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



MEDIA MONITORING

4 August 2015

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

UN airlifts DR Congo refugees out of C.Africa

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

3 August 2015 - The UN said Monday it had begun repatriating more than 600 people who had fled to the now violence-torn Central African Republic from the Democratic Republic of Congo six years ago.

The United Nations' refugee agency said it had airlifted a first group of 39 Congolese refugees from Zemio in southeastern CAR to the remote, eastern DR Congo province of Ango on Monday.

"Over the next three weeks, UNHCR plans to repatriate a total of 628 refugees on 12 chartered flights, including the one on Monday," the agency said in a statement.

The refugees were among some 5,000 people who fled DRC in 2008 and 2009 to escape attacks by the notorious Ugandan rebel group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

The group was at the time running rampant, robbing villagers, looting property, torching homes, kidnapping people, raping women and girls and using children as soldiers and sex slaves, UNHCR pointed out.

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The LRA continues to spread terror in the region, and is still present in the Ango area, but UNHCR said all the returnees had said they preferred leaving the Zemio camp, run by the agency, over fears of the volatile security situation in CAR.

Thousands have died and hundreds of thousands of people have fled deadly civil unrest in the landlocked nation since late 2012, including at least 2,800 Congolese refugees who have returned home.

The Congolese government had said it believed the situation in the Ango region was stable enough to allow for return, UNHCR said.

"The refugees were fully informed about the security situation in return areas before they made a final decision to go back," it said.

UNHCR meanwhile said it was trying to find a lasting solution for the refugees wishing to remain in Zemio, which is facing funding shortages and is in a volatile part of CAR and difficult to access.

It said lacking roads made it impossible to repatriate the refugees over land.

The agency said each returnee would be given \$60 to pay for their travel to their villages, and that each adult would receive an additional repatriation grant of \$150, while children would get \$100 each.

The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) would also provide cash vouchers for food, it said.

RWANDA

Fragile Burundi Casts a Wary Eye on Rwanda

OPINION

Source: New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/04/world/africa/after-unrest-a-fragile-burundi-views-rwanda-with-suspicion.html>)

By Marc Santora

Kigali, 3 August 2015 - Burundi and Rwanda can seem deceptively like conjoined twins. They share a common history, geography and language, and their populations

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are divided ethnically between Hutu and Tutsi. Both were devastated by some of the worst mass slaughter of the 20th century.

Since the guns fell silent, they have charted very different courses as they try to move beyond their bloody pasts. But trouble in one seems inevitably to spill into the other, and their politics are becoming intertwined again, in dangerous ways.

Burundi is in danger of collapse, its capital rocked by violence and divided by political intrigue. The country's fragile democratic fabric has been shredded in recent months by President Pierre Nkurunziza, who brushed aside a constitutional bar to secure a third term in office and put down an attempted coup meant to stop him. As Mr. Nkurunziza struggles to retain control, his top officials accuse Rwanda of tacitly aiding his enemies.

Pierre Claver Ndayicariye, head of the electoral commission in Burundi, announced results on Friday in Bujumbura, the capital. He said that President Pierre Nkurunziza garnered 69.41 percent of the vote. Burundi President Wins 3rd Term in Election Boycotted by Rivals JULY 24, 2015.

Then on Sunday, a top general close to the president was assassinated, threatening to further inflame a volatile situation.

The general, Adolphe Nshimirimana, had an outsize personality. He was feared for his brutal tactics and a linchpin in the president's control of his security forces. He played a major role in crushing protests in the spring, leaving scores of people dead, and was credited with helping foil the coup. No one has yet claimed responsibility for his death.

There is no suggestion that Rwanda had any hand in it. But top Burundian officials say that Rwanda played a part in the failed coup.

"We know that some of the coup leaders now live in Rwanda, at least three of them," said the foreign minister, Alain Nyamitwe, in an interview on July 22, the day after the presidential election.

Mr. Nyamitwe said the disaffected officers, who have called for open rebellion, present a clear threat to Burundi, and he castigated Rwanda for allowing them to find sanctuary there.

He was careful to say that there was no evidence of official Rwandan state support for the rebels, but there were many indications, he said, that Rwanda was being "unhelpful."

Rwandan officials categorically deny that the coup leaders are in their country and said Burundi's problems were of the government's own making. "When you have a deep

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crisis, looking for a scapegoat is normal,” a senior Rwandan official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity about diplomatic matters.

Rwanda has concerns about how the crisis next door could embolden another group of rebels who pose a threat to its own government. The remnants of the losing side in its long civil war, a Hutu militia force known as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, or F.D.L.R., fled to the forests in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. For a while, Burundi cooperated with Rwanda in hunting the rebels, but according to the Rwandan government official, that cooperation stopped suddenly last year.

“We know that some leaders of the F.D.L.R. met with officials in Burundi,” the official said. “The F.D.L.R. is a cancer because it espouses an ideology of genocide.”

Mr. Nyamitwe denied that Burundi was assisting the group and said there was not “a single F.D.L.R.” soldier in Burundi.

Against a backdrop of deepening distrust, the assassination of General Adolphe, as he was widely known, sent tremors throughout the region. President Nkurunziza went on state radio to urge calm, calling on “every Burundian, in the hills and the capital, to stay united.” And the State Department issued a statement calling “on all sides to renounce violence and to redouble their efforts to engage in a transparent, inclusive and comprehensive political dialogue.”

