiration.

I rejected 'Japa' offer for PhD in Nigeria – Sunday

Dr Abayomi Sunday, PhD, Clinical Psychology, WINNER of the overall student in Arts and Humanities-based disciplines Award



What are some of the challenges you confronted during the course of studying?

A lot of challenges came up. Firstly, if you are self-sponsored, you can have issues with funding when you need to collect your data. Depending on the type of course, collecting the data may also be challenging.

Did you ever consider dropping the programme at any point?

No, I had the determination to complete the programme from the beginning. In fact, when some people were talking about japa, I insisted not to go, and if I were to go, it should be after they had given me employment. The challenges of time, especially during COVID-19, when we couldn't go out for data collection, as well as strikes and cancellation of sessions, made it difficult.

What is your advice to prospective PhD students?

First is discipline and honesty, because when you are collecting your data, you have to be honest. Integrity matters. You are the one in the field, and you must be determined to tell the truth. Another thing is that you have to learn how to interact with people at both senior and junior levels. Nobody is indispensable. You learn from them, and they learn from you. Even when I defended, I still interacted with those coming. It is very essential.

How many years did you spend for the programme?

For the PhD, it is five academic sessions.

10 years of struggle made me a PhD holder – Adeleye

Dr Omowunmi Adeleye, PhD in Educational Management shares her 10 years higher education journey.



How was the experience?

I am grateful to the Lord for affording me the opportunity to be able to attend my convocation. I spent 10 years; I came in 2014 and finished on December 3, 2024. It was a tough journey. The time was long because of issues like strikes, from students to lecturers, and then we had the COVID-19 pandemic. There was also the academically rigorous part of it.

Was there a time you almost gave up?

Certainly, more than once, because my husband was also running a PhD programme. So it was tough on me and the children, but we kept believing in God and holding onto Him.

What is your advice to prospective PhD students?

The doctoral degree is built on integrity, excellence, and humility. Anyone who aspires to study at the highest level should do so with full commitment. At this level, you examine something small but from different perspectives. You want to be able to dissect and solve it. This gives you deeper knowledge.

What is the next phase after completing the programme?

I am trusting God for open doors and opportunities to create solutions to Nigeria's problems. I also hope to make an impact globally.

From Struggle to Success: PhD graduands reflect on journey

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I left family, tackle sleepless night for PhD – Kaburu

Dr Emily Wanga Kaburu, PhD Reproductive Health Science, Pan African University Scholarship student from Kenya shares her experience in Nigeria.

How many years did you spend in the programme?

I spent exactly three years. I was under the PAU scholarship, and we were expected to complete the programme within three years.



How was the experience living in Nigeria?

It was a good experience, and the people are wholesome. I love the foods such as Fufu, Amala, Jollof rice, etc.

What was your most memorable moment during your stay?

The most memorable time was spending time with young African scholars. We had fun visiting some parts of the country. The country is very beautiful. We went to Oyo State and Lagos.

What were the challenges you faced during the programme?

The back-and-forth with supervisors, and sometimes having sleepless nights. I remember my colleague and I would work until 4:00 a.m. doing group assignments. Another challenge was that I had to leave my daughter and family in Nairobi, as well as work, to be a full-time student.

What is your advice to people who desire to clinch this scholarship?

The first thing is to put together a very good proposal. I also encourage the ladies to apply because we face unique challenges. When we came, some of the ladies had to drop out because of one personal issue or another. I encourage people to stay focused.

I overcame language struggle to bag PhD – Koumba

Dr Jeff Koumba, PhD in Environmental Management, a PAU student from Gabon, shares his experience in Nigeria amid the language barrier.

How would you describe your initial experience on arrival?

At the beginning, it was difficult because I am from a French-speaking country. When I arrived, I had issues communicating properly. And since the programme gives opportunity for three months of English learning, we started from there before the technical courses.



How would you describe studies?

I found it very exciting and good. I learnt a lot from the lecturers and also the spirit of the university. I remember when I was coming here, I looked it up and discovered that the University of Ibadan is among the top-ranking universities. Now we are done with our PhD. We pray that Africa should continue to be one.

Your advice to prospective PhD students.

The programme requires commitment and discipline. As a higher academic programme, you need to exhibit these characters to succeed.

Focus, commitment required for PhD success – Tenena

Dr Silue Tenena, a Pan African University student from Côte d'Ivoire shares his PhD journey.

How do you feel about the programme?

