

Somalia: Wearing of face masks prohibited

The authorities have banned the wearing of face masks in the capital Mogadishu for security reasons; wearing hats and carrying weapons on public transport is also not permitted. However, the traditional Sunna hats worn by older people are exempt from this ban. Somalia has been plagued by insecurity for years, with the greatest threat coming from the militant group al-Shabab. Since President Mohamud's government launched an offensive against the group in August 2022, the al-Qaeda-linked group has stepped up its attacks again. 15.02.2024

Liberia: Conversion of rubber tree plantation

In a groundbreaking move for environmental sustainability and economic revitalisation, Karbon-X Project Inc. a leading provider of carbon offset solutions, has partnered with Revive Terra Corps, a pioneer in ecosystem restoration and sustainable agriculture. A centre for biochar production is to be built on a 245,000-hectare rubber plantation along the Sinoe River. The project represents a holistic approach to revitalising abandoned rubber tree plantations and thus addresses key issues such as economic stability, food security and environmental rehabilitation in Liberia. 14.02.2024

Liberia: First woman Minister of Defence

President J. Boakai has appointed a retired brigadier general, G. George, as acting Minister of Defence. Defence Minister Prince Charles Johnson III resigned on Monday following protests by soldiers' wives. The women had blamed the former Chief of Defence Staff for the low wages and poor living conditions in the barracks. They had set up road blockades in Monrovia and other parts of the country, forcing President Boakai to cancel the National Armed Forces Day celebrations on Monday.

Nigeria: "Disposable rice" as food

In northern Nigeria, many people rely on rice grains that are usually sorted out by millers after processing or sold to farmers to feed their fish, known as *afafata* in the Hausa language. The lower price of *afafata* helps poorer families to afford this staple food. Prices in Nigeria are rising faster than they have for almost 30 years. In addition to the global economic situation, the cancellation of fuel subsidies and the devaluation of the currency, the naira, have also fuelled inflation. A standard 50kg bag of rice, which can feed a household of eight to ten people for about a month, now costs 77,000 naira (\$53); this is an increase of more than 70 % since the middle of last year and exceeds the monthly income of most Nigerians.

One generation-not 300 years

While UN spokespeople say that child marriage will not be abolished for 300 years, three of the world's most influential women believe they can do it in one generation. Michelle Obama, Amal Clooney and Melinda Gates want to tackle the problem immediately through the co-operation of their foundations, which work to improve girls' schooling, careers, health and education. They are travelling through Africa, visiting the most affected countries and supporting local organisations. Malawi has one of the highest rates of teenage marriage in south-east Africa. 42% of girls are married before the age of 18 and regionally 33% are already pregnant. The three women see their collaboration as a strategic

decision that makes their areas of expertise more effective. Where powerful governments fail to deliver, women philanthropists must play their part. 13.02.2024

Madagascar: Castration of child rapists

The parliament of the island nation of 28 million inhabitants passed the following law on 2 Febr. and the Senate, the upper house, approved it last week. It must now be ratified by the Supreme Constitutional Court and signed by President Andry Rajoelina, who first raised the issue in December. His government had proposed the amendment to the law. The law provides for the following: surgical castration if a child under the age of 10 has been raped, surgical or chemical castration for rape of children between the ages of 10 and 13 and for rape of minors between 14 and 17. Offenders also face harsher penalties of up to life imprisonment and castration. Justice Minister said that this was necessary due to the increase in child rape. In 2023, 600 cases of rape of a minor were registered, and in January of this year, 133. The law was criticised by international human rights groups, but also received the support of activists who believe it is a suitable deterrent to curb "rape culture".

Morocco: Protests relations with Israel

Thousands took to the streets in Rabat to demand an end to relations with Israel due to its actions in the Gaza Strip. Morocco established diplomatic relations with Israel in 2020 as part of the US-brokered Abraham Accords. As part of the agreement, Rabat received recognition from Washington of its claim to sovereignty over the disputed territory of Western Sahara. 13.02.2024

After defeats to Cup winners

Cote d'Ivoire won the Africa Cup in their own country. They beat Nigeria 2:1 in the final. Winning the cup seemed unlikely as they had lost twice in the preliminary round and their coach Jean-Louis Gasset had been sacked. The Ivorians only progressed to the next round thanks to the support of their rivals. In the match for third place, South Africa won 6:5 on penalties against the Democratic Republic of Congo after no goals had been scored in 120 minutes. 12.02.2024

Kenya: Floating university anchored

The cruise ship MV World Odyssey, which houses a sailing university campus, moored in Mombasa. The ship enables students who are taking a break from their studies to spend a semester at sea. It travels to various countries to familiarise itself with their history and culture. There are 763 passengers on board the ship, 585 of whom are students. The university also accommodates "lifelong learners" who are 30 years or older, as well as lecturers and staff. During the 100-plus day voyage, students can earn 12-15 credits from Colorado State University while taking majors or electives from 20-25 areas of study. The MV World Odyssey has been called the "world's largest floating campus." The university is operated by the Institute for Shipboard Education. 10.02.2024

More Information: https://netzwerkafrika.de/Laudato_Si_and_Lent