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Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes in Africa



MEDIA MONITORING

21 September 2015

DRC

Congo ministers resign as election debate heats up

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters

By Aaron Ross

Kinshasa, 18 September 2015 - Two ministers resigned from Democratic Republic of Congo's government on Friday, raising pressure on President Joseph Kabila to name a new cabinet ahead of elections next year that are causing rising political tension.

Kabila has ruled the vast central African nation for 14 years but is barred from standing again. His spokesman says he will respect the constitution but critics say he is using violence and manipulating laws to prolong his rule or engineer a third term.

Civil service minister Jean-Claude Kibala and land affairs minister Bolengetenge Balela quit their posts after refusing to sign a loyalty pledge to Kabila's majority coalition, Florent Mulumba, national executive secretary of the Social Movement for Renewal, told Reuters.

The Movement is one of seven parties whose leaders were expelled from the Presidential Majority coalition this week for signing a letter demanding that Kabila relinquish power when his term expires.

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Four pro-democracy activists were sentenced on Friday to six months in prison in the eastern city of Goma for inciting disobedience in a verdict that human rights groups say is part of the pre-election crackdown.

The activists from Struggle for Change (Lucha) were arrested as they encouraged residents to protest the detention of fellow activists by whistling and banging pots and pans.

Defense lawyer Matthieu Mugisho vowed to appeal and said the court found them guilty of inciting disobedience to public authorities and also gave them 12-month suspended sentences.

In the worst violence this year, at least 40 people were killed in anti-government protests in January and a wave of arrests followed. The government said the arrests were an attempt to maintain order and were not politically motivated.

The council of ministers also proposed the designation by Kabila of special commissioners to provisionally govern 21 new provinces created in July, a move critics have said would be an unconstitutional power grab.

Four Congolese pro-democracy activists sentenced to prison

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters Africa

Kinshasa, 18 September 2015 - Four pro-democracy activists were sentenced on Friday to six months in prison in Democratic Republic of Congo for inciting disobedience, part of a crackdown before upcoming elections, lawyers in the case and human rights groups said.

President Joseph Kabila is prohibited by the constitution from running at elections next year to extend his 14 years in office but critics accuse him of trying to hang onto power. A spokesman for Kabila says he will respect the constitution.

The activists from Struggle for Change (Lucha) were arrested in Democratic Republic of Congo's eastern city of Goma in April as they encouraged residents to protest the detention of fellow activists by whistling and banging pots and pans.

Defense lawyer Matthieu Mugisho said the court found his clients guilty of inciting disobedience to public authorities and they were also handed 12-month suspended sentences. Mugisho said the verdict would be appealed within 10 days.

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"The condemnation of our comrades is further proof that in (Congo) there is not justice," Lucha tweeted from its official account.

Another Lucha member is standing trial in the capital Kinshasa on charges of plotting against Kabila after he was arrested at a workshop in March intended to encourage youth participation in politics.

The government said the meeting was organized by "instructors in insurrection" and has denied any political meddling in the judicial process.

The United Nations warned last week that rights violations are escalating in Congo ahead of a 13-month election cycle meant to begin next month and culminate in a presidential election next November.

RWANDA

Rwanda to Host International Peace Day

NEWS STORY

Source: Kigali Times Press

By Dan Ngabonziza

20 September 2015 - Rwanda will on Monday [21 September] free doves into the sky as a symbol of peace as the capital Kigali hosts the International peace day celebrations under the theme; 'Partnerships for Peace – Dignity for all.'

In 1994, Rwanda was brought onto its knees following a genocide against ethnic Tutsi that claimed a million lives in just a hundred days; but the world looked on as such mayhem took place.

For the past 21 years after the genocide, the country has reunited, built peace and contributed to peacekeeping missions around the world.

"This country will never be the same again," President Paul Kagame said during the 21st commemoration of the genocide.

Bishop Rucyahana President of the National Reconciliation Commission told KT Press; "It's a day for peace, but again a day of recognizing those exceptional individuals who sacrificed themselves to put Rwandan where it is today."

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The national unity and reconciliation commission says Rwanda was selected to host the day because of its unmatched level in restoring peace and security, 21 years after a devastating genocide.

Rwanda maintains over 4500 uniformed men and women in different peacekeeping missions around the world.

Ban Ki Moon the United Nations Secretary General, in honour of this day, calls for ceasefire and peace across conflict-stricken countries.

“I call on all warring parties to lay down their weapons and observe a global ceasefire. To them I say: stop the killings and the destruction, and create space for lasting peace,” Moon said.

Bishop Rucyahana noted; “We are celebrating International peace day with a lot of excitement. In Rwanda, we have peace because we worked for it.”

A couple of activities have been organised, including a parliamentary session of 300 youth discussing their role in peace building.

Later in the day, a ‘Peace One Day Youth Celebration’ will bring together 2,500 participants at Petit Stade Amahoro in Kigali, as well as a Peace Village that will feature exhibitions by partners in peace-building, according to Johnson Mugaga, executive secretary of the national reconciliation commission.