I feel good and I thank God for the opportunity. I learnt a lot from the programme.



What were the challenges you confronted when you started?

The first challenge was the language. But we were given opportunities to learn the language so it would be easy to get along with the studies, and that helped greatly. The environment was also superb.

How did you get along with the Nigerian food?

That was one of the most interesting parts. I like Amala and Ewedu. It was a lovely experience, I must tell you.

What is your advice?

My advice to the young ones is that they should take their studies seriously and be focused. There are great things to achieve, and if you want to achieve them, you must be very committed.

How I tackled data collection difficulties to obtain PhD – Ahmed

Dr Mbouemboue Ahmed, PhD Petroleum Geoscience, a PAU student from Cameroon, speaks on his academic journey in Nigeria.

What was the experience like?

I had a wonderful experience, and when I came, I had other scholars from other African countries to relate with, and we had a nice time.



What about the food?

Sorry about that. I love everything about Nigeria, but I only ate rice. I didn't taste other food, but I think they have very good food because I had other friends who ate it.

Was the course you did challenging?

It was very challenging because the course I did was Petroleum Geoscience, and it is one of the toughest courses all over the world. The data gathering and other things were very tasking. You had to go out and work with companies to get that. Of course, that was not easy.

What is your advice to prospective PAU scholarship applicants?

My advice is that you should never give up. Any challenge is a step on the ladder. The more you climb the ladder, the taller you become. So, never give up.

Scholars

INTERVIEW

From Struggle to Success: PhD graduands relive UI journey

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How my supervisor's death nearly ended my PhD dream – Bamigboye

Dr. Abiodun Bamigboye, PhD in Exercise Physiology with Special Interest in Stroke Rehabilitation shares his activism and academic pursuit journey.

How do you feel about this feat?

I am happy that today I have come to the end of my postgraduate programme in exercise physiology with a special interest in stroke rehabilitation. Talking about medical science, it may seem unusual to combine that with revolutionary work, and that is why I am proud to have achieved such success. It is very rare to see someone combine academic pursuit with the struggle for humanity. I hope this will also inspire other growing activists and revolutionaries to know that you can pursue academic excellence without compromising your revolutionary disposition.



How many years did you spend in the programme?

Actively, I spent three years. After my first year in 2014, my supervisor, the late Professor Ademola Abass, passed away. Unfortunately, because of my area of specialization, it took me another four years to get a replacement. During those four years, I held on to the programme. I was able to resume in 2021 after securing a new supervisor.

What were the challenges you faced during the programme?

One major challenge was the death of my supervisor, which occurred when I was about to sit for my conversion exam. It was a big setback because, if he had not died, I would have completed the programme within three years. Another challenge was political. As a revolutionary, I was arrested, detained, and charged to court at different times for fighting for workers' interests. Combining all of that with academic pursuit was very challenging.

Was there any time you thought of dropping out of the programme?

The only time I considered dropping out was when I lost my supervisor. He had persuaded me to start the programme at UI. I had already started in Ife, but considering the stress, he advised me to continue in Ibadan.

What is your advice to prospective PhD students?

My advice is that nothing good comes easy. One has to be focused, persistent, and ready to sacrifice. These are the qualities required to become a successful PhD holder. It requires a lot of patience and perseverance to achieve.

Strikes, job hunt, family pressure couldn't stop my PhD – Olasupo

Dr Idris Olasupo, PhD Educational Management and Administration, shares his academic journey and experience.

How many years did you run the programme?

I started in the 2017/18 academic session, and there was a strike, but I thank God that we are done with it.

How do you feel after the programme?

I feel different. You know, a PhD is the highest academic degree, and it is an honour to have earned it within this period. There are others who have spent more time completing theirs.

What are some of the challenges that you confronted?

Some were personal, institutional, and social. For instance, it is not easy running a PhD without a job; I got a job during the course. Managing both family and the programme was also challenging, as both require your attention. The challenges were there, but to the glory of God, we made it.



During the challenges, was there a time you thought of dropping out?

Many times, it happened. I would tell myself that this programme is not meant for me. But I reminded myself, "You have started it, and you have to finish it." There were times I couldn't sleep.

NEWSXtra

Skyrocketing gold prices hit Morocco's jewellery industry

By African Telescope

Africa's struggle to secure reliable water supplies is set to worsen as climate change fuels more frequent and severe droughts, experts warned at the World Water Congress in Marrakech.

