

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

CHANNELSTV

FEBRUARY 16, 2026

THE GDELT PROJECT

NIGERIA 2026: THE CONVERGENCE OF CRISES & GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS (FEBRUARY 16 REPORT)

ELECTORAL FRICTION & THE "REAL-TIME" MANDATE



UNCONDITIONAL ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION
NO MORE MANUAL BACKUPS
2027 TIMELINE CRISIS

FEB 2027
RAMADAN/LENT CONFLICT
EMERGENCY LEGISLATIVE PLENARY SESSION

Standoff over electoral transparency. Protests demand unconditional electronic results transmission. 2027 election dates clash with religious observances, forcing emergency legislative session. Skepticism high over lawmakers' "clever by half" clauses and the "Nigerian factor" in human processes.

INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY UNDER SIEGE

HIGH-LEVEL LEGAL WARFARE & ELITE FRACTURES



NSA WIRETAPPING CHARGES

LABOUR PARTY LEADERSHIP CRISIS

Arraignment of El-Rufai for intercepting National Security Advisor's communications signals aggressive use of cybercrime laws for political dispute adjudication. Deepening fracture among power brokers. High-level scores settled in courts, not consensus. Labour Party paralyzed by internal dispute.

ELITE POLARIZATION & JUDICIAL ADJUDICATION

SHIFTING GEOPOLITICAL ALIGNMENTS & SOVEREIGNTY DEBATE



SOVEREIGNTY DEBATE VS. SECURITY NECESSITY

CHINA'S ZERO-TARIFF POLICY FOR AFRICA

200 US MILITARY PERSONNEL DEPLOYED (COUNTER-TERRORISM SUPPORT)

Navigating complex external environment. US deployment sparks sovereignty concerns amid spreading banditry. China courts with zero-tariff trade, highlighting competitive landscape between Western security assistance and Eastern market incentives. AU seeks "African Agency" with reparations demand.

GLOBAL COMPETITION FOR AFRICAN AGENCY

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT, RISKS & FUTURE OUTLOOK

SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS)	MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS)	LONG TERM (1-5 YEARS)
 ELECTION TIMETABLE REVISION LIKELY. IMMEDIATE PROTESTS & LEGAL INJUNCTIONS.	 INCREASED US-LED SECURITY OPERATIONS. REGULATORY SHIFTS FAVOR BILATERAL POWER TRADING.	 STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN AU POSTURE. TRANSITION TO DECENTRALIZED "POWER CLUSTERS".

CRITICAL RISKS

- ⚠️ **CONSTITUTIONAL GRIDLOCK (High Impact):** Failure to align election dates.
- ⚠️ **SPREADING INSECURITY (High Impact):** Banditry threatens economic heartland.
- ⚠️ **INFORMATION SPACE COLLAPSE (Medium Impact):** Fake news creates credibility gap.
- ⚠️ **LIQUIDITY CRISIS IN POWER SECTOR (High Impact):** GenCo insolvency.

THE COMBINED STORY: A STATE WHERE INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY IS UNDER SIEGE FROM INTERNAL PARTISAN POLARIZATION AND EXTERNAL ASYMMETRIC THREATS & EVOLVING GLOBAL DYNAMICS.

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POLITICAL FRICTION OVER
ELECTORAL TRANSPARENCY, HIGH-
LEVEL LEGAL WARFARE, AND
SHIFTING GEOPOLITICAL
ALIGNMENTS

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

Governance in Nigeria on February 16, 2026, is characterized by a high-stakes standoff between the National Assembly and civil society over the future of electoral transparency. Protests have intensified at the gates of the legislature, driven by demands for [unconditional electronic transmission](#) of results in the forthcoming 2027 general elections. The Senate's perceived resistance to these measures, coupled with a controversial attempt to synchronize election dates that clash with religious observances like Ramadan and Lent, has triggered warnings of a looming constitutional crisis. This domestic friction is compounded by a dramatic escalation in legal warfare within the political elite, specifically the arraignment of former Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai on charges of [unlawfully intercepting communications](#) belonging to the National Security Advisor, Nuhu Ribadu. This case

signals a deepening fracture among power brokers and suggests the aggressive use of cybercrime laws to adjudicate internal political disputes.

