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



MEDIA MONITORING

5 August 2015

RWANDA

Rwanda: Academics, Clerics Push for Lifting of Term Limits

NEWS STORY

Source: The New Times

By Eugene Kwibuka

4 August 2015 - Religious leaders and academics have backed a popular proposal to scrap presidential term limits.

They presented their arguments yesterday during a consultative meeting with a team of senators, at the University of Rwanda's College of Education.

The exercise was part of ongoing Parliament-led consultations to collect people's views on amending Article 101 of the Constitution, which currently restricts a Head of State's tenure to two seven-year terms.

During the consultations, most speakers lauded President Kagame's leadership and argued that term limits should be scrapped to enable him realise his dream of turning Rwanda into a middle income country by the year 2020.

"Article 101 cannot be the barrier to people's choice. President Kagame is a hero and an honourable person; we cannot let him go when we still need him," said Aloys Ruzibiza, a lecturer at Kigali Independent University.

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Yvonne Mujawabega, an attorney working with the Rwanda Social Security Board concurred.

"We are coming from very far; we should create a legal framework that allows the President a chance to continue leading the country so he can finish building what he started," she said.

Pastor Claude Niyonzima lauded the President's leadership, which, he said, had brought about efficiency in the transport and health sectors, as well as more access to electricity.

"We need Kagame and only Kagame," he said.

Laurent Mugabo, a lawyer, told senators that he wrote a petition to Parliament asking for the amendment of Article 101 of the Constitution because he wants President Kagame to stay in power beyond 2017 so that he can help realise the country's Vision 2020.

While some academics and clerics want to specifically give President Kagame the provision to lead Rwanda beyond 2017, others want the issue of term limits not to feature in the Constitution.

They asked for the lifting of term limits, but with a shorter term of five years.

The senators will compile the ideas collected from the countrywide consultations and report to Parliament which will then vote on whether amend Article 101 of the Constitution.

If approved, the National Electoral Commission will be required to organise a referendum for Rwandans to vote on whether or not to amend Article 101 of the Constitution in accordance with Article 193 of the supreme law.

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BURUNDI

Burundi: UN condemns assassination attempt on leading human rights defender

NEWS STORY

Source: UN News Centre

4 August 2015 - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations human rights office have strongly condemned the assassination attempt on Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, a leading Burundian human rights defender who was shot and wounded by unknown assailants in the capital on Monday.

In a statement issued yesterday evening by his spokesperson, Mr. Ban wished Mr. Mbonimpa a full and speedy recovery and called for a prompt and transparent investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice.

“This incident, which comes only a day after the killing of General Adolphe Nshimirimana, is part of a growing pattern of politically-motivated violence in Burundi that must be broken before it escalates beyond control.

“The Secretary-General stresses that accountability and the resumption of a genuine and inclusive political dialogue are the best response to such attempts to destabilize Burundi.”

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Mr. Mbonimpa was badly injured after being shot four times, including in the neck, by two people on a motorbike yesterday evening in Bujumbura while he was on his way home.

OHCHR also voiced deep concern at the brutal arrest and ill treatment, on 2 August, of the RFI and AFP local correspondent, Esdras Ndikumana, by agents belonging to the Service national de renseignement (SNR), the national intelligence agency.

“Mr. Ndikumana was taking pictures on the crime site where General Adolphe Nshimirimana was killed on 2 August, when he was arrested and brutalized by SNR agents,” OHCHR spokesperson Cécile Pouilly told a news briefing in Geneva.

“They took him to their HQ in Bujumbura and reportedly subjected him to torture, claiming that he was a 'journalist enemy'. Mr. Ndikumana is currently under medical care, suffering from a broken finger and psychological trauma.”

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OHCHR called on the Burundian authorities to launch “prompt, transparent and thorough investigations” into these very serious incidents and ensure that those responsible are held to account, stressing that impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations must stop.

It also condemned the killing of General Nshimirimana and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. In addition, the Office voiced concern about the large number of arbitrary arrests over the last few months. More than 600 people have been arrested and remain in detention without charge, some of them since April.

In a statement to the press, the Security Council also condemned the killing of General Nshimirimana and the attack on Mr. Mbonimpa, calling on all actors to remain calm and to resume an inclusive dialogue.

