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FINALLY CANADA TO DEPLOY TROOPS TO MALI

After months of pondering, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau Liberal government has decided Canada will be sending troops to the embattled West African nation of Mali as part of a United Nations Mission there.



About 250 Canadian troops and six helicopters will be committed to the UN cause this summer. The troops will be part of efforts to quell Islamist dissidents and terrorist organisations affiliated to ISIS and Al-Qaeda operating especially in the north

of the country.

Matters came to a head five years ago when the Jihadist terrorist group Ansar-dine overran the north of the country imposing Sharia law, and harassing villagers who did not adhere to strict Islamic virtues, and banning and arresting musicians who did not perform only Islamic music.

The terrorists were eventually flushed out by a combination of African and French troops; however, running battles and sneak attacks remain pervasive in the country, enough to warrant the continued deployment of outside forces who checkmate the religious rebels as Mali marches forward to true democracy.

By Peter Uduehi

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Oldest man alive celebrates in South Africa



Western Cape Social Development Minister, Albert Fritz, paid a courtesy visit to centenarian and Delft resident, Freddie Blom, who celebrated his 114th birthday. Although yet to be recognised by the Guinness World Records organization, at 114 years-old, Mr. Blom is believed to be the oldest man alive.

Africa in Pictures:



Winnie Mandela, the former wife of anti-apartheid stalwart Nelson Mandela, dies recently. Here, sge's being memorialised in South Africa. Many showing their respect in Black Power salute!

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Analysis: by Human Rights Watch

Why Egypt's Al-sisi: The making of a strongman

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi should prioritize reforms to end serious human rights violations during his second term, Human Rights Watch has said.

Al-Sisi won the April 2, 2018 election with 97 percent of the votes cast following months of intimidation and arrests of other potential candidates. His only challenger, Mousa Mostafa Mousa, had supported al-Sisi's campaign until the day before registering as a candidate. Human Rights Watch and 13 other rights organizations concluded before the election that it lacked the minimum requirements for free and fair elections.

"Al-Sisi's disdain for his citizens' most basic rights marked his re-election campaign," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "In his final term in office, as mandated by the constitution, al-Sisi should change course and leave a positive legacy instead of being remembered as an autocrat who oversaw a human rights crisis."

Al-Sisi effectively took power in July 2013 and became president in June 2014.

His flagrant disregard for human rights has led the country into its worst rights and political crisis in decades. Rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have documented a host of serious abuses by the police and National Security Agency (NSA), the leading internal security force under the Interior Ministry, including routine and widespread torture of detainees.

Prosecutions, travel bans, and asset freezes against human rights defenders, in addition to repressive new legislation, threaten to effectively eradicate the country's once-robust independent organizations. The government has targeted sexual and gender minorities for heavy-handed repression, with more than 230 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people prosecuted on "debauchery" charges.

The security and human rights situation in North Sinai has deteriorated under the Egyptian military's abusive counterterrorism campaign, most likely including extrajudicial killings. Egypt's allies such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the European Union, should urge al-Sisi to carry out the following reforms:

Egypt has carried out a crackdown almost unparalleled in Egypt's history on nongovernmental organizations and activists during al-Sisi's tenure. A May 2017 NGO law will effectively eradicate independent groups, and most leading rights organizations and activists have been under continuous threat of imprisonment in protracted prosecutions in the so-called "foreign funding case."

Al-Sisi and the Egyptian parliament should immediately repeal the nongovernmental organisation law, and draft a new one through a free and transparent dialogue with independent groups. The Social Solidarity Ministry should lead these efforts, rather than security agencies that secretly drafted the 2017 law.

The government should end the foreign funding prosecutions and lift arbitrary travel bans and asset freezes to comply with its international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

While Egypt faces security threats, a vibrant and powerful civil society is an essential partner in curbing violent extremism. In addition, international partners providing funding cannot carry out certain development plans without civil society partners. Al-Sisi should focus on curbing violent groups and not peaceful activists.

The government should also end repression of workers, at least 180 of whom were arrested or prosecuted during 2016 and 2017. Al-Sisi frequently justifies closing political space by claiming he needs to prioritize economic reform. But solid economic reform cannot succeed without freedom for workers to mobilize. Since al-Sisi took power in 2013, the authorities have reconstituted and expanded the repressive instruments that

defined the pre-2011 uprising era. Enforced disappearances, mistreatment in prisons, widespread torture, and probable extrajudicial killings notably increased after March 2015, when al-Sisi appointed Interior Minister Magdy Abd al-Ghaffar.

Human Rights Watch has documented the systematic use of torture by the Egyptian police and National Security officers to force detainees to confess or divulge information, or as punishment. Only a handful of the hundreds of torture cases since 2013 have resulted in prosecutions, and few of those ended with convictions.



Egypt president Abdel Fattah Al-sisi

No single official or member of the security forces was investigated or prosecuted nearly five years after the mass killings of the largely peaceful protesters in the Rab'a Square in Cairo, where supporters of former President Mohamed Morsy gathered for weeks. At least 817 protesters were killed in one day, most likely a crime against humanity.

