

AFRICANS RISING
FOR JUSTICE, PEACE & DIGNITY

#AfricanRising#25May2017



2017
LAUNCH REPORT

AFRICANS RISING

A GROWING AND SELF-SELECTING COLLECTIVE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, NGOS, PEOPLES AND POPULAR SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS, INTELLECTUALS, ARTISTS, SPORTS PEOPLE, CULTURAL ACTIVISTS AND OTHERS, ACROSS THE CONTINENT AND AFRICAN DIASPORA.

Vision

A decentralised, citizen-owned future that will build support and solidarity for local struggles, local leadership and immerse activists in the grassroots work of building social movements from below and beyond borders.

Brief history of *Africans Rising*

The process that started out as the *Africa Civil Society Centre* (October 2015), widened into the *Africa Civil Society Initiative* (May 2016) and since 24th August 2016 is known as *Africans Rising for Justice, Peace & Dignity* is the result of a bottom-up series of on and offline consultations and dialogues between and amongst social movements, NGOs, peoples and popular social justice movements, intellectuals, artists, sports people, cultural activists and others, across the AU-determined regions of the continent, including the Diaspora.

Organising Point

Unanimous support to use African Liberation Day (Africa Day) on 25 May each year as the apex organising moment and, 25 May 2017 for the launch of *Africans Rising*.

Executive Summary

Thursday, 25 May 2017 dawned like any other day everywhere on the African continent, with one minor difference, that there was in the air, considerable palpation, tension, anxiety and, energy about fulfilling a promise of the *Kilimanjaro Declaration*:

'We commit to mobilising our people in Africa as we launch this Movement on the 25th May 2017, when we deepen the meaning of African Liberation Day and call on all sectors of our society to mobilise and organise events in every African country that will build the momentum towards the genuine liberation of our beautiful continent.'

This promise has been fulfilled.

We can say that with equal measure of humility and confidence that indeed, the promise of the two-hundred and seventy-two initial founders at the Arusha conference in August 2016 that, *Africans Rising for Justice, Peace & Dignity*, was launched on #25May2017 with a decentralised, people driven launch, connecting struggles and, establishing a Pan-African movement for justice, peace and dignity.

Two thousand volunteers, partners, supporters and friends organised a total of 300 actions & events in 42 countries on the African continent and the Diaspora, to mark the launch of Africans Rising, united by the hashtags #AfricansRising & #25May2017

On the media front, #AfricansRising & #25May2017 was included in at least 200 local & regional, national & international radio, print, television and online channels on African Liberation Day, 25 May 2017.

On Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, SoundCloud, LinkedIn, ThunderClap and www.africans-rising.org #AfricansRising & #25May2017 connected with 10 Million other users to mark the launch of a new Pan-African movement for justice, peace & dignity.

The promise to launch this movement, differently from what had been done in the past, is manifest – working together, we have succeeded in fulfilling the first promise of the Kilimanjaro Declaration. Now, we keep moving forward together to fulfill the next promise:

'We are committed to a decentralised, citizen owned future that will build support and solidarity for local struggles, empower local leadership and immerse our activists in grassroots work of building social movements from below and beyond borders.'

Pamoja, In Solidarity,

Muhammed Lamin Saidykhan
Coordinator

Kumi Naidoo
Launch Director

“

Silence and fear are paralysing us in Africa and the DRC. The Africans Rising movement is God sent – we in DRC need it for the salvation and transformation of our country.”

Benita Afumba, Africans Rising DRC launch committee member

Introduction

The consensus agreement from the Arusha Conference was to launch the movement on [#25May2017](#) with a non-traditional launch – not a single conference type event but rather a series of events and actions all across the African continent – rallying together as one Africa, to build peace, seek justice and manifest our dignity.

There was consensus that this format would be more suited to the idea of connecting our struggles for social justice across the continent more effectively and, was captured in this extract from the Kilimanjaro Declaration:

"We commit to mobilising our people in Africa as we launch this Movement on the 25th May 2017, when we deepen the meaning of African Liberation Day and call on all sectors of our society to mobilise and organise events in every African country that will build the momentum towards the genuine liberation of our beautiful continent."