Simultaneously, Nigeria is navigating a complex external environment marked by increased military and economic dependency. The arrival of 200 US military personnel to support counter-terrorism operations has sparked a [sovereignty debate](#), even as banditry continues to spread into previously stable regions like the Southwest. Economically, the country is being courted by China through new [zero-tariff trade policies](#) for African nations, highlighting a competitive geopolitical landscape where Nigeria must balance Western security assistance with Eastern market incentives. These developments converge to portray a state where institutional legitimacy is under siege from within by partisan polarization and from without by persistent asymmetric threats and evolving global power dynamics.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

- **Electoral Act Stalemate and 2027 Timeline Crisis:** Protesters and civil society organizations have converged on the National Assembly to demand the mandatory electronic transmission of results, while a [scheduling conflict](#) between the announced 2027 election dates and religious fasting periods has forced an emergency plenary session.
- **The Arraignment of Nasir El-Rufai:** The federal government has formally charged the former governor with three counts related to [illegal phone tapping](#) of the National Security Advisor, marking a significant escalation in judicial actions against high-profile political figures.

- **US Military Deployment and Counter-Terrorism:** Reports indicate the deployment of [200 US military personnel](#) to select airbases in Nigeria as part of ongoing security cooperation, coinciding with a surge in banditry and a bold psychological operation by a "National Terrorist Association."
- **Infrastructure and Power Sector Recovery:** The NDPHC announced the recovery of [110 abandoned containers](#) of equipment and a transition toward renewable energy (NIPP Phase 2), though the sector remains hampered by liquidity crises and gas supply constraints.
- **African Union Sovereignty and Reparations:** The 39th AU Summit concluded with a landmark resolution labeling slavery and colonialism as [crimes against humanity](#), with Ghana leading a diplomatic push for international recognition and reparations.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Leadership Dynamics & Governance

- The executive is projecting stability through project commissioning in Adam State, including the [Jama Model School](#) and a new governor's office complex.
- Elite infighting is evidenced by the Labour Party leadership crisis, where the NWC is seeking the arrest of [Julius Abure](#) for alleged perjury and conspiracy.
- State-level governance faces scrutiny over the withholding of [local government funds](#) despite Supreme Court rulings, with Ogun State officials defending joint account practices.

Terrorism & Asymmetric Threats

- The Northeast remains volatile, though troops successfully thwarted coordinated attacks in [Pulka and Mandaragirao](#).
- Banditry is bleeding into the Southwest, with a deadly attack in [Kwara State](#) prompting calls for a deeper recalibration of security policy and better inter-agency intelligence sharing.
- A psychological operation involving a purported "National Terrorist Association" is being analyzed as a sign of [maturing insurgent propaganda](#) aimed at eroding the state's monopoly on violence.

Macroeconomics & Trade

- Nigeria's capital importation surged by **380%** year-on-year, indicating [renewed investor interest](#) despite recent multinational divestments.
- The National Bureau of Statistics reported a drop in headline inflation to **15.1%** in January, though [business uncertainty](#) remains high.
- China's announcement of [zero-tariff access](#) for 53 African countries represents a major shift in trade dynamics that could alter regional supply chains.

Critical Infrastructure Security

- The power sector is struggling with "stranded capacity" where generation exists but [transmission grid constraints](#) prevent distribution to the market.
- Efforts to decentralize power are progressing, with states like [Lagos, Enugu, and Imo](#) seeking to commercialize distribution assets under the new Electricity Act.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

Institutional Legitimacy and the "Real-Time" Mandate

A dominant trend is the public's absolute demand for technological solutions to fix perceived human corruption in the electoral process. The "real-time" transmission of results from polling units is no longer a technical preference but a [political litmus test](#) for the National Assembly. Skepticism remains high that lawmakers are being "clever by half" by including clauses that allow for manual backups, which critics argue opens the door to [election rigging](#) at collation centers. The debate reveals a fundamental lack of trust in the "Nigerian factor"—the human agents operating the machines.

