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



MEDIA MONITORING

18 June 2015

GENERAL NEWS

UN urges ban on peacekeeping for child sex-abuse

NEWS STORY

Source: BBC

17 June 2015 - Countries should be barred from contributing troops to UN missions if their peacekeepers sexually abuse children, says a UN review of peacekeeping.

It recommends the home countries of abusers are identified annually.

The review was handed over to the UN secretary general following a French abuse scandal.

The leaked UN report claimed 16 French soldiers abused children in the Central African Republic.

The review also says peacekeepers' home countries should be given a six-month deadline for investigations of alleged sexual abuse by troops.

Currently peacekeepers can only be prosecuted in their home countries.

However, the panel's chairman, former president of East Timor, Jose Ramos-Horta stressed "immunity should not mean impunity".

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His review recommended that countries be required to disclose disciplinary action taken against soldiers, as well as governments' failure to report.

Mr Ramos-Horta said UN member states should fund a programme to assist children born from the peacekeepers' sexual exploitation.

The overall review of UN peacekeeping operations was commissioned before the French troops' sexual abuse scandal came out in April.

It said that the alleged abuse took place between December 2013 and June 2014 at a centre for internally displaced people in the Central African Republic capital, Bangui, according to the Guardian.

Last week another leaked UN report said hundreds of women surveyed in Haiti and Liberia said UN troops bartered goods for sex with them. One-third of the allegations involved children.

The UN currently has about 125,000 peacekeepers deployed around the world.

DRC

RDC – CPI: le procès de Bosco Ntaganda débutera le 7 juillet à La Haye

ARTICLE

Source: Jeune Afrique

Surnommé "Terminator" car réputé sans pitié, l'ex-chef de guerre congolowandais est accusé d'avoir joué un rôle central dans les crimes ethniques commis en Ituri en 2002 et 2003.

17 Juin 2015 - Le procès de l'ex-chef de guerre Bosco Ntaganda devant la Cour pénale internationale(CPI) s'ouvrira au siège de la cour à La Haye et non en République démocratique du Congo, où il est accusé d'avoir commis des crimes contre l'humanité, a indiqué la CPI lundi.

Des juges de la CPI avaient recommandé en mars que les déclarations d'ouverture dans ce procès aient lieu à Bunia, la capitale de l'Ituri, dans le nord-est de la RDC. L'objectif était de rapprocher le travail judiciaire de la Cour des communautés les plus affectées, le reste du procès devant se dérouler à La Haye.

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Mais la présidence, prenant en compte des risques pour la sécurité et le bien-être des témoins, l'impact logistique et les coûts estimés à plus de 600 000 euros, a finalement conclu que les avantages potentiels de la tenue de procédures à Bunia seraient dépassés par ces risques.

18 chefs de crimes contre l'humanité et crimes de guerre

Bosco Ntaganda, 41 ans, est accusé d'avoir joué un rôle central dans les crimes ethniques commis en Ituri en 2002 et 2003. Il doit répondre de 18 chefs de crimes contre l'humanité et crimes de guerre commis par les Forces patriotiques pour la libération du Congo (FPLC), dont il était le chef militaire. Bosco Ntaganda est notamment accusé d'avoir lui-même violé et réduit en esclavage sexuel des jeunes filles de moins de 15 ans.

Si le procès s'était ouvert à Bunia, cela aurait été une première dans l'histoire de la CPI: toute la salle d'audience aurait été du voyage, les juges, le greffe, l'accusé et son équipe de défense, l'accusation et les représentants des victimes.

Le premier à se livrer à la CPI

Milice à prédominance Hema, les FPLC combattaient principalement l'ethnie rivale Lendu pour le contrôle de l'Ituri, région riche en ressources naturelles, notamment de l'or, et en proie à des violences ayant fait quelque 60 000 morts depuis 1999.

Puis Bosco Ntaganda avait été l'un des meneurs du Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), lancé en mai 2012 dans l'est de la RDC, avant de subir une défaite militaire face à une scission de cette rébellion menée par Sultani Makenga. Après l'éclatement du mouvement, il s'était réfugié à l'ambassade des États-Unis au Rwanda et avait demandé son transfert à La Haye. De fait, il avait été en mars 2013 le premier à se livrer à la CPI.

Congolese troops must be disarmed if rapes are to stop, says Denis Mukwege**OPINION**

Source: The Guardian

Leading Congolese gynaecologist calls for soldiers to lay down their weapons so that recruits with no history of sexual violence can replace them

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17 June 2015 - The Congolese army is mired in a culture of sexual violence and should be disarmed because many of its troops are “completely sick”, according to one of the country’s leading gynaecologists.

Dr Denis Mukwege said soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) should be stripped of their weapons and replaced by new recruits who have never committed sexual violence or fought for a violent militia.

Rapists in the the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique (FARDC), he added, ought also to be considered “victims” because they were traumatised by involvement in one of Africa’s most brutal and longest-running wars and needed psychological help that was not available.

Alluding to the town in eastern Congo where Congolese soldiers committed mass rape in 2012, Mukwege said: “In Minova and other places it is the FARDC who are the ones who were raping instead of protecting the population. The FARDC has shown that the army can destroy its population, it’s a big problem.

“If we want to fight against sexual violence then we need to be courageous and say that we need to create an army where people have never been in a militia before or have never been involved in rape or destruction.”

Mukwege, 59, who was last year awarded the EU’s highest human rights award, the Sakharov Prize, for saving the lives of thousands of rape victims, also questioned the wisdom of the international community ploughing large sums of money into a military that routinely perpetrates sexual violence.

Mukwege said: “The UK and other countries are spending a lot of money to try and build an army from people who are completely sick and destroyed. They will never succeed.”

According to UN estimates, more than a third of the rapes that occur in the eastern part of the country are committed by the army.

Mukwege’s comments follow the revelation that, despite spending £5.2m on hosting a high-profile summit on ending sexual violence in conflict, the UK government has committed less than a fifth of that amount to tackling rape in warzones in 2015.

A UK parliamentary inquiry will this week begin scrutinising Hague’s initiative and also details of an Observer investigation that found rapists in the army are still operating with impunity within eastern DRC, where Mukwege’s Panzi hospital has helped treat more than 30,000 survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by the military and militias.

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Mukwege said: “We should be more courageous. Why can’t we start sending the FARDC to do social work like fixing roads, protecting houses or producing food? They can keep their uniforms but not their guns, that way they can be useful for society.”

Mukwege added that many military recruits had already fought for violent militia and committed rape, meaning that sexual violence was woven into the mindset of the country’s military.

