



SUDAN
BURIED IN SILENCE

For the thousands of families fleeing Sudan’s brutal war, the remote Jebel Marra mountains of Darfur had become a rare place of safety. That fragile sense of security collapsed on 1 September when torrential rains triggered landslides that buried villages and entire families alive. Tarasin, a small village in Jebel Marra, the worst of 88 communities affected, was almost entirely wiped out, with more than 1,000 people reportedly killed. The landslides have compounded an already dire humanitarian crisis, Mohamed Alnaier, spokesperson of the Sudan Liberation Movement-Army (SLM-AW), a rebel group that controls Jebel Marra, told *New Internationalist*. ‘Before [the war began] there were more than two million displaced people in our

controlled areas,’ he explained. ‘After the war, the figure rose to around seven million with locals included.’ Despite lacking basic services, Jebel Marra became a safe haven due to the SLM-AW’s neutral stance in the two-year conflict. Arrivals surged in April after the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – the paramilitary group fighting the Sudanese army – launched deadly raids on nearby refugee camps. Tawila, a small town at the foot of the mountain, absorbed up to one million people. Alnaier says SLM-AW leaders have appealed to international organizations, like the UN and Western countries, but support has so far fallen short. In Tawila hundreds of thousands are now living in open fields without safe water, sanitation or healthcare, in conditions described as ‘catastrophic’ by Adam Rojal, spokesperson of the local

refugee and displacement coordination team. Fatal diseases like cholera have begun to spread, and no humanitarian supplies have reached the village since June due to difficult terrain and ongoing fighting, he reports. The landslides have only added to the misery of people residing in Darfur’s mountains. The inaccessible terrain there has also hampered rescue efforts, leaving families and volunteers using their bare hands to dig through the mud. Alnaier confirmed that around 373 bodies were retrieved from Tarasin in the days after the disaster, which also washed away homes, crops and livestock. Mujib al-Rahman al-Zubair, head of the civil authority in SLM-AW territories, claims the landslides have caused material losses of more than three trillion Sudanese Pounds (\$5 million), while the estimated total death toll

Families displaced by Sudan’s civil war seek refuge in Tawila, Darfur, on 27 April 2025.

MARWAN MOHAMED/NRC

has surpassed 1,500. The *New Internationalist* was not able to independently confirm the reported death toll due to the remoteness of the area. International agencies have provided some support to affected areas, but al-Zubair said this was ‘not enough at all’, urging the UN and other NGOs to assist with evacuations and resettlement. As families who lost everything in the landslide join the millions already displaced, residents of Jebel Marra live on the edge of survival. Their voices rise in unison, calling for the world to act not tomorrow but today, before another preventable tragedy claims more lives in the mountains of Darfur. **EYAD HISHAM**

TAIWAN
SURVIVAL CHIC

Army rations. A first aid kit. A portable water filtration system. These are among the latest trendy purchases graphic designer Tseng Mia made after seeing peers posting photos of their own ‘survival kits’ all over Taiwanese social media. It was in May when Mia, who lives in the capital Taipei, first heard about kits on the social media platform Threads, which in Taiwan has become the equivalent of X. ‘At first, I was panicking,’ Mia said. ‘I felt like an invasion was really coming. I even thought about emigrating.’ The Taiwanese are used to rumours of a possible invasion from China. However in recent months these fears have sparked a new trend. Between May and August this year, Google searches for the term ‘survival kit’ hit an all-time high. Meanwhile, thousands of posts amassed on Threads under a survival kit tag, with over 100,000 comments and two million likes. The flurry of searches came after the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) posted a message on Facebook with examples of kit must-haves, and a call to action: ‘Make sure to pack your own Go Bag and be ready for anything.’ ‘The US is telling us to be (or get) ready [for an invasion],’ was Mia’s interpretation. Taiwanese media was reading between the lines too, with alarming headlines like: ‘Is the AIT’s survival kit implying a cross-strait crisis?’ Meanwhile, Taiwanese influencers have cashed in, producing a wide range of content, from explainers to a light-hearted dry rations taste test by the famous foodie YouTuber Chien-Chien.