Civil unrest erupted on 26 April in Bujumbura, Burundi's capital, after the ruling Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) party elected President Pierre Nkurunziza on 25 April as its candidate for the then-scheduled 26 June presidential election, which was twice postponed.

Mr. Nkurunziza has been in office for two terms since 2005, and a broad array of actors warned that an attempt to seek a third term was unconstitutional and contrary to the spirit of the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi that ended a decade of civil war in the country. He was re-elected on 21 July.

The mounting violence across Burundi has also provoked a widespread humanitarian crisis as refugees have spilled across the country's borders and fanned throughout the region.

Wounded Burundi activist is hospitalized but not in danger

NEWS STORY

Source: Associated Press

By Gerard Nzohabona

Bujumbura, 4 August 2015 - A prominent Burundi rights activist is hospitalized but his life is not in danger after being shot Monday night, his daughter said Tuesday.

Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, injured in the face and neck, is conscious and being monitored in a local hospital, Zygene Mbonimpa told The Associated Press. She dismissed reports that a bullet remains in Mbonimpa's neck.

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The attack on Mbonimpa has raised fears of revenge attacks on the regime's perceived opponents after a top military general, Adolphe Nshimirimana, was assassinated in a drive-by shooting Sunday. There has been sporadic gunfire throughout Bujumbura since Sunday.

Mbonimpa, 67, is one of Burundi's most prominent and respected activists, said Human Rights Watch, which urged Burundi's authorities to ensure his safety and protection.

Mbonimpa, the president of the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons, was arrested in May 2014 and charged with endangering state security in connection with remarks he made on the radio. He was provisionally released on medical grounds after falling ill, but the charges against him have not been dropped, according to the rights group.

Bujumbura has been hit by violence since April when the ruling party announced that President Pierre Nkurunziza would seek re-election for a third term. The police used force to break up frequent street protests in which more than 100 people died, according to watchdog groups. Nkurunziza was re-elected last month in elections that were widely condemned as unfair.

A shootout erupted Tuesday on a road bordering Lake Tanganyika near downtown Bujumbura as gunmen in a car opened fire on a car carrying a military officer. The officer was wounded and his two bodyguards were killed, said witness Isaac Nduwayezu.

Burundi's Pierre Nkurunziza warns against vengeance

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

3 August 2015 - Burundi's President, Pierre Nkurunziza has warned against vengeance following the assassination of a senior General.

In a televised address to the nation President Nkurunziza said vengeance can wipe out an entire generation, and therefore called for calm.

A Presidential spokesman told journalists that it is too early to blame anyone for the killing of General Adolphe Nshimirimana in a rocket and gun attack on his car.

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Burundi Defeated and Desolate

OPINION

Source: Deutsche Welle

By Domitille Kiramvu

Rifts in Burundi's opposition have deepened since President Nkurunziza secured his controversial third term in office. Great political skill is urgently needed to master the crisis.

4 August 2015 - Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza has succeeded in winning a third term despite protests by the population at home and criticism and condemnation abroad.

The elections were conducted swiftly with Burundians casting their ballots in a tense, angst-ridden atmosphere in which basic human rights were ignored. Nkurunziza's opponents now have to accommodate themselves to his victory while trying to deliver some sort of political response to it. The opposition and other actors are discussing various options, but a consensus does not yet appear within reach.

Their difficulties have been made worse by the procrastination of the mediators, who initially intervened in the crisis with a display of determination only to fall foul of the deceit and unscrupulousness of the Burundian government, which has no intention of listening to, or acting upon, the desires and aspirations of the people.

'If you can see a way out - take it!' That seems to be the prevailing dictum in Burundi's post-election chaos. Alliances are forged and then dissolved, depending on which way the wind is blowing and who has the upper hand. Proposals are put forward one after the other, each one being more hasty, illusory or hazardous than the one that preceded it. And circling above the day-to-day uncertainty is the nagging question: how could all this have happened? Too much blood has been shed, too many people have been arrested, murdered, too many innocent citizens driven into exile.

How much more intimidation, humiliation and deprivation are the people of Burundi expected to bear? And who is responsible for it? The country's rulers, or those who were incapable of dislodging them? Some are pointing an accusatory finger, others seek to justify their actions, yet others feel overcome by guilt, like repentant sinners.

Where is Burundi heading?

