

COVID-19 RESPONSE IN AFRICA... AND IN CARTOONS!



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COVID-19 RESPONSE IN AFRICA: TOGETHER FOR RELIABLE INFORMATION

ARTICLE 19, Deutsche Welle Akademie, Fondation Hirondelle, Free Press Unlimited, International Media Support, Reporters Without Borders and UNESCO have joined forces in a project called “COVID-19 Response in Africa: Together for Reliable Information”, funded by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO).

Led by Free Press Unlimited, the consortium has been implementing this 18-month project since 1 August 2020. The aim of the project is to facilitate the dissemination of reliable, critical information about coronavirus – currently inaccessible to at-risk populations, as the operations of a number of independent media outlets in Sub-Saharan countries are being hampered by the pandemic.

To achieve this, the project is providing support to media stakeholders in Sub-Saharan Africa, who have been left with few income-generating options since the arrival of COVID-19. Many of the activities undertaken are giving these media stakeholders time to adapt and survive the crisis caused by COVID-19, whilst at the same time helping them to provide their public with relevant, vital information about the pandemic.

In partnership with Reporters Without Borders, Cartooning for Peace took part in the programme in order to support and recall the essential role of the continent’s press cartoonists. This publication is the result of this partnership and allows us to look back, through cartoons, at all these major issues for press freedom.

You can find further details on the official website:



[https://collaboration.freepressunlimited.org/projects/
covid-19-response-in-africa/](https://collaboration.freepressunlimited.org/projects/covid-19-response-in-africa/)

REPRESSION, DISINFORMATION AND INCREASING PRECARITY: HOW CORONAVIRUS IS AFFECTING AFRICAN MEDIA

By the end of 2021, there had been nearly 10 million cases of coronavirus in Africa with over 228,000 deaths. These figures are difficult to analyse as they appear to be relatively low compared with the most affected regions of the world. For example, France alone has had about the same number of cases and 123,000 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

While the pandemic has not resulted in the expected catastrophe on the African continent, there is no doubt that its consequences have had a long-term effect on our freedoms, accelerated the weakening of journalism's stand against the ever-strengthening wind of disinformation, and helped to foster the vaccine nationalism that has left 93% of Africans still without a vaccine, 20 months into the pandemic.

Journalists and medias have been both witnesses and sometimes collateral victims of these effects. Reporters Without Borders (RSF), which joined a consortium that included Cartooning for Peace and several other NGOs, and whose aim was to protect the right to access reliable, independent information in 17 pilot countries in Africa, has seen the true extent of this multi-faceted crisis.

Since March 2020, we have documented 139 pandemic-related violations of the freedom of the press in Sub-Saharan Africa: a journalist deliberately run over by a motorbike when reporting on the lockdown in DRC, a South African reporter targeted by rubber bullets in South Africa, the arbitrary arrest of dozens of journalists in Zimbabwe, Uganda and Nigeria, laws making the dissemination of fake news a crime, states denying or minimising the reality of the pandemic, and conspiracy theories and rumours that frequently circulated on social media faster than the virus itself.

As a result, the information ecosystem, which was already particularly fragile, has been undermined to an extent never seen before on the continent: dismissals, loss of income, page and programme reductions, etc. The crisis has significantly accentuated the precarious situation of the African media, further increasing their vulnerability to various influences. A number of these organisations have admitted that, without the help provided by our consortium, it is unlikely that they would have survived. Altogether, over the past eighteen months, we have supported 90 partner organisations and media and over 900 African journalists.

Now more than ever, this crisis has imperilled the exercise of free, independent journalism on the African continent, and demonstrated the imperative need to find new ways of ensuring media sustainability. This is not in any way about protecting the interests of the media. It is about the future of citizens – in this case African citizens – and their access to quality information.

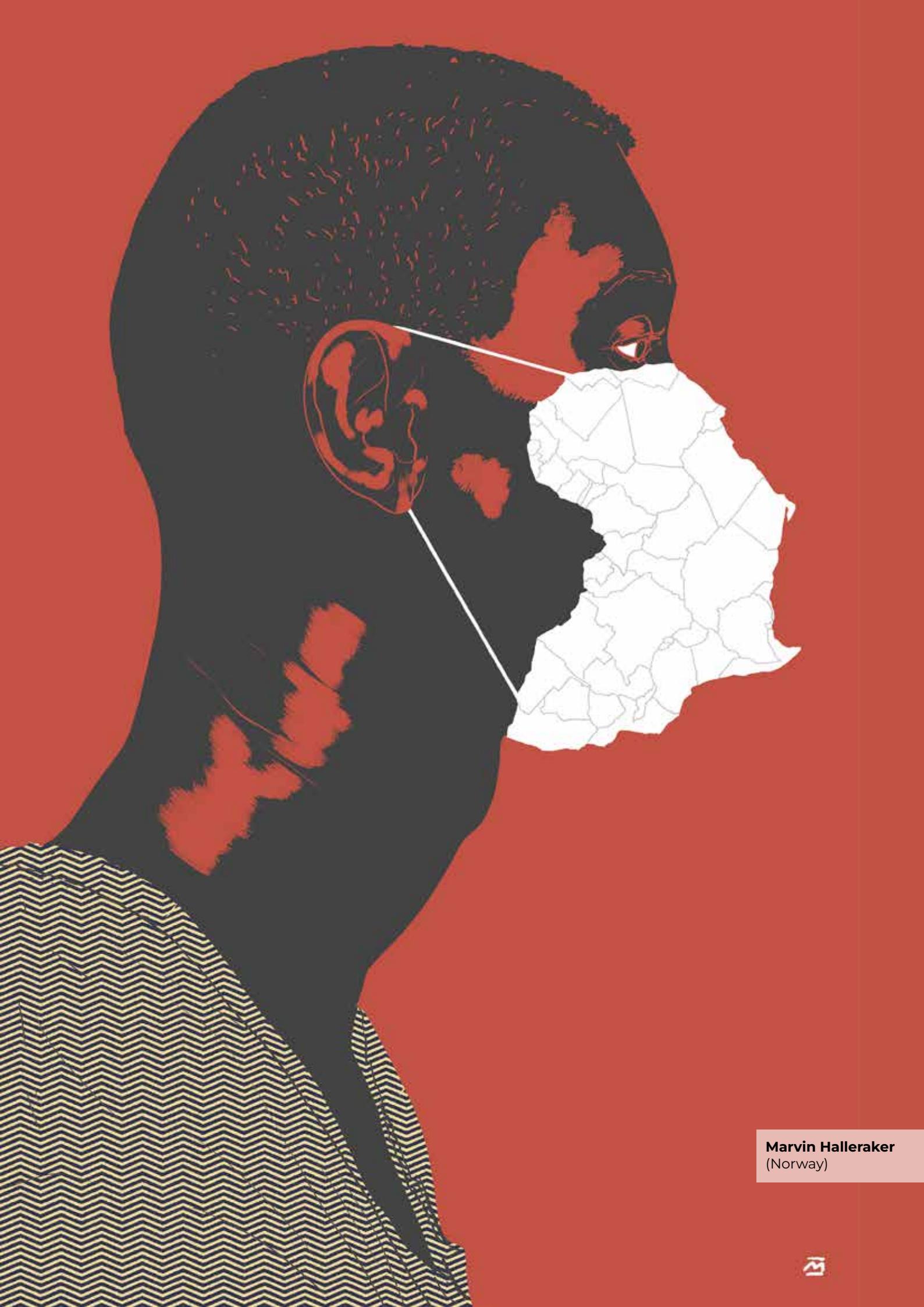
Arnaud Froger
Head of Africa Desk
REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS

COVID-19: THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC IN AFRICA

When the pandemic first began, no-one knew how it would affect Sub-Saharan Africa. A risk mapping exercise conducted by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in April 2020 painted a bleak picture. We all waited with bated breath to see how coronavirus would progress in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many articles were published, wondering why the COVID-19 pandemic did not seem to have been as deadly as elsewhere. Was it because of the relative youth of the population? Or because mortality was poorly reported? Whatever the truth of the matter, there is no doubt whatsoever that the COVID-19 pandemic had – and is still having – a significant impact on the continent, particularly in view of the fact that vaccination rates in Sub-Saharan Africa are seriously behind.