Now, Mia is the proud owner of a 9.5 kg ‘Go Bag’ she has to strain to lift – and she estimates it’s only two thirds complete. Although Mia hopes she won’t need it, it’s still a burden she’s willing to shoulder. **ERIC R STONE**

BRAZIL
BANDITRY BILL

When former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was found guilty of charges related to an attempted military coup after losing the 2022 election to leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, many across the country breathed a sigh of relief. However, just 10 days later, a bill that could have allowed Bolsonaro to evade his prison sentence of 27 years and three months abruptly halted celebrations. Critics feared the proposed constitutional amendment would have potentially pardoned Bolsonaro and made it harder to launch criminal proceedings against lawmakers in future. After being passed in the Congress by the ex-leader’s allies, the bill was later struck down by the Senate. However a separate bid for an amnesty for Bolsonaro remains ongoing. The anti-amnesty protests of 21 September saw tens of thousands of Brazilians take to the streets of major cities against what they dubbed the ‘Banditry Bill’. The marches, soundtracked by performances from musicians exiled during the 30-year dictatorship, are the largest seen in years in support of the preservation of Brazilian democracy. **PAULA LACEY**



HOME AT LAST

Prominent Egyptian-British pro-democracy activist Alaa Abdel Fattah was freed in September after spending most of the past 12 years behind bars. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi pardoned him following a determined lobbying campaign for his release, including a 287-day hunger strike by his mother Laila Soueif.

YOUTH REVOLT

Youth ‘Gen-Z’ activists are leading a new wave of marches in Lima against President Dina Boluarte’s government. Sparked by a reform that requires young adults to join a private pension fund, the September protests were met with tear gas and rubber bullets, with eight journalists reportedly injured.

SACRED MOUNTAINS SULLIED

Tibetans and environmentalists condemned high-end outdoor brand Arc’teryx after it set off fireworks above the Himalayan mountains, to mimic a dragon for an ad campaign. The peaks are considered sacred by Tibetan Buddhists and critics say the fragile environment cannot withstand fireworks. The brand later apologized, admitting the stunt was ‘out of line’.

BALI CURBS TOURISM

Indonesia has banned new hotels on rice paddies in Bali, after September’s flash floods killed at least 18 people.

Environmentalists have long warned that mass tourism in the popular island resort and the conversion of productive land has increased flood risks. The new decree will come into force by the end of 2025.

COPS UNMASKED

Immigration agents carrying out Trump’s raids on migrant communities will no longer be able to wear masks to conceal their identities in California. The law is a direct response to a series of raids in LA where agents wore masks while making arrests. Democrats have described the move as a way to push back against federal overreach.

DEADLY HIT IN HAITI

An armed drone meant to target a gang leader in Haiti’s capital hit a birthday party, killing 11 civilians, including eight children. Human-rights groups blamed the strike on Haiti’s police. The use of explosive drones is a new development in the government’s war on gangs in Port-au-Prince. Since March at least 300 people have been killed and almost 400 injured in drone attacks. While some say weaponized drones are putting the powerful gangs on the back foot, others argue civilian deaths are only fuelling support for them.

BETHANY RIELLY

SOUTH AFRICA
DISASTER PROFITS

As extreme floods hit South Africa's coastal cities, gangs are menacing thirsty communities. 'We are caught between three mortal dangers – floods, thirst, and "water mafia" gangs,' says Sfsio Daliyebo, a community leader in the southeastern town of Mthatha.

After the devastating Mthatha floods, which killed 102 people in June, South Africa's biggest disaster relief charity, Gift of Givers, was blocked from distributing free water to low-income townships under gang control. Then, explains Daliyebo, gangs coerced desperate residents into buying overpriced water from mafia-owned suppliers.

It's very profitable, gang member 'Ninja K' admits to *New Internationalist*. Each gang-owned water tanker can hold 20,000 litres of water and earn R80,000 (\$5,000) in a week, says the gang member, who owns seven of these vehicles.

He also describes gang members and corrupt municipal managers sabotaging the pumps and pipes that process water to suburbs, saying, 'Our men can blow up water valves: create an artificial crisis. We then sell water to thirsty

residents.' The same corrupt politicians and mafia then win the lucrative water repair engineering contracts. The Corruption Watch and Water Integrity Network says that contracts to build large-scale dams are being deliberately sabotaged unless politicians get supply chain deals.