In another ominous turn, the leading human rights lawyer in Burundi, Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, was shot by unknown assailants outside his home in Bujumbura on Monday night and was hospitalized in critical condition.

The United Nations condemned the attack.

“This incident, which comes only a day after the killing of Gen. Adolphe Nshimirimana, is part of a growing pattern of politically motivated violence in Burundi that must be broken before it escalates beyond control,” a spokesman for Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement.

Filip Reyntjens, a professor of African law and politics at the University of Antwerp, said that if history was a guide, the current crisis could quickly spread to engulf the region.

He said Rwanda and Burundi “are really false twins” that “have always had perverse influences on one another.”

In Rwanda, where Tutsi rebels won a clear victory in the civil war, the Tutsi-led government “follows a policy of what you could call ethnic amnesia,” Mr. Reyntjens said,

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by essentially making it illegal to talk about ethnicity. But under the surface, he said, some field research suggests that ethnic divisions are worse now than in the 1990s.

Rwandan officials call that analysis deeply flawed and say the country has worked hard to encourage citizens to see themselves as Rwandans, not Hutu or Tutsi, and to hold perpetrators from both groups to account for atrocities committed during the war.

But in Burundi, there was no clear victory, and peace was achieved only through painstaking negotiations over power-sharing along ethnic lines. Mr. Nkurunziza, who came from the Hutu side of the conflict, often points out that in the decade of his leadership since the peace agreement, there has been no ethnic killing.

Scores of interviews in the capital and in the countryside of Burundi suggest that people are aware of the dangers of allowing old ethnic scars to be ripped open. But outside experts worry that those vying for power in Burundi could try to manipulate ethnic divides in dangerous ways.

Though many countries condemned Mr. Nkurunziza for evading the two-term limit in the peace agreement, Rwanda has notably not objected on that ground. Instead, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda said Mr. Nkurunziza should not run again because he had failed his people, a remark that angered Burundian officials. Mr. Kagame appears likely to seek a third term of his own, after the Rwandan Parliament recently amended the constitution to allow it.

Mr. Kagame, 57, has led Rwanda since 1994, when an offensive by his Rwandan Patriotic Front rebels put an end to a genocide campaign by Hutu extremists. He is widely credited with helping bring peace, stability and what the World Bank has called “impressive development progress,” visible in the spotless streets of Kigali, the capital, and the construction cranes dotting the skyline.

Burundi, on the other hand, remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with a fragile economy and a dependence on foreign aid for half the national budget.

The experience of Evode Nkeshima, 31, offers a glimpse at the complexities in Burundi. When he was 14 in 1993, the rest of his family was slaughtered in Cibitoke, a part of Burundi where there were clashes last month.

“They were all sleeping when the rebels came in and took my father, three brothers and two sisters,” he said, adding that he survived only because was sleeping somewhere else that night.

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His family was Tutsi, and its members were killed by Hutu. But Mr. Nkeshima is now the president of a local branch of the governing party's youth wing, the Imbonerakure, in Bujumbura.

Rwandan officials view the Imbonerakure as a danger and compare it to the youth militia known as the Interahamwe, which carried out some of the worst atrocities in the genocide. Western officials have accused the Burundian government of arming the group and using it to stifle dissent.

Mr. Nkeshima said ethnicity had nothing to do with his support for the president.

While Rwanda might view Mr. Nkurunziza with suspicion, stemming from his days as the leader of a Hutu militia group — he was accused and sentenced to death in absentia for murdering Tutsi civilians, and then pardoned under the peace accords — Mr. Nkeshima said that since then the president had helped the country heal.

“We are all the same,” he said. “We are all people.”

Even so, he said there could still be war. And when he expressed worry about Rwanda's role, he cast it in ethnic terms.

“Rwanda is a bad country,” Mr. Nkeshima said. “The Tutsis in the government there are helping the Tutsis in the Burundi opposition. We cannot allow the opposition to take our country.”

BURUNDI

Ban greatly concerned over ongoing deterioration of security in post-election Burundi

NEWS STORY

Source: UN News Centre

2 August 2015 - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today voiced concern over the situation in Burundi, where the security situation continues to worsen following the recent elections, and strongly condemned the assassination yesterday of General Adolphe Nshimirimana.

A statement issued by Mr. Ban's spokesperson said the UN chief “notes with great concern the continuing deterioration of the security environment in Burundi following an

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electoral period marked by violence and the violation of human rights, including the right to life.”

In the wake of yesterday’s assassination, the Secretary-General welcomed President Pierre Nkurunziza’s message to the nation to remain calm and to the competent authorities to expeditiously investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice.

“The Secretary-General renews his appeal to all Burundians to resume an inclusive dialogue without delay and peacefully settle their differences under the facilitation of President Museveni as mandated by the East African Community,” the statement added.

The UN Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB) last week stated that while the 21 July election in Burundi that won Mr. Nkurunziza a controversial third term was relatively peaceful and conducted adequately, the overall environment was ‘not conducive’ for an inclusive, free and credible electoral process.