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What would be the best way forward? Should a transitional administration or a government of national unity be formed? Or a council that monitors compliance with the Arusha agreement and the integrity of the Burundian state? [Editor's note: one such council was formed by members of the opposition in exile in Addis Ababa on August 2, 2015]

Or is armed struggle until the bitter end the only option? Or a coup? Negotiations might be one way out - but who would conduct them? Or would tougher international sanctions against the regime be the answer?

Two factors would come into play in any of these scenarios: Public anger at an apparent breach of the constitution by those whose duty it is to uphold it and the non-existence of a united opposition, which could coordinate various initiatives so that they have the desired impact.

The opposition is fragmented and the regime is exploiting this to dismember it in its entirety. This is painful to observe for the regime's countless victims.

In such choppy waters, more or less everybody believes they can lay their hand on the tiller. Former henchmen who helped create the repugnant apparatus of repression now cloak themselves in innocence. Former politicians choose to remember their past deeds in a positive light, forgetting that the people rejected them for their authoritarian and tyrannical excesses. New arrivals to Burundian politics promise everybody everything.

There is little appealing or pleasant about those campaigning for change in our country. One can only hope that with the passage of time political realism will triumph over the villainy, egotism and thoughtless speculation. May statesmanship and self-control eventually prevail.

UGANDA

Uganda: Yoweri Museveni's challenger finds route to presidency is a rocky road

OPINION

Source: The Guardian

By Richard Kavuma

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After talking of political reform and bidding for the top job, Uganda's former Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi has been shunned within the ruling party

4 August 2015 - In their book Dictators and Dictatorships, Natasha M Ezrow and Erica Frantz write about personalist dictatorships, which are different from military or one-party regimes.

“One person dominates the military, state apparatus and ruling party (if one exists),” the authors say. “No autonomous institutions exist independent of the leader. Though the leader may ally with or create a political party, it is merely a tool of the leader.”

In this political setup, the “right to rule is ascribed to a person rather than an office, despite the official existence of a written constitution”. The leader usually governs using a clique of friends, unquestioning loyalists and family.

“Though personalist dictatorships occasionally survive the death or retirement of the leader, intra-regime turnover [of leaders] is relatively rare,” they say.

For all his utopian promises of a fundamental change after seizing power in 1986, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni presides over something akin to a personalist dictatorship, only dressed in democratic garb. Elections – local and national – are stolen or otherwise flawed, the opposition is harassed constantly by the police, and corruption is endemic.

For many people outside Uganda, it is not easy to see the political stagnation under Museveni – masked by sustained economic growth and because the president values public relations. Comparisons with Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe are instructive.

One lingering question in Uganda is where the stimulus for reform will come from. With state security institutions forever intimidating the opposition and civil society, some politicians have looked to “fight from within”, hoping that progressive voices within the ruling party can inspire reform.

But events over the past two months will have shaken even the most staunch optimists.

On 15 June, Amama Mbabazi, long seen as Uganda's most influential politician after Museveni, declared that he would run for chairman of the ruling National Resistance Movement, and for president of Uganda, where elections are due next year. Mbabazi, who had worked with Museveni since the 1970s, was sacked as prime minister last September and removed as NRM secretary general in December.

Announcing his presidential bid, Mbabazi pledged to breathe new life into a government system “that has become weak and inefficient”, revitalise “the NRM and return to its roots – a genuine accountable and democratic movement”, promote equitable

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development and respect for the rule of law, and champion quality healthcare and education.

Rather than debate these issues, Museveni has accused Mbabazi of causing confusion in the party. Ministers and party officials are lining up to attack Mbabazi in the media, and on 9 July police deployed hundreds of personnel and armoured vehicles to arrest Mbabazi, who was heading to eastern Uganda for consultations. The police said Mbabazi needed their permission to conduct consultations but he, a lawyer, says they are abusing the law.

As the excitement that greeted Mbabazi's declaration peters out, the reality of the difficulty of reform in personalist regimes sets in. Museveni's reaction to Mbabazi is no different from Mugabe's handling of Joice Mujuru, whom he sacked as vice-president last December – accusing her of plotting against him. A key difficulty lies in the fact that despite the semblance of institutions – such as elected parliaments and a ruling political party – the leaders see government as something very personal.