Deliberate sabotage of electricity or water infrastructure in South Africa poses a serious danger to national security, says Brigadier Athlenta Mathe of the South African police. To defend vital relief from gangs, armed police escorts are now accompanying some tankers carrying free water to disaster zones. The police have also created a special intelligence brigade to target the water mafia's networks, Mathe says.

South Africa is one of the world's most severely water-stressed countries. As of today, Mthatha's residents still struggle with water access. The floods damaged pumps and pipelines, and poorly run municipalities do not have the engineering skills or political will to fix the damage. With climate change beating down on Mthatha and South Africa, water mafias and their political allies are looking at big paydays next time disaster strikes.

TSITSIBHOBO

MOROCCO
CLOTHING CRIMES

Renowned Moroccan feminist Ibtissame Betty Lachgar is languishing behind bars under accusations of blasphemy, having been arrested in August after posting a photo on social media of a T-shirt she wore to a 2023 UK feminist conference.

The T-shirt's slogan, which read 'Allah is a lesbian', upset authorities in her home country, where LGBT rights exist in a grey area – homophobia is rife and homosexuality is illegal, but the law is not always enforced. Soon after the photo went online, the far-right Islamist Moroccan 'Moorish movement' launched a campaign of cyberharassment against Lachgar, issuing rape and death threats and tagging Morocco's security services.

Charged with 'offending Islam', Lachgar argued in court that the slogan was a political protest, not blasphemy. Despite this, she was given a 30 month sentence and a \$5,000 fine.

'Not only is this verdict unjust, but it also threatens freedom of speech and opinion,' Hamid Sikouk, from the Moroccan Association of Human Rights, told the Associated Press. Lachgar has complex medical needs as a cancer survivor and may not be able to access care in prison.

Lachgar has lodged an appeal, and has received support from Ex-Muslims International who have written to the Moroccan government demanding her immediate release. 'To speak of "insulting Islam" is to purposefully obfuscate the nature of ideas,' says Maryam Namazie of the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain. 'People have dignity and rights; ideas do not.'

RAHILAGUPTA



ARGENTINA
HOSPITAL STAFF
VS MILEI

For the last five months, workers at Argentina's largest paediatric hospital have been battling relentless austerity measures imposed by the far-right government of Javier Milei. Buenos Aires' Garrahan Hospital treats hundreds of thousands of patients from across the country each year, including those with rare and complex diseases.

With the hospital's budget frozen since 2023, Milei's cuts threaten the institution's ability to function. In 2025 alone, more than 200 hospital staff resigned due to low wages. 'Services are becoming depleted because there simply aren't enough staff to meet the demand, and this is directly impacting children's health,' says Norma Lezana, general secretary of the Association of Hospital Professionals and Technicians.

Since May, the health workers have organized assemblies, strikes, and

marches demanding salary increases and better working conditions. The government's only response has been a campaign of fake news and threats of layoffs.

The hospital quickly became a rallying point in the opposition to the Milei government's libertarian policies, which risk dismantling public education and healthcare systems. An August survey showed that the Garrahan Hospital has a 94 per cent positive image among Argentinians. Mobilizations and widespread

public solidarity led to the approval of the Paediatric Health Emergency Law in Congress, which prioritizes the immediate allocation of budgetary resources for supplies, infrastructure and salaries in pediatric care units nationwide

However, despite losing a key legislative election amid corruption scandals and a deepening economic crisis, the government vetoed the law. Now, it is up to Congress to decide whether to uphold or reject this veto. But Lezana remains hopeful:

'The Garrahan will triumph, thanks to the unwavering support of the people and the determination of its workers to ensure that the hospital does not close.'

MAIA PAURO

In Buenos Aires, Garrahan hospital workers rally against proposed public spending cuts, July 2025.
MAIA PAURO



NEPAL
GEN Z REVOLUTION

Anti-government protests in Nepal triggered political upheaval in September, forcing Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli from office. In an unprecedented move, young organizers reportedly chose an interim prime minister Sushila Karki – Nepal’s first female leader – via the Discord messaging app. She promised to hold snap elections in March 2026 and enact protesters’ demands for ‘an end to corruption, good governance and economic equality’.