The polls took place after two postponements in an environment of “profound mistrust” between opposing political camps, the Mission noted, adding that the decision of the incumbent President to run for another term precipitated a deep political and socioeconomic crisis.

Outcry after journalist beaten in Burundi; leading activist injured in shooting

NEWS STORY

Source: Mail & Guardian Africa

3 August 2015 - MEDIA watchdog Reporters without Borders lashed out Monday at the “despicable assault” against an AFP reporter in Burundi, who says he was detained and badly beaten after a top general was assassinated.

Esdras Ndikumana, a prominent Burundian journalist who works for Agence France-Presse and Radio France Internationale (RFI), said he was held for around two hours, during which he said he was subjected to severe beatings on his back, legs and the soles of his feet.

He was later released and hospitalised, with the injuries also including a suspected broken finger.

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Ndikumana said he was taking pictures on Sunday at the scene of the general's assassination in the capital Bujumbura when he was arrested by members of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) and taken to their offices.

The secretary-general of Reporters without Borders, Christophe Deloire, said he was "shocked and angry" over the attack.

This "despicable assault" is "tantamount to torture," added Deloire, who called on the authorities to "immediately open an enquiry to identify and punish those who carried out this barbaric act."

AFP's global news director Michele Leridon said in a statement Sunday she was "very shocked" by the attack.

"We will seek explanations from the authorities in Burundi and an assurance that such an incident will not happen again," she said.

"Our correspondent must be able to continue to carry out his work in complete safety."

RFI said Ndikumana's life was not in danger but that he was "in shock and has severe bruising".

The radio station has already lodged an official complaint with the Burundi authorities.

It said it would send a joint letter with AFP to seek explanations and assurances that there would be no repeat.

The Eastern Africa Journalists Association also reacted strongly, seeing in the incident a "clear" attempt to "intimidate and terrify" the reporter.

"Media are clearly being targeted. It has to stop," said Muheldin Ahmed Idris Titawi, the head of the association.

The political crisis in Burundi has seen independent media outlets shut down and many journalists have fled the country or have gone into hiding because of threats and attacks.

The assassination of General Adolphe Nshimirimana came just over a week after President Pierre Nkurunziza was declared the outright winner of controversial elections, securing a third straight term despite opposition protests and international condemnation.

He was a close aide to Nkurunziza and was widely seen as the central African nation's de facto internal security chief and even considered the regime's number-two.

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Meanwhile Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa, a well-known human rights defender in restive Burundi, was seriously injured in a shooting in the capital on Monday, civil society activists told AFP.

“He has been very badly wounded, he is in hospital,” said Balthazar Fengure of the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detainees, adding that Mbonimpa had publicly opposed President Pierre Nkurunziza’s controversial bid for a third term in office.

Five killed in separate attacks in Burundi: Police

NEWS STORY

Source: Anadolu Agency

Bujumbura, 3 August 2015 - Three Burundian police officers and two civilians were killed Sunday night in separate attacks, security and administrative sources have told Anadolu Agency.

According to local security sources, the police officers were killed by unidentified gunmen while on duty outside a municipal high school in Cibitoke, a city located north of Bujumbura.

“The three officers died on the spot while others were injured and taken to hospital,” Venerend Nzikobanyanka, administrative advisor of the Cibitoke commune, told Anadolu Agency.

Meanwhile, a resident of Bubanza, a city located northwest of the capital, was killed – and his wife seriously injured – when unidentified assailants attacked their home with grenades, police officer Jerome Ndayirukiye told Anadolu Agency.

The same source also reported that the body of a middle-aged woman had been found on Monday in Bujumbura’s Buringa neighborhood.

“The victim, Apolline Hakizimana, a mother of four, was beheaded and her tongue cut off,” Ndayirukiye said.

The spate of murders follows the death on Sunday of General Adolphe Nshimirimana, a former Burundian army chief-of-staff and intelligence chief who was assassinated by unknown assailants in the capital’s Kamenge district.

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Since demonstrations erupted in April against President Pierre Nkurunziza – who won a third term as president in July 21 polls widely boycotted by the opposition – over 100 people have reportedly been killed across Burundi in simmering political violence.

ANGOLA

Angolan ambassador defends right to protest but condemns violence

NEWS STORY

Source: The Portugal News Online (<http://theportugalnews.com/news/angolan-ambassador-defends-right-to-protest-but-condemns-violence/35512>)

Angola’s ambassador in Lisbon, José Marcos Barrica, has said that the people in Angola have the right to protest “when necessary”, but the act of protesting also implies duties.

3 August 2015 - Without specifically mentioning last Thursday’s demonstration in Luanda demanding the release of 15 Angolan youths who were arrested in June, the ambassador noted that the Angolan constitution enshrined the right to protest and that Angolans “should protest when there is reason to do so”.

“But it (the constitution) also says that the freedom of speech and the freedom of information is limited by the right to a good name, honour and reputation, image and the right to the intimacy of private family”, he said.

The ambassador told Lusa that Angolan youths who are discontent “can protest” in the streets with a specific purpose and shout slogans, but “it is not civilised, it is not democratic that a protest is a moment of basic violence”.

“When you talk of political activists, it is a label that someone decided to give people who act outside the law. These youths, so called political activists as the Portuguese press calls them, are youths who acted illegally. Of course they were detained.