“Many of the perpetrators are themselves victims because many of them were children when they joined the army and there is no psychological support to help them,” said Mukwege.

“We are trying to build something with people who are mentally unsafe ... studies show that most have post-traumatic stress disorder. How can you give them guns?”

On Sunday an investigation found that the biggest rape tribunal in the country’s history was allegedly fixed by the government and military prosecutors, while rape prosecutions in eastern DRC have fallen and incidents of sexual violence increased despite political pledges at the London summit to act on sexual violence in conflict.

The findings raise questions about the UK government’s commitment to the issue, with data from freedom of information requests revealing that last year just one trip was made to the Congo by a member of the UK team dedicated to sexual violence.

Funding to the DRC from the Department for International Development (DfID) is £149m this year, a portion of which is dedicated to helping the country’s army “increase their ability to fight against impunity”. Other initiatives aimed at defence reform in the country. In addition, the Ministry of Defence says that a handful of officers are based in the east of the country, “working with the UN and Congolese government”.

Despite such efforts, Congolese troops continue to be implicated in ongoing sexual violence. Rebecca Masika Katsuva, who runs a women’s refuge in Minova, calculates that of the 800 rape victims her centre has helped since the start of 2014, 600 were attacked by the army.

Emmanuel Baboo, of the Heal Africa hospital in Goma, which treats up to 10,000 victims of sexual violence a year, describes cases where soldiers from the 10th military region in eastern Congo deliberately rape children to “corrupt” them early.

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RWANDA

Rwanda: Changing constitution to allow President Kagame third term 'will undermine peace and democracy'

OPINION

Source: International Business Times

17 June 2015 - Two members of the Rwandan Parliament and a member of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) have resigned for reportedly disagreeing with the ruling party's decision to change the constitution to allow President Paul Kagame to run in the 2017 election.

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) announced that it approved an amendment to article 101 of the country's constitution after some 3.6 million people – about 72% of Rwanda's electoral roll – signed a petition asking the Parliament to change the document, which restricted the president to running for two seven-year terms

However, some reports claimed that part of the population was forced to sign the petition by officials.

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RPF member Connie Bwiza Sekamana resigned earlier in June after allegedly being summoned by the Criminal Investigations Department, the East African reported.

However, sources told the East African that she was dismissed after criticising the government for its decision to change the constitution.

Chamber of Deputies Giovanni Bushishi and EALA member Celestin Kabahizi also resigned from their positions. It is not yet clear why they abandoned their posts, but sources told East African the catalyst was their disagreement over amending article 101.

Changing the constitution will undermine peaceful transfer of power

Earlier in May, the country's main opposition party Democratic Green Party of Rwanda (DGPR) filed a lawsuit to the Supreme Court attempting to block the change to the constitution, arguing that article 193 concerning amendments of the document does not allow the number of terms to be changed, but only their lengths.

DGPR's President Frank Habineza told IBTimes UK: "We don't support the change of the constitution, but we are not surprised [that this happened] because many people have been protecting this move."

Habineza also said that there are allegations that some people were forced to sign the petition, but added that DGPR does not have any evidence to prove this.

"Changing the constitution will not only undermine the democratic process but also the peaceful transfer of power," he said, adding that since the kingdom of Rwanda – which ended when King Kigeli V was overthrown in a 1961 coup d'etat resulting in a referendum that abolished the monarchy – the non-democratic successions of leaders had led to deaths and unrest.

It is not yet clear whether Kagame will back the RPF's decision. Earlier in April, the president said he did not support changes of the constitution, but he was open to debate.

"In a democratic society, debates are allowed and they are healthy," he said.

Kagame also urged politicians not to coerce people into signing the petition. "If the allegations that some people have been forced are true, that's a concern and you should also have that concern," he said.

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Burundi unrest unlikely in Rwanda

In neighbouring Burundi, hundreds of people have been engaged in violent protests after President Pierre Nkurunziza announced he will seek a third term in this year's election.

Protesters accused him of violating the constitution and the Arusha Peace Agreement, which says the president can only stay in power for two terms.

Nkurunziza's supporters argue the president's first term should not be counted as he was chosen by the Parliament and not by the people in an election as is specified in the agreement.

The Burundian police as well as the Imbonerakure – the youth wing of Nkurunziza's party National Council for the Defense of Democracy – have been accused of committing abuses, such as killings and torture, against protesters.

International commentators have said it will be unlikely for Rwandans to protest against RPF's decision given Kagame's strong support, mainly stemming from belief in his ability to transform Rwanda into a middle-income country, a goal he committed to achieving by 2020.

However, critics have accused Kagame of cracking down on political and press freedoms.

Assistant professor in comparative politics and researcher on sub-Saharan Africa Omar McDoom told IBTimes UK: "The president's [Kagame] popularity is difficult to gauge. While he has delivered social order and rising prosperity, his record on individual freedom and justice lags behind.

"Petitions and quantitative indicators of public opinion are not reliable guides to the true sentiment of the population given the extraordinary ability of the state to monitor society and given how strongly the regime has punished dissent, perceived as disloyalty, in the past. Self-censorship is an issue in a regime which, by all independent measures of democracy, has an authoritarian character."

When asked to comment on possible unrest in Rwanda, Habineza told IBTimes UK: "I don't know what could happen in Rwanda, but I know that not every Rwandan wants to change the constitution."

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Article 101

"The President of the Republic is elected for a term of seven years renewable only once. Under no circumstances shall a person hold the office of President of Republic for more than two terms."

Article 193

"The power to initiate amendment of the constitution is vested concurrently in the President of the Republic upon the proposal of the cabinet and each Chamber of Parliament upon a resolution passed by a two thirds majority vote of its members.

"The passage of a constitutional amendment requires a three quarters majority vote of the members of each chamber of Parliament. However, if the constitutional amendment concerns the term of the President of the Republic or the system of democratic government based on political pluralism, or the constitutional regime established by this constitution especially the republican form of the government or national sovereignty, the amendment must be passed by referendum, after adoption by each Chamber of Parliament. No amendment to this article is permitted."

BURUNDI

Burundi accepts military observers in 'principle'

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP World News

Bujumbura, 18 June 2015 - Burundi's government said Thursday it had agreed "in principle" to the deployment of African Union military observers and human rights experts to monitor key elections following weeks of political unrest.

But Burundi rejected AU calls for further delays to the polls, with parliamentary elections planned for June 29, ahead of the presidential vote on July 15.

"Military experts, human rights monitors, observers -- we say that in principle there is no problem, there is no objection," Foreign Minister Aime-Alain Nyamitwe told AFP.

But Nyamitwe said they would be allowed in only after setting out conditions following "consultations" with the AU.

