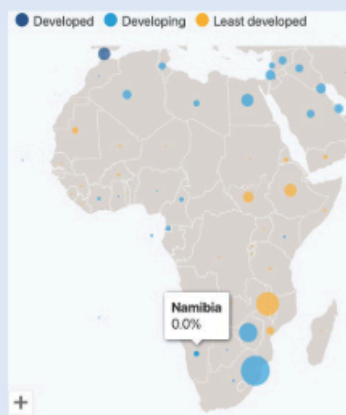


Africa Diary

News from the continent

1 March to 31 May 2025

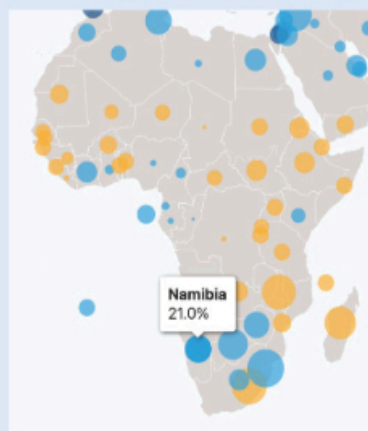
A selection of events about, and from across, the continent that are significant or interesting, or both. Compiled by the New Agenda Editorial Collective at the Institute for African Alternatives, we welcome contributions for ideas on what to include.



Planned US tariffs are disruptively high for many vulnerable economies

Trade-weighted applied tariffs on US imports if all new tariffs, including country-specific ones, are applied

US tariffs before January 2025



US Tariffs after the "90 day pause

Source:

<https://unctad.org/news/mapping-size-new-us-tariffs-developing-countries>

using COMTRADE data and Executive Orders published by the White House



The incoherent trade policy of the United States moved into uncharted territory in April with the announcement of illogical and destructive tariffs that sent shock waves across the global trading systems. Africa, with the rest of the world, will be profoundly harmed. African countries have often been victims of the globalised economic order, and in ways that make them even more vulnerable to its disruption. Chaotic and unpredictable tariff ‘pauses’, intensifications and exemptions have been announced week after week, further unsettling an already unstable economic and geo-political environment.

May

30 May: The Kenyan police arrested a young software developer, Rose Njeri, who created a website to help citizens understand some negative features in the Finance Bill 2025. She was later charged under the Computer Misuse and Cyber Crime Act. This was because the website allowed concerned citizens to send a computer-generated e-mail to Parliament – “interfering with the normal functioning of the official systems of the finance committee”. She was held in jail for four days and then released on bail of 100,000KSh (approx. R14,300). The Kenyan Parliament normally encourages citizens to “Get Involved”. All bills are efficiently published online for public scrutiny. Its website says: “Every person has a right to petition Parliament to consider any matter within its authority, including to enact, amend or repeal any legislation.” And it even has a facility online to upload petitions. President Ruto withdrew the 2024 Finance Bill following violent protests in which many people were shot by the armed forces.

26 May: Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o died aged 87 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

13 May: Just Share, a Cape Town-based NGO, released a report showing that South Africa’s major polluters have succeeded in persuading government to roll back progressive climate-related policy initiatives. Eskom, the state-owned power utility, is the highest contributor of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in South Africa. The biggest private greenhouse gas emitter is Sasol. The views of other significant polluters are represented by Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and the Minerals Council South Africa (Mincosa). Industry pushback has achieved delays and concessions which have neutralised the impact of the carbon tax, which was legislated in 2019.

6 May: Three days after World Press Freedom Day, Zimbabwean journalist Blessed Mhlanga was finally granted bail (this was his fourth attempt) and released from prison. Mhlanga was arrested in February on a charge of incitement after he reported that a person he interviewed had called for President Emmerson



Mnangagwa to resign. Zimbabwe, a “difficult” country for journalists has nevertheless shown recent steady improvement according to the World Press Freedom Index, where it ranks at 106 in the world. The lowest ranking country in Africa (and the world) remains Eritrea –ranked at 180.

2 May: A graduate of the University of Pretoria, who was awarded a master’s degree in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa in 2002, was jailed for six years and four months after being convicted of enslaving a young Ugandan woman in the United Kingdom. Lydia Mugambe, worked with a contact in the Ugandan High Commission to arrange a visa for the victim, under the guise that she would be working in the household and office of the High Commission. However, once she arrived in the UK, the victim was transported to Mugambe’s home in Kidlington, Oxfordshire where she was forced to work unpaid as her maid and provide childcare. The prosecutors agreed this was a case of modern slavery.