Also, international artistes are expected to grace the celebrations including; Nigeria’s Ice Prince, Maurice Kirya and Lillian Mbabazi from Uganda, Mafikizolo from South Africa; Alikiba and Wangechi from Tanzania and Kenya, among others.

FDLR Commander Drops Guns, Returns Home In Rwanda

NEWS STORY

Source: Kigali Times Press

18 September 2015 - A commander of the Rwandan rebels in DR Congo has this Friday surrendered and repatriated with his family to Rwanda to start a new life.

Lieutenant Colonel Nibabaza a.k.a Mambo Gerald aged 47 was head of G1 in the administration of Democratic Front for Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR-FOCA). He was directly attached to Sylvestre Mudacumura the FDLR leader wanted by International Criminal Court for the militia’s crimes against humanity.

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The fighter left his base at Walikale in Democratic Republic of Congo and crossed to Rwanda through the Rubavu border post. He was accompanied by his wife Sergeant Jacqueline Nyirakamana and other seven combatants and four dependants.

The rebel commander and his fellow fighters told Kigali Today journalist in Rubavu district that they chose to repatriate after realising it was their best option.

“We are leading a sorry life in the forest; stealing, disputing over food with Congolese regular soldiers...while we have always learnt that our fellow Rwandans are happily building this country,” Sergeant Nyirakamana said adding FDLR has no organised combatants.

The former rebel was born in Ngororero district, Western Province

Sgt. Nyirakamana left Rwanda in 1998 during the infiltration (abacengezi) war and got married to Mambo in 2000 who introduced her into FDLR. She served under the rebel group’s intelligence section. She could sneak into Rwanda in 2010 and return to rebel bases in DRC and occasionally convinced her husband to repatriate.

“My call to repatriate was resisted for long. Time has come now,” she said.

Jean Sayinzoga, the chairman of Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) told KT Press, “We provide to every ex-combatants with important skills, then pocket money to support their feeding before they get their own harvest.”

Sayinzoga said, since 1997, over 11,000 ex-members of FDLR repatriated and are leading a decent life among the community.

After reaching the country, the combatants headed to Mutobo demobilisation camp located in Musanze district.

In Mutobo, combatants spend 3 months learning basic skills that allow them start a new life.

Meanwhile, their children will be hosted by relatives.

Of recent, another senior officer identified as Major Noah also repatriated to Rwanda. He was in charge of outreach program in FDLR.

The U.S. National Counterterrorism Center listed FDLR-FOCA as a terror organization responsible for acts of terrorism that have killed hundreds of civilians in Eastern Congo since 2009.

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BURUNDI**Economic failure is the backdrop to the Burundi crisis**

NEWS ANALYSIS

Source: <http://www.enca.com/africa/economic-failure-backdrop-burundi-crisis>

By Jean-Benoit Falisse

18 September 2015 - Burundi may have slipped off the world's attention, but the crisis that erupted in May when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he would seek a third term is far from being resolved.

Most commentators have, rightfully so, discussed the political aspects of the crisis. This includes whether Nkurunziza's third mandate is constitutional and the lack of coherence of the political opposition. They also discussed the alarming political violence and mounting tension with Rwanda.

Often overlooked is the economy, which is central to understanding the backdrop to the most severe crisis Burundi has had since the end of the 1993-2005 civil war. While acknowledging the crucial political dimension of the crisis, this article focuses on the economic situation and its consequences.

Hungriest nation on earth

With a GDP per capita of US\$267, the country's 10.16 million people are among the poorest in the world. Burundi ranked 180 out of 186 in the last Human Development Index.

89% of the active population depends on farming a territory as densely populated as Belgium. Coffee, once the proud main export of Burundi, was controversially privatised in 2008 and has been declining for 20 years. Tea and cotton, the other traditional exports, are also in poor shape.

The country has few mineral resources. It has been expecting a lot, so far in vain, from a potentially important nickel deposit. The hopes in gold, which is artisanally mined and had become Burundi's first export by 2012, collapsed with the recent crash of international prices. Part of Burundian gold has also reportedly been smuggled from the DR Congo.

The apparently decent 4% to 4.5% growth of Burundi's GDP in the past years is dwarfed by a population growth above 3%. The number of mouths to feed keeps

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growing very fast and the GDP per capita has not grown by more than 1.5% in the best of the past years.

Even before the crisis, reports indicated that the living conditions were deteriorating for most people. Burundi was, and still is, the hungriest nation on earth. With the political crisis, things have deteriorated even further.

When violent unrests exploded in Bujumbura, the city was paralysed for months. It concentrates 70% of the economic activity of the country.

Trade with regional and local markets was heavily disrupted and is still not back to normal as security forces control displacements of people in and out the capital city. The government recently estimated that the insurrection cost at least US\$ 32.7 million in material damage.

At least 190,000 people have left the country since April, and among them investors, business people, and part of the middle class. Most of them still have not returned.

The Burundian diaspora, mostly from Canada, the US, France, and Belgium, are a habitual and most-welcomed source of cash in the summer. But they did not spend their holidays on the beaches of Bujumbura this year.

Perhaps more important for the economy, Western donors are in the process of cutting their support to Burundi, whose budget relies 49% on aid.