The Kilimanjaro Declaration

One of the key aims of the launch was to ensure that #AfricansRising inspires millions of African people to demand from their governments, good governance as they all work collectively towards common goals of peace, social inclusion and shared prosperity. We aim to let our leaders know that we have had enough of this unfair and unjust system and we wanted to make clear our intention to work together, to build a new Africa.



Africans Rising founders at the movement's validation conference in Arusha, Tanzania in August, 2016

African Liberation Day 25 May 2017

"The decentralised launch of Africans Rising is not just the launch of a movement, it is the beginning of a change in consciousness towards our aspiration for an Africa with Justice, Peace and Dignity. One that will start at the grassroots and continue until our all our people and leaders across the continent recognise the positive power of African Unity."

Kumi Naidoo, Africans Rising Launch Director

Launch activities were centred on a number of unifying action points that all participants were asked to engage.



Africans Rising members gather for a photo during the movement's launch in Maputo, Mozambique.



Participants in Arusha, Tanzania launch Africans Rising



A launch participant in Arusha, Tanzania



Africans Rising members during the launch in Noukchott, Mauritania



Africans Rising launch organisers in Bakavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) address participants

Red was chosen as the unifying symbolic colour that unites the various peaceful mobilisations across the continent because:

- It symbolises the sacrifice and blood spilt by so many before us, across the continent for our liberation from colonial rule;
- It signifies the ongoing bleeding of wealth from the continent through illicit financial outflows, and The destruction of Africa's natural resources which benefits greedy corporations and a narrow economic and political elite on the continent who live like nobles, while the majority of people suffer the daily indignity of dehumanising poverty.
- Red is also a reminder that irrespective of the country we call home and the religions we embrace; irrespective of who colonised us and the languages we might use from that past; all of us have the same red blood.



Participants at a launch on historic Goree Island, off the coast of Senegal

There were two proposed actions:

Action #1

- Between 12:00 (noon) and 14:00
- Gather in your group, club, movement, office or alone
- Wear red or have something red on you or in the background
- Read out the Kilimanjaro Declaration
- Read out your list of demands
- Stand up together to signify your intention to build a new Africa and say: "WE ARE A UNITED AFRICA. WE ARE AFRICANS RISING. FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND DIGNITY."



Youth in Nanyuki, Kenya participate in the Africans Rising launch with a march



Africans Rising members in Hargeisa, Somaliland read out the Kilimanjaro Declaration and their list of demands for change



Students at the University of Ife in Ife, Nigeria launch Africans Rising



Africans Rising members read the Kilimanjaro Declaration at a launch in Harare, Zimbabwe

“ We demand good governance as we fight corruption and impunity
 We demand our Zimbabwean currency with value
 All we need is that Zimbabwe that used to be the grain basket of Africa
 We demand women’s rights and freedoms across society
 Young women demand access to land
 We demand efficient social services
 We demand climate and environmental justice
 We want to live happily again – we miss the 1980s and early 1990s.
 The list of demands launch participants in Zimbabwe read out ”

Action #2

- Between 19:00 (7pm) and 20:00 (8pm)
- Gather in your group, club, movement, office, with your family and, friends
- Wear red or have something red on you or in the background
- Turn off your lights in solidarity with the millions of Africans with no access to electricity
- Light a candle (the more people with candles the better!)
- Read out the Kilimanjaro Declaration
- Read out your list of demands
- Stand up together to signify your intention to build a new Africa and say:
"WE ARE A UNITED AFRICA. WE ARE AFRICANS RISING. FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND DIGNITY."