Nepal now faces a momentous moment, propelled by a generation of young people excluded from politics.

‘This is a leaderless movement,’ says Akriti Ghimire, a founder of the Instagram account @howtodeshbikas (‘how to develop a nation’), one of

several groups meeting with the interim government to discuss Nepal’s future. ‘There needs to be a bigger cultural revolution around our fundamental values as citizens.’

Analysts have drawn parallels with recent Gen-Z-led uprisings in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, where frustrations with political corruption and elitism also forced long-time, elderly leaders from office. In Nepal, protesters denounced government corruption and the banning of 26 social media platforms. At least 72 people were killed amid the chaos in Kathmandu, including tens of protesters shot by police. Government offices and residences were burned down, private businesses looted and dozens of media outlets attacked.

Among the movement’s many demands is the direct

election of Nepal’s head of state, capped at two terms. Yet the proposal divides opinion. A young democracy, Nepal became a secular federal republic in 2006, after a comprehensive peace accord ended 10 years of civil war that killed nearly 16,000 people. Pranaya Rana, a Kathmandu-based political journalist, says that while the current federal system is flawed, it gives a voice to marginalized groups. The proposal, he fears, could centralize power in Kathmandu.

‘Federalism was a hard won battle... A directly elected executive head could be dangerous for a country like Nepal, where we really don’t have safeguards against populism and misinformation,’ he said. ‘I share Gen-Z’s aspirations ... [but] as a

millennial, I remember being so optimistic [in 2006] that these revolutionaries couldn’t be corrupt. With the benefit of hindsight, I’m optimistically cynical.’

But protesters insist the movement is about more than just electoral reform.

‘This is not just Gen-Z’s country,’ says Ghimire. ‘This is everybody’s country. I hope our generation can [help] put national interests at the core of our decision making. The onus lies on us and I hope we can continue to lead this cultural revolution.’

MAXINE BETTERIDGE-MOES

Protesters capture Nepal’s government building in Kathmandu on 9 September 2025 amid huge Gen Z-led demonstrations against corruption.

SKANDA GAUTAM/SOPA IMAGES VIA ZUMA



INTRODUCING...
ZARAH SULTANA

The 31-year-old Sultana is an up and coming force on the British left at a time when many feel disillusioned with the neoliberal capitulations of Keir Starmer’s Labour government. Elected as the Labour MP for Coventry South in 2019, Sultana then won a vastly increased majority in the 2024 election that ended 14 years of Conservative rule. Despite gaining popularity in her constituency for supporting a range of community causes, by 2020 the die was cast for Sultana’s fall from favour within Starmer’s Labour.

The young politician’s relentless criticism of the Israeli genocide in Gaza put her at loggerheads with the Party establishment and its shameless support for the apartheid state. She also defied the whip on domestic issues, opposing Starmer’s bid to keep the two-child benefit as well as cuts to winter fuel payments and disability benefits.

For such rebellious acts of principle Sultana was suspended (along with other MPs) by the Labour whip and left in political limbo. For socialists like her, Starmer’s decision to go with austerity instead of taxing the rich made it clear that there was no place for the left in the current iteration of the Labour Party.

Born in Birmingham in 1993, Sultana traces part of her political awakening to a visit to the West Bank at the age of 17, igniting in her a sense of ‘internationalism’ and a ‘deep opposition to imperial power’. She joined the Labour Party in 2011 as a student, in the wake of the coalition government’s decision to treble university fees to £9,000 year, believing at the time that there was no other party that could act as a vehicle for change.

As a Muslim woman of Pakistani heritage, Sultana has also faced a toxic mixture of racism and chauvinism throughout her career. She has been outspoken against the proscription of the protest group Palestine Action as a ‘terrorist organization’, (a designation that puts the protest group in the same camp as neo-Nazi organizations and Al Qaida) and has often been a thorn in the side of establishment politics across the spectrum.