In January, Museveni declared that all the money in Uganda belonged to him, urging voters in local elections to elect NRM candidates or miss out on development projects. This also means that any NRM politician fraternising with Mbabazi today risks being fired or sidelined by Museveni. Life outside the patronage circles can be hostile to politicians used to a life of luxury. This leaves a reformist such as Mbabazi isolated.

Ironically, the politicians openly backing Mbabazi are the traditional opposition. They see him as a late convert to the gospel they have been preaching for years. But Mbabazi cannot be seen to fraternise too much with the opposition, lest the ruling party uses it to hasten his possible expulsion.

At the same time, many opposition activists question how Mbabazi, who as prime minister was the architect of the system that oppressed them for decades, can suddenly change and push for reform.

Mbabazi's answer is telling: he says he did not have the power to change things. While people like Mbabazi and Mujuru may hold senior positions, they have little real power, and are easily dispensed with should they aspire to the top job.

It still leaves the question of where change will come from. A military officer suggested a decade ago that the opposition could wait until old age or death takes care of the domineering leader. Yet that may not guarantee reform, as the next leader may be an acolyte of the departed personalist ruler.

Both Mbabazi and Mujuru were considered future presidents. But the names now being talked about for a future leader in Uganda include Museveni's wife, Janet, and his son,

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Special Forces commander Brigadier Muhoozi Kainerugaba. And in Zimbabwe, they include Mugabe's wife, Grace.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

UN fears humanitarian disaster in CAR

NEWS STORY

Source: MWC News (<http://mwcnews.net/news/africa/53323-humanitarian-disaster-in-car.html>)

Activities cannot be continued till end of year without urgent action to boost aid to African nation, UN official says.

4 August 2015 - The Central African Republic is staring at one of the largest humanitarian crises of our time if immediate action is not taken to increase aid to the country, according to the UN.

Aurelien Agbenonci, the UN's humanitarian coordinator in CAR, told Al Jazeera on Sunday that if the shortfall for aid was not met, the UN "won't be able to continue humanitarian activities till the end of the year".

Only 31 percent of the UN humanitarian appeal for the CAR has been secured, the UN said.

"This is an extremely trying time for everyone but it would be a critical mistake for the international community to be lulled into thinking that stability has returned to the country," Agbenonci said.

The comments came as one UN soldier was killed, according to a spokesperson for the UN stabilisation mission MINUSCA, when fighting broke out in a northern neighbourhood of the capital Bangui.

"The mission launched an operation to arrest a person wanted by the judicial services for various crimes. Our forces came under heavy fire. One MINUSCA peacekeeper was killed and several others were wounded," Reuters quoted the unnamed spokesperson as saying.

Million displaced

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About a million people have been displaced since Seleka fighters took control of Bangui in March 2013.

Around 2.7 million people, more than half the population, are still in need of aid, while 1.5 million people were affected by food insecurity.

"Putting an end to impunity by bringing perpetrators of human right violations and grave violations against children to justice should be a priority," Agbenonci said.

Describing the challenges on the ground as "serious", Paul Taylor, west Africa regional director at the New York-based International Rescue Committee (IRC), said it was still "difficult to characterise the situation in CAR as the biggest disaster of our time given the multiplicity of global crises and especially the situation in Syria".

"The situation in the Central African Republic is serious [...] roughly 50 percent of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance [and] the fact that the state is not able to deliver essential public services such as healthcare, education, and security."

Taylor said the lack of media attention on CAR is not a symptom of the situation on the ground having improved, other than in Bangui.

Both Amnesty International, the human rights monitor, and the UN said that there has been a progressive return of internally displaced persons and refugees in the areas, but civilians remain at the mercy of armed groups operating in the hinterland with impunity.

"There might not be enough 'spectacle' to make it in the international news agenda, but the IRC continues to operate under difficult conditions in a country which is still rife with insecurity, especially in the countryside," Taylor said.

The UN's comments came two days after Amnesty released a report documenting the deliberate erasure of Muslims from the country.

Amnesty said that more than 30,000 Muslims were living in seven protected enclaves around the country. Those living outside the enclaves faced a daily battle for survival.

The UN said that targeted attacks have resulted in a massive exodus of the Muslim and Fulani communities from CAR, with the communities still largely under threat from anti-Balaka militia.

The anti-Balaka have specifically targeted the country's Muslim minority, seen as sympathetic to the Seleka who took over the country briefly in a coup in 2013.