Africans Rising members in Port Louis, Mauritius light candles in solidarity with fellow Africans without electricity



Candlelight in Juba, South Sudan to light the way for brighter leadership



Click here to view video: <http://bit.ly/2tctPk2>

We closed the event by singing “Ishe Komborera Africa” the Shona version of the iconic hymn “Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika” (God Bless Africa). It was a deeply moving moment, in which I felt the spirit of unity and solidarity with the rest of Africa—so present during the days of the liberation struggle—rising again in our midst.

Doug Coultart, This Flag movement, Zimbabwe

The launch of Africans Rising took place in the following 42 countries:

Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Germany and United States of America .

“We are not re-inventing the wheel but continue to work with people-led movements and groups to resist and defend their rights in any part of Africa.”

Muhammed Lamin Saidykhan, Africans Rising Coordinator

African citizens and descendants living outside the continent participated in a launch on Goree Island in Senegal, a renowned historic site linked to the Transatlantic Slave Trade.



Africans Rising launch at the historic House of Slaves on Goree Island, off the coast of Senegal

Throughout the mobilization for the launch and at the conclusion, there was such energy and inspiration all around, we felt fantastic to have been part of a successful event standing in solidarity with folks in Africa especially. Those who came, and others who sent messages of support, understood the importance of this new pan-Africanist platform and are excited to continue in the movement building agenda.

Nunu Kidane, US-based activist attending the Goree Island Launch

Aside from the proposed launch actions, many launch events involved participation in a variety of special activities. These included:

- Mural paintings in N'jamena, Niger and on Goree Island, Senegal
- A march to the summit of a sacred hill for a traditional ceremony near Durban, South Africa
- A quiz competition of school students in Kono, Sierra Leone
- A webinar by the Coalition of African Lesbians on women's rights in Nairobi, Kenya
- A conversation with women parliamentarians in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- A town hall meeting in Gaborone, Botswana
- The launch of a sexual reproductive rights campaign in Kaduna, Nigeria
- The composition of a song by women land rights activists in Sierra Leone
- A musical performance in Bonn, Germany
- An interfaith prayer service in Oakland, USA



Participants who joined a hike to the top of a sacred hill to launch Africans Rising in Durban, South Africa



German-based band, BonnAfrica, perform at a launch event in Bonn, Germany

"So, we must take the Kilimanjaro Declaration as a manifesto and based on it, prepare the upcoming youth voters in Egypt."

Hassan Ali Ghazaly, Africans Rising launch organiser in Cairo, Egypt.



A young participant makes a statement while an artist performs for others at the launch in Juba, South Sudan



Spoken word artist, Tula, performing at the Juba launch



Youth activists in Banjul, Gambia kicked off Africans Rising with a soccer match



Many working Africans unable to attend launch activities reported that they participated in the launch of Africans Rising with actions in their workplaces

Actions & events connected to the launch, around the world included wearing an item of RED clothing and turning of their lights between 7 and 8pm and, lighting a candle in solidarity with millions of Africans across the continent who still live in energy poverty.

Media Engagement

Africans Rising initiated a broad media campaign aimed at publicising both Africans Rising as an emerging movement and the launch and mobilising membership of the movement and participation in the launch. This campaign targeted users of both traditional media and social media platforms.

