



Editor's Note, March 05, 2021

Basic rights in Africa are under threat from 'digital authoritarianism', [a report](#) from the African Digital Rights Network (ADRN) warned this week.

The ten-country study - the first of its kind - offers a glimpse into the dark side of Africa's digital revolution.

It found that there were 115 examples of methods used to close civic space between 2000 - 2020, almost double the number of steps to open it. These range from surveillance and internet shutdowns, to price hikes and social media taxes.

The report warns that this poses a 'serious threat' to democratic governance.

It could also worsen the global digital divide, referring to unequal access to information and communications technology.

This is most pronounced in Africa, where average internet access remains the lowest internationally at around 30%. Mobile access stood at just 26% in sub-Saharan Africa at the end of 2019 [according to the GSMA](#).

A good example are so-called social media taxes.

When [Uganda introduced a \\$0.05 daily fee](#) to access social media platforms in July 2018, internet users plummeted by around 30% in just three months. Similar measures have been introduced in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Cameroon.

Thankfully such examples are limited, and aren't hampering efforts to reduce the price of data - a major

barrier to access.

According to the Alliance for Affordable Internet, the average cost of 1GB of data in Africa **more than halved** from 10.7% of monthly income in 2015 to 4.3% in 2019.

That's good, but given the digital economy's amplified importance in a post-pandemic world, it's worth keeping an eye on this trend.

This week's Picks

From The Continent

Ethiopia's government has said it might postpone a much-anticipated liberalization of its telecoms sector if bids for a planned new licence fail to meet a minimum amount set by the government. The announcement comes amid growing scrutiny of one of Africa's most promising economies due to rising instability and a recent internal conflict in its northern state of Tigray. **More: [Bloomberg](#)**

Kenya's Equity Bank has launched a \$685m lending facility aimed at helping small and medium-sized enterprises recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The fund comes with guarantees of \$319m from donors including the African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, and France's development finance institution Proparco. **More: [Nasdaq](#)**

THE WEEKLY STAT

59,000,000

The number of Africans that could be pushed into extreme poverty by the end of 2021 if the impact of the coronavirus pandemic is not contained, according to the UN's Economic Commission for Africa. More: [Reliefweb](#)

The Global Perspective

The International Finance Corporation, the World's Bank's private sector arm, has invested \$24m in Estonia-based ride-hailing start-up Bolt, to expand on-demand transport services in Europe and Africa. Competition in the space is heating up on the continent, from Uber to a growing list of local start-ups. More: [TechCrunch](#)

Dubai-based ports and logistics company DP World plans to invest \$190m to upgrade a port terminal at Angola's Porto de Luanda, part of a 20-year concession agreement signed in January. DP World is on an expansion drive on the continent, which includes a recent \$1.1bn deal to develop a deep water port in Senegal, as well as plans to invest in Sudan. More: [ArabianBusiness](#)

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