Ending police impunity, investigating abuses, and stopping enforced disappearances and torture should be at the forefront of al-Sisi's priorities in his second term. As a start, he should immediately order the Interior Ministry to forbid detaining anyone in National Security offices or anywhere other than officially registered police stations and prisons.

Three months after Human Rights Watch released a report on torture in Egypt in September 2017, Diaa Rashwan, the State Information Service director, announced that the prosecutor general had appointed a judge to investigate the report's findings. Rashwan also said that the prosecutor general established a new unit in his office to handle complaints about human rights violations.

But no information has been provided about how victims, lawyers, and activists can submit complaints or how the unit will handle them. The prosecutor general and the Justice Ministry should immediately begin serious and transparent investigations into these abuses.

Al-Sisi should also end the state of emergency that he imposed in April 2017 and has extended since then. Egyptians have enjoyed only brief respites without a state of emergency in the past 37 years, and it is a major reason for the pervasive abuses by security forces. Western allies should halt all security assistance and weapons transfers that could be used in internal repression until the government carries out serious reforms.

Under al-Sisi's government, the number of detained

peaceful dissidents has grown to the tens of thousands. At least 20 journalists are in detention. Al-Sisi's government should review the status of all those detained and release thousands of detainees who were prosecuted for peaceful activism. The government should revise the restrictive 2013 protest law to bar locking up peaceful protesters practicing their constitutional rights. Releasing unjustly detained people could be one important step toward reconciliation to end the country's political and rights crisis.

The abusive atmosphere during al-Sisi's first term has been coupled with special concerns for the rights of minorities. Coptic Christians, an estimated 10 percent of the Egyptian population and historically a target of widespread legal and social discrimination, have been the victims of increasing sectarian attacks since al-Sisi rose to power. In a number of cases, Human Rights Watch has documented that Interior Ministry officials and prosecutors did not properly investigate or bring charges for these attacks.

Egyptian authorities have also relentlessly persecuted LGBT people, with the Interior Ministry tracking them down and entrapping them through dating apps and social media. Since al-Sisi took power, about 230 people have been prosecuted and more than 50 sentenced to prison for "debauchery." Some were subjected to forced anal exams, a form of torture.

Al-Sisi should fulfill his responsibilities as president of all Egyptians with urgent steps to protect religious, gender, and sexual minorities. He should support the development of a comprehensive legal framework to protect minorities and criminalize all discrimination and persecution against them.

"Egypt's international allies should pressure the Egyptian government to end its abusive policies instead of accepting al-Sisi's autocracy as 'the new normal,'" Whitson said.

Election Day is June 7, 2018.

Polls are open from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. ET / 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. CT.

To vote in this election, you must be:

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Ontario Creating 200 New Long-Term Care Beds for Runnymede Hospital Province

Also Opens Applications for New Long-Term Care Beds Across Ontario

Ontario is opening 200 new long-term care beds for Runnymede Hospital that will help seniors access the care they need, closer to home. Today's announcement is a part of a commitment

been advocating and working alongside our government to help expand health care resources for my community and why this funding for 200 new long-term care beds for Runnymede Hospital is so important. This will mean higher quality health



From left to right: Yvan Baker – MPP Etobicoke Centre, Laura Albanese – MPP York South-Weston, Connie Dejak, President & CEO, Runnymede Health Centre, and Joe Sherri – President, Maltese Canadian Federation.

to create 5,000 long-term care beds over the next four years and more than 30,000 over the next decade.

The province is also inviting existing or new long-term care organizations to apply for new beds in their communities. This investment is part of Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors, which has more than 20 new initiatives to help seniors access the supports they need. The plan includes 15 million more hours of nursing, personal support and therapeutic care for long-term care home residents – a free annual high-dose influenza vaccine for seniors – and a new one-stop website where seniors can find information about tax credits, drug coverage, powers of attorney, recreation programs and more.

Improving seniors' access to the care they need is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation.

QUOTES

"Our government is committed to supporting Ontario residents who rely on long-term care homes for their ongoing health and personal care needs. By adding 200 new long-care beds to the redevelopment of the Runnymede Hospital, we are helping more seniors access the care they need in their community, close to family and friends."

– Dr. Helena Jaczek, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

"Seniors are a growing population in my riding of York South-Weston and beyond, and I believe that they deserve the very best care and support we can provide. That is why as part of our government's plan to increase access to high-quality long-term care, including the commitment to adding 200 long-term care beds to the redevelopment of Runnymede Hospital, we are ensuring that communities across Toronto West are receiving high quality care." – Laura Albanese, MPP York South-Weston

"Health care is one of the most important issues for my constituents in Etobicoke Centre. One of my top priorities has been ensuring that the Government of Ontario delivers consistent, quality, and accessible health care to our community. That's why I have

care in our community and for my constituents in Etobicoke Centre." – Yvan Baker, MPP Etobicoke Centre

"We are absolutely thrilled by the provincial government's announcement that we will receive funding to build a long-term care home on our site. Runnymede Healthcare Centre has a history of providing excellent, patient-focused care. The addition of a long-term care facility to our campus will allow Runnymede to provide comprehensive services for generations to come. By providing active rehabilitation, medically complex and long-term care services, Runnymede has established itself as a community health hub. We are excited to make this announcement in the presence of the President of Malta. Runnymede is situated in the heart of Little Malta and as such it is appropriate there will be a culturally designated Maltese component to the new long-term care home. The government supports Runnymede's inclusion of this wonderful community." – Connie Dejak, President & CEO – Runnymede Health Centre