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The troubled central African nation has been in crisis since late April over President Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial bid to stand for a third consecutive five-year term, a move branded by opponents as unconstitutional and a violation of a 2006 peace deal that ended 13 years of civil war.

"You do not send military experts to a country without having held consultations," Nyamitwe added, calling on the AU to clarify details about the observers, including their mandate, their number, and which countries they will come from.

Polls were postponed following weeks of demonstrations that were brutally suppressed by security forces, and after a failed coup attempt last month by a section of the army.

The unrest left about 40 people dead and scores injured, mostly in the capital Bujumbura. More than 100,000 people have fled the violence to neighbouring countries.

The decision to send some 50 observers was taken by the continent's leaders at an AU summit last weekend in South Africa "to verify the process of disarming the militia and other armed groups," the 54-member bloc's peace and security commissioner Smail Chergui said.

The United Nations has repeatedly warned about the need to disarm youth groups ahead of elections, especially the ruling party's youth wing, the Imbonerakure, which it accuses of carrying out executions, abductions and torture.

The AU has expressed its "deep concern about the continuing stalemate" in Burundi and said that election dates should be "set by consensus between the Burundian parties".

Nyamitwe however dismissed any further postponement saying polls had already been delayed, and that there was a need to ensure the new government was in place to avoid a "constitutional vacuum" when the current administration's mandate ends.

The next president must be sworn in by August 26.

Burundi: Opposition calls for tax boycott in economic battle against regime

NEWS STORY

Source: International Business Times

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17 June 2015 - Burundi's opposition has called on civilians to reduce their consumption of beer, cigarettes, fuel and mobile phones in a bid to 'asphyxiate' the government they claim should step down as month-long street protests have rocked the country.

It is estimated 77 have died and around 150,000 civilians have sought refuge in neighbouring countries since the start of the violence on 26 April, when Burundi's ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party nominated President Pierre Nkurunziza to stand for re-election.

Opposition leaders want the president to step down or withdraw his third-term bid, claiming it violates the country's constitution and the Arusha Accords, a peace deal that ended ethnic civil war and established the foundation for Burundi's post-conflict recovery in 2005.

But Nkurunziza's supporters argue the president's first term should be discounted as he was chosen by the parliament and not by the people in an election as is specified in the agreement.

Economic asphyxia

The spokesman for the Arusha Movement, a coalition of opposition and civil society groups behind the protests, told IBTimes UK how opposition leaders are now calling on the population "to stop paying their taxes".

"We want to significantly target the economy of the country to be sure that the president has no other choice but to yield to the people's demands," Jeremie Minani said over the phone from the capital Bujumbura.

Around 46.5% of Burundi's state budget comes from indirect taxes – including the 'taxe de transaction' or VAT on fuel, alcohol and tobacco, and customs duties. Only 3% of the country's finances derives from direct taxes on civil servants' salaries.

Since the start of the protests, however, analysts say the country has slowly come to a halt, experiencing an "economic breakdown".

"It is an economic battle that we are playing out. We want to asphyxiate a country that is already economically weakened, that has had its foreign resources cut off."

Burundi exports very little - mainly coffee (72.1% of total exports) followed by tea (15.7%) and manufactured goods (9.3%) but produces too little of all three items to ensure its alimentary self-sufficiency - and is plagued by corruption, ranking 159th out of 175 in the 2014 index of the NGO Transparency International.

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The government, which therefore relies on foreign aid to meet half of its budget, has been deprived of a significant chunk of these revenues after countries like Belgium suspended their aid following the start of the protests.

In May, for instance, Belgium said it would pull out of a €5m police cooperation deal, which it had in place jointly with the Netherlands.

"We can stop paying the municipal tax, even if we face penalties and accept to pay these later," Minani said.

'Stop drinking beer and smoking'

Part of the restrictions the opposition is hoping to impose on the government include asking traders to stop importing products that are not basic necessities such as clothes or luxury products so as to stop paying custom taxes.

"We're just telling them that they should stop importing some products. However, those that are of basic necessities, they should continue importing them because we will not let our people die."

While he is calling for civilians to boycott products on which indirect taxes are levied, such as alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, and fuel, Minani is also demanding that people "stop using mobile phones so much because that also brings a lot of money to the state. Text, don't call".

This comes despite the fact that mobile phones are one of the only means of communication remaining in a country suffering a media blackout where the majority of independent media have been reduced to silence and most journalists who had been receiving daily death threats have gone into hiding.

No other choice

Because, Minani claims, "the President has already ordered to his police to arrest or kill anyone, civilian or military opposed to his third mandate", an economic war is the only option left.

"The diminishment of the street protests has to be accompanied by peaceful actions linked to civil disobedience, economical measures and the whistle campaign. All this, we hope, will persuade the government to push the president to step down and stop his forcing."

According to the politician, the government could find itself incapable of paying civil servants, who, after finding themselves without a salary, are expected to start supporting the contestation movement.

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"We're targeting the army, teachers, the police; all those people who will join the cause and ask for the president to leave. Already, we have a large portion of the army that is muzzled and reduced to silence, but that supports us. We want the entire army to join us, not by taking arms, but by coming and protesting peacefully to show the president that force and violence have no place," Minani explained.

Regime will castigate saboteurs

For the regime, who at the beginning of the month, assured the population that in May, June and July, salaries of civil servants or other public officials would be paid, the opposition's calls to constrict the economy is nothing less than "sabotage".

"These people are waging a war of attrition. They are showing their true face, and their aim is to bring the government down. After the protests and the coup, this is a new form of sabotage," presidential adviser Willy Nyamitwe told IBTimes UK, in reference to the 13 May failed coup d'etat.

In the adviser's eyes, "all those who want to bring down institutions that are democratically-elected are outlaws", and he insists they will be prosecuted by Burundi's justice system and punished in accordance with the penal code.

"No one can openly say that he will sabotage the economy of a country and those who do should be chastised and condemned according to the law," Nyamitwe added. "If they want to be good citizens, the minimum is to respect the democratically-elected institutions and the national economy.

Tension Evident in Rural Burundi Ahead of Elections**NEWS STORY**

Source: VOA

Ngozi, Burundi, 17 June 2015 - Far from Bujumbura, the Burundian countryside seems little affected by the months of political protests and unrest in the capital.

"It's quiet here," said Francois Nahimana, a resident of Ngozi, President Pierre Nkurunziza's hometown. "These troubles happen far away. We only heard about them on the radio. But we are scared that it could spread here, that it turns into a war throughout the country."

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In the hills surrounding Nkurunziza's home region, the president and his ruling party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), still have significant support.