As part of our programme, many local partners drew the attention of the population to the importance of protective measures such as social distancing, mask-wearing and getting vaccinated. However, vaccine hesitancy, caused by mistrust and disinformation, is compounded by vaccine inequality, thereby increasing the risk of seeing new, dangerous variants developing in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Free Press Unlimited



Marvin Halleraker
(Norway)

Alex Tefera (Ethiopia)



Gado (Tanzania-Kenya)

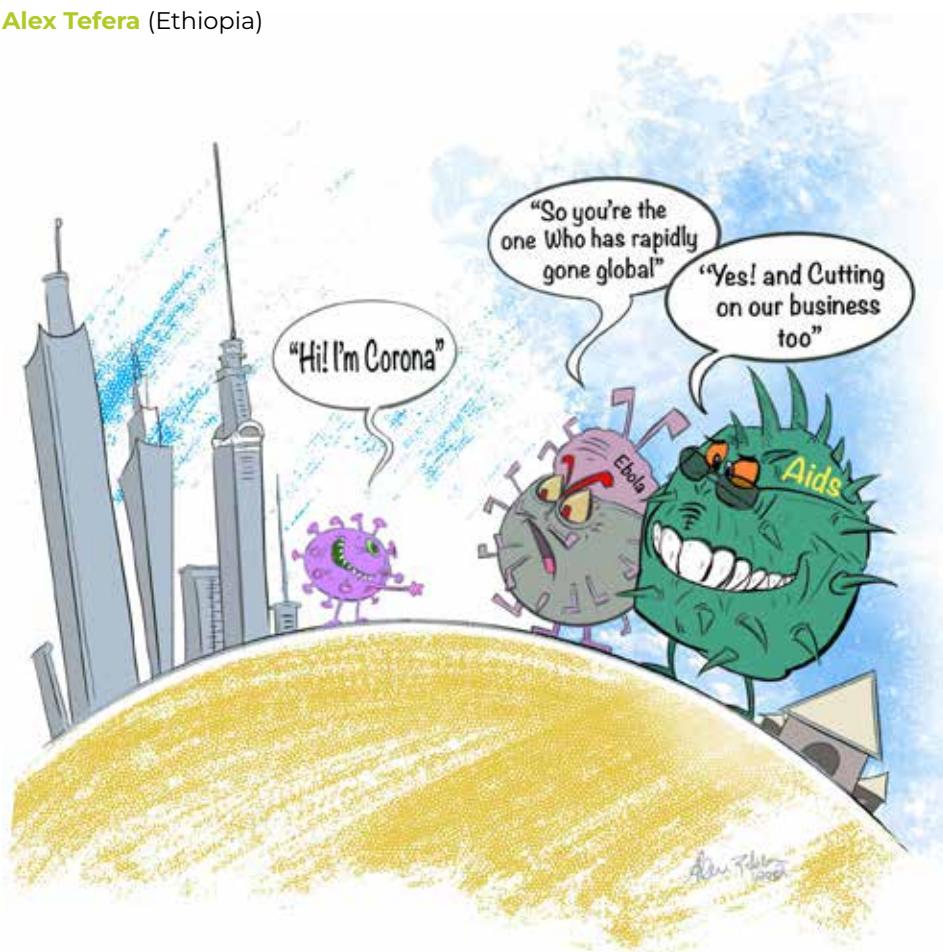


Glez (Burkina Faso)



Africa, less affected? / "Go back Home ! Can't you see that there is no more room here?"

Alex Tefera (Ethiopia)



Piçarra (Angola)



“

In Burkina Faso, it is difficult for the press to operate in a context where terrorist attacks are combined with COVID-19. The state allocated COVID-19 funding to the press, but this did not have the desired impact. All in all, it was just a drop in the ocean.

”

Idrissa Birba, President of the human rights organisation, Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (NDH-Burkina)

Glez (Burkina Faso)



L'AFRIQUE FACE AU COVID

Africa and covid

Pov (Madagascar)



Learning to live with the COVID-19

Victor Ndula (Kenya)



“

In Sudan, citizens are not under attack from the virus alone. There are also the security forces, for example. In terms of controlling the lockdown, this means that citizens have to deal with the security forces as well – something that traumatises us, because the system has always been corrupt and the relationship between citizens and security, whatever its shape or form, has always been very brutal and violent. As a result, many people are scared to go out, not just because of the virus, but because they don't want any kind of harassment, they don't want to be verbally – or indeed physically – abused by the police.”

”

Alaa Satir, press cartoonist (Sudan)

Alaa Satir
(Sudan)



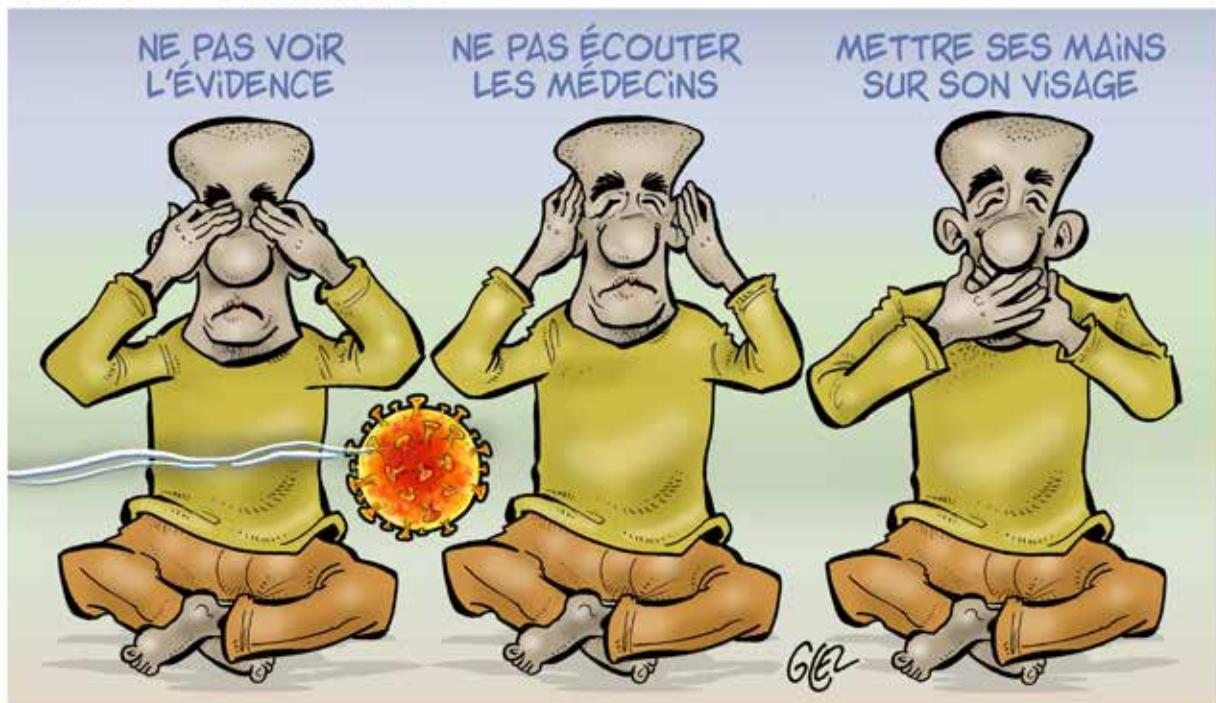
“

As soon as COVID-19 appeared in Burkina Faso, the government adopted a battery of legal measures to limit its spread. While the measures have more or less succeeded in containing the spread of the pandemic, on the other hand they have also hampered access to journalistic information. The specific laws governing the health sector, like the one establishing medical confidentiality, have made it harder for journalists to access information. At the same time, official information was increasingly hard to come by, which gave free rein to rumours and other fake news (...). Lack of information breeds rumours. Consequently, numerous inhabitants of Burkina Faso did not believe in the pandemic.”

”

Idrissa Birba, President of the human rights organisation, Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (NDH-Burkina)

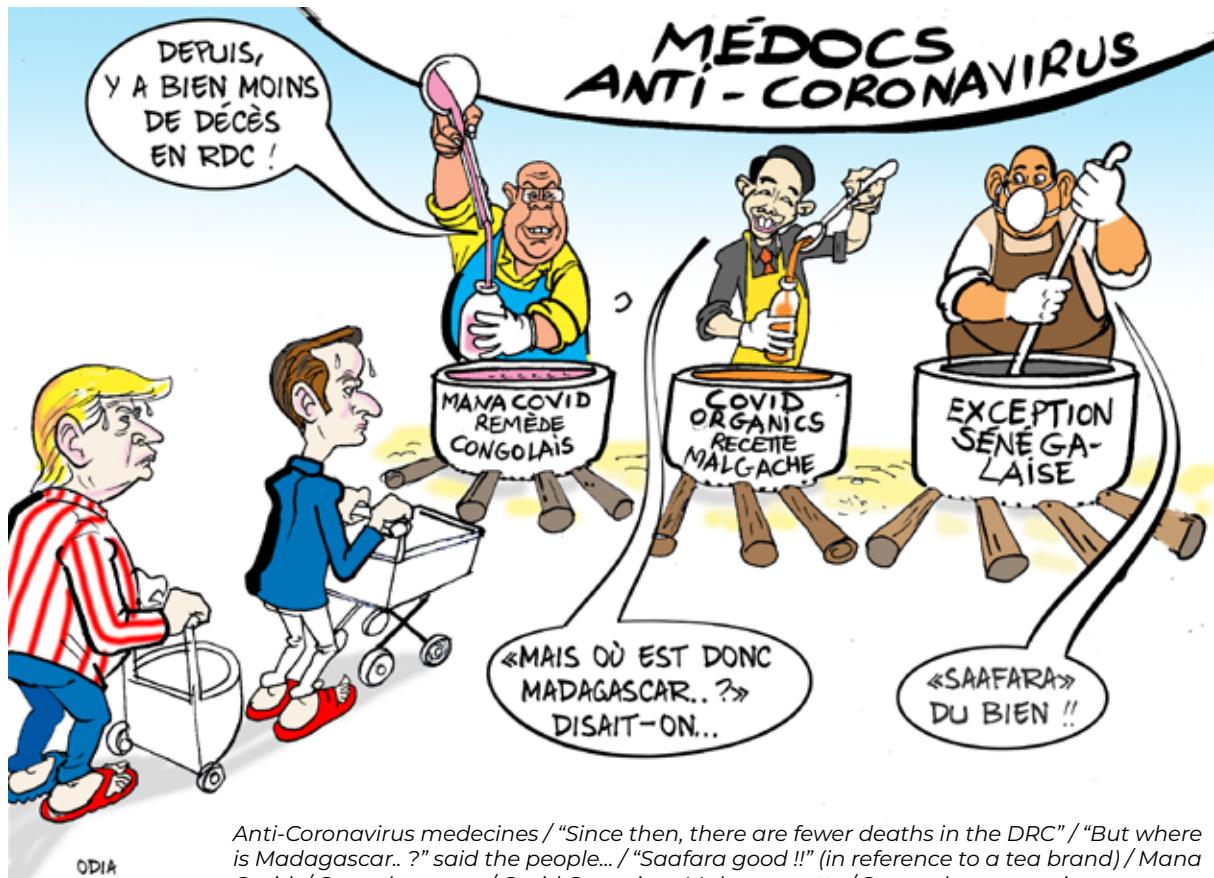
DÉNI DE CORONAVIRUS



Glez (Burkina Faso)

Coronavirus denial / Not seeing the evidence / Not listening to doctors / Putting your hands over your face

Odia (Senegal)



Zapiro (South Africa)



Gado (Tanzania-Kenya)



Chappatte
(Switzerland)

"The third dose is recommended for people with special conditions"

"What conditions ?"