QUICK FACTS

- Ontario is inviting existing or new long-term care organizations across the province to apply for new long-term care beds. Some of these new beds will prioritize culturally-specific needs, as well as Indigenous and Francophone populations.
- The redevelopment of the Runnymede Hospital will be undergoing a licensing review.
- In addition to creating 30,000 new long-term care beds, Ontario is supporting the redevelopment of 30,000 long-term care beds in 300 homes across the province by 2025, including eliminating all four-bed wards.
- The province has nearly doubled its annual funding for long-term care since 2003, from \$2.1 billion to \$4.14 billion.
- In 2017-18, Ontario announced a \$101 million investment over the next three years for the dementia strategy which includes expanding access to community programs, enhancing education, training and respite services for care partners, and improving patient navigation.

- Long-Term Care Home Development
- Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors
- Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care
- Information for Seniors

Ontario Supporting Diverse and Inclusive Communities

Over 420 Organizations Receiving Multicultural Community Capacity Grants
April 27, 2018 10:30 A.M.

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
Ontario is supporting over 420 not-for-profit organizations to help more newcomers and multicultural communities participate in the civic, cultural, social and economic life of the province.

Laura Albanese, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, was at the Learning Enrichment Foundation today to announce the recipients of the Multicultural Community Capacity Grant Program.

This year, the Learning Enrichment Foundation is receiving support to create a Community Music Festival and a Multicultural Art Project for up to 650 people in Toronto's Rustic and Mount Dennis neighbourhoods.

Other organizations are also receiving funding for projects that will:

- Increase intercultural awareness and understanding
- Enhance civic engagement and social connections
- Improve social and economic integration of newcomers and vulnerable groups such as refugees and newcomer women and youth
- Empower women by providing opportunities for leadership roles
- Improve access to services for newcomers and diverse communities

To build on the success of the program, a new capital stream will help organizations plan long-term initiatives that will improve services to Ontario's communities.

Ontario is also supporting multicultural communities through the new Multicultural Journalism Fund, a three-year pilot project that will aim to increase coverage of local, regional and national issues from diverse perspectives.

Supporting diverse and inclusive communities is part of the government's plan to support care, create opportunity and make life more affordable during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes free prescription drugs for everyone under 25, and 65 or over, through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, and free preschool child care from 2 ½ to kindergarten.

Quick Facts

Ontario is investing \$6 million over two years through the Multicultural Community Capacity Grant Program to support community projects. This year, the province is investing up to \$3 million to support over 420 organizations. More information on these recipients will be published on Ontario Open Data in the coming months.

In November 2017, Ontario invested just over \$3 million to support 465 not-for-profit organizations for programs that wrapped up by March 31, 2018. Since 2017, more than 880 organizations across the province have been funded through the Multicultural Community Capacity Grant Program.

"Ontario benefits when newcomers and multicultural communities are able to fully participate in our society without barriers. I am proud of the work being done by the organizations receiving funding through the Multicultural Community Capacity Grant Program. Together, we are building a strong economy and a socially-cohesive society." Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

"Our organization has benefited from funding to enhance the ability of immigrants and multicultural communities to participate in, and contribute to, Ontario life. We are thankful for the support of the Ontario government. Our community is made stronger through the Multicultural Community Capacity Grant Program."

Assignment: Improving farming yields

New study finds deworming women farmers improves productivity

A new study in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) found that treating women subsistence farmers with just a single dose of a cheap deworming medication significantly improved their physical stamina for the grueling agriculture work needed for their family's survival. The results of treatment could be twofold: improved health for farming women and increased food production by women who have the stamina to farm more efficiently.

The finding, published today online in *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, spotlights whether women of childbearing age - who may be especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of an intestinal parasite called hookworm - should be included in mass drug treatment campaigns targeting the infections, which are acquired from contact with soil contaminated with human sewage. These intestinal worms feed on blood and cause chronic anemia.

More than 500 million people in the world are estimated to be infected with hookworm, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pharmaceutical companies have provided at low-cost or donated billions of doses of the anti-hookworm drug albendazole in low-income countries where disease is endemic. But public health campaigns currently target school-age children, for whom hookworms contribute to stunting and learning impairments that have lifelong consequences.

"We found that when women farmers infected with hookworms received just one 400 milligram dose of albendazole, their overall physical fitness improved significantly, which could greatly improve their ability to do the hard work required to grow food for their families," said the study's lead author Margaret Salmon, MD, MPH, an emergency medicine specialist and Director of InnovationsCZ, a nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of people in conflict areas through innovation and technology transfer. "This beneficial effect could be especially important in the food challenged regions of Africa, where a large portion of farmers are women and their physical capacity for growing crops and tending to livestock can determine whether their families eat or go hungry."