"He's done a lot of good things during the 10 years he's been in power," said Desire, a local farmer. "He built schools, implemented free health care for children under 5, and our houses have been improved."

But critics say it isn't easy to speak out against the ruling party. One opposition supporter said he was threatened for showing others how to vote for their candidate.

"They were Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling party," Joel Minani said. "They told me I didn't have the right to show people how to cast votes since the ruling party had already explained the process. They arrested me and demanded I meet conditions in order to be released."

Opposition parties say they face intimidation and are harassed by the youth of the ruling party and the authorities, preventing them from campaigning.

"We didn't campaign because of the insecurity in the country. We couldn't do it," said opposition party member Emmanuel Icoyitungiye. "There have been abductions in broad daylight in various towns, and some of our members have been arrested."

Officials in the ruling party deny harassment allegations. They say that there might be small groups of violent people on both sides but they have nothing to do with the official line of the party.

Eighty percent of Burundians live in the countryside and their votes are expected to determine the outcome of the upcoming elections.

Burundi Rights Group Says 77 People Killed Since Late April

NEWS STORY

Source: Bloomberg

17 June 2015 - At least 77 people have been killed in Burundi and more than 1,000 detained since protests erupted in the country in late April, a local rights group said.

About 500 others have been wounded in clashes sparked by President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, head of the Association for

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the Protection of Human Rights and Incarcerated Persons, said Wednesday in an interview in the capital, Bujumbura.

The figures were reached by conducting a census across the East African nation, Mbonimpa said. The country's Red Cross on June 4 said that at least 21 people had died in the unrest.

Burundi has been rocked by demonstrations since the ruling party nominated Nkurunziza as its presidential candidate for elections rescheduled to July 15. Opponents say his bid violates a two-term limit set out in peace agreements that in 2005 brought an end to a 12-year civil war.

Burundi holds 6 percent of the world's nickel reserves, according to the African Development Bank. Kermas Group, a London-based investment company, is developing a mine at Musongati in the nation's southeast, which ranks as one of the 10 largest known deposits of the metal.

Hundreds of demonstrators assembled Wednesday morning in Musaga, a district of the capital, to call for Nkurunziza to withdraw from next month's vote, protest leader Elie Nijimbere said in an interview. Supporters argue that Nkurunziza's first mandate doesn't count because he was elected by parliament not the public. Police spokesman Pierre Nkurikiye on June 15 said that all protests were over.

Burundi will begin its rescheduled election cycle with a June 29 parliamentary vote, the presidency said last week. More than 100,000 refugees have fled to neighboring countries since early April, fearing political violence, according to the United Nations.

UGANDA

Uganda's ruling party, president dismiss bid by ex-PM for top job

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters

16 June 2015 - A former Ugandan prime minister's bid for the ruling party's nomination to run for president in the 2016 election in a direct challenge to veteran Yoweri Museveni is a "non-starter" that will fail, the party spokesman said on Tuesday.

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A day earlier, Museveni also dismissed the bid by Amama Mbabazi, who he sacked as premier in September, in remarks made on Monday suggesting his ex-ally should take responsibility for any criticisms he had leveled against a government he once led.

Mbabazi, 66, announced on Monday that he intended to seek the support of the National Resistance Movement to run for the country's top job, vying with Museveni, 70, who has been in power for three decades and is expected to run again.

"Yes, there is tiredness, corruption, lack of commitment in executing programs, but...I think the Right Honourable Mbabazi owes you (Ugandans) an explanation in those fields,"

Museveni said in remarks published by state-owned New Vision newspaper.

Analysts said Mbabazi's sacking bore the hallmarks of a power struggle between him and Museveni.

"Since he was sacked, we have not seen a single NRM legislator or minister who has broken ranks with the president and joined him," said party and government spokesman Ofwono Opondo. "He's a non-starter who will easily be defeated."

Museveni has yet to state his intentions but many party members have already urged him to stand. The party votes for a candidate at a conference expected in late September in the east African state.

In an effort to pose a stronger challenge, opposition parties have formed a coalition to field a single candidate.

But analysts say Museveni's control of state institutions means he is likely to win another landslide although -- as in previous votes -- opponents are likely to accuse him of rigging and other abuses. Government officials insist voting is fair.

Police arrested youths in Kampala and five other major towns after Mbabazi declared he would run again, saying they had tried to distribute campaign material ahead of the legal campaigning period. Local newspapers said they were handing out leaflets and wearing Mbabazi T-shirts.

In the last budget before the presidential and parliamentary elections due in February or March, the government announced a 71 percent hike in spending, mainly for improved infrastructure and energy supplies, a move analysts saw as clear bid for votes.

Some Western donors have criticized Museveni for holding on to power for so long, but have also praised the rebel-turned-statesman for restoring order after years of chaos and sending Ugandan troops to fight Islamist militants in Somalia.

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KENYA

African Union adopts resolution to join International Criminal Court case

NEWS STORY

Source: Standard Digital (<http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000165923/african-union-adopts-resolution-to-join-international-criminal-court-case>)

By Geoffrey Mosoku

17 June 2015 - The African Union (AU) will formally seek to be enjoined in the criminal case against Deputy President William Ruto after the African heads of states adopted a resolution on the same.

The heads of states Summit held in South Africa last weekend finally adopted a resolution that seeks to enjoin in the case against Ruto at the International Criminal Court (ICC), with a view to pushing for its termination. The AU Commission will seek to join in the application under Rule 68 by the ICC Prosecutor against the DP as an interested party for purposes of placing before the court all the relevant material arising out of the negotiations. "The commission requested the ICC to terminate or suspend the proceedings against Ruto until Africa's concerns and proposals for amendments of the Rome Statute of the ICC are considered," the document adopted reads in part.

Speaking after the resolution was adopted, President Uhuru Kenyatta accused the ICC of reneging on an agreement of the 12th Session of the ICC Assembly of States Parties in December 2013 that amended Rule 68 of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Rome Statute to allow for admission of prior recorded testimony.

He said this was to be done subject to the condition that the rule would not be applied retrospectively and subject to the clear understanding that it would not applied to the Kenyan cases.

"Once again and in total disregard to the understanding, the prosecutor on May 21, 2015 filed an application under Rule 68 seeking to use recanted evidence in the case involving my DP. The prosecutor's desperate action is in total violation of the understanding reached by State Parties to the Rome Statute during negotiations on the amendments of Rule 68," President Kenyatta said. The President appealed to his peers to sign the Malabo Protocol, which was adopted in June last year on the Amendments to the Protocol on the Statute of the African Court of Justice Human Rights, to enhance the jurisdiction of the court to try international crimes. "The Protocol needs 15 ratifications for its entry into force. My country signed the Protocol during the January

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2015 Summit and has initiated the process to ratify the treaty at our National Assembly. In order to operationalise the court, I urge member states to sign and ratify the Protocol as a matter of priority,” he said. Ruto, who has maintained that he is innocent, is being tried alongside former radio journalist Joshua Sang over the 2008 post-election violence.