After breaking with Labour in 2025, she joined forces with the party’s former leader Jeremy Corbyn to launch an independent left-wing outfit, tentatively called Your Party. Hundreds of thousands expressed interest in joining,

demonstrating the appetite in the electorate for a principled popular socialism. While the fate of any new party is anyone’s guess, a series of all-too-unhelpful public rows between Sultana and Corbyn have already shaken some peoples’ faith in the project. Splits emerged early on over a membership portal that Corbyn claimed was launched without approval to collect members’ data and money. Firing back, his co-founder claimed she’d been frozen out of discussions by a ‘sexist boys’ club’ inside the party. But disagreements need not become divorce.

Perhaps Sultana represents not only a political break with the establishment but also a generational one. In an excellent interview with *New Left Review*’s Oliver Eagleton she concludes that the new party must appeal to ‘people in that younger age bracket who are in touch with popular sentiment, and who know how far removed it is from the decaying politics of the establishment. We must do politics differently, and that’s not a cliché but a prerequisite for this party.’

RICHARD SWIFT

SERIOUSLY?

Meditating on the Moon

It is getting easier and easier to send weird stuff into space: an Andy Warhol sketch; a gorilla costume; the cremated remains of Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry. Even an action figure of Buzz Lightyear made it into orbit – although not quite to infinity or beyond. Lunar delivery services such as Astrobotic have a sideline in oddities. Celestis Pets offers to

fly remains of your pets as far as the Moon for \$12,500.

These space deliveries can be controversial when artefacts are sacred: last year, the Indigenous Navajo Nation and NASA had a dispute over an attempt to send human (and dog) remains to the lunar surface on the Peregrine lander. However, attitudes differ across faiths, and in 2019 a metal microfiche copy of Buddhist sutras was crashed into the lunar surface.



December of this year may see an escalation of this struggle for spiritual elbow room on the Moon. A company called beingAI hopes to send a holographic image of an AI-powered trainee Sōtō Zen Buddhist priest on a nickel and gold disk. It is unclear what the AI monk, named Emi Jido, is expected to do upon arrival. Although perhaps Emi and Buzz Lightyear can join forces...

TONY MILLIGAN

ILLUSTRATIONS: EMMA PEER



**ZIMBABWE
SELL OUT**

ZimDancehall – a spin on Jamaican reggae with raw, noisy lyrics – was born in 2012 in Mbare, the Zimbabwean capital Harare’s toughest neighbourhood. Almost overnight, it became a sensation – until the regime began tempting its stars with ‘gifts’, leading fans to fear the subversive genre had been coopted.

‘It’s the beat of our identity,’ says Ras Caleb, a popular ZimDancehall artist. Unlike traditional music, ZimDancehall bypasses record labels, spreading via WhatsApp. Blaring out of bars and taxis, the beat has become Zimbabwe’s most popular genre.

But its roots lie in hardship. In Mbare, hunger, sex work and crime shape everyday

life. In their frustration, local youths turned to music, experimenting in bedroom studios with electric beats on laptops – what blues singer Sanii Makhalima calls ‘coded fury at misgovernance’. From this, a new industry emerged organically.

However in 2020, as dissent against the autocratic government grew, political figures moved to buy the loyalty of ZimDancehall stars as a way to pacify restless youth, Tapuwa Nhachi, a social scientist, says.

Artists like Sir Calaz and DJ Fantan were gifted Mercedes Benzes and Toyota SUVs by tycoon Wicknell Chivhayo, a close ally and financier of the regime. Suddenly, the artists turned into drum majorettes for the government, adds Nhachi. Others soon followed. In June, local media showed young rappers being gifted expensive cars after composing

songs praising the president. ‘It’s [a] shameful spectacle seeing DJs now recording tunes to praise some of the most corrupt kingmakers of [the ruling] party,’ says Nhachi.

WINILE XIMBA

A man walks past a mural of popular ZimDancehall artists, Kinnah (left) and Killer T (right), in Zimbabwe’s most populous slum Mbare. The young musicians have become heroes in this township, the birthplace of the subversive genre.

MARK MHUKAYESANGO



SIGN OF THE TIMES
Students protest outside the parliament building in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 9 September 2025, amid a nationwide movement against corruption, economic inequality and police violence.