The government already had to use its own money to organise the elections, reportedly diverting funds earmarked for malaria and education. And it seems clear that the 2015 budget is now totally offtrack. Hypothetical fresh support from Russia or China is unlikely to be enough to balance the budget. Inflation only rose by a bit less than a percentage point since May. But official tax revenues for May-August are about 30% lower than expected, and 23% less than last year.

Pressure points

Nkurunziza, who was controversially re-elected in August, is now facing an economic crisis that could destabilise him in at least three different ways:

First, the first long-serving Hutu president has built his popularity on generous social policies including the abolition of healthcare user fees for children below five and pregnant women, free primary education, and a national fertiliser subsidy program. These social services depend on foreign aid and are now in grave danger.

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Second, if the reported current disruption of wage payment continues, Nkurunziza may alienate a small but influential middle-class of civil servants as well as the police and military still mostly loyal to him.

Third, benefits from politically appointed positions are becoming potentially less interesting as the economy contracts. This makes it harder to buy off loyalty and opponents, and potentially exacerbates corruption, which is already a key reason for discontent with the regime.

Nkurunziza's current strategy, in a fashion not dissimilar to his predecessor president Pierre Buyoya, is to blame the insurgents and Western countries for the economic difficulties. This may reinforce him, but probably only for a short while.

In the meantime, Burundians are being pushed towards even more intolerable levels of poverty. The locking of the political space and the volatility of the situation is likely continue to scare off economic actors and international partners and fuel the mismanagement of public services.

In the current context, few have any interest or incentive to look beyond the very short term. The economic and social costs of protracted fragility are huge, even in an already impoverished nation.

The safest route to restoring stability and developing the Burundian economy is to rebuild strong and inclusive institutions that citizens and international partners – including the diaspora that has an important potential for economic development – can trust.

In the past years, the boundaries between the state and party apparatus have blurred at the expense of ordinary citizens. Abuses used to be vocally denounced by the local independent media, but most of them were shut down after the failed May coup attempt.

Calls for a national unity government, which the president says he has responded to by including a few not-too-virulent opposition parties to his government, are missing the point if they only lead to redistributing rents between a slightly larger or different elite group.

Burundi needs a social and economic vision that rests on economic and political institutions that are genuinely accountable and directed to the people, and that everybody, including the poorest and non-party members, can rely on.

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UGANDA

Uganda's veteran president gets nod to run again, faces tough rival

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters

By Elias Biryabarema

21 September 2015 - Uganda's veteran President Yoweri Museveni got the formal go-ahead from his party to stand again in elections next year, setting him up for a possible tough confrontation with ally-turned-adversary, former prime minister Amama Mbabazi.

Museveni, 71, has already dominated the east African nation for nearly 30 years, with a rule bolstered by economic growth, an often divided opposition and control of the security services.

But analysts say Mbabazi - the ruling party's former secretary general who is now hoping to stand as an opposition candidate - could be the president's strongest challenger yet.

Mbabazi, who was seen as a kingmaker in Museveni's government before he was sacked as prime minister in 2014, originally stood against Museveni to get the ruling National Resistance Movement's presidential nomination.

But he dropped out of that race in July, accusing officials of frustrating his bid.

Mbabazi then joined an opposition coalition, The Democratic Alliance, where he is in a tight race with three-time presidential challenger Kizza Besigye to secure the alliance's ticket.

The government media centre said Museveni had promised to improve living standards and "eradicate corruption in the country," after securing his party's nomination on Sunday.

Museveni, a key western ally, has been credited with returning economic stability to Uganda after years of turmoil.

But his critics have accused him of failing to check runaway corruption and of using security forces to harass opposition supporters during elections.

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The opposition says it suspects Museveni is grooming his son, Kainerugaba Muhoozi, to succeed him.

The president regularly denies having any such intention and dismisses the other charges against him.

Presidential and parliamentary polls are scheduled between February and March next year.

Uganda: Court Orders Arrest of Besigye, Lukwago

NEWS STORY

Source: <http://www.mareeg.com/uganda-court-orders-arrest-of-besigye-lukwago/>

By Robert Muhereza-Kabale

19 September 2015 - Kabale Magistrates Court has ordered the arrest of FDC presidential flagbearer Kizza Besigye and Kampala Lord Mayor Erias Lukwago and other Opposition leaders for failing to appear in court to answer charges of inciting the public.

The arrest warrant was issued against the duo together with FDC's secretary for mobilisation Ingrid Turinawe and Kawempe Mayor Mubarak Munyagwa on Wednesday by Kabale Chief Magistrate Agatonica Mbabazi.

They are charged with inciting the public on July 14, 2012, at Kabale Stadium where four policemen were injured and police vehicles pelted with stones during a rally.

Held liable

Last month the court summoned the accused to report on Wednesday but they failed to turn up. Ms Mbabazi also cancelled the bail earlier granted to the accused.

"I hereby pray that this court issues warrant of arrest against the accused persons because they have failed to attend court even after being served with criminal summons," state lawyer Gloria Inzikuru submitted to court.

However, the defence lawyer, Mr Jonathan Bwagi, said his clients had been busy in election campaigns for their political parties and some of them were still attending The Democratic Alliance retreat.