The Weaponization of the Information Space

Security and politics are increasingly being contested in the information domain. The charges against El-Rufai for [wiretapping the NSA](#) highlight the vulnerabilities of state communications. Simultaneously, the emergence of a "National Terrorist Association" writing letters to communities and the use of social media by bandits to [project power](#) through videos of abductees suggests that non-state actors are mastering psychological warfare. The government's inability to control these narratives contributes to a debased national psyche where human life is increasingly devalued.

Geopolitical Competition for African Agency

A macro-level shift is occurring in how Nigeria and Africa interact with global powers. The AU's move to designate [November 30](#) as a day

of tribute for victims of the slave trade and the demand for permanent UN Security Council seats reflect a surging "African agency." This is occurring against a backdrop of competing foreign interests: the US is providing [kinetic support](#) through military advisors, while China is leveraging [economic statecraft](#) through zero-tariff policies. Nigeria is positioned as a "frontier market" that must navigate these overlapping spheres of influence while managing its own internal instability.

INTERNAL DYNAMICS & DOMESTIC INSTABILITY

Elite Polarization and Judicial Adjudication

- The [arraignment of Nasir El-Rufai](#) signals that high-level political scores are now being settled in the courts rather than through traditional party consensus. This legal warfare creates a climate of uncertainty for the 2027 election cycle.
- The Labour Party's internal working committee is effectively paralyzed by a [leadership dispute](#) involving the Inspector General of Police and the Attorney General, suggesting that the primary opposition groups are too internally fractured to offer a stable alternative to the ruling party.

Societal Tension and Religious Sensitivities

- The potential clash between the 2027 election date and the [Ramadan and Lenten periods](#) has introduced a dangerous religious dimension to electoral logistics. Any delay or adjustment to the timeline could be framed as favoring one faith over another, further polarizing a secular state.

- Civil unrest is bubbling at the "grassroots," with women's groups demanding [37 extra Senate seats](#) and 108 state assembly seats to address the "disgusting" lack of female representation.

EXTERNAL DYNAMICS & GLOBAL POSTURE

Security Cooperation and Sovereignty

- The deployment of [US personnel](#) is framed as a necessary measure to combat "highly dispersed" terrorist groups, yet it faces pushback from those concerned about [national sovereignty](#). The narrative suggests that the Nigerian state is no longer capable of securing its own territory without direct foreign intervention.

Economic Pivot and Trade Blocs

- China's zero-tariff policy for [53 African countries](#), including Nigeria, is a clear attempt to deepen economic ties and challenge Western dominance in the region. This move coincides with Nigeria's 380% surge in capital importation, suggesting the country is a primary target for **Sino-Western economic competition**.
- The AU's resolution on reparations and the return of [stolen artifacts](#) indicates a growing rift between African nations and their former colonial rulers, particularly the UK and EU.

THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic outlook is a mixture of improving macro indicators and persistent micro-level volatility. While inflation is cooling, interest rates remain at a staggering 27%, creating an environment where [agribusiness and manufacturing](#) cannot realistically borrow

for expansion. The focus on "revenue generation" by subnationals through high "right of way" charges is actively sabotaging national efforts to expand digital inclusion and internet penetration.

Key Economic Vectors

- **Capital Inflows:** Nigeria's capital importation surged by **380%** to reach **\$6.01 billion**, signaling [investor confidence](#) in the long-term outlook despite short-term divestments.
- **Inflation and Rates:** Headline inflation dropped to **15.1%** in January; analysts forecast a **250-300 basis point rate cut** later in the year to stimulate growth.
- **Corporate Scaling:** Companies like LR Lakes PLC are attempting to scale from fish farming into [diversified agro-industrials](#) to bridge the multi-billion dollar food import gap.
- **Maritime Trade:** APM Terminals reported a **30% increase** in container volumes, driven by a [geopolitical shift](#) in trade flows toward West Africa.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

The current political landscape is marked by a shift from "old guard" alliances to more targeted judicial and administrative purging, alongside a push for gender-inclusive quotas.