**INDIA
WHO BELONGS?**

Across Delhi’s sprawling metropolitan region, July 2025 was a month of terror for Bengali-speaking migrants as police identity verification drives swept through neighbourhoods.

Community halls and empty school buildings were converted into temporary detention centres as police, acting on a government circular since May, moved to accelerate deportations of ‘illegal’ Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants.

However thousands caught in the raids were not undocumented at all, but legal residents and even Indian citizens, many from West Bengal state, where Bengali is the main language.

Fearing detention and deportation, thousands of families fled Delhi’s satellite cities of Gurugram and Noida. By August, officials in West Bengal reported nearly 2,500 returnees.

‘This is how it works,’ said Mithu Chakraborty, a schoolteacher from Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. ‘Workers moving north tell me they [alter] their speech, hide their origins, even lie about their parents’ birthplace. A vowel sound can become evidence, a surname a sentence.’

Hundreds of Bengali speakers were unlawfully expelled to Bangladesh without due process, according to Human Rights Watch, which also reported incidents of abuse and confiscation of documents.

Bengali Muslims, who are often employed in low-wage sectors and rely on their IDs to hold jobs and rent homes, were also the most likely to have their papers discounted as fake, or incomplete.

Nazma Bibi (name changed),

a domestic worker from Cooch Behar city, recalled officers barging into her rented room and detaining her husband. ‘We showed Aadhaar [India’s resident identification number system], ration cards, voter IDs. Nothing mattered. They kept asking if we were Bangladeshi. I was born in India. So were my parents,’ she said. Her husband spent three days in a holding centre before being released. The ordeal has left them both shaken. ‘Since my husband’s arrest, I jump every time there’s a knock,’ says Nazma, who now keeps a folder of their IDs ready. ‘We came here to work, not to hide,’ she said. ‘But papers can’t protect us if someone has already decided who we are.’

Civil society groups warn that the raids amount to racial profiling. ‘Men detained “just for speaking Bengali” is not an isolated claim,’ Chakraborty said. Meanwhile, police and officials maintain that they are strictly targeting undocumented foreigners.

Yet raids often coincide with pressures to ‘clear’ informal settlements on valuable land. Community organizers describe a pattern in which those profiled as ‘illegal’ are easiest to displace.

The campaign also reflects wider repression of India’s Muslims, which intensified after April’s Pahalgam attack in Kashmir. Bengali Muslims, branded ‘infiltrators’, are particularly vulnerable in a system tilting toward Hindu majoritarianism.

Beyond that, the pattern resonates globally. In the US, legal residents are being deported without due process; in the UK, citizenship stripping powers have reached unprecedented levels. For Nazma and thousands like her living in India’s urban margins, the question is; when papers fail and suspicion reigns, who truly belongs?

KASTURI CHAKRABORTY

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL



DEAD IN THE WATER

A massive data centre in water-scarce Arizona, US, has hit a major roadblock after months of local resistance. Tucson city council voted unanimously in August to deny a request to connect two large Amazon-linked data centres – known as ‘Project Blue’ – to the municipal water supply, throwing the plans into doubt.

Projected to guzzle 2.5 million cubic metres of water each year, the project sparked alarm in a region already grappling with drought. Rather than trusting offsetting promises made by development firm Beale Infrastructure, the community-led No Desert No Data Center campaign pressed local officials to block the plans.

SHELL SHOCKED

Fossil fuel giant Shell’s oil exploration plans on the southwest coast of South Africa were interrupted on 13 August, when the Western High Cape Court blocked the government authorization for offshore drilling after a legal challenge from environmental groups. The court found that Shell’s Environment Impact Assessment had failed to fully examine the consequences of a major oil spill on communities both locally and on the shores of neighbouring Namibia. This decision brings hope for other ongoing court battles to prevent destructive extraction projects elsewhere in the country.

PAULA LACEY

**SOLIDARITY
IN SCOTLAND**

Scotland has paused public financial help to arms companies supplying the Israeli military. The country’s leader John Swinney made the announcement in September after repeated criticism from activists over Scotland’s role in

ILLUSTRATION: EMMA PEER