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Ms Mbabazi, however, said she was satisfied that the accused were served with criminal summons and there was no reason for them to miss court. The case was adjourned to October 20.

EU rewards Uganda for its socioeconomic development

NEWS STORY

Source: <http://neurope.eu/article/eu-rewards-uganda-for-its-socioeconomic-development/>

17 September 2015 - Uganda has been rewarded with \$24.5m from the European Union for sticking to its Millennium Development Goals agenda and for its progress so far in sustaining socioeconomic development.

As reported by the International Business Times, the monetary support to Uganda is part of a financial envelope of up to \$654m until 2020 and will focus on tackling poverty, inequality, good governance and sustainable rural development.

“Our support rewards performance. Its impact is entirely dependent on the partnership with the government of Uganda,” EU Ambassador and Head of Delegation to Uganda, Kristian Schmidt, was quoted as saying on September 15. “We expect future support to yield further progress in inclusive development, democracy, rule of law, cost-effective infrastructure, sustainable livelihoods, agriculture and much-needed job opportunities for Uganda’s unemployed youth.”

Official data show Uganda managed to reduce the rate of poverty from 56% of the population in 1992 to 24.5% in 2009. At the same time, the country’s middle class has grown from 21.2% to 37% in the last decade. What is more, the average income for Ugandan citizens has increased by 29.4% while the GDP per capita has increased from \$553.3 in 2010 to \$677.4 in 2012, according to data from the World Bank.

However, the total number of Ugandans living below the poverty line has increased, due in part to population growth, according to the International Business Times. And poverty remains firmly entrenched in rural areas, where 84% of Ugandans live. About 27% of all rural people (some 8 million men, women and children) still live below the national rural poverty line in remote areas throughout the country, with the poorest areas in the north.

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CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

IFC Begins Reengagement with the Central African Republic's Private Sector

NEWS STORY

Source: <http://www.finchannel.com/index.php/business/item/49166-ifc-begins-reengagement-with-the-central-african-republic-s-private-sector>

As part its efforts to re-engage with the Central African Republic, IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, supported the organization of a five-day national forum on private sector development presided over by Catherine Samba-Panza, the country's transitional Head of State.

18 September 2015 - Workshops during the forum focused on forestry, mining and agriculture as key development sectors, and introduced a public-private partnership (PPP) model to infrastructure development. Other key issues discussed included taxation, investment incentives, women entrepreneurship, and inclusion in the regional economy. A short film highlighted some investment opportunities available in the country, according to IFC.

The World Bank Group's Investment Climate Team highlighted areas measured in the Doing Business report as an opportunity to improve the business environment for small businesses, through growth-stimulating reforms. Small businesses were particularly affected by the recent political and military crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR)

Jean Christophe Carret, World Bank Country Manager for the CAR, said, "The World Bank Group is open to re-engagement with key internal and external stakeholders in the CAR to promote private sector-led growth through support to the health and infrastructure sectors, including transport and energy."

World Bank Country Director for the CAR, Paul Nomba Um, said, "Sustaining the achieved rigor in public governance is key. Relentlessly supporting and even accelerating public governance reforms will help control expenditures and increase revenues. With support from IFC, re-establishing the public-private sectors' permanent consultative framework is one of the prime measures to be taken in order to improve the investment climate."

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The forum's 500 participants included cabinet members and senior government officials, representatives of employers' associations, civil society members, women entrepreneurs, business managers from across the country, and international business and development organizations. The forum's goals included identifying bottlenecks hindering the development of the private sector, and nurturing a new economic development approach for the country.

IFC has previously worked with public and private sector partners in the CAR to improve the investment climate and support small business growth, particularly in and around the capital, Bangui. IFC was also engaged with the country's chamber of commerce, helping it build its capacity to serve local businesses.

The forum was co-financed by IFC's Conflict Affected States in Africa Initiative (CASA), which is supporting private sector growth in nine fragile countries in Africa, including in the CAR. CASA is supported by donor partners Ireland, the Netherlands, and Norway.

SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan President Will Skip New York Meeting

NEWS STORY

Source: VOA

By James Butty

21 September 2015 - South Sudan President Salva Kiir will not be attending a meeting at the United Nations later this month called by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to strengthen the ongoing peace process.

Information Minister Michael Makuei said President Kiir had already designated his Vice President James Wani Igga to represent the South Sudan government.

In addition, Makuei said, the invitation was given to President Kiir on short notice. He said while President Kiir considers the UN meeting very serious, the situation in South Sudan is more serious.

"President Salva Kiir is not going to the United Nations General Assembly meeting because he has already delegated his Vice President James Wani Igga to go and attend the General Assembly meeting as scheduled," he said.

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Message will be delivered

Makuei said Vice President Wani Igga will be delivering the same message that President Kiir would have delivered had he come in person.

In addition, Makuei said the UN invitation to President Kiir was given on short notice.

“The fact that his Excellency was given the invitation on such a short notice definitely would not allow other commitments to have happened,” he said.

Makuei denied President Kiir is not coming to the United Nations because he might not want to meet with his former Vice president.