- **Nasir El-Rufai:** The former governor's arraignment signals a [major fall from grace](#) and a warning to other "elite" actors that past alliances do not provide immunity from cybercrime and national security prosecutions.

- **Julius Abure:** Faces criminal charges and [demands for arrest](#) from within his own party, potentially marking the end of his influence in the Labour Party structure.
- **Governor Hope Uzodinma:** Is being highlighted for [transformative leadership](#) in Imo State, possibly signaling his positioning for higher national roles in the 2027 cycle.
- **Special Seats Bill Advocates:** A rising faction of [women-led civil society](#) groups is successfully forcing an emergency legislative session, identifying them as key winners in current political mobilization.

EDITORIAL POSTURE & STORY HIERARCHY

The network's editorial hierarchy is dominated by **electoral reform and elite legal scandals**. The protests at the National Assembly and the El-Rufai case were given the highest frequency of coverage across multiple broadcasts. The tone is deeply skeptical of the legislative process, often pitting "the people" against "lawmakers being clever by half." Conspicuous airtime was also given to **US military deployment**, framed as an answer to the state's security failures.

Buried Stories: Detailed analysis of the 380% capital importation surge was often placed behind political drama, potentially minimizing the scale of the economic recovery. **Conspicuous Omissions:** There was a lack of detailed coverage on the *specific* identities of the 200 US military personnel or the terms of their "status of forces" agreement, which is critical for assessing sovereignty risks. Additionally, while the AU summit was covered, the potential pushback from Western nations on the "genocide" labeling of colonialism was not explored.

GEOPOLITICAL FRAMING

Global powers are framed through a lens of **utility versus interference**, while African institutions are asserting a new moral high ground.

- **The United States:** Portrayed as a "security partner" but one that complicates the sovereignty narrative. The deployment of 200 personnel is seen as a necessary but [controversial intervention](#).
- **China:** Framed as a **strategic benefactor**, using "generous" zero-tariff policies to [deepen economic ties](#) and bypass traditional trade barriers.
- **The African Union:** Portrayed as **principled and assertive**, specifically regarding its resolution on slavery as a [crime against humanity](#) and its demand for G20 and UN Security Council seats.
- **United Kingdom:** Implicitly framed as **weak and chaotic**, with Keir Starmer's leadership struggles and the Prince Andrew scandal described in terms of "uncertainty" and ["political tension."](#)
- **Israel:** Portrayed through a lens of **unlawful expansionism**, with UN reports highlighting the "illegal annexation" of the [West Bank](#).

INFORMATION WARFARE ENVIRONMENT

The information space is being used to manipulate the legitimacy of both state and non-state actors.

- **Narrative Seeding:** The rumors of a **25% levy** on building materials were characterized by officials as a ["misinformation" campaign](#) intended to incite panic in the real estate market. This suggests a targeted effort by opposition or special interest groups to sabotage tax reforms.
- **Psychological Operations (Psy-Ops):** The emergence of the **"National Terrorist Association"** and its distributed letters represent a sophisticated effort by criminal groups to use [bureaucratic nomenclature](#) to grant themselves an aura of officialdom and bypass law enforcement.
- **The "Real-Time" Meta-Narrative:** Protesters are weaponizing the term "real-time," framing any deviation from it as an [intentional opening for fraud](#). This simplifies a complex technological issue into a binary moral struggle.

HYPOTHESES AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Electoral Timetable Revision:** Given the clash with Ramadan and Lent, the 2027 election dates will almost certainly be [moved](#), potentially to late January 2027, creating an even tighter operational window for INEC.
- **Judicial Purgings:** The El-Rufai case is likely the first of several high-level "national security" prosecutions intended to [neutralize political rivals](#) before the 2027 election season officially begins.