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"The humanitarian community is extremely concerned by the situation of the estimated 36,000 people from minority communities in CAR trapped in enclaves living under high risks of attacks," Agbenonci said.

OCHA says humanitarian needs continue to exceed resources available.

CAR has been led by a transitional government since January 2014. The country is scheduled to hold presidential and parliamentary elections on October 18.

SOUTH SUDAN

Gov't restrictions threaten aid operations in South Sudan: UN

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

3 August 2015 - Restrictions put in place by authorities on the movement of barges from Bor to Malakal on River Nile in South Sudan as well as lack of flight clearances to use Malakal airport are threatening the aid operations, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a statement.

The Nile is the main form of transporting food aid to the oil-rich region, but presently a frontline in Upper Nile between opposition forces and government troops.

Last week, the spokesperson for the South Sudanese army (SPLA) admitted the river transport was "temporarily put on hold" for security purposes, amidst claims rebels relied on it to attack army bases.

"The situation is dire for at least 65,000 people in Malakal and Wau Shilluk who are estimated to be affected by access and transport constraints, with humanitarian partners reporting shortages of medicine, fuel and water treatment chemicals," OCHA said.

It, however, said negotiations were ongoing to ensure supplies were delivered to Upper Nile to avert further deterioration of the situation.

During his recent visit to South Sudan, the UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, Stephen O'Brien, called for rapid and unhindered access to provide assistance to conflict-affected communities. He also stressed the need for immediate assistance.

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Tens of thousands of people have been killed and nearly two million displaced since violence broke out in South Sudan in December 2015 when forces loyal to President Salva Kiir clashed with those allied to the country's former vice-president, Riek Machar.

An estimated 4.6 million people, aid agencies say, could face hunger should the fighting continue.

S.Sudan shuts down leading newspaper after opposition story

NEWS STORY

Source: Bloomberg News

By Okech Francis

Juba, 4 August 2015 - South Sudan's government ordered the indefinite suspension of the country's leading newspaper after it reported on opposition to a proposed power-sharing deal, the publication's editor said.

The decision may be part of a plan by President Salva Kiir's administration to stifle public debate about a peace agreement proposed by regional mediators, Nhial Bol Aken said in an interview Tuesday in the capital, Juba. Information Minister Michael Makuei Lueth declined to comment when contacted by phone.

The Citizen published a story at the weekend that cited opposition officials saying they oppose plans to hand 90 percent of power to the ruling party in any transitional government. The proposal is part of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's suggestion on how to end 20 months of conflict in the oil-producing nation.

Fighting between government and rebel forces that erupted in South Sudan in December 2013 has left tens of thousands of people dead and more than 2 million displaced, according to the United Nations. Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar have failed to reach an agreement on ending the conflict despite months of negotiations.

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South Sudan says will unveil domestic peace deal with rebels

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

4 August 2015 - South Sudan said Tuesday it was conducting consultations to unveil home-grown peace deal with the armed opposition leadership under former vice president, Riek Machar, with indications that Juba had rejected the peace compromise proposal from the mediation of the East African regional bloc, IGAD and its international partners.

“It’s no secret that the IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) has been less interested in allowing the parties to negotiate the terms of the agreement to end this conflict,” Mark Nyipuch, deputy speaker of the national legislative assembly told Sudan Tribune on Tuesday during an exclusive interview.

The senior official of the ruling SPLM party claimed that the evidence of this “lack of interest” emanated from the recent IGAD-Plus proposal which he said divided the country and polarized the people instead of working out a way to bring them together.

He said there was need to give the two warring parties ample time for direct negotiations to come up with a home-grown solution rather than through imposed solution by the mediation.

“Bringing the two parties is a positive thing depending on the approach. A mediator is never a negotiator,” he said.

He strongly criticized the IGAD mediation for allegedly doing the same thing over and over again while expecting the same result.

“They are just working around the previous proposal and each time they come out, they give more divisive proposal,” he further claimed.

The parties, he said, should be allowed to negotiate so that they are able to reach the agreement to end “this senseless conflict.”

He said the government and the SPLM leadership were capable of ending the war with the rebels through peaceful dialogue without the help of the mediators.