Although Ruto’s trial was not initially on the agenda of the 25th AU Summit in South Africa, the Kenyan delegation successfully pushed for its inclusion in talks on Saturday evening.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Warlord Business: CAR’s Violent Armed Groups and their Criminal Operations for Profit and Power

OPINION

Source: <http://www.enoughproject.org/reports/warlord-business-car%E2%80%99s-violent-armed-groups-and-their-criminal-operations-profit-and-power>

17 June 2015 - The two main armed groups in the Central African Republic (CAR)—the ex-Séléka and the Anti-Balaka, along with their multiple factions—make millions of dollars in profits from illicit activities, which support their operations and create wealth for ruthless warlords and business owners. Killings, extortion, and other forms of violence are used to control areas with gold and diamonds throughout CAR, and the groups are deeply involved in this high-value trade in several ways. The two groups also generate income through illicit taxes and “protection money” from civilians, road travelers, businesses, local organizations, and state institutions.

Ex-Séléka and Anti-Balaka groups profit from a large illicit minerals trade. They do this directly by the mining and theft of diamonds and gold that they then sell to middlemen. They also profit indirectly by looting, extortion, and predatory taxation of miners and traders. Research presented in this report estimates the total current value of the illicit diamond trade and taxation by armed groups in CAR to be between \$3.87 and \$5.8 million dollars annually, a sufficient amount in CAR to fund widespread military operations. The majority of the diamonds and the gold are smuggled out of CAR to neighboring countries—mainly Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sudan—and then on to international markets; a lesser amount is sold on the local market within CAR.

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Some of the diamonds sold locally are purchased by three Central African diamond buying houses that currently have a total stock of diamonds worth close to \$8 million.⁷ This domestic diamond trade is not prohibited by the Kimberley Process (KP) suspension of CAR's membership and the decision by KP members to refrain from sending or receiving diamond shipments from CAR that has been in effect since May 2013 and only restricts exports of rough Central African diamonds.⁸ Deliberations are, however, underway concerning the possibility of a partial lifting of the KP restrictions. There are concerns that the combination of an inadequate diamond tracing system in CAR and control by armed groups of diamond mines¹⁰ could result in conflict diamonds, which have provided financing for armed groups, entering the KP-approved diamond trade. To counter this danger, any lifting of CAR's KP diamond restrictions should be conditioned on the removal of all armed groups from mining sites, full control of diamond trading markets by U.N. peacekeepers or local gendarmes, and a credible tracing and due diligence system for diamonds bought and sold by Central African diamond companies, including those for export.

In addition to natural resource exploitation, ex-Séléka factions in particular have set up efficient tax collection practices. Conservative assessments estimate that different factions within the group collect \$1.5 to \$2 million annually from illicit road taxation throughout the areas they control in central and eastern CAR. They gain an additional estimated \$210,000 to \$420,000 in taxation of cattle traders and \$200,000 to \$240,000 from taxation of coffee traders. Meanwhile, Anti-Balaka groups that roam western CAR collect illicit road taxes, extort money from rural villages, and demand sums that range from \$600 to \$1,000 as a one-time payment for "protection." Additional research is needed to estimate the total annual profits collected by Anti-Balaka groups through road taxation, looting, and other abusive activities.

Armed groups in CAR have turned into profit-making entities through illicit sale of natural resources, taxation, extortion and the strategic use of killings and violence. The majority of these illicit funds go directly to boost the personal wealth of the senior commanders and their trade partners, while most lower-level soldiers have one daily meal or receive meager payments. Bringing an end to the crisis in CAR requires preventive strategies that seek to disrupt the sources of finance, combined with punitive measures and sanctions that target individual commanders and the companies and other actors that facilitate the trade.

Recommendations

The Enough Project recommends the following policies and strategies to help cut financing for armed groups in CAR:

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1. Expand targeted sanctions on the networks of actors that trade with and provide finance for armed groups in CAR. The United Nations and the United States should expand targeted sanctions on those individuals, companies, institutions, and other actors that participate in the illicit natural resource trade and carry out other activities that provide finance for armed groups in CAR. Particular efforts should be made to craft a systemic strategy that targets the entire network of atrocity financing in CAR over the less effective one-off sanctions on individual commanders of the armed groups or individual companies.
2. Increase support for the new Special Criminal Court in CAR. Ambassador Stephen Rapp, Ambassador Samantha Power, Special Envoy Stuart Symington and Bill Brownfield from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) should support CAR's new Special Criminal Court (SCC) to bring an end to impunity for atrocity crimes in CAR. INL and European donors—particularly France, Belgium, and the European Union—should contribute financial and expert support to the SCC in this critical stage of development. Power, Rapp, and Symington should encourage Francophone African countries to send judges and prosecutors to serve in international roles. The SCC's investigators and prosecutors should have a dedicated strategy for investigating and prosecuting the pillage of natural resources, especially diamonds, alongside investigations of atrocity crimes.
3. Establish government control of gold and diamond mining sites. Central African gendarmes and peacekeeping troops from the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should deploy robust missions to expand government control of mining areas and regional towns occupied by armed groups. Doing so would play an important role in countering parallel taxation and help to protect civilians from crimes like forced labor and rape in mining areas and the pillaging and trafficking of diamonds and gold that provide profit for armed groups.
4. Condition the lifting of Kimberley Process restrictions on CAR diamond exports on three commitments. The Kimberley Process should, before lifting restrictions, ensure three conditions are met that can safeguard against conflict diamonds entering the Kimberley Process. The U.S. and E.U. should provide support to enable CAR to establish the safeguards. First, the U.S. Geological Survey or similar agency should help establish baseline production statistics for the conflict-free diamond mines. Second, the Kimberley Process should establish a multi-stakeholder team to be based in CAR and monitor whether conflict diamonds are entering the conflict-free supply chain. Third, diamond companies buying from CAR or neighboring countries should commit to conducting strict due diligence on their purchases.

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5. Counter parallel taxation and highway extortion by armed groups. Central African gendarmes and MINUSCA troops should increase individual and joint patrols and deployments to secure border crossings, in particular those with Cameroon, the DRC, the Republic of Congo and Sudan, where the majority of illicit smuggling takes place. Gendarmes and troops should also take control of key transportation roads and regional towns in order to counteract parallel taxation and extortion by armed ex-Séléka and Anti-Balaka groups that defy state authority and enrich senior commanders.

SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan's PLP calls for renegotiation of IGAD power sharing proposal

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

17 June 2015 - Leader of the newly established People's Liberal Party (PLP) in South Sudan, Peter Mayen Majongdit, said a power-sharing proposal revealed by the East African regional bloc (IGAD) to end the 18-month long civil war in the country needed to be renegotiated by the parties in an inclusive process.

The draft power-sharing deal gave president Salva Kiir's government 53% of executive power at the national level, while 33% went to the armed opposition faction led by former vice president, Riek Machar, and 14% to be equally divided between the former political detainees led by former secretary general of the ruling (SPLM) party and the other political parties.

In greater Upper Nile region reforms are to be effected with the reverse of giving the rebel faction 53% in charge of the three states of Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei in the oil-rich region. The government in that region will get 33% and former detainees plus other political parties to equally share the remaining 14%.

Majongdit however said the draft deal was unfairly distributed, questioning why should only 10 individuals of former detainees be given a share in the 14% with the other political parties while [the] majority of these individuals were already members of the national parliament or ruling party's political bureau.

"Why should the former political detainees share 14%," he inquired.

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He was referring to the notion that the 10 membership of the former detainees, sometimes known as G10, were just individuals without declared constituencies as far as the war is concerned. Critics also describe them as “opportunists” who were only hoping for an opportunity to sneak into the leadership of the country by portraying themselves as neutral “good boys” in the eyes of the international community while they were partly responsible for the current crisis.

According to Majongdit, he argued that the former detainees were either members of the SPLM highest political executive and legislative organs which should share from the 53% taken by the government because there were cadres of the SPLM if the Arusha agreement was to be incorporated into IGAD proposal.

He further warned that other opposition political parties might reject the participation in a transitional government of national unity if not allocated proper percentage.

“That means it will not be called government of national unity in the absence of opposition parties,” he said.

Majongdit, whose party base is in Warrap state from where he hails, further revealed that his political party may not take part in the transitional government and shall only focus on preparations for the upcoming general elections at the end of interim period.

“PLP shall be aspiring for country’s leadership when the time is due, through election, so it has no interest to be part of government which they shall soon challenge. Our priorities are peace for now,” he said, adding that the preparations may not be easy.

He said there was need for institutions such as election commission to be independent from government’s influence.

He also stressed the need for the peace talks to be inclusive, rather than bilateral between the warring parties so that issues were also widened beyond the mere power-sharing to include ensuring that accountability was addressed.

He also called on IGAD and the warring parties to extend power-sharing deal in the other two greater regions of Bahr el Ghazal and Equatoria, saying these regions equally needed reforms and the change should therefore not be benefiting only Upper Nile region.

The opposition leader, who hails from Warrap state like President Salva Kiir, was kidnapped this year, severely beaten and detained for several days by security operatives. He said as a condition for his release he was warned not to talk much about the shortfalls in the country’s leadership or risk disappearance. He however said he defied such threats against his constitutional right.

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PLP was formed earlier this year with the aim to create liberal democratic society with human values, according to its statement. Since its formation the party chairperson has been actively engaged in the country's political affairs winning public attraction.

UN Peacekeeping Chief Decries South Sudan's Lack of Cooperation

NEWS STORY

Source: VOA

United Nations, 17 June 2015 - The U.N.'s peacekeeping chief expressed his frustration with South Sudan's leaders Wednesday, saying President Salva Kiir and his government have denied repeated requests for the U.N. mission there to use equipment needed to protect civilians.

Hervé Ladsous laid out to the U.N. Security Council the problems that his 12,000 troops, police and civilian personnel in South Sudan have been experiencing because of the government's lack of cooperation.

"I see a country — and I can be very candid, that country is South Sudan — a country where we felt that we needed to do a better job to protect civilians," he said. "We needed attack helicopters — request denied. We needed UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones] — request denied by the president to me, personally, three times last year."

Ladsous said the mission's movements have also been restricted. Also troubling, he said, is that the South Sudan government is finding new ways to harass and intimidate mission personnel.

"Juba did declare some of our senior personnel persona non grata," he said. "If you look at the fact that yesterday it was announced that from now on U.N. personnel who are taking pictures will be considered as spies, well, I think this raises a number of concerns."

Among the senior staff in South Sudan who were recently told they were no longer welcome was Toby Lanzer, the deputy head of mission and the U.N.'s humanitarian coordinator.

The government accused him of being outspoken about the economic and humanitarian situation in the country, where 4.6 million people face severe food insecurity and more than 2 million have been displaced from their homes and villages. For over a year, the

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U.N. has been sheltering more than 100,000 civilians who have sought protection at hastily set up camps inside U.N. bases in some of the worst-affected areas.

The civilians are fleeing fighting that ignited after a political rivalry between Kiir and his former vice president, Riek Machar, escalated into open conflict in December 2013. Tens of thousands have died since, and the two men have not heeded international warnings to adhere to a cease-fire deal made in January 2014 and start working toward a transitional government.

The U.N. secretary-general held a special high-level meeting on the crisis on the sidelines of the annual U.N. meetings in New York last September. Kiir, who was in town, snubbed the gathering by not showing up.

The Security Council has repeatedly threatened those thwarting efforts at peace and stability in South Sudan with sanctions and dangled the possibility of an arms embargo, but has so far only set up the legal mechanism for imposing sanctions.

South Sudan accuses Sudan of airstrikes, killing 1

NEWS STORY

Source: Sun Herald

Juba, 17 June 2015 - South Sudan's government on Wednesday accused Sudan of bombing two locations in its territory, killing at least one soldier and wounding others.

A suspected Sudanese warplane bombed Maban and Renk counties of Upper Nile state on Sunday and Monday, said Peter Hoth, a State Minister for Information.

Hoth said one soldier was killed in Renk, near the border of Sudan, and others wounded.

"We do not know the motive why the Sudanese are bombing inside the Republic of South Sudan," Hoth said by phone from Renk.

Hoth said four children and a woman were wounded when two bombs landed in Maban County on Sunday.

South Sudan's army spokesman, Col. Philip Aguer, confirmed the death and said nine other soldiers were wounded.

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Aguer said Sudan is likely responsible because it has the only hostile air force in the region. He said the aircraft that dropped the bombs was an Antonov, which comprise a large part of Sudan's air attack capabilities.

In April, South Sudan accused Sudan of bombing its Northern Bahr al Ghazal state, killing four people.

South Sudan broke away from Sudan in 2011 following decades of armed struggle and a peace agreement but border skirmishes have continued.