- **Economic Pivot to China:** China's zero-tariff policy will lead to a **diversification of Nigerian exports** away from the West, though it may also lead to a surge in Chinese-manufactured goods flooding the local market, potentially harming domestic SMEs.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

- **Short Term (1-4 Weeks):** Expect immediate protests and possible legal injunctions if the 2027 election dates are not adjusted. High potential for [emergency legislative sessions](#) to pass the Special Seats for Women Bill to quell unrest.
- **Medium Term (1-6 Months):** A significant increase in US-led security operations in the Southwest and Kwara regions to ["clear" ungoverned spaces](#) before the election cycle heats up. Regulatory shifts in the power sector will favor "bilateral trading" between GenCos and States.
- **Long Term (1-5 Years):** A structural change in the AU's global posture, leading to a [reparations movement that could redefine diplomatic relations with the UK and Europe. The transition to renewables \(NIPP Phase 2\) will likely result in decentralized "power clusters" rather than a unified national grid.](#)

RISK ASSESSMENT

[The primary risk to Nigerian stability remains the erosion of electoral trust, which could lead to widespread civil unrest if not managed through a transparent and consensus-based legislative process.](#)

- **Constitutional Gridlock:** [Triggered by a failure to align election dates with religious observances and the 2022 Act. Likelihood: High. Impact: Catastrophic. Mitigation: Immediate passage of the 2026 Electoral Act amendment including "real-time" transmission.](#)
- **Spreading Insecurity to the Economic Heartland:** Banditry moving into Kwara and the Southwest threatens the Lagos-Ibadan industrial corridor. Likelihood: **Medium**. Impact: **High**. Mitigation: Deployment of [US-supported intelligence assets to secure major highways.](#)
- **Information Space Collapse:** [Fake news regarding taxes or terrorist "official associations" creates a credibility gap](#) for the state. Likelihood: **High**. Impact: **Medium**. Mitigation: Establishment of a "verified government source" mandate for major broadcasters.
- **Liquidity Crisis in the Power Sector:** Failure to settle invoices (currently only 30% settled) leading to [total GenCo insolvency. Likelihood: Medium. Impact: High. Mitigation: Diversifying revenue through bilateral transactions with bankable industrial clusters.](#)
- **Geopolitical Backlash:** [Public anger over US military presence](#) could be weaponized by opposition candidates. Likelihood: **High**. Impact: **Medium**. Mitigation: Transparent public debate on the "Status of Forces" agreement.

GAPS & BLIND SPOTS

- The broadcasts failed to explain the **exact technical limitations** cited by the Senate regarding "real-time" transmission, despite INEC's data showing 93% network coverage.

- There is no mention of the **specific defense protocols** governing the 200 US personnel, leaving a void for misinformation regarding foreign military combat roles.
- The inflation drop to 15.1% is stated, but the **continued 27% interest rate** suggests a disconnect between headline numbers and the "real economy" that was not fully interrogated.
- The report on El-Rufai focuses on the charges but misses the **broader political context** of why these specific wiretapping incidents are being prosecuted now, years after they allegedly occurred.

CONTRARIAN NARRATIVE SCENARIOS

- **The El-Rufai "Strategic Diversion":** The high-profile prosecution is not a "fall from grace" but a **calculated distraction** designed to consume media space while the National Assembly quietly removes the "real-time" requirement from the Electoral Act behind closed doors.
- **US Deployment as "Regime Insurance":** Rather than fighting bandits, the 200 US personnel are a **signal to regional coup-plotters** that the current administration has direct Western kinetic backing, intended to stabilize the government through a volatile election year.
- **Black Swan - The "Religious Nullification":** If the election dates are not moved, a **mass boycott** or legal challenge on the grounds of religious discrimination could nullify the entire 2027 results, leading to a transition government and total institutional collapse.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For Statecraft/Public Sector:

- **Security:** Formalize the "vigilante" groups (Amotekun, etc.) into the [national intelligence framework](#) to prevent the state from being "flat-footed" in rural areas.
- **Economic:** Leverage China's zero-tariff policy to [boost the export](#) of semi-processed minerals rather than raw lithium or ores.
- **Diplomatic:** Ghana should be the lead negotiator for the [AU's reparation push to maintain a unified African front at the 80th UN General Assembly](#).