The study reports that after treatment with albendazole, infected women farmers who live and work in a region where many struggle to get enough to eat saw their heart rates drop by about 10 beats per minute when doing a simple exercise test. The researchers noted that, in the world of sports medicine, the ability to accomplish an exercise task like running on a treadmill at a lower heart rate is considered a good measure of improved aerobic capacity.

"We think the lower heart rates we observed are also a good indication of an increased capacity for the physical demands of farm labor," said Michael Cappello, MD, a Professor of Pediatrics, Microbial Pathogenesis, and Public Health at the Yale School of Medicine and co-author of the study. "It's all the more impressive because the women who tested positive for infection had a relatively low level of hookworms and were not more anemic than those who were uninfected."

Hookworms do their damage by chewing and tearing blood vessels in the intestines and then drinking the blood that spills from them. This blood loss can contribute to iron deficiency and anemia. Poor women of childbearing age are seen as particularly vulnerable due to the blood loss they already experience from menstruation and, if pregnant, from the demands of the fetus. Cappello's research team at Yale has also linked hookworms to inflammation in the intestines and interference with natural diges-

tive enzymes, which he said may contribute to malnutrition and lead to other maladies.

Cappello notes that the observation that women who registered improvement in the study had relatively light infections could indicate that these other effects of hookworm - the inflammation and impaired digestion - inflict serious harm as well, and can be triggered by even a low level of hookworms in the gut.

In an editorial accompanying the study, former ASTMH President Peter Hotez, MD, PhD, FASTMH, Dean of the National School of Tropical



Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, noted that such stark evidence of hookworms impairing the work capacity of women farmers supports what researchers have casually observed in the field for years. For example, he said some researchers have used the term "agricultural anemia" to describe how co-infections with malaria and hookworm, both of which are common in rural Africa, appear to be especially burdensome for the poor smallholder (small-scale) family farmers who produce most of the food in the region.

The study from the DRC "reinforces the removal of hookworms from the human intestine as a potent antipoverty measure," Hotez said. An estimated 4.7 billion people live in areas with a high prevalence of hookworms and similar parasites, which are technically known as soil transmitted helminths.

"Because of hookworm's unique effect on agricultural worker productivity in resource-poor economies, hookworm prevention needs to be better prioritized by the world's finance ministers and global leaders who wish to introduce or expand interventions that promote women's health and empowerment," Hotez wrote.

In the DRC study, funded through a Grand Challenges grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, researchers recruited 250 women farmers via two Safe Motherhood Action Groups operating near the city of Kindu. All 250 women were tested for the presence of hookworm and administered a stair-stepping "exercise tolerance test." The women then were divided equally into two groups of 125 each, with one group receiving a single 400 milligram dose of albendazole and the other a placebo. Neither the researchers nor the women farmers were aware of who had tested positive for hookworm and who received the real drug. Seven months later, the women were administered the same exercise test in which those who had tested positive for hookworm exhibited the improved performance.

Whether the results validate recent recommendations to expand mass drug treatment campaigns,

Cappello said further study will be necessary to confirm the findings of this pilot intervention trial. Currently, given the low cost and general safety of albendazole, the World Health Organization recommends that school-age children and non-pregnant women of childbearing age in hookworm-endemic communities should receive a single 400 milligram dose of the drug once or twice a year. However, Cappello noted that most countries have not adopted these recommendations yet for women. There is strong evidence that children with moderate to heavy hookworm infections derive significant phys-

ical and developmental gains from effective treatment. Far less is known about the benefits of broadly treating people like the women who participated in this study, who have a lighter burden of parasites, he said.

Cappello noted that there are issues that would need to be considered in light of expanding mass drug treatment campaigns. They include evaluating the risks of deworming drugs administered inadvertently to pregnant women, as albendazole currently is not recommended for women during the first trimester. For the DRC farm worker study, pregnancy tests were administered to volunteers, and women in their first trimester were excluded, which would not be feasible in the setting of mass drug administration.

Cappello also added that there is legitimate concern that expanding albendazole mass drug campaigns beyond school-age children could hasten the emergence of drug resistant hookworms. Cappello said there already is a puzzling variability in the efficacy of albendazole against hookworm in endemic communities.

"It's important that we take a balanced view of potential costs and risks associated with widespread distribution of deworming medications," he said. ASTMH President Regina Rabinovich, MD, MPH, of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, congratulated the researchers on their study.

"These scientists conducted a complicated study in very challenging conditions and emerged with critically important evidence that could improve treatment for a badly neglected tropical disease," Dr. Rabinovich said. "It's very important to follow up on their findings with additional studies that can help inform decisions about the best way to drive down the burden of hookworm in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo."

Around Africa

Optical success recorded in Eritrea

Massawa – The Sudanese Ophthalmologists group 'Albeser' conducted commendable eye surgery from 3 to 6 May for 325 patients in Massawa. The beneficiaries include patients with sight disabilities from all over the Northern Red Sea region that have been on the waiting list.

Dr. Eyob Beyene, Medical Director of the Girar Hospital, said that the sustainable awareness programs conducted and the strong participation of the communities coupled with the commitment of the Sudanese Ophthalmologists group alongside their Eritrean counterparts had significant contribution in the success of the program.

Dr. Eyob indicated that ophthalmological diagnosis for over 1000 people with sight disabilities has been conducted and provided medicines and eyeglasses.