"Being rich !"

Africa needs vaccines



“

In South Africa, we have one of the highest GINI coefficients in the world. There are significant inequalities between rich and poor. In South Africa this is often a question of race. You have to be aware of this, and most caricatures have tried to look at these problems, which have been accentuated by the pandemic.

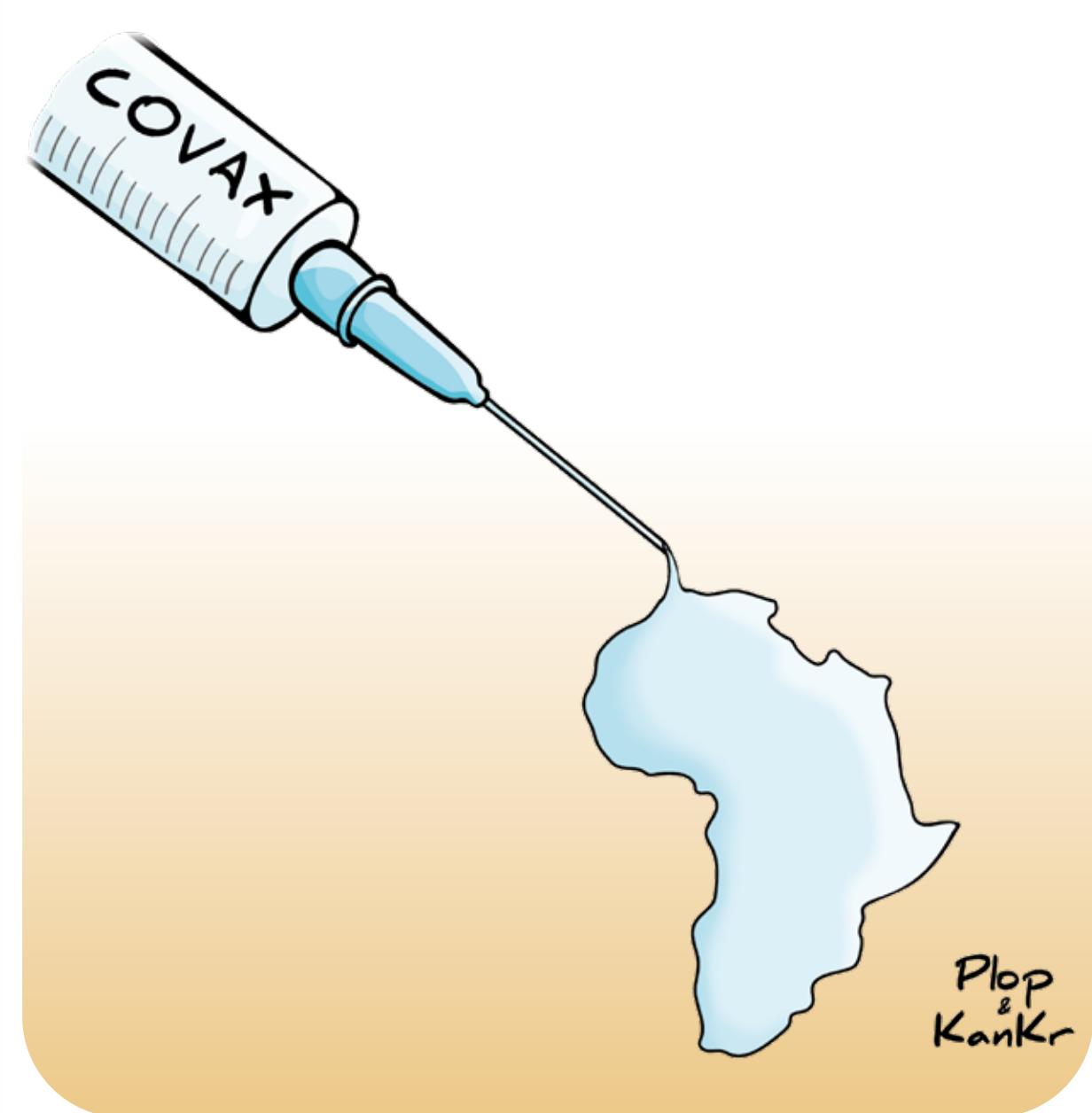
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Zapiro, press cartoonist (South Africa)

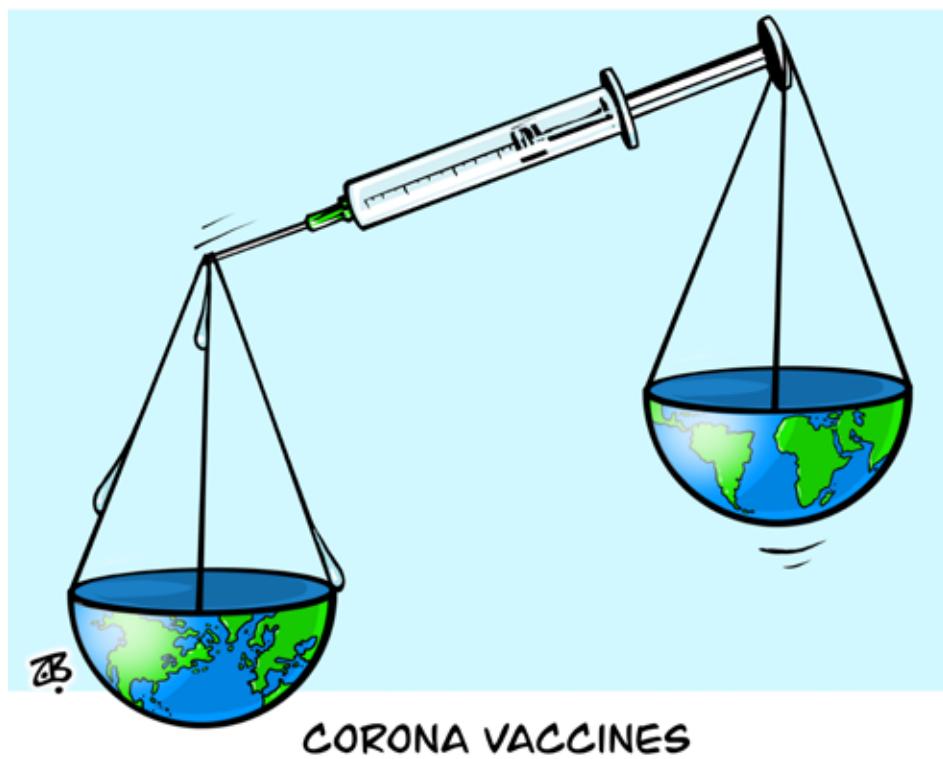
* The Gini index (or coefficient) is a synthetic indicator that captures the level of inequality for a given variable and population.



Victor Ndula (Kenya)



Emad Hajjaj (Jordan)



Victor Ndula (Kenya)



HOW THE PANDEMIC HAS IMPACTED INFORMATION

The COVID-19 pandemic has gone hand in hand with what's called the "infodemic" – a term invented by the World Health Organization to describe the tide of fake and misleading information about COVID-19.

We have observed that incorrect information or indeed a lack of information about coronavirus can have serious consequences in terms of people's health and welfare. In some of the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa where the programme has been deployed, our greatest challenge has been to reach people living in remote, rural areas and ensure that they understand how serious the pandemic is and what steps they could take to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

In other countries, governments lacked transparency or indeed themselves contributed to disinformation, which meant that media organisations sometimes had to intervene and take over from national health establishments, and provide objective information about coronavirus.

The pandemic made the importance of the media and their vital role regarding public information undeniably clear. All the programme's partner organisations have played their part: creating animations on the importance of social distancing and how the vaccines work, writing research reports about how the pandemic was affecting different sectors of the country, and creating COVID-19 information podcasts.