“He has been meeting with him (Former South Sudan VP Riek Machar) so many times in Addis Ababa and he is ready to meet him anywhere. The question is the wrong timing in which these two meetings have been rescheduled,” he said.

But an official of the rebels said President Salva Kiir’s decision to skip the UN-sponsored meeting later this month in New York is an indication Kiir does not see peace as a priority, particularly since the invitation was extended to the two principals in the conflict.

Rebels say they want peace

On the other hand, Ambassador Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth, the secretary for foreign affairs of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in opposition, said the rebels have always been committed to the peace process, saying they were the first to sign the recent agreement.

“My leader, Dr. Riek Machar will be attending in his capacity as the chairman and commander-in-chief of the SPLM-SPLA opposition and as the vice president-designate. We will be arriving in new on the 24th. Definitely the meeting is for peace. We are for the implementation of the agreement. That’s why we are traveling to show our commitment to the UN that we are for peace,” he Gatkuoth said.

He said the world will be the judge about who’s serious about peace and who’s not.

Government: Rebels rejected ceasefire

Makuei said the government delegation that went to Addis Ababa last week to attend a workshop on the implementation of a permanent ceasefire returned to say that the rebels had refused to sign a ceasefire implementation agreement.

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"Yesterday the delegation that went to the workshop came back yesterday to inform us that the agreement on the implementation of the permanent ceasefire was signed by the government delegation and the former detainee delegation, and the rebels rejected the signing of the agreement. So the ball is now in the court of IGAD and the rebels," he said.

Gatkuoth said the rebels did not sign the implementation of the permanent ceasefire agreement in Addis Ababa last week because it failed to demilitarize the capital, Juba.

"If you recall in the agreement, it is clearly stated that Juba will be demilitarized. Demilitarization means you will take the army away from the capital city, but if you look at it in the proposed draft that we are asked to sign, it is actually militarizing Juba. For example, it says that the barracks in Juba will be protected by 5,000 soldiers. This is not demilitarization. And it says that 3,000 integrated police will be there; this is already 8,000," he said.

South Sudan president complains of being treated like 'schoolboy'

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

War-torn South Sudan's president will snub a UN meeting aimed at boosting peace efforts because he feels he was summoned there like a "schoolboy", a minister said Friday.

19 September 2015 - United Nation Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon invited President Salva Kiir and his arch-rival, rebel leader Riek Machar, to New York later this month in a bid to bolster their struggling peace accord.

Machar has said he will attend the September 29 meeting, but Kiir will only be sending his deputy.

"You cannot just invite a president and give him short notice like a schoolboy to come and attend your meetings," Information Minister Michael Makuei told reporters.

He also said there may be a problem related to Kiir travelling to the United States.

"Going to America, as you know is a problem, in terms of visa. Yes they can give the president the visa, but they can obstruct the going of others who are accompanying the president, so in order to avoid all this embarrassment, the Vice President James Wani Igga is going to attend," he added.

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Kiir and Machar signed a peace deal last month, but fighting has continued despite a ceasefire that was due to take hold on August 29.

The United States has been pushing for the UN Security Council to impose a travel ban and assets freeze on South Sudan's army chief Paul Malong and rebel commander Johnson Olony for their role in the continued fighting, although Russia and Angola have blocked the sanctions.

The world's youngest nation, South Sudan descended into bloodshed in December 2013 when Kiir accused Machar, then his deputy, of planning a coup.

The violence has left tens of thousands of people dead and the impoverished country split along ethnic lines.

Machar: 'Museveni accepted UPDF withdrawal from S Sudan'

NEWS STORY

Source: Radio Tamazuj

18 September 2015 - South Sudan's rebel chief Riek Machar says Uganda has accepted to withdraw its troops from South Sudan during his meeting with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni at Corinthian Hotel in Khartoum Tuesday.

The meeting was held in the presence of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir.

In a Thursday statement to the Khartoum-based Al Jareeda newspaper, Machar stated that he asked the Ugandan president to withdraw his troops from South Sudan.

The rebel leader pointed out that Museveni has accepted to pull out the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) from the South Sudanese territory, but he did not disclose the timeframe for the withdrawal.

Presidents Omar al-Bashir of Sudan and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda on Wednesday reiterated their support to the recently signed peace agreement in South Sudan.

In a joint communiqué issued at the end of Museveni's visit to Khartoum, the two leaders vowed to exert the necessary efforts to bring stability to the new nation, saying both countries were directly affected by the South Sudan conflict.

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Death Toll in South Sudan Fuels Truck Blast Reaches 182

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters

Juba, 18 September 2015 - The death toll in South Sudan from the explosion of a fuel truck this week has risen to 182, a regional official said on Friday.

The blast occurred on Wednesday as crowds gathered around the tanker to gather fuel after it had veered off the road. An official had earlier said the toll could keep rising as South Sudan did not have adequate facilities to treat the burns.

"The death toll has increased to 182 people. However, we are now on the ground evacuating some serious cases to a safe location for medical attention," Wilson Thomas Yanga, Maridi County Commissioner, told Reuters.

Maridi is in Western Equatoria, the region where the blast took place.

Such incidents have happened before in the east African region where fuel tankers often have to travel long distances along potholed roads and pass through poor communities.