The eye surgery that is being conducted annually in cooperation with the Sudanese Ophthalmologists group 'Albeser' is making significant contribution in minimizing sight problems of many nationals and in sharing experiences with the Eritrean medical professionals.

The coordinator of the Ophthalmologists group, Dr. Mohammed Hussein expressed satisfaction for the conducive atmosphere created for them at the hospital to successfully accomplish their tasks at a given time.

The Sudanese 'Albeser' group has conducted eye surgery to over 2200 national in the Northern Red Sea region over the past 12 years.

Cameroon braces up amid insecurity perceptions

Cameroon is cracking down on weapons proliferation as it battles two insurgencies and prepares to hold important nationwide elections this year. The military says it discovered a large cache of illegal weapons in a warehouse in Awae, near the capital. Cameroon's military raided the warehouse April 30 after locals reported suspicious movements to and from it. Adjutant Chef Major Patrice Bella is a military official who led the operation.

He says five gunmen working with the arm dealers fought back but were overpowered by the military. He says they will be investigating to find out the true owners of the weapons cache and what the weapons were to be used for.

Inside the warehouse, soldiers discovered 10,500 rounds of ammunition, as well as an undisclosed number of explosives, guns, cutlasses and knives. So far, all those arrested are Cameroonian nationals.

The location of the warehouse has sparked concern. Awae is 55 kilometers from the capital. The town hosts an international school for security forces called EIFORCES that trains African militaries on peacekeeping techniques.

Officials suspect the weapons came overland from neighboring countries, in particular Nigeria. However local residents wonder how they got past police and gendarme posts around Awae.

The discovery remains a hot topic of local conversation.

41-year-old road engineer Joseph Mbida says he is frightened because the discovery of ammunition and weapons amassed so close to Yaounde could mean people are planning to try to destabilize the country. He says he is counting on the military to track down those responsible.

Cameroon heads to presidential, parliamentary and local council elections starting in October.

Meanwhile the country is grappling with instability in the Far North, where troops continue to battle Boko Haram, and in the two English-speaking regions, the northwest and the southwest, where separatist rebels are demanding independence. In April, the government banned even the legal

sale of weapons to civilians.

Paul Atanga Nji, minister of territorial administration, addressing a security meeting in Yaounde, said there are as many as 30,000 war weapons and small arms in circulation in Cameroon.

He says the use of weapons is reaching alarming proportions in Cameroon, threatening the security of everyone. He says some criminals even rent weapons to kill, steal and create disorder and that armed gangs are now found in all major cities and towns. He says the government must control its borders and stop the sale of arms.

In Cameroon, a 2016 law made the unlawful possession of a firearm punishable by a prison term of five to ten days and a fine.

However, the use of illegal firearms and weapons is judged by a military tribunal, with a possibility of life in prison if the tribunal decides the offender meant to disturb public order and peace.

How can African countries push climate smart Agriculture?

By Esther Ngumbi

The World Bank recently launched one of its largest climate smart agriculture initiatives in India. Through this \$420 million initiative, the bank expects to reach over 25 million smallholder farmers working on 3.5 million hectares of land. The project will support climate-smart agricultural practices including crop diversification and planting of drought-tolerant varieties. Ultimately, this will lead to the sustainable improvement of agricultural productivity, water security, soil health and improve farmer resilience in the face of a changing climate.

Climate smart agricultural practices (CSA), as defined by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, are approaches that help to transform and reorient agricultural and food systems to effectively support development and ensure food security in a changing climate. These approaches aim to tackle three objectives: sustainably increase agricultural productivity, adapt and build resilience to climate change and reduce or remove greenhouse gas emissions. CSA initiatives employ and encourage several strategies including planting of improved and drought tolerant crop varieties, delivering timely seasonal and current weather information to farmers and sharing agricultural innovations.

The changing climate continues to impact many countries around the world as evidenced by recurrent droughts, prolonged dry seasons, floods, increased crop pest infestations, and emergence of new problems such as the fall armyworm in Africa. Affected most are the smallholder farmers, many of whom depend on agriculture as a source for their livelihood. Take the example of Kenya, where many farmers including those I work with in agricultural projects along the Kenyan coast are experiencing floods which are expected to worsen. This shows that more CSA initiatives need to be rolled out and supported in many of the climate change impacted countries including countries in the African continent.

This is happening in places. There are several CSA initiatives that have been rolled out in many African countries including Kenya, Niger, Tanzania and Uganda. These initiatives have been implemented by agencies and international research centers such as the UN FAO, the World Bank, USAID and the CGIAR.

And there are many success stories emerging from CSA initiatives that have been in operation for the last several years across Africa. From Ken-

ya's climate smart villages that have helped farmers to transform their previously unproductive land into productive high-yielding farms to Tanzania, where improved irrigation systems have resulted in increased rice productivity for more than 228,000 farmers have increased farm productivity and Ethiopia, where farm productivity has increased, soil health improved and average annual farm household incomes increased by over 260 percent because farmers were provided with accurate analysis of their soil health, allowing them to apply the needed fertilizers.