Free Press Unlimited

Carrilho
(Portugal)





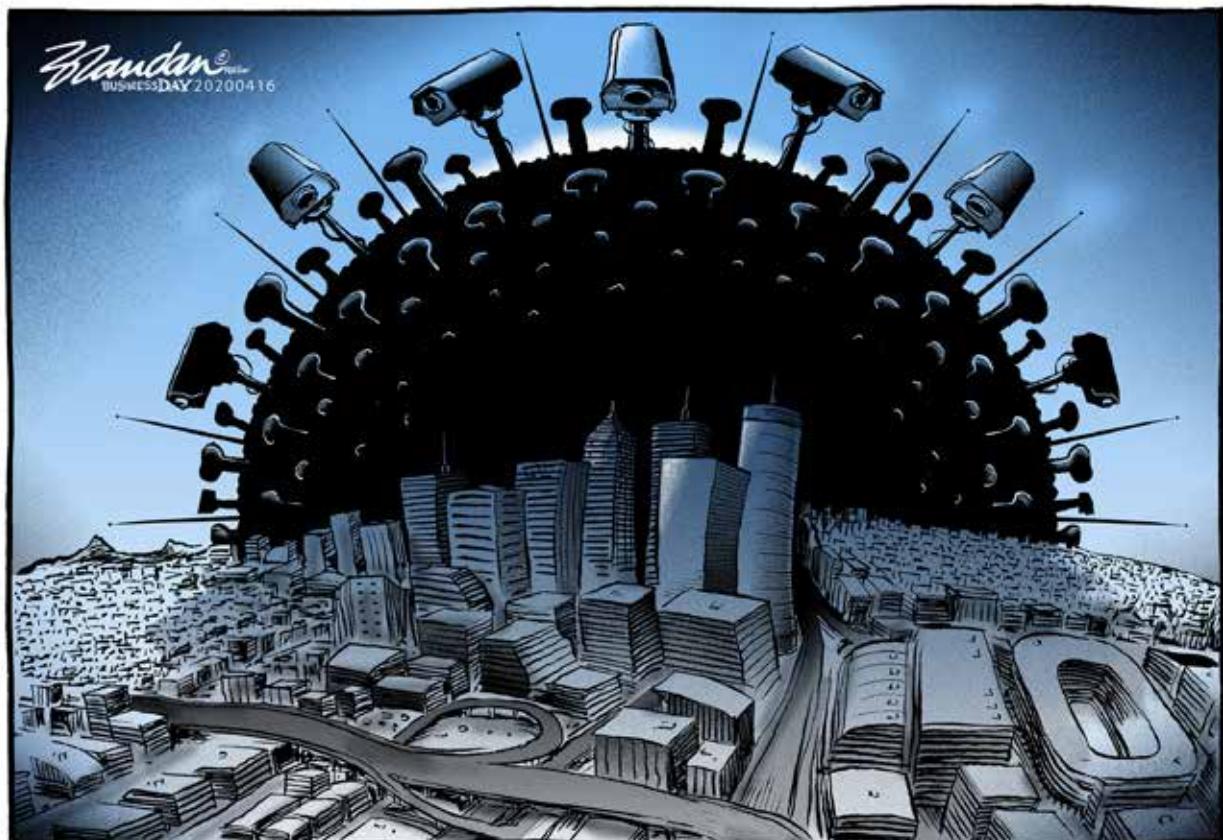
Emad Hajjaj
(Jordan)

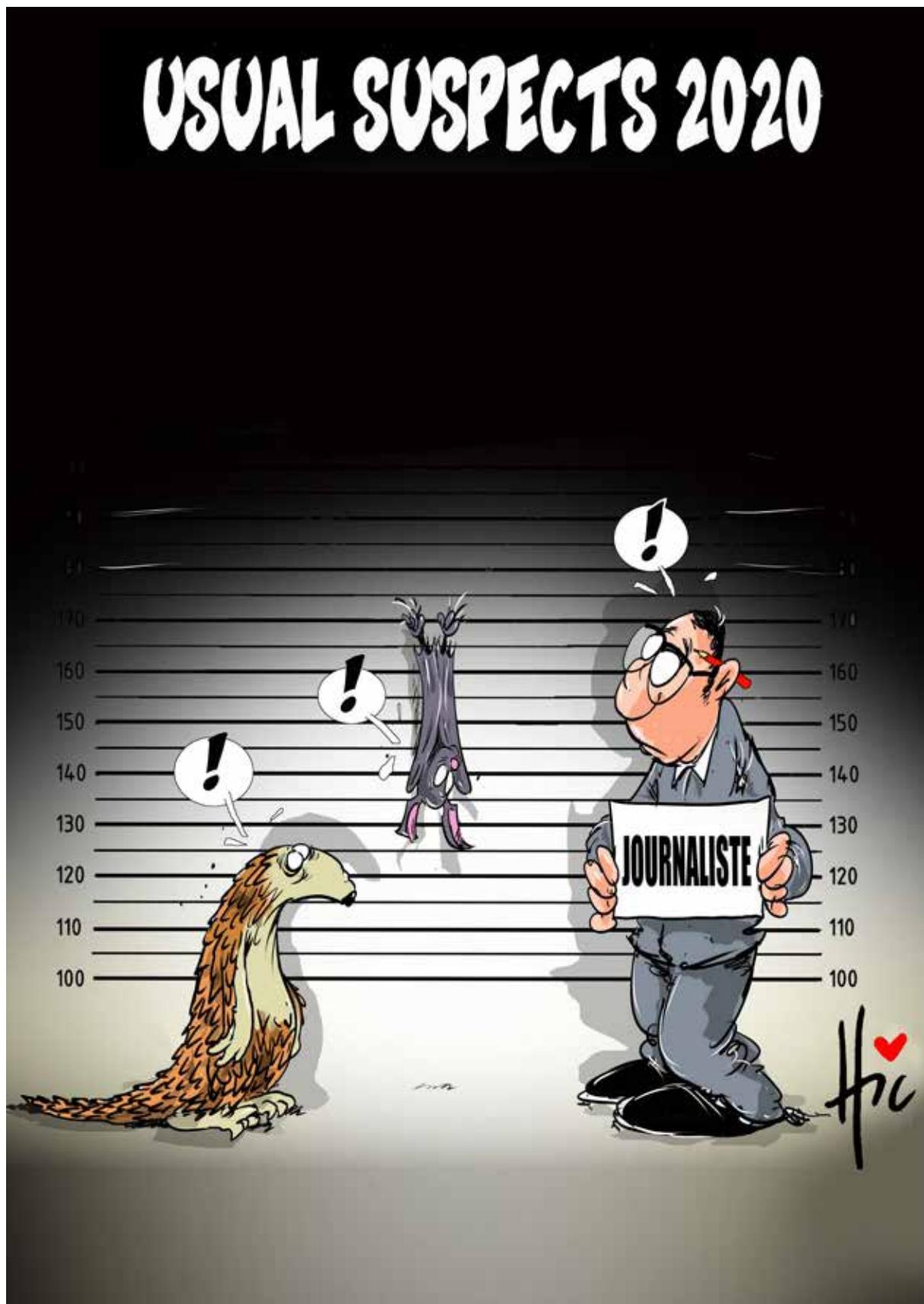


Gado (Tanzania-Kenya)

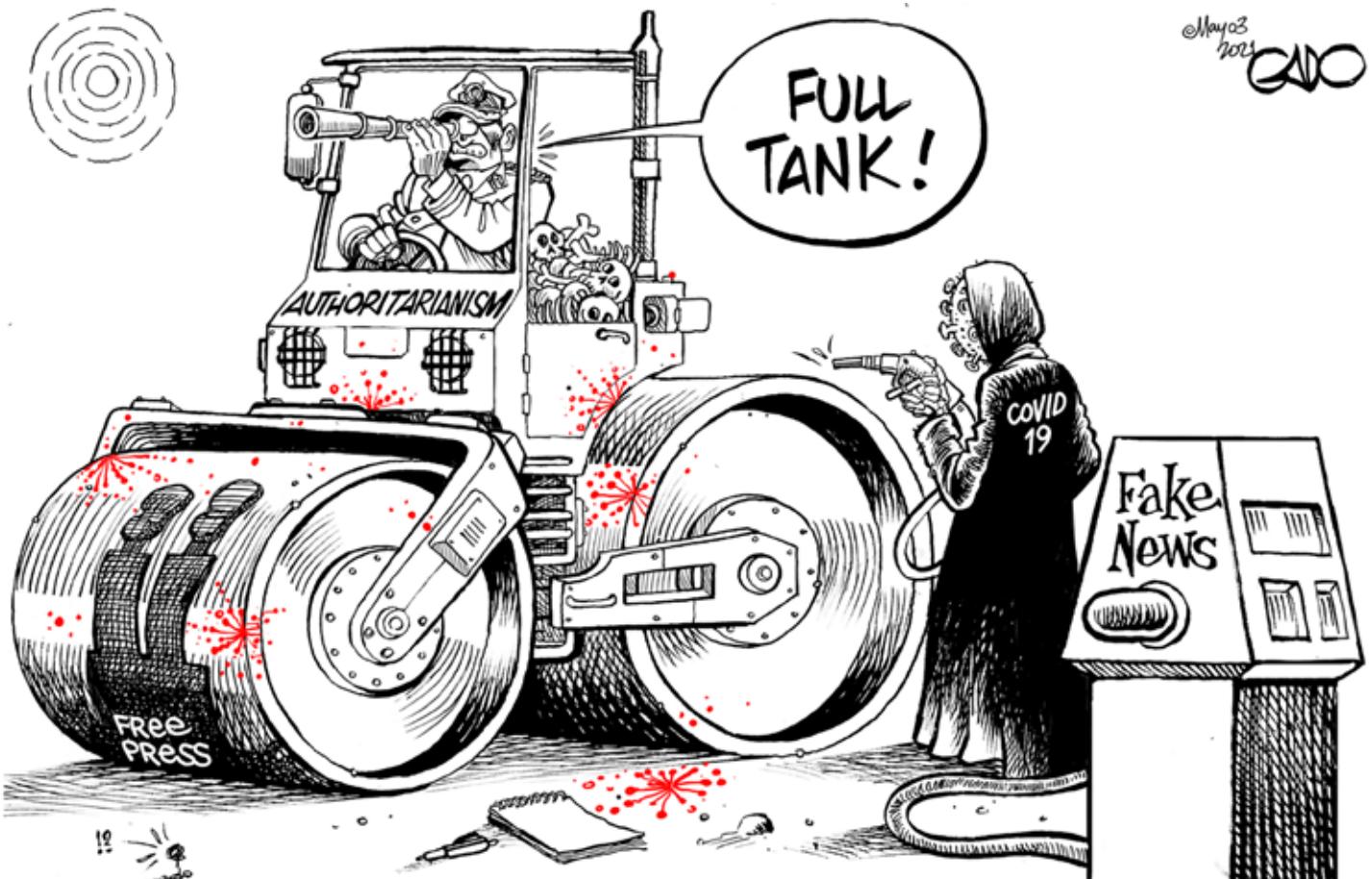


BRandan (South Africa)