The Angolan attorney general said the group of 15 arrested on 20 June was preparing an attempt against the president in an alleged coup.

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Angola: Ambassador Barrica Calls for National Unity

NEWS STORY

Source: Angola Press

3 August 2015 - The Angolan ambassador to Portugal, José Marcos Barrica, reaffirmed Saturday in Lisbon the strengthening of the spirit of national unity and "dialogue" to overcome the great challenges of the country.

Speaking to the Angolan community on "The current political and socio-economic situation in Angola, as a result of the 40 years of independence", Marcos Barrica stated that "Angolans will never need foreign intermediaries to solve their problems". The diplomat condemned the "political instability and signs of disturbance in Angola, with attempts of demonstrations instigated by some who call themselves friends of Angola, dissatisfied with our progress."

"The Executive is establishing the diversification programme, but unfortunately, this effort is not considered by the enemies of Angola, who prefer to emphasize our momentary weaknesses," he said before about one thousand people attending the event. Besides the members of the Angolan community in Portugal, the event was attended by the consuls general of Angola in Lisbon, Oporto and Faro. Pastor Américo Marques from the Adonai church was invited to bless the opening of the session.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Congo, Angola in joint bid to exploit oilfield

NEWS STORY

Source: APA

3 August 2015 - Congo and Angola will jointly exploit the Lianzi oilfield located along their common border, APA can report from a statement issued at the end of the 24th meeting of the interstate steering committee on the production of oilfield held on 31 July in Brazzaville. The expected production on this reserve is estimated at 3500 barrels per day, the statement said.

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According to the statement, the 24th meeting of the interstate committee was jointly chaired by the ministers for Hydrocarbons of Congo and Angola, Mr Andre Raphael and Jose Maria Botelho Loemba de Vasconcelos respectively.

The research work on the site is jointly carried out by Congo's National Society of Petroleum (SNP) and Sonangol of Angola in collaboration with the private firms such as Chevron and Total E&P Congo and CABGOC BV as well as Total Block 14 for Angola.

In 2012 officials of the two oil-producing countries signed the agreement clearing the way for the joint exploitation of the oilfield.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Central African Republic: Security Council condemns attacks that killed peacekeeper

NEWS STORY

Source: PR Newswire

3 August 2015 - The members of the Security Council condemned today in the strongest terms the attacks against a convoy of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which were perpetrated on Sunday in Bangui and resulted in the death of one peacekeeper.

"The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest condolences and sympathy to the family of the peacekeeper killed and to the Government of Cameroon, and to MINUSCA. The members of the Security Council wished a speedy recovery to those injured," they said in a statement issued to the press.

MINUSCA peacekeepers were attacked by an armed group during a search operation intended to arrest a suspected criminal in application of a judicial warrant from the Public Prosecutor of Bangui. Eight peacekeepers were injured. Three suspects were arrested during the operation.

The members of the Security Council underlined that attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute a war crime and reminded all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

"They called on the Central African authorities to swiftly investigate, with the assistance of MINUSCA, this attack and bring the perpetrators to justice," added the statement.

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UN chief condemns killing of peacekeeper in Central African Republic

NEWS STORY

Source: UN News Centre

2 August 2015 - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned today the killing of a peacekeeper from the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

“The Secretary-General deplores in the strongest terms attacks against United Nations peacekeepers and calls for swift action to bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice. He further calls on all armed groups to respect the impartiality of MINUSCA,” reads a statement issued by the UN Spokesperson during evening.

MINUSCA peacekeepers were attacked by an armed group during a search operation intended to arrest a suspected criminal in application of a judicial warrant from the Public Prosecutor of Bangui. One of them was killed and eight were injured. Three suspects were arrested during the operation.

Mr. Ban offered his condolences to the bereaved family and to the Government and people of Cameroon, wishing a speedy recovery to the injured.

“The Secretary-General reiterates the commitment of the United Nations to support the Central African authorities in their fight against criminality and putting an end to impunity, in line with MINUSCA's mandate and within its area of deployment,” adds the statement.

SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan says will strengthen bilateral relations with Sudan

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

3 August 2015 - South Sudanese government has unveiled new diplomatic push towards strengthening bilateral relationship with the government of neighbouring Sudan from which it seceded in 2011, but with which it has been unable to resolve a host of post secession matters, despite signing cooperation agreements three years ago.

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According to press reports published in Khartoum, the South Sudanese top diplomat will be in Khartoum very soon. But when asked by Sudan Tribune officials at the foreign ministries in the two capitals failed to indicate the date of the visit saying preparations are still taking place.

The government of president Salva Kiir, according to his foreign affairs and international cooperation minister, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, confirmed his next trip to Khartoum for talks on bilateral relations and the implementation of the cooperation agreement.

“I will be going to Khartoum and will be carrying a special message from our president, General Salva Kiir Mayardit to his brother, Field Marshal Omer Al-Bashir, president of the Republic of Sudan. I will be carrying a message of peace, hope and commitment of the government to implementing the cooperation agreement fully,” Marial told Sudan Tribune on Monday.

The government, the minister added, advocated working together with other countries to build a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity.