UN water envoy Retno Marsdui said the continent faces a "grim picture," with 4.8 billion people globally at risk from poor water quality by 2030.

In Africa, extended dry spells are already threatening food production and livelihoods.

Delegates highlighted Morocco's innovative approach as a potential model for other nations. The country has invested heavily in wastewater treatment and desalination, with plans to expand desalination capacity from 350 million cubic metres today to 1.7 billion cubic metres by 2030. Morocco's facilities rely exclusively on renewable energy, cutting costs and carbon emissions.

Experts stressed that while infrastructure is key, African governments must also manage water demand effectively and mobilize domestic financing.

Visa denials in Nigeria will fall with proper guidance, says Travel expert



Travel Expert and Managing Director of Sky Travels & Tours, ***Oluwaseyi Babatunde****, in this interview with AFRICAN TELESCOPE, shares insights into the opportunities and challenges in Nigeria's travel and tourism industry, the impact of the current economic climate on travel, the growing trust deficit caused by visa restrictions and fraud, among other issues.*

Can you tell us about your journey into the travel and tourism industry and what inspired you to start your company?

My journey into the travel and tourism industry was inspired by seeing how many Nigerians struggle with misinformation and poor guidance when trying to travel. I started Sky Travels & Tours to provide honest, professional support that helps clients make informed decisions and avoid unnecessary visa refusals. Our focus has always been on clarity, proper documentation, and building trust through results.

What would you say are the biggest opportunities for Nigerian travel agencies in today's global travel market?

The biggest opportunity for Nigerian travel agencies today is that more Nigerians want to travel for work, study and business but need guidance. Global travel rules are more complex, so people rely on trusted agents to help them do things the right way. Agencies that are honest, knowledgeable, and client-focused have a strong chance to grow and be more successful in their business through trust and referrals.

How has the current economic climate in Nigeria affected outbound and inbound travel?

The current economic climate in Nigeria has made travel more expensive for many people. Rising costs, inflation, and the weak naira mean that fewer Nigerians are travelling abroad for leisure because tickets and foreign expenses take up more of their budget travel has become more of a necessity than a luxury. At the same time, some types of travel, like medical tourism abroad, have dropped sharply as people look closer to home or cut back because of tighter foreign exchange and higher prices. Inbound travel has also struggled because of broader economic and perception challenges, though business and student travel still continue.

What steps is your company taking to rebuild confidence among Nigerians after years of visa restrictions and travel uncertainties?

At Sky Travels & Tours, we know that years of frequent visa restrictions and travel uncertainties have shaken confidence in international travel, so we're taking active steps to help Nigerians feel more prepared and informed. We focus on education and transparency by clearly explaining that visa approval is always at the embassy's discretion, not ours, and what travelers need to do to improve their chances. We prepare each application carefully, make sure documentation tells a consistent story, and double-check requirements so clients aren't guessing this reduces rejections due to avoidable errors. We also stay updated on changing policies

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Skyrocketing gold prices hit Morocco's jewellery industry

By African Telescope

Morocco's jewellery market is feeling the heat as gold prices soar to record highs above $5,000 an ounce, driven by global demand, geopolitical tensions, and a weakening US dollar.

Traders and artisans say the surge, the best monthly performance since 1973, is squeezing margins and forcing some shops to close as customers cut back on purchases.

"Strategic factors and supply-demand dynamics are pushing gold to unprecedented levels," said gold trader Saad Kamar. "Countries are buying in large quantities, and the uncertainty in global markets is fueling the rally."

The World Gold Council warned that the price spike is affecting demand for gold jewellery worldwide, leaving Moroccan jewellers scrambling to adapt in an increasingly volatile market.

Ivory Coast launches $480m cocoa buyback to protect farmers

By African Telescope

Ivory Coast has launched a massive cocoa buyback scheme to ensure farmers get paid amid a sector crisis caused by falling global prices and port logistics delays.

The initiative, led by the Coffee and Cocoa Council (CCC), aims to purchase up to 100,000 tons of cocoa by the end of March at the government-set official price, costing roughly 280 billion CFA francs ($480 million).

"The slowdown in commercialisation is due to both port delays and a liquidity problem," CCC director Yves Brahima Koné said, adding that exporters had refused to buy beans after global cocoa prices dropped.

The scheme will first focus on buying and storing the cocoa, before moving to export the stockpiles.