Journalist



“

Satirists have to be pretty careful at the moment, particularly in a region of the world with authoritarian, dictatorial regimes that have been strengthened by the pandemic (...) History show us that it is at times like these that all sorts of things can happen (...). We must continue to focus on the police and the authorities and continue to speak the truth to those in power.”

”

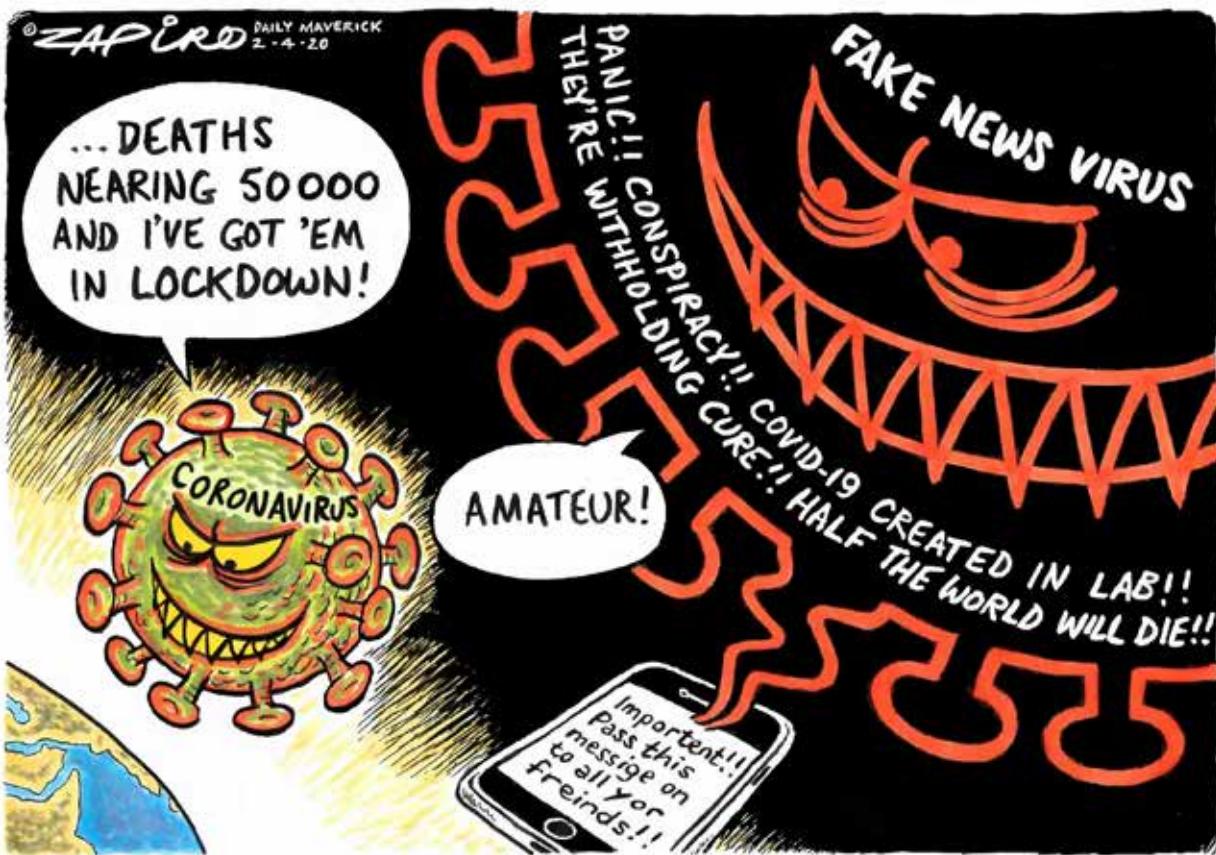
Gado, press cartoonist (Tanzania-Kenya)

“

The fake news phenomenon has become really frightening. Particularly on WhatsApp. I've done some cartoons to try and embarrass people who put out such information without checking the facts, without checking that it comes from a reliable source.

”

Zapiro, press cartoonist (South Africa)



Zapiro (South Africa)

Glez (Burkina Faso)



Press / Freedom of expression

“

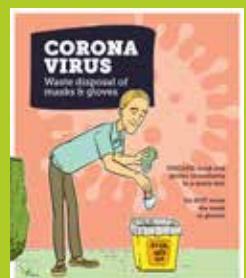
The sword of Damocles is particularly keen in Burkina Faso, so, as well as denouncing Covid-related corruption or the neglect of other diseases, we had to include messages about preventive measures in our usual press cartoon, or even put our awareness-raising hats on, because cartoons are particularly powerful in countries where most of the population is illiterate and there are 60 nationally recognised languages living side by side.”

”

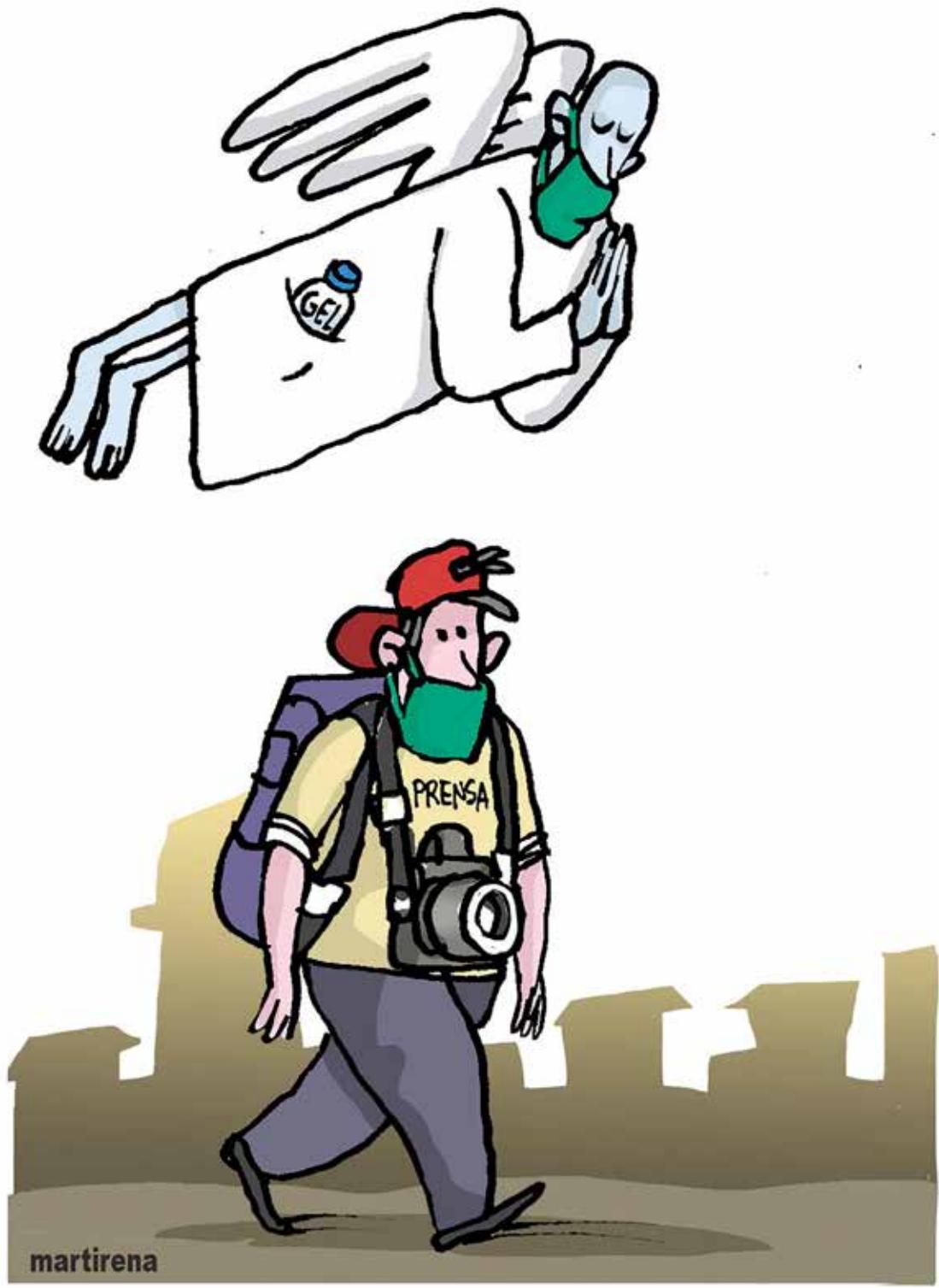
Glez, press cartoonist (Burkina Faso)

Without abandoning their determination to look critically at current events and the actions of their governments, cartoonists on the African continent were quick to add a new hat and support any efforts made by governments and NGOs to raise public awareness about the pandemic.