There are almost no tarmac roads in South Sudan, one of Africa's poorest nations, which has been mired in conflict since December 2013. Rebels and the government signed a peace deal in August, although the ceasefire has already been violated.

Presidential spokesman Ateny Wek Ateny had said Wednesday's incident was not related to the conflict. "This was an accident," he said.

In June 2013, at least 30 people were killed and scores more injured when a broken-down fuel tanker exploded on a highway in Uganda while they were trying to siphon fuel.

Security Council to further discuss South Sudan sanctions after New York summit

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

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18 September 2015 - The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will again table the draft proposed sanctions on top military commanders in South Sudan after the expected UN General Assembly scheduled for 29 September.

On Tuesday Angola and Russia, supported by China and Venezuela, asked to put on hold the US and UK-drafted sanctions targeting South Sudanese army chief, Paul Malong Awan, and opposition's commander in Upper Nile state, Johnson Olony.

Among the main complaints raised by Angola and Russia was the fact that the Security Council's draft only called for travel ban on Olony but wanted to impose both travel ban and assets freeze on Awan, which they thought was unfair. They also said the sanctions would be counter-productive to the implementation of the peace agreement.

Both Awan and Olony are accused of sabotaging the peace deal by allegedly continuing to order rival troops to fight despite ceasefire deal signed by their two principals, president Salva Kiir and opposition leader, Riek Machar.

But UNSC sanctions committee would continue to push for the measures to be imposed, not only on the two additional top commanders, but also on many more officials in the future.

According to a report by the What's in Blue electronic newsletter Angola raised the request to hold the process of the sanctions and supported by Russia, which complained of unequal treatment of the two rival generals and also asked to defer the process until after the expected African Union's Peace and Security Council's summit and the UN General Assembly high level meeting in New York.

"Angola argued that the Council's decision-making should not be contingent on the domestic law of one of its members—an apparent reference to a US explanation in response to Russia's request for clarification as to why an asset freeze in addition to a travel ban was not proposed for Olonyi—and stated that it did not believe that designating these two individuals would support the peace process in South Sudan," partly reads the report.

It further proposed that a decision on the potential designations be delayed until after the convening of the AU Peace and Security Council summit in New York, scheduled for 26 September, and the high-level event on South Sudan planned for 29 September on the margins of the General Assembly's opening session.

China and Venezuela apparently supported the views expressed by Angola and Russia.

At the 4 September consultations on South Sudan, special representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS),

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Ellen Margrethe Løj, noted that there had been numerous violations of the peace agreement signed in late August by the parties.

The Council, said the statement, is expected to remain actively engaged on South Sudan issues in the coming months to closely monitor the implementation of the peace deal and initiate measures to punish spoilers.

The US has also been working on another draft resolution that would support initial implementation of the security, operational and political aspects of the peace agreement. The new draft is to be circulated after the end of the workshop on transitional security arrangements involving the warring parties in Addis Ababa on 18 September.

In the next Secretary-General's report on UNMISS, due in November, the Secretary-General could provide recommendations for a revised mandate for the Council's consideration prior to the mission's 30 November expiration.

The UN Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of UNMISS with expanded role to ensure implementation of the deal.

South Sudan's newspaper told to cease publication after criticizing government soldiers

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

17 September 2015 - An independent newspaper has been ordered by security agents in the South Sudanese capital, Juba, not to publish stories on Friday, a source told Sudan Tribune late on Thursday.

The Juba Monitor newspaper, which is owned by a former BBC correspondent, a South Sudanese national. Alfred Taban, has been told to stay off on Friday after publishing an opinion critical of the government soldiers' crackdown on civilians in Wonduruba payam of Lainya County in Central Equatoria state.

"We are told not to publish on Friday and our editor-in-chief, Alfred Taban, has been called to attend a meeting at the office of the national security on Friday," a source asking to remain anonymous in fear of repercussions told Sudan Tribune on Thursday.

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Alfred Taban wrote an opinion castigating the behaviours of the army in Wunduriba payam that led to displacement of tens of thousands of people, with some local reports suggest that up to 80,000 have been displaced in Lainya County for the past one week of army's random shooting at civilians in the area suspected to host rebels.

Wunduruba payam of Lainya County is home to the current government minister of cabinet affairs, Martin Elia Lomoro.

He said the aggression of the army amounted to creating more enemies to the government of President Salva Kiir, a move that is against a peace agreement signed last month.

The veteran journalist suggested army's "rebooting" and restructuring to reflect a diverse composition of South Sudan. He lamented that all South Sudanese communities have to send sons and daughters to the army who are entrusted to propel nationalism as opposition to tribalism.

Juba Monitor is the only independent English language newspaper after the Citizen was shut down by the security in July. Citizens newspaper's chief editor, Nhial Bol Aken, said he had to quit journalism last week after receiving a series of threats against his life.

At least 9 journalists have been killed so far and many more tortured or imprisoned by government's security personnel for the past four years after independence in 2011.

TANZANIA

Warning in Tanzania over political militia groups

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

Arusha, 19 September 2015 - Electoral authorities in Tanzania on Saturday called on police to investigate fears that some political parties were preparing to train militia groups ahead of next month's national elections.