Traditional Media Engagement

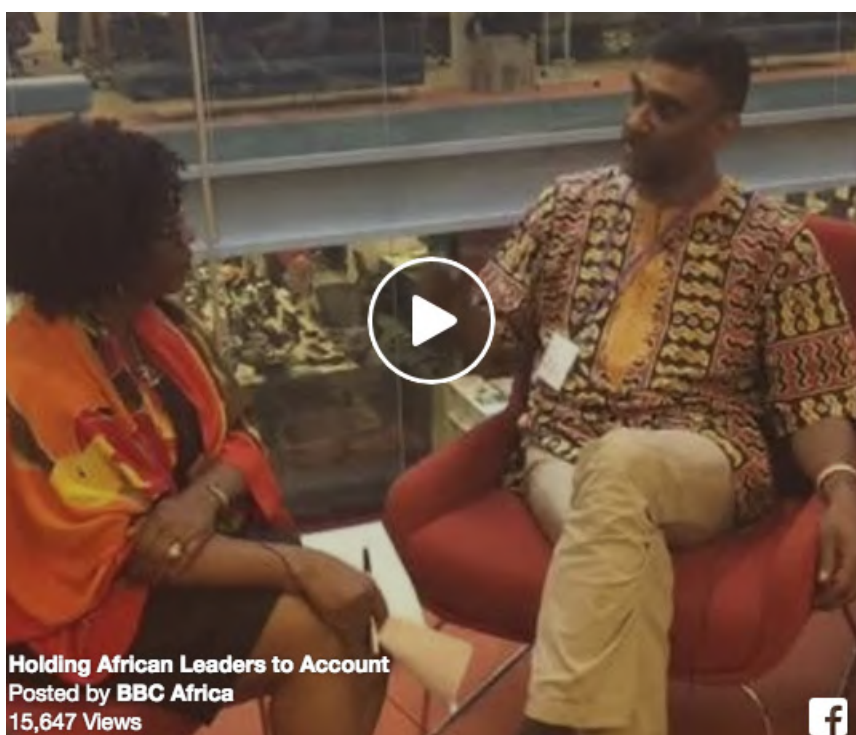
In the lead up to the launch and on launch day, a diversity of local, national, continental and international media platforms was engaged, distributing information on the movement and its launch to their audiences. This coverage included broadcast interviews with Africans Rising leadership, Opinion-Editorials and print articles referring to the movement and launch. Coverage of Africans Rising and the launch was featured by:

- Leading global news providers reaching African audiences of millions each, including the BBC, Voice of America and Deutsche Welle.
- Continental and regional pan-African news providers including pan-African TV network e-News Channel Africa (eNCA), pan-African social justice news portal Pambazuka News, French-language pan-African newsmagazine, Jeune Afrique, West Africa Democracy Radio (WADR), French-language North African news agency Maghreb Arab Press (MAP) and French-language West African Newswire.
- National news providers including SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) News, KTN (Kenya Television Network) News, leading Senegalese daily newspaper, Sud Quotien, Ghana News Agency and Global Times News (Sierra Leone).
- Local, regional and national media in the United States and Europe including The Guardian UK newspaper, The International Business Times UK, US-based news site Quartz, US-based Pacifica Radio Network, Spain's highest circulation daily newspaper, El Pais, US-based Post-Carbon Radio and the New York Amsterdam News newspaper.

Online and social media platforms enabled Africans Rising to extend the reach of the launch, and participation in it, far beyond what would have been possible by traditional means.



Africans Rising Coordinator Muhammed Lamin Saidykhan speaking to media in Dakar, Senegal on the eve of the launch



Africans Rising Launch Director Kumi Naidoo in a video interview with BBC Africa on their Facebook Live platform ahead of the launch

The inaugural Africans Rising Photo Contest was also organised and held as part of launch efforts. Some 560 photographers from 22 African countries, the UK, France and the US submitted entries along the theme, "I Am African/Africans Rising". Photographer Kureng Dapel, whose winner photo was taken in a part of Nigeria devastated by the Boko Haram insurgency - wins a one-month photography residency.



As a movement concerned with authentic portrayal of Africans, and with re-imaging ourselves beyond stereotypical definitions rooted in colonialism, this contest served to advance that mission.

Conclusion

I feel more connected [to Africans Rising] now because I feel like I belong to the story that we are writing to reveal the identity of the Africans and to reinvent Africa.

Aminata Siahoué, Africans Rising member in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

The launch of Africans Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity, after two years of consultations, marks the first step in a journey towards building a pan-African movement that offers solidarity to and support for all progressive grassroots, national, regional and continental struggles.

The Kilimanjaro Declaration, our founding charter, resolves that our work should build a local, national, continental and global campaign that is expanding space for civil political action; fighting for women's rights across society; focusing our struggles on the right to equality and dignity; demanding good governance as we fight corruption and impunity; and demanding climate and environmental justice.