The top diplomat, also a close political ally of president Kiir hailing from the Lou-Nuer ethnic group of Jonglei state, described his boss as someone who ‘loves peace and advocates that nothing is more valuable than peace’, asserting that the government would ‘do whatever it takes to develop and maintain better relations with all the neighbouring countries, including neighbouring Sudan’.

“It is in the interest of the two countries to maintain a continuation of the stable relation, which will allow our two countries to pursue grand strategies that perpetuate a peaceful co-existence. Our shared interests based on mutual respect will lead to peaceful co-existence,” Marial explained during an exclusive interview.

He said neither Juba nor Khartoum wanted a ‘lose-lose’ relations on the host of contentious matters, pointing that the human spirit could be held within the bounds of either natural necessity or rational prudence.

Meanwhile, the spokesperson of the ministry of foreign affairs and international cooperation added that his country remained committed to the vision of the two viable states living side by side.

Mawien Makol said it was a desire of everybody that the relationship between the two countries was developed and structured in a way that would prevent future confrontation, acknowledging that the national interests of two countries will inevitably collide from time to time but must be contained through open, peaceful and cooperative engagement on issues of mutual benefits.

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Sudan and South Sudan have been exchanging mutual accusations with claims that each country supports rebel movements of the other. They both deny the accusations.

Kiir, Machar Unite in Rejecting U.S. Call for Speedy Peace Deal, Sanctions

NEWS STORY

Source: Daily Nation (Kenya)

By Aggrey Mutambo

3 August 2015 - Warring parties to the South Sudan conflict are protesting sanction threats, just a week after US President Barack Obama rallied the region to pressure leaders of the world's youngest nation into a peace deal.

Both the government under Salva Kiir and the rebels under former Vice President Riek Machar have opposed imposition of sanctions and deadlines in what could complicate search for peaceful solution.

"Peace making is a process, it is not about deadlines.

We will continue to negotiate with the rebels until we arrive at the credible peace that satisfies all," Mr James P Morgan, South Sudan Deputy Head of Mission in Nairobi told the Sunday Nation on Friday.

"Quick-fixed solutions (sic) are the recipe of prolonging the suffering of our people.

In fact, bad peace is worse than the war itself," he argued.

On his tour of East Africa last week, President Obama, who also addressed the African Union in Addis Ababa, said there "is no time left", and that the warring parties have to agree to a peace deal.

Mr Obama gathered leaders or their representatives from member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (Igad), a regional body that has been midwifing South Sudan peace talks since January 2014.

It has recently suggested a final agreement by August 17.

"That is not how peace is negotiated. We cannot be forced into a deadline yet the elements of the conflict are still intact.

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"This means there will be a recipe for another war. This has been the situation in South Sudan," Prof Peter Adwok, former South Sudan Education minister and who now supports Riek Machar, said on Thursday.

A senior White House Official had indicated to journalists that sanctions would be imposed if the sides fail to agree this time.

"We have supported a UN Security Council resolution that explicitly threatened an arms embargo and we think it is, in the failure of this last effort, one of the options that's right on the table," the official told reporters during a session whose rules demanded anonymity.

South Sudan, which descended into chaos in December 2013, has had a recent eruption of violence between rebels and government forces in northern states where oil fields are concentrated.

Despite seven ceasefire agreements being reached before, the parties have often violated them within days.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Ocha) says more than 50,000 have been killed and about two million displaced by the fighting and are in need of about \$250 (Sh25 billion) million worth of humanitarian assistance.

Despite previous threats for sanctions, experts warn such may not lead to the parties agreeing to a long-term peace deal.

"It is important to have deadlines in any peace talks because you cannot have these talks forever. But these deadlines can be problematic because they can push parties into artificial agreements on important issues," Dr Ochieng Kamudhayi, a conflict management expert and lecturer at the Centre for Public Policy and Competitiveness, Strathmore Business School, told the Sunday Nation.

"For sanctions, it is necessary to know what type to apply or even who to target. Blanket sanctions may be ignored or they may end up hurting those who are not part of the conflict. They have to be designed very carefully."

Last year, human rights organisations called for an arms embargo, but the US argues an embargo may not affect both sides since some Igad members have already taken sides.

Cord Co-Principal Kalonzo Musyoka, who once took part in mediations to create South Sudan from Sudan during the Moi regime, also warned that sanctions could worsen the conflict.

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"Sanctions never work. They never worked in Cuba. The best thing for the people of South Sudan is to engage" he said.

"They will have to find a solution, but not through sanctions."

In Addis, President Obama met with leaders from Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia as well as representatives from Sudan.

South Sudan warring parties were not invited but the idea was to get a common ground for the region to push warring parties to agree to a peace deal by mid-August.

"I think at this point our view is that both parties are part of the problem and this is not an opportunity for them to have a bunch of air time.

They've had many, many opportunities with the regional leaders," the White House official added in a session with journalists aboard Air Force One.

"I think the point is to underscore that there's unity around the Igad effort and that there will be unity in the aftermath, and that if these guys aren't with the programme, they're going to face sustained and concerted pressure."

Last week, Igad published Proposed Compromise Agreement, which it argued had been endorsed by both the AU and the international community for South Sudan to have a 30-month transition government, before elections are held.

Among other proposals is the suggestion that Kiir's government retain 53 per cent of the posts, rebels take 33 per cent, former detainees seven per cent and other political parties take seven per cent.