These success stories clearly show that climate smart agricultural practices are a viable option that can sustainably transform the agriculture sector under a changing climate. The question then becomes: how can these practices be sustained over time to ensure that farmers continue to adopt and implement them in the coming decades? Most important is the question on how countries can prioritize that what works so that it can be scaled up quickly?

First and foremost, African countries governments must take the lead both in designing and funding these strategies. Governments need to identify the suitable and appropriate CSA practices adapted for their countries and further come up with plans on how this climate smart agricultural practices will be rolled out across their respective countries.

A deeper look at the current CSA initiatives being rolled out in many African countries including Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia shows that many of these initiatives are heavily funded by external donors such as The World Bank, African Development Bank, USAID and CGIAR centers. One of the biggest drawback is that it is almost impossible for African countries to set out their own research agendas without donor interference. Kenya, for example, acknowledged this drawback in its recently released 2017-2026 Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy. African governments therefore need to allocate and set budgets that specifically fund their CSA initiatives.

Secondly, it is important for CSA initiatives to be inclusive. Most importantly, farmers voices must be heard, and their needs incorporated in CSA initiatives. Farmers and other beneficiaries of these initiatives need to be consulted and involved in defining and choosing the appropriate CSA practices. To date, many of these solutions are from experts and passed along to farmers without adequate consultation. For these practices to be sustainable and be widely adopted, it is important to be inclusive.

Most importantly, because many CSA practices and interventions are new to African smallholder farmers African governments must support and maintain demonstration centers or on the ground model farms where farmers can go learn and see many of these climate smart agricultural practices in action. Doing so will allow farmers have access to the information they need to implement these CSA practices on their farms.

Of course, even if African governments take the lead, they may still need to involve various stakeholders and partners. Many CSA projects require large investments and the involvement of multiple agencies. Thus, partnerships including public-private partnerships and collaborations between governments, private funders, agricultural institutions and universities must be encouraged.

Climate smart agricultural practices and initiatives have a great promise for boosting Africa's agricultural productivity and helping to build farmers resilience. African countries must therefore take the lead in investing and funding these worthy practices that will enable their citizens to improve agricultural productivity while becoming resilient to the changing climate.

Liberian activists call for war crimes

From Liberia's *New Dawn* newspaper
By Bridget Milton

A group under the banner Citizens Action for the Establishment of War and Economic Crimes Court (CAWAECC) has resubmitted its petition to the House of Representative for the establishment of a War Crimes Court here.

Protesters led by Franklin K. Wesseh of CAWAECC and Siaffa Kanneh of the National



Former warlord Charles Taylor, left, now sits in a London prison after being sentenced to 30 years in jail for his crimes against humanity as president of Liberia

Student Movement for the Establishment of Economic and War Crimes Court in Liberia earlier gathered on the grounds of the Capitol Tuesday, 8 May and presented their petition to the Legislature.

But the petition was initially taken off the day's agenda by House Speaker Bhofal Chambers on grounds that it was ambiguous and was addressed neither to the House of Representatives nor the House of Senate. The protesters were asked to make corrections.

Reading the petition, Mr. Fubbi Henriess said implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations would also not only rewrite Liberia's history that culture of impunity is over, but it would also bring peace of mind to those who lost their loved ones and have been going through trauma from the impact of the war.

He says it would also serve as deterrence for future conflicts, adding that Liberia cannot have genuine peace without justice. The petition says the establishment of a War Crimes Court is inevitable, noting that even the heavens require judgment for "our actions" here on earth.

The petitioners believe that until the instigators of the war and perpetrators of atrocities face justice, the country would not be truly reconciled. They say child soldiers were used throughout the war, and some of those who are responsible for the commission of those diabolical acts against humanity are today holding very key positions in the Liberian government, making it somewhat difficult for the government.

However before this court is enacted into law, some of these individuals have to raise their hands in the Legislature to vote either for or against the establishment of the court.

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Girl who murdered man in Sudan after resisting rape sentenced to death

By Nita Bhalla in Nairobi — A 19-year-old girl in Sudan was sentenced to death by a court on Thursday for murdering her husband after he tried to rape her, said campaigners, calling on the president to pardon her as she was forced into a child marriage, and had acted in self-defence.

Noura Hussein says her father made her contractually marry her cousin when she was 16, but she refused to accept the union and sought refuge with a relative for three years. She returned to her family home on the outskirts of the capital Khartoum in April this year after her father said the marriage was cancelled, but found that she had been duped and preparations for her wedding ceremony were under way. Hussein said that she refused to have sex with her husband after the ceremony, but on the sixth day, he raped her as three of his male relatives held her down to restrain her.

"Under Sharia law, the husband's family can demand either monetary compensation or death. They chose death and now the death penalty has been handed down"

— Badr Eldin Salah

The following day, he attempted to rape her again and as she struggled to stop him, she stabbed him, killing him.

A Sharia court, which follows Islamic religious law, found Hussein guilty of premeditated murder last month and on Thursday officially sentenced her to death by hanging. Her lawyers have 15 days to appeal.

"Under Sharia law, the husband's family can demand either monetary compensation or death. They chose death and now the death penalty has been handed down," said Badr Eldin Salah, an activist from the Afrika Youth Movement who was in the court.