April



Some of the leaders at the 1955 Bandung conference: Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Achmed Sukarno (Indonesia) and Josip Tito (Yugoslavia). Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence.



- 24 April** marked the 70 year anniversary of the Bandung conference of Asian and African leaders, which was held amidst the post-war transition from colonial rule to independence. This landmark conference was hosted by Indonesia (which was recently liberated after a bloody revolution against the Dutch). It paved the way for the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement.
- 21 April:** Semia Gharbi, a Tunisian scientist and environmental educator, was the African winner of the 2025 Goldman Environmental Awards. She helped spearhead a campaign that challenged a corrupt waste trafficking scheme between Italy and Tunisia, resulting in the return of 6,000 tons of illegally exported household waste back to Italy, its country of origin, in February 2022. More than 40 corrupt government officials and others involved in waste trafficking in both countries were arrested in the scandal. Her efforts spurred policy shifts within the European Union, which has now tightened its procedures and regulations for waste shipments abroad.
- 18 April:** Two months after a tailings dam collapsed at a Chinese-owned mine in Zambia, polluting the Kafue River with acid waste, very little appears to have been done in response to the disaster. Freeman Chiwele Mubanga of the Centre for Environmental Justice in Lusaka told the 'China in Africa' podcast that "there's no assurance on the restoration of the ecosystem in the Kufue River, given the damage that has happened". Pollution experts have detected dead fish and contaminated water 100km downstream from the spill. "...[B]oth sides are to blame. There was negligence in terms of monitoring and there was also negligence in terms of maintenance of the tailings dam by the company." But there has been no mention of any tangible sanctions, which would require restoration of the damage.
- 12 April:** General elections in Gabon marked a return to 'civilian rule' and 'democracy' when Brice Oligui Nguema was elected president. He had previously been the military ruler of Gabon and led the coup in 2023 that unseated Ali Bongo and his immediate family. Brigadier General Nguema became a civilian in order to run in the elections – under a new constitution and electoral code to ensure his easy victory. He is a member of the extended Bongo family who have ruled over Gabon since 1967.
- 10 April:** The International Court of Justice (ICJ) began public hearings at the Peace Palace in The Hague in the proceedings instituted by Sudan against the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Sudan contends that the UAE "is complicit in the genocide on the Masalit [group in West Darfur] through its direction of and provision of extensive financial, political, and military support for the rebel RSF militia". The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and militias allied with it are said to have killed and harmed members of the group and have inflicted on them conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in



whole or in part. (In May, the ICJ judges voted by 14 to two to declare they had no jurisdiction).

9 April: Tundu Lissu, the opposition leader in Tanzania, was arrested and charged with treason. Three days later, his party (The Party for Democracy and Progress, commonly known as Chadema) was disqualified from the national elections due to take place later this year. Tanzania's ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), has governed the country uninterrupted since independence from Britain in 1961. The country was a one-party state until 1992 – and it retains laws that give an unassailable advantage to this longest ruling party in Africa.

1 April: Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, the former Ghanaian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, became Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. She is the first African woman – the second African overall – to lead the association of 56 countries, which make up a third of the world's population and more than a quarter of the United Nations membership. Twenty one African countries belong to the Commonwealth, most of them former colonies of Britain. Zimbabwe is no longer a member. Gabon, Mozambique, Rwanda and Togo have been allowed to join.



Hon Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, former Ghanaian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, assumed office as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.



March



Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, the first woman president of Namibia.

Source: Flickr

21 March: Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, known as NNN, was inaugurated as the first woman president of Namibia. The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) awarded her 58% of the vote after a mismanaged and distorted election process marked by voter frustration, ballot shortages, as well as accusations of voter suppression. Her party, SWAPO, which has governed since independence in 1990, saw its formerly large majority cut to just 51%, according to the contested results. Nine ministers of the former government failed in their campaigns for re-election.

13 March: The Bisie tin mine in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the third largest tin mine in the world, temporarily ceased operations and evacuated most of its staff just a week before the M23 rebel movement occupied the nearby regional capital town of Walikale, 125km north-west of Goma. While majority owned by North American investors, Bisie is one of the “flagship investments on the continent” for South Africa’s state-owned Industrial Development Corporation. IDC owns 11% and the DRC government 5%.