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The FACT file



"Africa is open for business. We wish to partner with any nation in the world on a win-win basis. But let's not kid ourselves! Trade and investments will not come to Africa because we wish. Africa must undertake the hard but necessary reforms."

President of Ghana, John Mahama speaking at the African Union conference.



"We must be intentional and make bold and tough decisions, shifting from the comforts of mediocrity and being average. This is the only way to sustainably transform our country. This is what leadership is."

President of the Republic of Kenya, William Samoei Ruto, PhD. during a meeting recently.



World in Perspective
with R. M. Adisa

Nigeria, the United States and the Dilemma of Counter-Terrorism:
Between Security, Sovereignty and Narrative

Barely a month before the United States carried out airstrikes against militants linked to the Islamic State group in north-western Nigeria on Christmas Day, President Donald Trump had designated Nigeria a "country of particular concern". The label, issued under the US International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, is reserved for states whose governments have "engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom". It is a serious designation, often paving the way for diplomatic pressure, sanctions or other punitive measures.

Yet Nigeria's inclusion has raised fundamental questions. The Act lists abuses such as arbitrary executions, torture or denial of the right to life and liberty on the basis of religion. In Nigeria's case, there is no credible evidence that the government itself has carried out or sanctioned such acts. Instead, the country has been battling a complex web of insurgencies and criminal violence for more than a decade, perpetrated by non-state actors who target civilians indiscriminately.

Traditionally, the designation of a "country of particular concern" is meant to trigger graduated responses, beginning with diplomatic engagement and public dialogue. However, Washington moved swiftly beyond this first step. Even before meaningful diplomatic engagement, sanctions were threatened and, ultimately, direct military action followed. Although this was not the first time Mr Trump had applied the label to Nigeria, he did so in December 2020 under the administration of former late President Muhammadu Buhari, the 2025 designation carried sharper consequences. On Christmas Day, US Africa Command, in coordination with Nigerian authorities, struck terrorist locations in Sokoto State.

Reactions within Nigeria were divided. Some citizens welcomed the strikes, hoping they would weaken terrorists' groups and deter further violence. Others voiced unease, not out of sympathy for terrorists, but over concerns about sovereignty and precedent. These reactions reflect a broader national dilemma: how to balance urgent security needs with long-term political autonomy.

The violence that prompted international concern is undeniable. Since 2009, terrorism and insurgency have ravaged large parts of northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt, killing tens of thousands and displacing millions. Both Christians and Muslims have been victims. Extremist groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have attacked churches, mosques, markets and villages alike, often punishing Muslims who reject their rigid interpretation of Islam. In August 2025, gunmen killed worshippers inside a mosque in north-west Nigeria. A day before the US strikes, a suicide bomber attacked a mosque in Maiduguri, killing at least five people.

At the same time, hundreds of Christians have been killed over the years, prompting church leaders and advocacy groups to warn of systematic persecution. Reports by organisations such as Barnabas Aid have documented attacks claimed by ISWAP, including killings and village raids in parts of north-eastern Nigeria. These realities have fuelled strong rhetoric in Washington. Some US politicians and public figures have described the situation as a "genocide", citing figures that claim thousands of Christians are killed annually.

However, these claims remain contested. Investigations by international media, including the BBC, have found that some of the data underpinning such assertions are difficult to verify. Nigerian authorities have rejected the characterisation, arguing that terrorists target anyone who opposes them, regardless of faith. Independent analysts and conflict monitoring groups broadly agree that while Christians have suffered grievously, the majority of victims of jihadist violence in Nigeria are Muslims. The conflict, they argue, is better understood as a multifaceted security crisis rather than a single, faith-driven campaign.

Against this backdrop, the US intervention presents both opportunities and risks. On the positive side, American involvement brings advanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities that Nigeria currently lacks. Precision strikes can deliver short-term gains by disrupting terrorist networks and eliminating high-value targets. Training programmes and military assistance may also help professionalise Nigerian forces and reduce civilian casualties. The psychological impact of sustained international attention may further deter insurgent groups.



Yet the potential unintended consequences are equally significant. Direct foreign military action raises legitimate concerns about sovereignty and the danger of Nigeria becoming a proxy battleground for external interests. Experience from other regions shows that such interventions rarely offer clean exits and can foster long-term dependency. There is also the risk of retaliation, as extremist groups may frame foreign involvement as occupation, escalating attacks against civilians.

Perhaps most critically, military solutions alone cannot address the root causes of Nigeria's insecurity. Poverty, political marginalisation, competition over land and

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