As an emerging, de-centralised movement committed to a citizen-owned future, Africans Rising belongs to you. We call on all people of African descent, on the continent and in the diaspora, as well as partners, allies and supporters to engage the movement in your activism and our efforts to bring about the Africa we want. In the coming weeks and months, as we begin the work of a people's movement, we will be looking to members for guidance, direction and action. Your work - activism, advocacy, engagement and energy - is what drives this movement.

We would like to sincerely thank all who participated in making Africans Rising a reality - from our validation as a movement to the official launch. Congratulations! We look forward to working with you as we move forward to an Africa that is just, peaceful and dignified.





Appendix



Africans Rising Launch Events in Pictures and Videos:

<https://docs.google.com/a/africans-rising.org/spreadsheets/d/1g5iTN627kz8gjepbzbKFPSwsuWT0vQur5P3NGlt39Rc/edit?usp=sharing>

Media Coverage of Africans Rising And Launch

<https://africans-rising.org/2017/05/17/africans-risings-kumi-naidoo-on-bbc-world-service/>

<https://africans-rising.org/2017/05/22/africans-rising-in-the-guardian-26-03-2017/>

<https://africans-rising.org/2017/05/15/1682/>

<https://africans-rising.org/2017/05/15/1676/>

<https://www.pambazuka.org/economics/currency-fixing-africans-should-rise-against-robbery-multinationals>

<https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/africa-ignores-cameroon-crisis-human-rights-abuses-mount>

<https://africans-rising.org/2017/05/04/stopthebleeding-africans-rising-on-sabc-tv-news-on-illicit-financial-flows-from-africa/><https://africans-rising.org/2017/05/04/kumi-naidoo-on-africans-rising-and-challenges-to-african-progress-on-africa-now-on-wpfrw-radio-in-washington-dc/>

The Work of Africans Rising

Alliance building as a means to build the movement from below and beyond borders, establishing a solidarity framework from grassroots to the continental levels. These alliances should push back against repressive laws through the institutions and the mass movement itself.

Strategic Convening brought to the fore the need for and value-add of face-to-face and smaller group meetings as a way to build campaigns from the ground up.

Mapping of resources across the continent from smaller movements to larger networks is essential for *Africans Rising* to succeed in leveraging this mass support to address the systemic causes of poverty and inequality. Data gathering and sharing within ethical open frameworks is essential to building, consolidating and sharing knowledge.

Africans Rising needs to be present along the way through the processes initiated on the ground, avoiding simple **solidarity actions** and preferring accompaniment as better reflecting the values and ideals of the movement.

Acknowledgements

Launching a pan-African movement for justice, peace and dignity is no small task and the success of the #25May2017 launch was made possible by the generous support of a broad diversity of a great many people and organisations on the continent and abroad.

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Ambassadors

Coumba Toure (Mali/Senegal)

Nunu Kidane (Eritrea/US)

Jay Naidoo (South Africa)

Africans Rising Interim Working Group (IWG)

Ibrahim Ceesay (The Gambia), Hilma Mote (Namibia/Togo), Ngunga Tepani (Tanzania), Aya Chebbi (Tunisia), Emira Woods (United States/Liberia), Mithika Mwenda (Kenya), Dr. Francis Kuria (Kenya), Marcia Thomas (United States) and Ezra Mbogori (Tanzania/Kenya).

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THE
KILIMANJARO
DECLARATION

AFRICA IS A
RICH CONTINENT.

THAT WEALTH BELONGS TO ALL
OUR PEOPLE,
NOT TO A NARROW POLITICAL AND
ECONOMIC ELITE.
WE NEED TO FIGHT
FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
THAT IS JUST AND EMBRACES SOCIAL INCLUSION
AND ENVIRONMENTAL CARE.
WE HAVE A RIGHT TO THE
“BETTER LIFE”
OUR GOVERNMENTS HAVE PROMISED.

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