"Noura's lawyers say they plan to appeal against the decision, but we also need strong international support from organisations such as the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union to support her."

Sudan is ranked 165 out of 188 countries on the U.N.'s Gender Inequality Index, which measures how women fare compared to men when it comes to access to health, education, political participation and employment opportunities.

UN Women says violence against women and girls is considered prevalent. The country has not signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and has weak policies in place to protect them.

Marital rape and child marriage, for example, are not considered crimes in the predominately Muslim African nation.

Sudanese law allows for the marriage of a girl once she hits puberty. It also says a 10-year-old girl can be married by their guardian with the permission of a judge. One in three Sudanese women are married before the age of 18, says UN Women.

Petitions appealing for Norma's release such as Change.org and Avaaz.com are being widely circulated on social media platforms and have gathered tens of thousands of signatures.

Campaign groups such as Equality Now say they are writing to Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to plead for clemency, arguing that the judgement is against the Sudanese constitution.

"Noura is a victim, not a criminal, and should be treated as such. In many countries, victims like Noura would be provided services to ensure that they overcome the trauma of their experiences," said Equality Now's Global Director Yasmeen Hassan.

"Criminalisation of Noura for defending herself from assault and, in particular a death sentence, would violate her rights under the Sudanese Constitution and international law."

Kenya 'rape taboo' spurs women to report attacks via SMS

By Nita Bhalla in Nairobi — Hundreds of women and girls in Kenya are using SMS to report cases of rape through a toll-free messaging service set up to help survivors break the silence around sexual violence in the conservative nation, the initiative's founder said on Thursday.

Although there are several hotlines for victims of sex attacks, the SMS platform - operated by the Kenyan charity Wangu Kanja Foundation - is the first to connect survivors with community volunteers who provide them with direct support.

"In Kenya, we are socialised to believe sex, sexuality and sexual violence is a private issue. People don't discuss it - it's a complete no-go zone," said Wangu Kanja, founder of the charity operating the SMS service, and also a rape survivor.

"Those who do speak out about being raped are not taken seriously and can face negative reactions from their family, community and police. Most survivors have no one to turn to for help such as getting medical care or even reporting the crime."

Some 5,490 rapes were reported in Kenya in 2016, up 3 percent on the previous year, the latest police statistics show.

But women's rights campaigners say the data is a gross underestimate as many victims do not report sexual offences, fearing they will face shame and stigma in the largely patriarchal and conservative east African nation.

The platform has helped about 700 victims of sexual and domestic violence, largely in the country's sprawling city slums, since launching almost two years ago.

"The service was designed for people living in informal settlements," Kanja said. "They don't know their rights as well as the rich and elite in Kenya, and don't know how to access services or can't afford to pay for things like medical care."

The 24-hour SMS service - launched in July 2016 in partnership with ActionAid Kenya - provides a mechanism for survivors to seek help by speaking to someone safely, confidentially and without fear of judgement, she added.

A 2014 study by the National Crime Research Centre found that only 15 percent of women and girls who had been sexually violated reported it to the police.

Users text HELP to the SMS code 21094 and are immediately called back by an operator who will ask about their situation and connect them with local volunteers - often survivors of sexual violence themselves.

The volunteers then accompany the women and girls to hospitals or clinics where they can get medical care and also take them to the police to report the assault.

Women's rights lawyers welcome such reporting mechanisms, but add that more needs to be done to ensure access to justice.

"We conduct training sessions with the police on gender issues, but they often end up being transferred to other areas such as dealing with cattle rustling or terrorism-related crimes," said Teresa Omondi-Adeitan, executive director at the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA), an advocacy group.

"There needs to be more concerted efforts to keep those trained police on gender-related crimes, as well as providing more support to help them properly investigate crimes to the point of prosecution."

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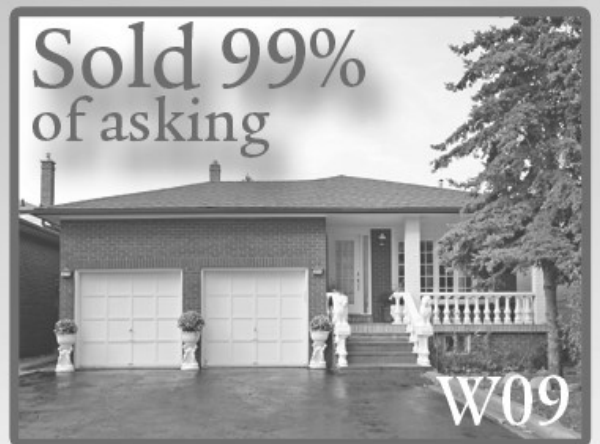
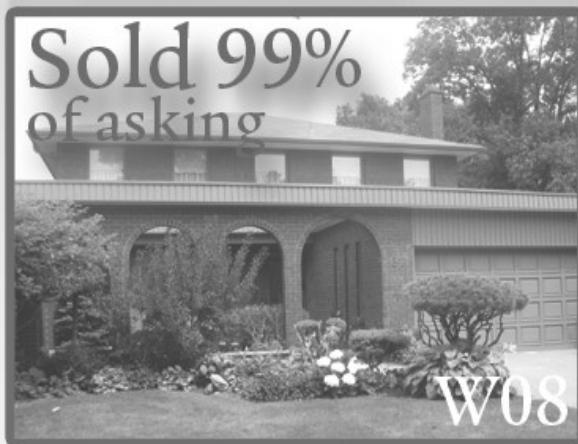
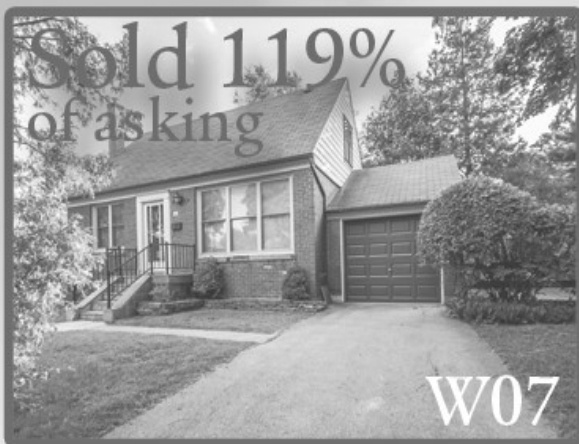
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Egypt football Mo Saleh star makes huge donation to sewage project