Igad had proposed August 17 as the day the parties should sign on it but Juba immediately protested being excluded from the Obama meeting and a proposal that rebels take more than half of posts in the Greater Upper Nile region.

"That proposal is unacceptable because the people of the Greater Upper Nile will be sacrificed and handed over to the rebels.

"Those people are likely to rebel against that.

"These people love peace and Riek Machar only controls just two or three counties out of the 57.

"It is like Igad is dividing our country by handing over some parts to the rebels," Mr Morgan added.

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S. Sudanese rebels accept demilitarisation of Juba: spokesman

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

2 August 2015 - South Sudan's armed opposition faction (SPLM-IO) led by former vice president, Riek Machar, which has been fighting the government of president Salva Kiir for the past 20 months, said they would accept the element of the peace proposal by the East African regional bloc, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which seeks to demilitarise the national capital, Juba.

The IGAD peace proposal on security arrangement provides for at least 18 out of 30 months of the transitional period during which to complete integration of the two rival forces loyal to President Kiir and those allied to rebel leader, Machar.

The two principles will separately be commanders-in-chief of their respective armies, pending completion of the integration process. The two forces will begin to assemble 90 days after signing of a final peace agreement.

South Sudan's capital, Juba is expected to be demilitarised and its security provided by international and regional forces. A radius of 25kms will be imposed for 30 months until the end of the transitional period. President Kiir will be allowed to have 260 soldiers as bodyguards while the armed opposition leader, Machar, will have 195 bodyguards.

"Yes, we have accepted demilitarisation of the national capital, Juba, during a transitional period. Actually our position is in this line, not only for the national capital but also for demilitarization of other state capitals and major towns in the country," said Machar's spokesman, James Gatdet Dak told Sudan Tribune when contacted by phone Sunday.

He said there was need to first make security sector reforms and transform the two rival armies into one professional army in the process of amalgamation during the transitional period. This, he said, would take place before national army could be able to take charge and provide security and protection for all citizens so as to avoid repeat of 15 December 2013 by either side.

"These security sector reforms and transformation processes will also apply to the other organized forces such as categories of the police and the national security service," he added.

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Dak dismissed claims by president Kiir's government that demilitarisation of the national capital would amount to surrendering of the country's sovereignty to foreign agents, arguing that this was to avoid similar massacres in the capital and other towns.

He also downplayed the feeling of sovereignty displayed by the government, saying they had already surrendered the country's partial sovereignty to neighbouring Uganda.

"It doesn't make sense for a regime that has partially surrendered sovereignty of South Sudan to Uganda to be falsely claiming patriotism and rejecting the proposal. Who is protecting Juba, its airport, and Bor in Jonglei state? Is it not a foreign force from Uganda?," he inquired.

He said the IGAD-Plus proposal was good to ensure that no rival army would go on rampage again in the capital and other towns and start carrying out massacres such as the mass killing of Nuer civilians in mid-December 2013.

SPLM-IO KICKS OFF CONSULTATION IN PAGAK

The rebel leader's spokesperson also reiterated that a leadership consultative meeting kicked off on Sunday in Pagak, contrary to comments by government officials that it would not take place.

"The previously announced leadership consultative meeting has kicked off in Pagak, South Sudan. Chairman and Commander-in-Chief of SPLM/SPLA, Comrade Dr. Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon, has officially opened it today, Sunday," Dak told Sudan Tribune.

He said senior political and military officials, including representatives of the movement abroad took part in the opening.

Dak added that the meeting will study the IGAD-Plus peace proposal and come up with a position, which will be submitted to the mediation in Addis Ababa by 6 August.

South Sudan army says containing ethnic unrest in Western Equatoria

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

3 August 2015 - South Sudanese army (SPLA) claimed it has managed to contain an inter-ethnic fighting in Western Equatoria state, creating a buffer zone between two rival tribes involved in the conflict.

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Fighting erupted on Friday and Saturday between youth from Azande community and ethnic Dinka armed pastoralists backed by elements from the national army. The two-day clashes left dozens dead on both sides.

A senior military commander however said situation had come under control and that a buffer zone had been created between the two warring communities.

“There is no problem. Everything is under control. We have created a buffer zone and we are encouraging the leadership to engage in dialogue and tell the youth to control their emotions,” SPLA’s sixth division commander, Major General Johson Juma, told Sudan Tribune on Monday.

General Juma, who is the top commanding officer of the government soldiers in the area, called on politicians to not fuel the situation with what he described as “inflammatory statements.”

But while the commanding officer appeared to have downplayed the intensity of the security situation in the area, state officials stressed that the delegation dispatched to the area to calm down and diffuse the situation from spiralling out of control was unable to meet both the two warring sides.

JUBA CONSPIRACY

Western Equatoria state’s information minister, Charles Barnaba Kisanga, accused the national government in Juba of “conspiracy” to incite violence in the state in order to use it as a pretext to replace governor Joseph Bangasi Bakosoro.

He also said the delegation from Juba didn’t bother to meet the ethnic Dinka pastoralists and convince them to stop fighting, saying they were only lecturing youth from the state.

“The delegation as much as chief of staff concentrated on siding with the pastoralists because they only lectured Western Equatoria state youth and leaders, and none of them ventured to side of Dinka pastoralists who are well armed to tell them terms of peace,” said state minister Kisanga.