The concern has emerged as campaigning heats up prior to the October 25 polls, in which the long-time ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party's candidate John Magufuli is hoping to succeed President Jakaya Kikwete.

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But Magufuli, 55, is facing what is seen as the tightest electoral race in the east African nation's history, with the main opposition parties uniting around ex-prime minister Edward Lowassa, 61, who recently defected from the CCM.

"The Commission has received information that certain political parties were preparing to give military training to more than 1,500 youth in order to cause trouble during the elections," Damian Lubuva, the National Election Commission's president, said in a statement.

"Even if this information only comes from one camp, the Commission requests the police to investigate and take the necessary action," it added, without naming any particular party.

"No party is allowed to use such a militia. It is against the law."

The statement also came after one person was killed earlier this month in a clash between CCM supporters and the main opposition Chadema party.

The ruling CCM party has dominated politics since modern Tanzania was formed in 1964, and currently has two-thirds of seats in parliament.

But it has been weakened by internal splits and a string of graft scandals, and recently suffered defections of high-profile members -- including ex-prime minister Frederick Sumaye and former home affairs minister Lawrence Masha -- to the opposition coalition.

Tanzania is one of the region's most stable countries, and Kikwete is also standing down at the end of his second and final mandate -- in contrast to President Pierre Nkurunziza in neighbouring Burundi whose bid to stay in office sparked weeks of violence and a coup attempt.

Another neighbour, Kenya, was also hit by post-election tribal violence in 2007-2008 which left more than 1,000 dead.

Tanzania, with over 50 million people, is east Africa's most populous country, with economic growth of more than seven percent, according to the World Bank.

Despite advances, the country remains very poor by regional and international standards, the World Bank says, with agriculture the key sector, providing a quarter of gross domestic product and employing three-quarters of the population.

Tanzania: Opposition Members Defect to Ruling CCM

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NEWS STORY

Source: Tanzania Daily News

By Rose Athumani

Mtwara, Tanzania, 18 September 2015 - More than 100 members from Civic United Front (CUF), Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (Chadema) and Tanzania Labour Party (TLP) defected to Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM).

The 123 members of the opposition party who defected to CCM were received by the ruling party's presidential running mate Samia Suluhu Hassan campaign rally at Mikindani, in Mtwara Urban constituency in Mtwara region.

Addressing the public Samia urged CCM Members in Mtwara to receive the new members with open arms and work with them especially during this campaign period. Samia appealed to the public in Mtwara region to vote for Dr John Pombe Magufuli because he is going to bring development change that will benefit all from grassroots level.

She said Dr Magufuli plans to build railway line from Mtwara to Songea to Mbamba Bay which will bring economic revolution in those areas and the nation in general through industries. Ms Samia said the railway line will transport coal from Songea, Ruvuma Region to industries in Mtwara Region.

Her government will also build four berths for docking large ships at the Mtwara Port, which according to the presidential running mate, will increase the number of ship docking at the Harbour.

Ms Samia added that residents of Mtwara whose land was taken by government for development in Magomeni, Ufukweni, Matengo and Mji Mwema will be compensated using current market rates. "CCM government is focused on fighting poverty and not fighting with poor people.

We are looking to get poor people out of poverty, therefore we will peg the compensation to the current market rates," she explained. Speaking he earlier the Mtwara Urban parliamentary candidate through CCM ticket, Hasnain Murji said appealed to the presidential running mate to push for compensation for those who vacated their land to be used for development.

The CCM presidential running mate yesterday completed her second leg of her campaign trail in the Southern regions of the country where she gave detailed account

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on what her government will do to bring development to the public if her party is elected to form the next government in the October general elections.

Meanwhile FATMA ABDU reports that former Dar es Salaam Regional Secretary of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) Captain (rtd) Alhaj Mohamed Ligora and Democratic Party (DP) National Chairman, Christopher Mtikila emerged in Dar es Salaam and strongly opposed the presidential candidate of a coalition of four opposition Parties (UKAWA).

Speaking to journalists at different press conferences in the city DP Chairman, Mr Mtikila said that is time Tanzanians were supposed to be careful with candidates who use money in order to be president.

On his part, Captain Ligora required Ukawa presidential candidate Edward Lowassa to stop defaming President Jakaya Kikwete by linking him to Richmond scandal.

Tanzania: Vice President Criticises Opposition Leaders

NEWS STORY

Source: Tanzania Daily News

By Issa Yusuf

18 September 2015 - Zanzibar Second Vice- President, Seif Ali Iddi, has warned leaders of opposition parties preventing people from travelling and living in any part of Zanzibar as it is against the Constitution.

"There are some leaders who are against people who travel from one place to another to settle in any place they want. It is wrong to prevent people from enjoying their right to freedom of movement," he said during the launch of CCM campaign in South Unguja Region.

He said Tanzanians were free to move or settle in any village in the United Republic of Tanzania -- including Unguja and Pemba -- because it is their constitutional right. "It's unfortunate that some leaders claim that some Tanzanians have no right to live in Zanzibar," he said, adding that the notion was misleading.