“Riek Machar himself can negotiate directly with the government without the involvement of any third party mediating the way to resolve this conflict. He [Machar] did that with the government of Sudan when he broke away from the movement in 1991

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and then went and signed the 1997 Khartoum Peace Agreement and when he returned to the movement [he did the same],” Nyipuocho further stressed.

He added that the two agreements which Machar previously signed with Sudanese president Omer Al Bashir and late John Garang were never negotiated with the involvement of any third party.

Presidential spokesperson, Ateny Wek Ateny, in a separate interview with Sudan Tribune said president Kiir was still conducting consultations with different groups and stakeholders in the country in order to come out with a unified position in response to the proposal of IGAD-PLus.

President Kiir, according to his spokesperson, has also been soliciting ideas and inputs from independent opinion leaders and consulting leaders from all the 10 states in the country for guidance.

Ateny however revealed that despite the aforementioned continued consultations, the government had already rejected the regional proposal, claiming that the deal did not give the two sides an opportunity to sit down and negotiate over the contentious matters.

A host of outstanding issues on governance, security arrangements, various reforms, wealth sharing, accountability, justice and reconciliation as well as power sharing have remained unresolved between the two parties.

A face-to-face direct negotiations between president Kiir and opposition leader Machar collapsed on 6 March when they could not agree on almost every contentious matter in the negotiations to end the 20-month long civil war.

The two parties are expected to submit to IGAD-Plus results of their respective consultations by 6 August.

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SUDAN

Sudan's President, Facing Charges, Scheduled to Speak at UN

NEWS STORY

Source: Associated Press

4 August 2015 - Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir, who faces international war crimes and genocide charges, is on a provisional list of speakers at a U.N. summit of world leaders in late September. If he speaks, al-Bashir would be the first head of state to address the General Assembly while facing charges by the International Criminal Court.

U.N. spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters Tuesday that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said all U.N. member states have to take ICC warrants "seriously."

Al-Bashir was also scheduled to speak at the General Assembly's annual ministerial meeting in September 2013 but the government cancelled his appearance.

The United States made it clear then that it did not want al-Bashir to show up in New York, and human rights groups had warned they would seek legal action against him if he arrived.

Under a U.S. treaty with the United Nations dating to 1947, Washington is obligated to issue the visa as the world body's host country. The United States has never banned a visiting head of state who wants to speak to the United Nations.

"We've been very clear how we feel about the president of Sudan and that he's wanted for crimes, and we want to see him held accountable for those crimes," U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Tuesday.

Asked whether al-Bashir had applied for a visa yet, Toner said the U.S. is aware of reports that he will speak at the U.N. "but we haven't seen anything beyond that."

A diplomat at Sudan's U.N. Mission, who refused to identify herself, said Tuesday: "He is attending" the summit. She gave no other details.

More than 160 world leaders are expected at the summit and al-Bashir is scheduled to speak on Sept. 26, the second day.

Al-Bashir faces two ICC indictments for atrocities linked to the conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region, where an estimated 300,000 people have died and 2 million have been displaced since 2003, according to U.N. figures.

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He rejects the ICC's authority and had been able to travel relatively freely in Africa and the Middle East, even to countries which are parties to the Rome Statute that established the court and are required to carry out ICC arrest warrants.

But in June, when al-Bashir was in South Africa for an African Union summit, a provincial court ordered him to remain in the country while judges deliberated on whether he should be arrested on the ICC warrants. But al-Bashir left for Sudan before the court ruled that he should indeed be arrested.

Akshaya Kumar, Sudan and South Sudan analyst with the Enough Project, a non-governmental organization campaigning to end genocide and crimes against humanity in Sudan and Congo, expressed hope that "the Obama administration will do everything in its power to prevent him from landing in New York."

The United States is not a party to the ICC. But Kumar said prosecutors in New York should consider announcing that if al-Bashir does make the trip, "they will explore filing a criminal case using the U.S. law that allows for anyone present in the United States to be prosecuted for genocide, even if their crimes were committed abroad."

Al Bashir Meets Mbeki, Reiterates Keeness to Achieve Peace and Continue Dialogue

NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Vision

By Zuleikha Abdul Raziq

4 August 2015 - President of the Republic, Field Marshal Omer Al Bashir reiterated the government's keeness to continue the dialogue to reach a comprehensive agreement for all the outstanding issues.

Al Bashir, who met yesterday the Head of the African Union High Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Thabo Mbeki, and the accompanying delegation, expressed appreciation to the African Union for its tireless efforts to achieve peace in Sudan.