Examples include a campaign against fake news, conducted in Ivory Coast by members of the *Tache d'Encre* cartoonists' association, in collaboration with the *Groupement des Éditeurs de Presse de Côte d'Ivoire* (GEPCI), the *Fonds de Soutien et de Développement de la Presse* (FSDP) and the Ministry of Communications, Damien Glez's work for the MediaSahel project and Yemi's posters in Ethiopia.

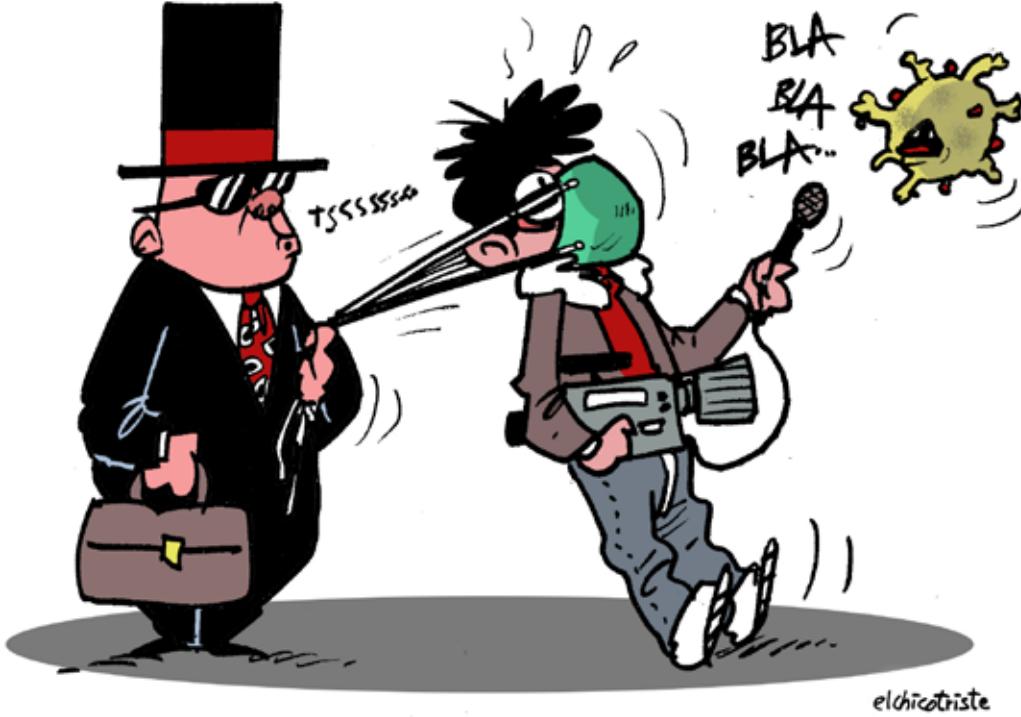


Martirena (Cuba)



Press

Elchicotriste
(Spain)

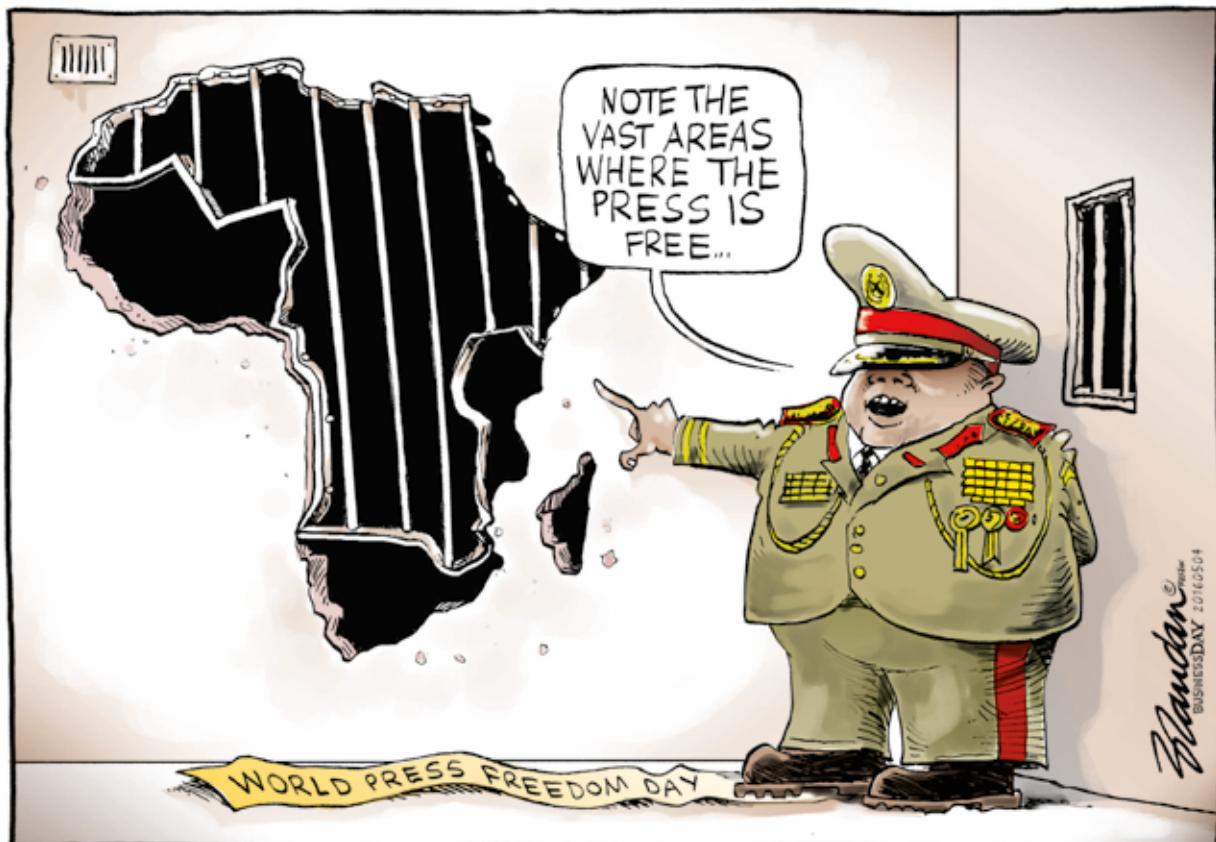


Pov (Madagascar)



"It goes down... Worrying." / "What?! Covid cases? B... But it's..." / "Press freedom index."

BRandan (South Africa)