Egypt football star, Mohammed Salah recently made news off the field for his philanthropic work. The footballer bought land and paid



for a sewage plant to be built, to supply his village with clean water.

The remarkable deed by the Liverpool striker has been hailed by many across the continent.

Liverpool forward Mohammed Salah is loved on and off of the field of football. Salah's recent philanthropic gesture has received numerous praise from across the continent. The Egyptian footballer recently spent \$450,000 to fix a sewage problem in his village.

Salah, the winner of the PFA player of the season is still very much in touch with his roots. He reportedly bought land and paid for clean drinking water to be supplied within his village and its environs. After the Arab Spring uprising, Egypt has been battling for stability and development, politically and economically.

Mo's father was reportedly a signatory as a witness on the contract.

The donation by Salah isn't new to his villagers who have enjoyed other donations from the 25 years-old footballer.

The Governor of Gharbia, where Salah's village is located said, "Salah is a role model to be followed by the youth and he is already loved by millions around the world because he draws happiness on their faces. He is also the best ambassador to Egypt in the world for promoting tourism."

Salah, popularly referred to as the Egyptian king in 2017 donated \$36000 to the Association of Veteran Players in Egypt. He has also been involved in a campaign to end drugs in his country.

Salah's gesture is reminiscent of Nigerian football Nwankwo Kanu who started the Kanu Heart Foundation in 2000. The Kanu Heart Foundation sponsors open heart surgeries in Nigeria for many that are unable to pay.

Ivorian Joris Gnagnon hints at France switch



Joris Gnagnon

Joris Gnagnon, a former France Under-20 player, switched his allegiance to Ivory Coast last year. Former France under-20 star, Joris Gnagnon, has not ruled out playing for the European country at senior level despite switching allegiance to Ivory Coast last year.

Back in October, the 21-year-old committed his future to the Elephants and was in the squad for Ivory Coast's trip to Mali in a 2018 World Cup qualifier.

The defender, who plays for French side Rennes, was cleared by Fifa to play for the country of his parents and was an unused substitute in Bamako.

"No, my choice to play for Ivory Coast is not definitive," Gnagnon was quoted as saying by French daily Ouest-France.

"Everything is very clear, open and precise, I already know what will happen to me, I give it time.

"There are reasons why I did not play or returned home a lot earlier than expected.

"If the coach invites me, I will be available." Last year, the Ivorian Football Federation (FIF) announced his switch to play for Ivory Coast, despite having represented France at Under-20 level. According to Fifa regulations, players who have represented one country at junior level can play for another at senior level if they meet the qualifying stipulations and submit a written request to the world governing body. Gnagnon has made 34 league appearances for Rennes this season, scoring twice.

Kenya: Ayub Timbe Gets Lengthy Ban, Fined Heavily By CAF

Harambee Stars will miss the services of Ayub Timbe in their next three matches of the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations qualification campaign after the forward was banned and fined heavily by Confederation of African Football (Caf).

Recently, Football Kenya Federation (FKF) explained that the China-based player has been handed a three-match ban and slapped with a Sh1 million fine over an altercation with a match official during Kenya's 2-1 loss to Sierra Leone in these qualifiers in September 2017. FKF however termed the development as a 'big blow' for the team while the player expressed his disappointment with Caf's ruling.



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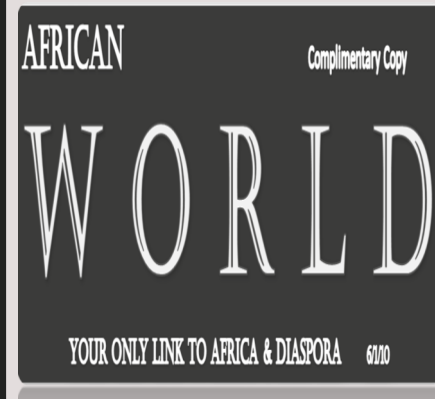
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