President Al Bashir briefed the AUHIP delegation on the steps taken to push forward the national dialogue process.

Meanwhile, Presidential Assistant, NCP Deputy Chairman for Parties' Affairs, Engineer Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid announced that President Omer Al Bashir will meet the National Dialogue mechanism along with the political parties' leaders on Wednesday.

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Hamid added in press statements after his meeting with the Head of the AUHIP, Thabo Mbeki in Corinthia Hotel in Khartoum, that the purpose of the meeting was to push forward the national dialogue process, adding that Mbeki reiterated his support to the national dialogue stressing that it should be the Sudanese themselves to resolve the problems facing the nation.

He pointed out that the meeting discussed the AU efforts to support the national dialogue as model for resolving the problems facing the African countries.

Hamid confirmed the NCP's ruling party keenness in making the national dialogue inclusive; adding that the meeting also discussed the relations between Sudan and neighbouring South Sudan country, pointing out that Mbeki emphasized the importance of continuing the meetings between the two countries to implement the agreements sponsored by the African Union.

According to Hamid, the meeting also touched on the resumption of the two areas' talks between the government and the SPLM-N and its importance to achieve peace and stability.

It is to be noted that this is the first time for Thabo Mbeki to Sudan after the formation of the new government.

Amnesty accuses Sudan of war crimes in South Kordofan

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

4 August 2015 - Amnesty International has accused Sudan's army of committing war crimes by bombing and shelling civilians in its South Kordofan region.

More than 374 bombs, including cluster bombs, were dropped in 67 locations between January and April, killing at least 35 people, the human rights group said.

Sudan's army has not yet commented on the allegations.

It has been battling rebels demanding more rights for the region since 2011.

At least 1.4 million people, or a third of South Kordofan's population, have fled their homes because of the conflict, Amnesty said in a report.

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African Union chief mediator Thabo Mbeki is currently in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, where he is expected to discuss the conflict with government officials, the AFP news agency reports.

'Children killed'

"War crimes cannot be allowed to be committed with impunity and a population facing a protracted humanitarian crisis can no longer be ignored by the world," Amnesty said.

It added that its research team had visited South Kordofan, and found cluster munitions at four sites.

"The use of prohibited weapons - such as cluster bombs - launched from high-flying aircraft has resulted in civilian casualties," the group said.

Children had been killed playing with unexploded ordinance, Amnesty added.

Sudan's government has previously accused the rebels, the Sudan People's Liberation Army-North, of being backed by neighbouring South Sudan, which became independent in 2011.

South Sudan denied the allegation.

The conflict has been fuelled by grievances among non-Arab groups over what they see as neglect and discrimination by the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum.

Sudan rebels offered guarantees to attend talks

NEWS STORY

Source: Middle East Online (<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=72528>)

Government of Sudan offers legal guarantees to insurgents in Darfur region, in bid to foster national dialogue by convincing rebels to attend talks in Khartoum

3 August 2015 - Sudan's government said Monday it is ready to offer rebels battling its forces legal guarantees to allow them to attend talks in Khartoum aimed at addressing the country's multiple crises. President Omar al-Bashir has called for a national dialogue to try to end conflicts in border regions and to right its ailing economy.

The government says the talks must take place in Sudan.

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"We are ready to offer the required guarantees for armed groups to attend" the national dialogue, First Vice President Bakri Hassan Saleh said at a press conference. "We are ready to freeze the sentences" against rebel leaders, he said, but added that the government would not offer them full pardons yet.

Khartoum has been battling rebels in the vast Darfur region of western Sudan since 2003 when insurgents mounted a campaign against Bashir's Arab-dominated government, complaining of marginalisation. Khartoum is also facing an insurgency in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile areas, where the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North has been battling its troops since 2011.

Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes in Darfur, called for the national dialogue last January but the talks have yet to start. African Union chief mediator Thabo Mbeki met Bashir in Khartoum on Monday and is expected to stay for one week for talks about the national dialogue.

"If Mbeki wants to facilitate the internal dialogue he is welcome, but dialogue abroad is not allowed," Salih told reporters.

The UN says that the conflict in Darfur alone has killed 300,000 people and forced 2.5 million to flee their homes. Khartoum puts the death toll at 10,000.