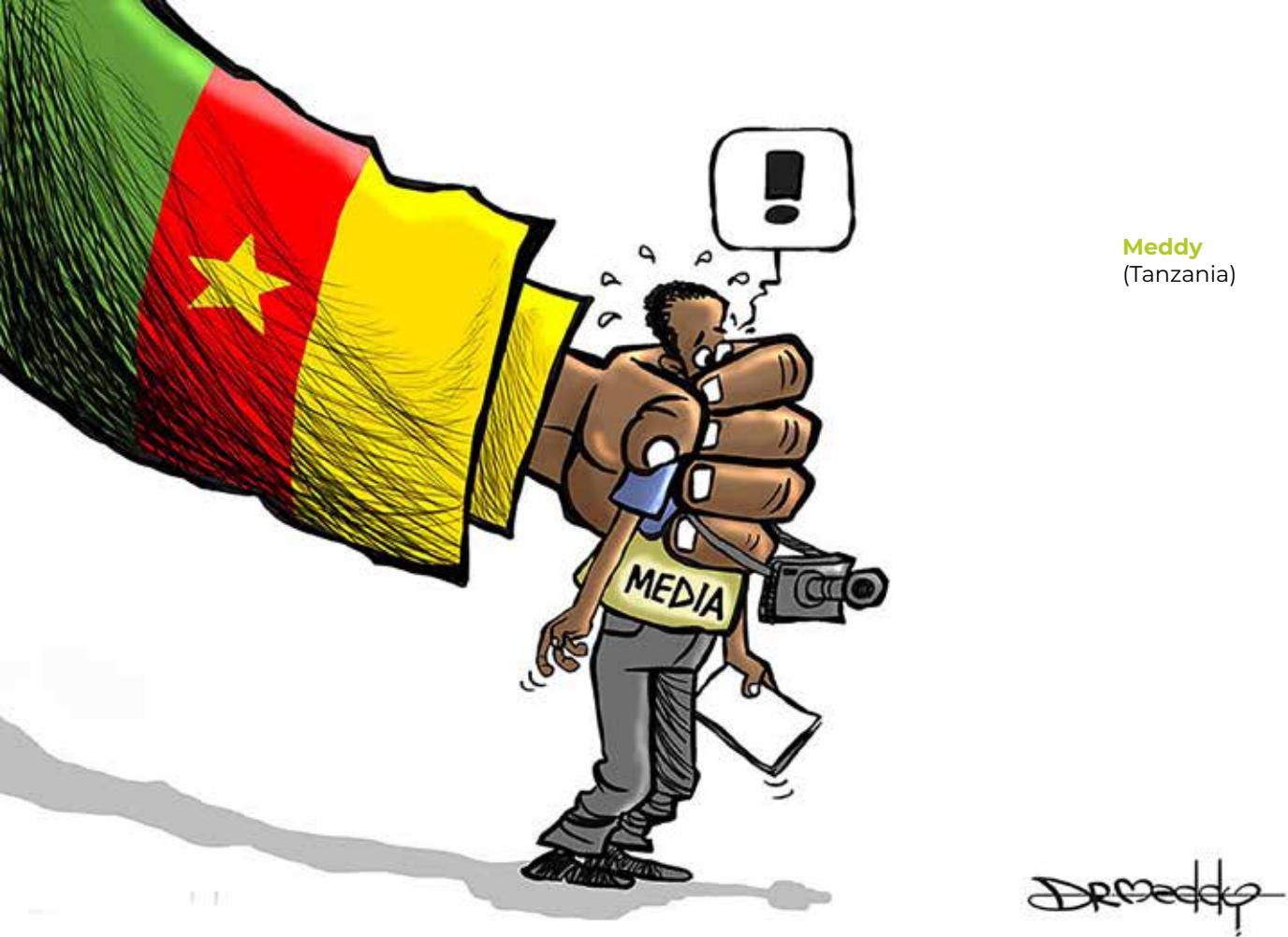


LA SITUATION DE LA PRESSE EN ALGÉRIE

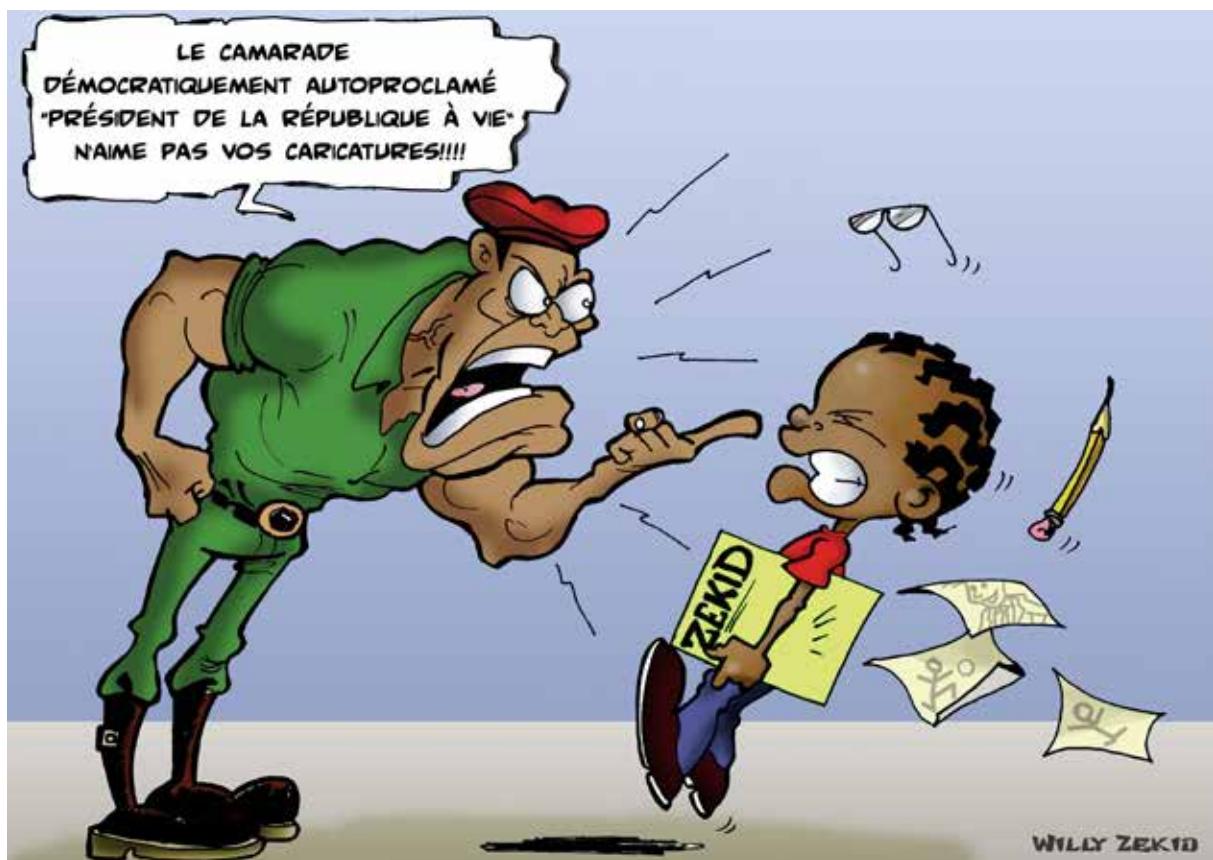


Dilem (Algeria)

Press situation in Algeria / "This is the newsroom!"



Willy Zekid (Republic of Congo)

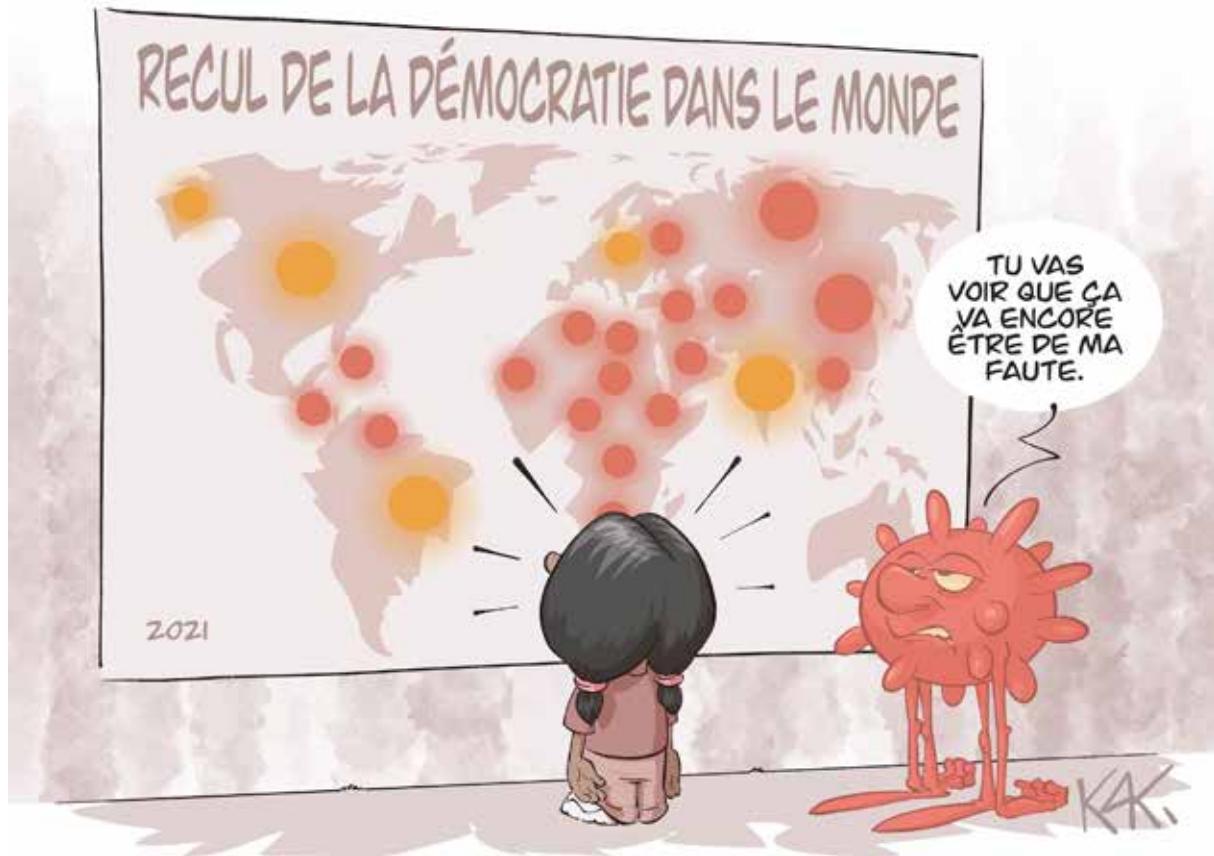


"The democratically self-proclaimed president of the republic for life does not like your caricatures."