Both countries at times trade accusations over harboring or supporting rebels.

SUDAN

Soudan: Les casques bleus sud-africains étaient pris en otage en échange d'Omar El Bashir

ARTICLE

Source: CamerPost avec APA (<http://www.camerpost.com/soudan-les-casques-bleus-sud-africains-etaient-pris-en-otage-en-echange-de-omar-el-bashir-17062015/>)

17 Juin 2015 - L'armée soudanaise avait pris en otage les casques bleus sud-africains au Darfour afin de s'assurer que le Président Omar El Bashir qui participait au sommet de l'Union Africaine (UA) qui se tenait à Johannesburg en Afrique du Sud ne soit pas arrêté dans ce pays, a indiqué la presse sud-africaine.

Selon Réseau Afrique du Sud 24, environ 1.400 soldats sud-africains présents au Darfour dans les bases militaires de l'ONU à Kutum, Mellit, et Malha ont été encerclés par des soldats soudanais lourdement armés

Le porte-parole de l'Union des Forces de Sécurité Sud-Africaine, Pikkie Greeff, a confirmé cette information.

L'armée soudanaise ne s'est retirée de ses positions qu'une fois qu'El Bashir a quitté l'Afrique du Sud.

« Cela se résume à un chantage en menaçant de guerre quelqu'un », a affirmé Pikkie Greeff.

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« Nous sommes préoccupés par la sécurité de nos soldats parce qu'ils sont au Darfour pour maintenir la paix et non pour une guerre conventionnelle », a-t-il indiqué.

Les Forces de défense nationale sud-africaine (SANDF) ont confirmé dans un communiqué qu'il y avait un «mouvement de troupes soudanaises », mais elles ont considéré que ces mouvements de militaires soudanais ne représentaient pas «une menace sérieuse pour les troupes sud-africaines dans ce pays ».

Lundi, le président soudanais Omar El-Béchir qui a abrégé sa participation au sommet de l'UA à Johannesburg, est arrivé à Khartoum en dépit d'une ordonnance d'un tribunal sud-africain lui interdisant de quitter le pays.

Le président est arrivé à l'aéroport de Khartoum aux environs de 18h50, heure soudanaise.

Des centaines de partisans et militants du Parti du congrès national au pouvoir se sont rassemblés à l'aéroport pour accueillir le président.

Un tribunal de Pretoria avait, lundi après-midi dernier, ordonné que le gouvernement sud-africain arrête le président Béchir accusé de crimes de guerre et de crimes contre l'humanité.

Le tribunal a été plus tard informé par l'avocat du gouvernement que le président soudanais avait quitté le pays.

Sudan: SA Troops in Sudan Feared the Worst

NEWS STORY

Source: News24 Wire

17 June 2015 - More than 800 terrified South African soldiers in Sudan feared the worst when their camp was surrounded by Sudanese troops.

"In order to save lives, we would have to have surrendered if they stormed us. One battalion of soldiers without proper weapons could not fight against an entire country's army," a South African soldier told Network24.

Network24 reported on Tuesday that South African peacekeepers in North Darfur were effectively held "hostage" by members of the Sudanese army while the drama around Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's possible arrest during the African Union summit

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in Johannesburg escalated. The High Court in Pretoria ordered that Al-Bashir be detained.

It is believed that Al-Bashir was possibly allowed to leave South Africa amid fears of violence against the South African peacekeepers.

"They [the South African troops] would have been overwhelmed. If South Africa had arrested Al-Bashir, they would have been prisoners of war," a friend of a soldier told Netwerk24.

Meanwhile, soldiers, family members and friends of the soldiers serving in Sudan have contradicted the military's "categorical denial" that there was a hostage situation, recounting stories of their loved ones' fears while in the war-torn country.

The army said the "increased military traffic" in Darfur was part of the Sudanese government's preparations for the Ramadan religious celebrations.

Head of joint operations, Lieutenant General Derrick Mgwebi, said the situation had "normalised" and the mobilisation of Sudanese soldiers near the South African base in Khartoum was not aimed at the base.

But a soldier said: "We were so scared - we were surrounded by soldiers. We handed out extra ammunition to everyone in case it was needed."

The deployment apparently began shortly before the weekend, when Al-Bashir left for the AU summit in South Africa.

A friend of a soldier at the base said that they were surrounded by about 500 heavily-armed Sudanese soldiers in Hilux bakkies at about 10:00 on Monday. Al-Bashir's jet took off from Waterkloof air force base at about midday on Monday.

While the court bid to have him arrested continued in Pretoria, the South African soldiers were surrounded. They were placed at Level 2 readiness, which means they had to be battle ready and fully armed.

"They were terrified and overwhelmed. They were basically kept as hostages for the afternoon.

"They could see an attack was imminent. The [Sudanese] soldiers were about 500 metres from their camp. According to their intelligence something would have happened if Al-Bashir was arrested," the source said.

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One caller to Power FM said a relative who is serving in Sudan said her camp was "surrounded" by Sudanese soldiers. Another soldier confirmed that they were placed at Level 2 readiness when vehicles approached the base.

"I am so grateful South Africa did not arrest Al-Bashir. Our commander said after Al-Bashir arrived safely in the country, the soldiers withdrew," a message sent by a soldier in Darfur to his colleagues in South Africa read.

According to Netwerk24, approximately 800 South African soldiers are serving in Darfur as part of Unamid, a combined UN and AU peacekeeping force. The current group of soldiers are from 8 Infantry Battalion in Upington.

Meanwhile, the UN has denied that the South African soldiers were in a hostage situation, saying they were never in danger. And a Sudanese army official told Bloomberg that they are not in conflict with the South Africans.

Fuite d'Omar el-Béchéir: l'Afrique du Sud victime de pression?

ARTICLE

Source: RFI

En Afrique du Sud, le gouvernement nie avoir fait l'objet de pressions de la part de Khartoum pour laisser repartir le président Omar el-Béchéir. Lundi, le président soudanais, sous le coup de mandat d'arrêt de la CPI, a quitté le sommet de l'Union africaine à Johannesburg, avant la fin de la rencontre, et ce malgré l'interdiction de la Haute Cour de Pretoria. La presse sud-africaine rapporte qu'il y aurait pu y avoir intimidation. Des soldats sud-africains auraient été encerclés dans leurs bases militaires au Darfour, dans l'ouest du Soudan.