“I made this clear today in my South Sudan Television talk that peace must involve talking to all sides,” he said in a statement.

He claimed that the conspirators wanted South Sudanese president Salva Kiir to use his constitutional powers empowering him to remove state governor and dissolve even state legislative assembly in the event that an internal insecurity becomes a national security threat.

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“It is clear the delegation was put in place by those orchestrating violence as a way they could remove Western Equatoria state governor and install their new governor without reference to the suffering of Western Equatoria people,” minister Kisanga added.

The state official said if there was urge to remove the governor, the best way was to make consultations with the people in order to come up with a new candidate for the governorship.

“The delegation condoned the order by chief of staff that only one side, the Western Equatoria state youth, must be shot to kill and massacred. Conflict among people cannot be solved by ordering the killing and annihilating of one side,” he added.

SUDAN

Sudan’s Bashir says determined to reach negotiated solution to the Two Areas conflict

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

3 August 2015 - The Sudanese president Omer Hassan al-Bashir on Monday discussed with the African Union chief mediator, Thabo Mbeki, the recent developments of the peace process and national dialogue besides relations between the two Sudans.

Sudan’s presidential assistant, Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, told reporters that Bashir stressed to the African Union mediator that his government is seriously seeking to end the conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states through negotiations.

“The government told the mediator that it seeks to bring the war in the Two Areas to a definitive end by achieving a comprehensive cease fire and discussing other issues through negotiations,” he added.

The presidential aide also said that Bashir briefed Mbeki on the developments of the national dialogue including its agenda and the national figures participating in it.

He disclosed that the exact date for convening the national dialogue would be set after the anticipated meeting between Bashir and the dialogue coordination body next Wednesday.

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In a separate press conference, Sudan's first vice-president, Bakri Hassan Salih, for his part said the former South African president came to Khartoum to explore possibilities of a Sudanese role in resolving the ongoing crisis in South Sudan as well as discussing the national dialogue and peace process in the Two Areas.

He pointed in a press conference on Monday that Mbeki is only a facilitator for the national dialogue and has no powers to transfer the process abroad.

Mbeki, for his part, said in press statements following his meeting with Bashir they discussed the peace process in Sudan, adding the latter expressed his government's readiness to stop the fighting in South Kordofan and Blue Nile once and for all.

However, he pointed out that the meeting didn't discuss a proposed date for resuming negotiations on the Two Areas.

Blue Nile and neighbouring South Kordofan state have been the scene of violent conflict between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/North (SPLM-N) and the Sudanese army since 2011.

The Sudanese government and rebel group failed to reach a cessation of hostilities agreement after a series of talks brokered by the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in December 2014.

Last April Mbeki suspended indefinitely a pre-dialogue process aiming to bring together the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the political and armed opposition forces to discuss the preparation of the national dialogue which is to be held inside the country.

The suspension intervened following the refusal of the Sudanese government to take part in the preparatory meeting two weeks before the general elections. The NCP officials at the time said it would send a negative message to the Sudanese voters.

Since, Khartoum said ready to participate in the meeting and informed the African Union that Mbeki is welcome to resume discussions with the government on the process.

RELATIONS WITH SOUTH SUDAN

Meanwhile, Mbeki said the Sudanese president underscored his absolute commitment to implement the cooperation agreements signed with South Sudan in order to the resolve outstanding issues between the two countries.

He pointed the mediation would resume meetings of the Joint Political and Security Committee (JPSC) between to discuss border demarcation and the demilitarized zone between the two countries but he didn't set a specific date for the proposed meeting.

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In September of 2012, both Sudan and South Sudan signed a series of cooperation agreements, which covered oil, citizenship rights, security issues, banking, border trade among others.

In March 2013, the two countries signed an implementation matrix for these cooperation agreements.

However, the two sides did not reach an agreement over the identification of the zero line as they failed to determine the surface of a disputed area called 14 Mile located between Northern Bahr el Ghazal and East Darfur states.

In accordance with the security arrangement the two parties have to withdraw their troops ten kilometres from the unmarked border.

Sudan Says Willing to Suspend Verdicts against Rebels Who Join Talks

NEWS STORY

Source: VOA

Khartoum, 3 August 2015 - Sudan said on Monday it could freeze court verdicts against armed rebels if they agree to join national reconciliation talks, a renewed attempt by the government to end fighting that has long mired the country.

First Vice President Bakri Hassan Saleh told reporters the freeze on verdicts, which could include death sentences, would apply for the duration of the talks.

Khartoum has been fighting an insurgency in the southern provinces of Blue Nile and South Kordofan since 2011, mounted mostly by former civil war fighters who were left in Sudan after South Sudan seceded that year.

President Omar al-Bashir called for a national dialogue early last year but little progress has been made. He also renewed a general amnesty for armed groups who "truly desire to return and participate in dialogue".

"We can freeze rulings during the talks period as well as take any other measures based on consensus," he said.

"But we cannot provide amnesty unless we feel the talks will succeed because you don't want to grant them amnesty only for them to pick up guns against you again."

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Two leaders and 15 members of the main rebel alliance against Bashir were sentenced to death in absentia in March 2014.