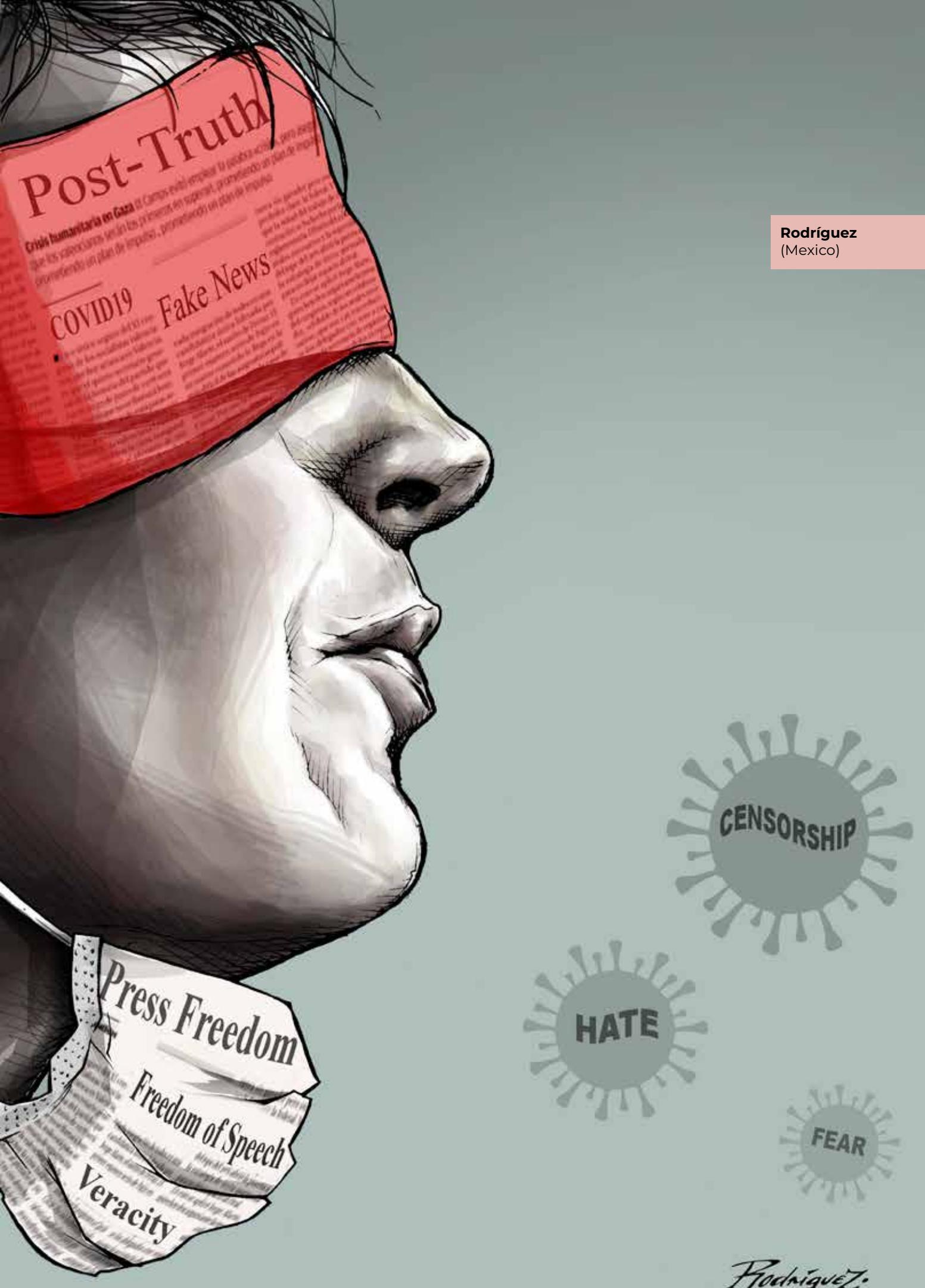
Zohoré
(Ivory Coast)



Kak (France)



Decline of democracy in the world / "You'll see, I will be blamed for that as well..."



Rodríguez
(Mexico)

CARTOONISTS



BRandan (South Africa)



Carrilho (Portugal)



Chappatte (Switzerland)



Darío (Mexico)



Dilem (Algeria)



Elchicotriste (Spain)



Gado (Tanzania-Kenya)



Glez (Burkina Faso)



Emad Hajjaj (Jordan)



Kak (France)



Le Hic (Algeria)



Martirena (Cuba)



Meddy (Tanzania)



Victor Ndula (Kenya)



Odia (Senegal)



Piçarra (Angola)



Plop & KanKr (France)



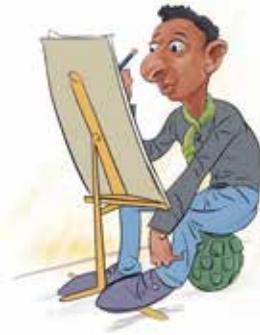
Pov (Madagascar)



Rodríguez
(Mexico)



Alaa Satir
(Sudan)



Alex Tefera
(Ethiopia)



Willy Zekid
(Rep. of Congo)



Yemi (Ethiopia)



Zapiro (South Africa)



Zohoré (Ivory Coast)

PARTNERS





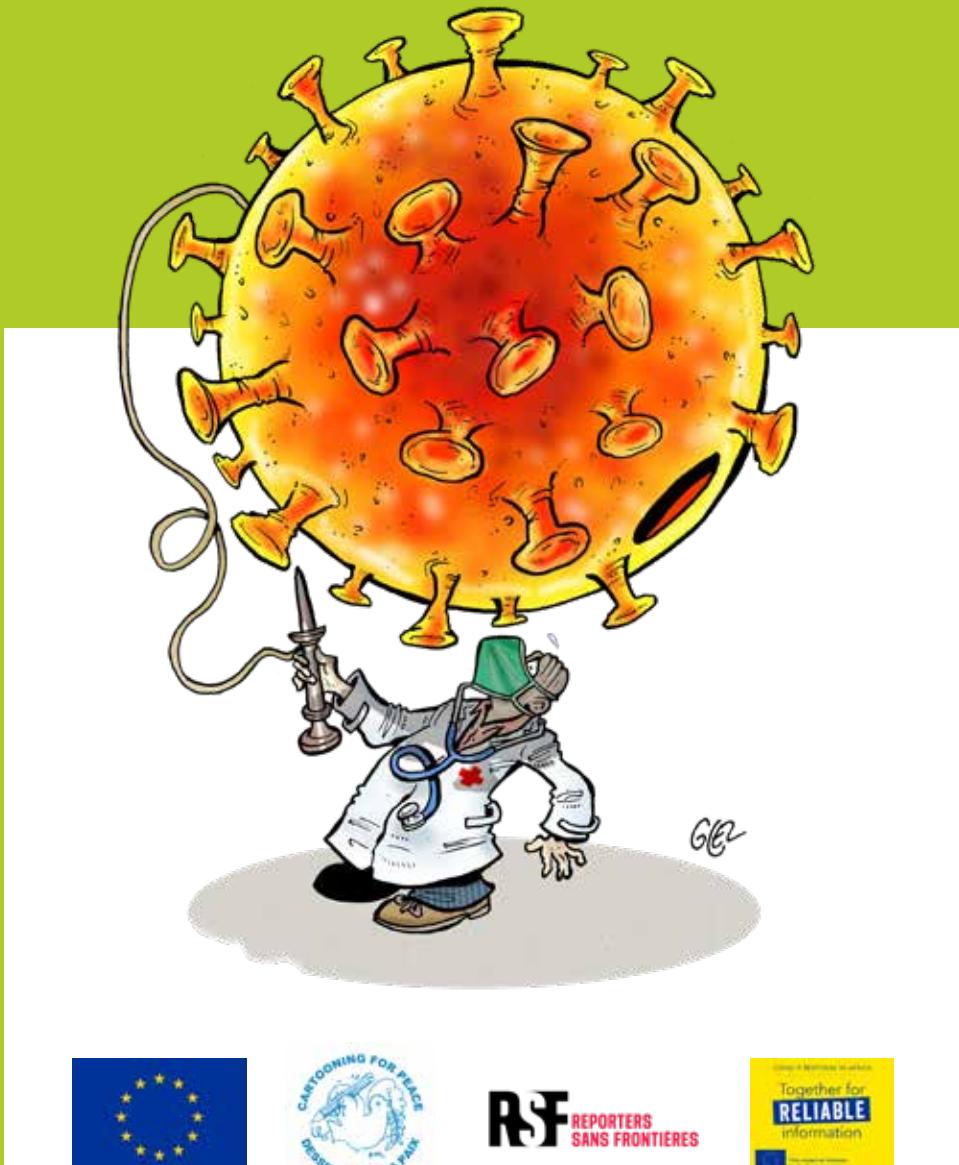
Cartooning for Peace was created in 2006 on the initiative of Kofi Annan, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former Secretary-General of the United Nations, and press cartoonist Plantu. Cartooning for Peace is an international network of cartoonists committed to promoting freedom of expression, Human Rights and mutual respect amongst people of different cultures and beliefs, through the universal language of press cartoons. The current president of this not-for-profit organisation governed by the French law of 1901 is the French cartoonist Kak.

www.cartooningforpeace.org



Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is an independent NGO which has consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF). RSF's work worldwide is based on its positive, ambitious and ideal vision. We want "all human beings to have access to the news and information they need so that they can be aware of, understand and form their own opinion about the challenges posed by the world and their environment". RSF strives to promote "journalistic freedom, pluralism and independence, through the defence of those who embody these ideals", in the same spirit as the reference texts on human rights and the great declarations on journalism ethics. Without quality journalism in both north and south, local and global challenges cannot be addressed effectively: armed conflicts, extremism, corruption, discrimination, violations of human rights, asymmetric information, etc. To achieve its goals, RSF works with local media and funding organisations, enabling it to continue its operations and develop its activities in support of its mission and vision.

www.rsf.org



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Cover: cartoon from **Gado** (Tanzania-Kenya)

Back cover: cartoon from **Glez** (Burkina Faso)

Graphic design: Suzanne Grossmann

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