17 Juin 2015 - Que s'est-il passé exactement au Darfour? Mardi, la presse sud-africaine a rapporté que l'armée soudanaise aurait encerclé plusieurs bases militaires, où se trouvent des soldats sud-africains qui participent à la mission de maintien de la paix. Selon la journaliste qui a rapporté l'incident, il n'y a pas eu de confrontation, mais un important mouvement de troupes soudanaises fortement armées aux abords de ces bases militaires.

Coïncidence ou intimidation? Pour Pikkie Greef, porte-parole du principal syndicat de l'armée, Sandu, il s'agit clairement d'intimidation: « Il n'y a pas eu de menace physique directe. Mais ce que l'armée soudanaise a fait, c'est qu'elle a maintenu une imposante

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présence au tour des camps, alors qu’habituellement elle ne s’en approche jamais. Donc le message est subtil, mais clair ».

Le gouvernement lui dément toute pression de Khartoum. Pour Sipiwe Dlamini, porte-parole de l’armée, il n’y a pas eu d’incident: « Je veux rassurer les Sud-Africains, nos troupes qui sont déployées au Soudan dans le cadre de cette mission conjointe Union africaine et Nations unies sont saines et sauvées et continuent leur travail. Ces incidents sont faux ». Réels ou non, ces incidents arrivent à point nommé alors que Pretoria est sommée d’expliquer pourquoi elle a laissé repartir le président soudanais.

Sudan reacts to Omar al-Bashir's brush with international law

ARTICLE

Source: The Guardian

17 June 2015 - For a moment on Sunday it seemed like Sudan’s president Omar al-Bashir’s had finally lost control of his destiny: while visiting South Africa for an African Union summit, the country’s high court issued an interim order to prevent him leaving the country in order to answer international criminal charges.

He is the world’s only sitting leader to have been indicted by the international criminal court (ICC) for crimes against humanity over the government’s role in the Darfur conflict.

But by Monday – in clear defiance of both national and international law – he was on a private jet back headed for Sudan’s capital, Khartoum.

Bashir is an autocratic ruler of a country that routinely stifles free speech, meaning that the voices of Sudanese citizens – especially those caught up in violence – are overlooked in international debates about their country.

Here’s how Sudanese citizens reacted to the week’s dramatic events, and the implications for what many have decried as a failure for international law.

Refugees: ‘Bashir will face justice’

Darfur-based news site Radio Dabanga spoke to Darfuri refugees living in eastern Chad who expressed gratitude at the attempt of the South African high court, a move which they say has given them fresh hope in international justice.

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For the refugees, the blame lies with South African president Jacob Zuma for letting the president escape, but “they believe that Bashir will face justice, no matter how long it takes,” says Haidar Gardia, head of the Touloum camp.

Abdel Wahid Mohamed Ahmed El Nu, of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SPLM) told the radio station the events would serve to remind the world about “the genocide the regime committed”.

Ahmed El Nu also made an appeal to the Rapid Support Forces, a militia group linked to the government, to: “refrain from Bashir’s crimes and join the Sudanese people in their march to change, and building a state of equal citizenship.”

“If Bashir, who enjoys immunity, is chased in this way, you are not immune,” he reminded them.

Voices from Sudan

As news first filtered through of his possible arrest #Bashir was trending on Twitter with human rights campaigners sharing images of the devastation and destruction in Darfur using #arrestBashir.

According to tracking service Topsy the hashtag had been used 4,600 times since Sunday.

Twitter account Voices of Sudan (@Sudan_Voices), which is curated by a different Sudanese Twitter user every week, asked their followers to share their thoughts as events unfolded.

One complaint was that the ICC disproportionately targeted Africans – a criticism voiced by many African leaders, “and to some extent the general public” in Africa, according to the Washington Post.

One Twitter user, Walid Ibrahim (@waleedib83), said that whilst he believed that Bashir should be put to justice this was not the right course of action, leaving fellow Twitter user Getachew A. Woldie, to question exactly what the right mechanism should be.

Others raised questions, and fears, for the future of Sudan. The president has been in power since 1989, and in April extended his 26-year with a 94.5% landslide win in a general election that was boycotted en masse by opposition groups on the grounds that it was a “political charade”.

Responding to a later question about where people saw Sudan in 15 or 20 years time, Twitter user @AayahOsama said: “My vision is so dark for this place. I have no hope whatsoever.”

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Media reaction

On Monday, New York Times journalist Nicholas Kristof was tweeting from “remote Sudan” claiming that people were “thrilled by news that South Africa tried to block Pres. (sic) Bashir from leaving.”

The ambiguity of his location drew the ire of some on Twitter, but he had stated that he was unable to reveal his location due to “security reasons”. The general feeling, he tweeted, was that it was time for Bashir to leave.

This mood wasn’t not reflected in the nation’s papers on Tuesday morning. The BBC reported that Al-Watan newspaper led with “Bashir returns to the country, is welcomed by large crowds” with al-Taghyir carrying similar scenes on their front page.

Sudan’s independent media is has been severely weakened by government crackdowns, including news blackouts and print seizures which are common ways the government tries to stifle any form of dissent. Watchdog Freedom House have also reported similar crackdowns on the use of the internet.

South Africa’s constitutional crisis?

For some South Africans the incident has sparked a constitutional crisis. Political analyst Justice Malala said it hailed the death of South Africa’s reputation as a human rights leader and lamented a worrying tendency of Zuma’s government to side with Africa’s tyrants.

Brooks Spector, associate editor at the Daily Maverick website, raised concerns about South Africa’s legitimacy. “At the minimum it says that South Africa doesn’t value international law”, he told Eye Witness News, warning of a “penalty clause” the next time South Africa needs international support.

Putting handcuffs on Sudan president may have only been wishful thinking

Writing for Africa is a Country, Oumar Ba said Bashir’s arrest would have had significant political implications across the continent. “Had South Africa arrested Bashir that would have sent shockwaves throughout the African Union that may well have been fatal to the organisation’s survival”.

Elsewhere Twitter users, including BBC correspondent Fergal Keane, pointed to the irony of a national border that allows Bashir to go free but refuses to let the Dalai Lama attend a summit of Nobel peace laureates.

‘The ICC unwelcome in Africa’

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Never one to miss out on controversy, this year's chair of the AU, 91-year-old Robert Mugabe's said that the ICC was "unwelcome in Africa", further highlighting the tension between the international body and African leaders.

The Zimbabwean president is considered a hero by some for speaking out against western imperialism, but others have raised questions about the legitimacy of an African Union led by an autocratic leader who has become increasingly isolated on the international stage.

The summit also saw Mugabe deride African presidents for "finding any excuse" to stay in power. Without naming names it's widely assumed that he was talking about Burundi's president Pierre Nkurunziza, whose decision to stand for a third term sparked violent protests and a failed coup.