Speaking at a campaign rally at Michamvu village, central district which many of its residents are from Tanzania Mainland, Mr Iddi emphasized that every Tanzanian should feel safe at any place, and the government will not accept any attempt to disrupt unity.

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"The few politicians who make discriminatory statements should know that they risk facing legal action," he warned. Zanzibar CCM Campaign Committee chairman Mr Iddi said the team has been going on well in unveiling the party's election manifesto and that so far everything looks bright.

"We have done a lot in improving people's lives in the islands. CCM needs another term under President, Dr Ali Mohamed Shein, to serve the people," he said. Michamvi village remains one of the few areas in the islands facing water shortage.

U.S. ties approval of \$472.8 mln Tanzania aid to graft fight

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters Africa

By Fumbuka Ng'wanakilala

19 September 2015 - The United States told Tanzania on Friday it must do more to fight corruption if it wants to receive a \$472.8 million financial aid package next year.

Tanzania has made big discoveries of natural gas and hopes to start large-scale production within a decade, but investors in the east African nation of over 45 million people have long complained of graft.

"Despite some efforts to address corruption, it remains a serious concern affecting all aspects of development and government effectiveness," Mark Childress, the U.S. ambassador to Tanzania, said in a statement.

Tanzania won a five-year package of grants in 2008 worth \$698 million under the U.S. government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) program, but the award of a second round of grants will now depend on the government's anti-graft effort.

The MCC board acknowledged Tanzania's steps to reform its institutions, but said more needs to be done before additional aid can be approved.

"The board expressed continued concern regarding corruption in Tanzania and agreed that Tanzania must pass the control of corruption indicator on MCC's fiscal year 2016 scorecard before the board will vote on the compact," an embassy statement said.

A group of donors last year withheld nearly \$500 million in budget support to Tanzania over corruption allegations in the energy sector after a scandal led to the resignations of three cabinet ministers.

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The aid freeze hit the government's budget for the fiscal year 2014/15 and weakened the local currency.

Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete said in May that Western donors were setting degrading conditions for aid to his country and he could be forced in time to tell them: "keep your aid".

Kikwete is scheduled to step down after next month's general elections at the end of his second and final term in office.

"We hope to see free, fair and peaceful elections that represent the will of the Tanzanian people," Childress said.

Tanzania, one of Africa's biggest per capita aid recipients, has experienced repeated delays in payments due to donor concerns about corruption, poor governance and the slow pace of reforms.

East Africa: Secretary General Urges Tanzania Media to Build Peace and Consensus

PRESS RELEASE

17 September 2015 - The Secretary General of the East African Community, Amb. Dr. Richard Sezibera has urged the media fraternity in Tanzania to build peace and social consensus as the country prepares for the forthcoming General Elections slated for October 2015.

The Secretary General, who was on Wednesday 16 September participating in a two-day Tanzania Media Peace Forum 2015 convened by the Media Owners Association of Tanzania (MOAT), Trinity Group East Africa, and the EAC Secretariat at the Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre in Dar es Salaam, said during the electioneering period, the media in Tanzania is expected to build peace, social consensus and cohesion, without which democracy is threatened.

Amb. Sezibera, who was represented by his Head of Corporate Communication and Public Affairs Department, Mr. Owora Richard Othieno, said "it will be unfortunate if the media in Tanzania take the path of fanning flames of discord by taking sides, reinforcing prejudices, muddling the facts and peddling half-truths during the electioneering period".

He urged the media to shape public opinion responsibly and not to be influenced and manipulated by different interest groups in the society. "You are expected to promote

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democracy by among other things, educating voters, protecting human rights, promoting tolerance among various social groups, and ensuring that the government is transparent and accountable. Please don't sow fear, division and violence which will lead to democratic decay", asserted the EAC official.

In his keynote address, Dr. Reginald A. Mengi, the Executive Chairman of IPP Limited and Chair of Media Owners Association of Tanzania (MOAT), commended the EAC Secretariat and the Trinity Group East Africa for bringing together the representatives of various political shades, religious organizations, international organizations, media owners, media practitioners and stakeholders to appreciate their various critical roles in deepening democracy in Tanzania.

Dr. Mengi reiterated that for a long time Tanzania had been a haven of peace, a situation, which has given the country international applause and that, the peace is a huge national asset and guarantees the country's unity and national security.

"if we create and breed social instability, our existing peaceful co-existence will vanish at a great loss to all Tanzanians and the nation, and it will be very hard to re-organize and restore it" noted the MOAT Chair.

The Chair cautioned the media on reporting what candidates and their campaigners say while looking for votes. "Newsrooms, online portals, radio and television producers, should report stories and developments that aim to promote peace and national unity".

A representative of the Head of the European Union Delegation in Tanzania, Mr. Fabio Di Stefano said the role of the media during elections cannot be under estimated and that development partners were ready to accompany the Tanzanian people during the general elections.

Rev. Canon Thomas Godda, the Executive Director of the Inter-Religious Council for Peace Tanzania and Mr. Tom Ndahiro, former Head of Department of Civil and Political Rights in the Rwanda National Human Rights Commission shared their views on the role of the media in democracy and peace building.