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Regulation:** [Focus capital on "bilateral power trading" with states that have passed independent electricity laws](#) to avoid national grid liquidity risks.
- **Safety:** Multinationals must upgrade [security and safety standards](#) for media and field teams, as evidenced by the high fatality rates in convoy accidents and bandit zones.
- **Supply Chain:** Diversify sourcing to utilize the **APM Terminals capacity** in Port Harcourt and Onne to avoid the "maxed out" Lagos Cluster [infrastructure bottlenecks](#).

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

The legislative agenda is currently hijacked by electoral reform and gender representation quotas, with the National Assembly under severe pressure to restore transparency clauses to the Electoral Act and resolve the 2027 timeline crisis.

BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Electoral Act Amendment Bill (2026):** Intended to mandate electronic transmission of results; currently stalled over [manual backup provisos](#).
- **Special Seats for Women Bill (HB 1349):** Proposes **37 extra Senate seats** and 108 assembly seats for women to address systemic under-representation.
- **Cybercrimes Prohibition Prevention Act (Amendment 2024):** Being used as the [legal framework](#) to prosecute former Governor El-Rufai for communication interception.
- **Nigeria Tax Act:** Recent reforms to simplify the system; rumors of a [25% levy](#) on building materials were officially refuted.

HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Emergency Plenary Session (Feb 17, 2026):** Convened to harmonize differences between the House and Senate on the [2027 election dates](#).
- **Budget Defense (Works & Electoral Matters):** Marked by "drama" and "shouting matches" over [budget allocations](#) for INEC's network infrastructure.

KEY STORIES

- **Nasir El-Rufai Arraignment:** Former Kaduna Governor charged with three counts for [phone interception](#) of NSA Nuhu Ribadu. Arraigned at the Federal High Court in Abuja.
- **National Assembly Gate Protests:** Hundreds of demonstrators, led by Aisha Yusuf and former presidential candidates, demand [electronic result transmission](#).

- **US Military Deployment:** 200 US personnel arrive at [select airbases](#) to support counter-terrorism operations.
- **2027 Election Date Conflict:** Prediction that Feb 20th dates [will change](#) due to Ramadan and Lent fasting periods.
- **AU Summit Reparations Resolution:** AU leaders designate colonialism and slavery as [genocide/crimes against humanity](#) in Addis Ababa.
- **Labour Party Leadership War:** NWC seeks arrest of [Julius Abure](#) for impersonation and criminal conspiracy.
- **Ogun State Roads Deficit:** State government defends its record on 1,600km of roads while blaming [Lagos proximity for population overflow pressures](#).
- **NDPHC Power Recovery:** [Recovery of 110 containers](#) abandoned at ports for 10 years; transition to solar-powered industrial clusters.
- **Death of Kanny Ben:** Channels TV cameraman [died at 44](#) following a road accident on official duty in Gombe.
- **Kwara Banditry Attack:** Armed bandits invade [Shari Community](#) in Ephelodun LGA; fierce gun battle with security forces reported.
- **China Zero-Tariff Move:** China grants tariff-free access to [53 African countries starting in May 2026](#).
- **Jimmy Lai Sentencing:** [Hong Kong publisher sentenced to 20 years](#) in prison for sedition.
- **Keir Starmer Crisis:** UK Prime Minister struggles with [leadership challenges](#) and guilt-of-yield spikes in financial markets.
- **West Bank Annexation Alert:** UN Secretary General Guterres warns that new Israeli measures in [Area A and B](#) erode the two-state solution.

- **Mercenary Recruitment Warning:** Nigeria's Foreign Ministry warns citizens against [illegal recruitment](#) into the Ukraine conflict.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

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