The most prominent figures are Malik Agar, who was governor of Blue Nile state before taking up arms, and Yasir Arman, who stood against Bashir in the 2010 election.

Agar is now head and Arman secretary general of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which is active in Blue Nile and the oil-producing South Kordofan province.

"We do not trust this government that has killed prisoners of war and peaceful protesters," Jibril Adam, spokesman for the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel group, told Reuters.

"We will only participate in dialogue if there are regional and international guarantees and after prisoners of war are released," he said.

Saleh said the unrest in Blue Nile and South Kordofan hurt the economy and served as an excuse for foreign interference. He said the talks could begin "in the coming days".

Bashir extended his 25-year rule in April when he was reelected with over 94 percent of votes after most opposition groups boycotted the poll.

Bashir to discuss Sudan's dialogue with political parties

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

3 August 2015 - Sudanese president will head Wednesday a meeting to discuss the preparations for an inclusive conference to discuss peace and constitutional reforms called national dialogue, a presidential aide announced on Monday.

Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid told reporters after a meeting with the mediator Thabo Mbeki that Wednesday's meeting will be attended by members of the dialogue mechanism and leaders of political parties participating in the internal process.

The upcoming meeting is expected to fix a date for the launch of the dialogue and to form committees to deal with issues of political detainees, and contacts with the political forces refusing the dialogue under the current conditions.

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The ruling National Congress Party (NCP) said earlier this year that the inter-Sudanese conference will be held after Ramadan, as some participants, like the Popular Congress Party (PCP) criticized the successive delays of the operation.

On the other hand the holdout opposition groups demand the implementation of the confidence building measures included in the African Union roadmap as the release of political detainees, ensuring political freedoms, freedom of expression, guarantee for the rebel groups to join the process.

PCP political secretary Kamal Omer said Monday he will present a report to the meeting about the contacts they had with the armed opposition groups, adding "They want sufficient guarantees and insurance before to enter the country in order to participate in the dialogue."

Last April, the head of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) Thabo Mbeki suspended indefinitely a meeting including the NCP and opposition parties to discuss the preparations of the process after the government refusal to hold it before the election.

SPECIAL DIALOGUE FOR THE TWO AREAS

Ibrahim said Mbeki reiterated his support for the organization of national dialogue inside the Sudan and its conduct by the Sudanese themselves to solve the country's issues.

He said the government is keen to hold an inclusive process without excluding any party, adding that he informed the mediator that the dialogue is "a popular demand".

The presidential aide further said the meeting discussed the issues of the Blue Nile and South Kordofan state, and pointed that "there could be a special forum within the national dialogue dedicated to the Two Areas".

Regarding the peace talks with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, Ibrahim said the meeting did not touch the negotiations, but agreed that the dialogue be held inside the country so that there will be ample space for each one of Sudan's issues.

The last round of talks between the warring parties in the Two Areas failed to reach a declaration of principles including a cessation of hostilities.

Also, separate talks with two Darfur groups collapsed as the government refused to the rebels demand to open the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur for negotiations.

PCP TRUSTS BASHIR

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Omer said his party is confident about the seriousness of the government towards the national dialogue.

"I do not imagine that dialogue would be a deception," he said.

He further ruled out the existence of power centres working to obstruct the dialogue within the ruling party, and said that the lobby groups within the NCP have completely collapsed and the center of power is now in the state, represented by President Omer al-Bashir who signs the decisions.

Bashir "committed himself personally to the national dialogue," the PCP official said adding "Now we are counting on the President of the Republic".

Sudan's Bashir to make 2nd attempt at addressing UNGA

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

3 August 2015 - The Sudanese president Omer Hassan al-Bashir plans to address the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meetings this year in New York, a diplomat at the UN said today.

Sudan's Deputy UN ambassador Hassan Hamid Hassan answered in the affirmative when asked if Bashir would attend a UN summit dedicated to sustainable development in late September.

According to Reuters, a provisional agenda for the UNGA meeting of world leaders only lists Sudan as being represented at ministerial level. Another one lists the Sudanese head of state as scheduled to speak on Sept. 26.

Neither the US State department nor the Sudanese foreign minister commented on Bashir's planned appearance.

Bashir made a similar attempt to fly to New York in September 2013 but Washington dragged its feet on granting him visa without rejecting it outright.

The US at the time decried Bashir's visa application. Under the UN headquarters agreement, the US is obligated to promptly issue visas for officials seeking to participate in UN events except under very limited circumstances related to national security.

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"Those people [US government] we put them in a corner....We [can] go to the US and no one can do anything to us because there is no law in America that affords US authorities the right to take any action against me because it is not a member of the Rome Statute. "Attending the [UN] General Assembly [meeting] is our right" Bashir told reporters at the time.

Washington asserted that Bashir should not make such a trip because he is accused of war crimes and genocide by the International Criminal Court (ICC) related to Darfur conflict.

The US is not an ICC member but in 2013 said the ICC arrest warrant will be a factor in deciding his visa request.

Last June, Bashir was forced to flee South Africa where he attended an African Union (AU) summit after a court ruled he should be banned from leaving pending the outcome of a hearing on his possible arrest.

The court eventually ordered taking him into custody pending his transfer to the ICC. South Africa, an ICC member, was accused of flouting its constitutional and international obligation by allowing him to leave.