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



## **MEDIA MONITORING**

**7 August 2015**

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### **DRC**

#### **At least three killed in eastern Congo quake**

##### **NEWS STORY**

Source: Reuters

**Goma, 7 August 2015** - A 5.6 magnitude earthquake that struck eastern Democratic Republic of Congo early on Friday killed at least three people, the government spokesman said.

The quake hit 24 miles (40 km) north of Bukavu, not far from the border with Rwanda, at 3:25 a.m. on Friday, said the U.S. Geological Survey, which initially reported the quake at magnitude 5.8.

"There were three deaths - two children in a house in Bukavu. There was also a police officer near the airport," government spokesman Lambert Mende told Reuters.

Sources in Bukavu said the toll could rise slightly but there was no evidence of widespread destruction in the town.

The quake raised concerns about Mount Nyiragongo, which is north of Goma and is Africa's most active volcano. It erupted in 2002 sending a river of lava through the city.

The government sent a team of vulcanologists to the mountain to check for possible new fissures, Julien Paluku, the governor of North Kivu province, told Reuters.

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North and South Kivu lie on Congo's eastern border with Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania, a region at the center of a long conflict. The provinces are part of the Great Lakes region and North Kivu contains the Virunga forest as well as volcanoes.

## US Pushes Congo to Allow Adoptions despite Trafficking Fears

### NEWS STORY

Source: <http://thejakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/international/us-pushes-congo-allow-adoptions-despite-trafficking-fears/>

**6 August 2015** - Legislators in the United States are lobbying the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to give 400 adopted children exit visas, after it suspended international adoptions because of fears children were being trafficked.

Several African countries have stopped their children from being adopted by foreigners because of evidence that some of those involved in the business have been acting unethically.

A Thomson Reuters Foundation investigation in May found that child traffickers bribed, tricked and coerced Ugandan families into giving up their children for adoption.

At least 136 members of the US Congress sent a letter to the DRC's senate and parliament on Tuesday asking them to speed up 400 pending adoption cases.

"Due to the delay in processing the outstanding adoption cases, we understand that at least one child has unnecessarily died despite already possessing a valid visa with which to immediately enter the United States," the letter said.

"We encourage you to act without delay to facilitate the union of these loving families as soon as possible."

The Congolese government suspended exit permits for adopted children in September 2013, pending the introduction of a new adoption law.

Congolese parliamentarians have raised doubts over international adoptions because "they consider many Congolese judges to be corrupt," the US State Department said on its website.

The suspension left 400 children who had already been legally adopted by foreigners in limbo.

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At least 11 of these children have since died, according to the pro-adoption US advocacy group Both Ends Burning.

More than 40 other “medically fragile” children’s “lives are in jeopardy,” it said on its website.

Some desperate US citizens have smuggled their adopted children out of the DRC illegally since 2013, according to the US State Department.

There has been a surge in overseas adoptions by Americans, particularly evangelical Christians who see it as a religious and moral duty.

They often fall prey to swindlers who trick poor Congolese parents into believing that their children are only going abroad for education; bribe officials; and falsify documents to make out that children are orphans.

Americans adopted 6,441 children from around the world in 2013/2014, according to the State Department, the DRC being the second most popular African source nation, after Ethiopia.

Ghana, Benin, Kenya and Ethiopia have suspended intercountry adoptions as they strengthen their policies to combat trafficking.

## RWANDA

### Strong earthquake hits Rwanda

#### NEWS STORY

Source: Xinhua

**7 August 2015** - A strong earthquake struck Rwanda and shook most of the capital Kigali Friday morning.

The magnitude 5.6 earthquake hit Rwanda at 3:25 am local time (0125 GMT), the United States Geological Survey reported.

The epicenter of the earthquake was located 35 km north of Cyangugu city in western Rwanda, occurring at a shallow depth of 10 km.

This is the second strong earthquake ever felt in Rwanda within a period of seven years.

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An earthquake damaged up to 45 schools and health centers in western Rwanda's districts of Nyamasheke and Rusizi in February 2008. 27,000 children were evacuated from schools, while 37 people died and 646 others were injured.

According to experts, earthquakes are common in the western Great Rift Valley due to the presence of a seismically active fault line which straddles western Uganda, eastern the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania.

## **UN envoy meets Rwandan president over security situation in Burundi**

### NEWS STORY

Source: Xinhua

**Kigali, 6 August 2015** - A UN envoy on Thursday met with Rwandan President Paul Kagame over the current security situation in Burundi.

Abdoulaye Bathily, the Special Representative and Head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa, has been recently appointed to help mediate peace talks in Burundi.

After the meeting held in Rwandan capital, Kigali Bathily reiterated the UN Secretary-General's condemnation of the current violence in Burundi

Mr. Bathily continues to hold consultations with political parties, civil society and religious organizations, government officials and the diplomatic community, with the view to reconvene the political dialogue as soon as possible.

After meeting with the Rwandan leader, Bathily also expressed his concern that the situation in Burundi was accumulating "the well-known and visible marks of a society which previously suffered divisions leading to grave violence."

"Currently the humanitarian crisis caused by the escalating political tensions in Burundi has worsened, and uptick in the number of refugees seeking asylum and a deterioration in health conditions at refugee camps receiving them," he told reporters in Kigali.

In the meanwhile, the UN special envoy also told the Rwandan that he remained concerned about the peace and security situation in Burundi.

He pledged to continue working with leaders from the region and the international community to find a solution to the long-drawn crisis in Burundi.

The African Union has also called for the deployment of an international force to avert a humanitarian tragedy in Burundi.

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Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza won the third term in an election that was condemned by the opposition and the international community, which triggered violence in the tiny Central African nation.

## BURUNDI

### US Envoy Expresses Concern over Burundi Crisis

#### NEWS STORY

Source: VOA

**6 August 2015** - The US Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa Thomas Perriello has expressed grave concern about the ongoing political and humanitarian crisis in Burundi.

Perriello, who just returned from a trip to the region including a visit to Burundi, says there is a need for both the government and its opponents to be committed to negotiations in a bid to resolve the crisis. He says Burundians feel a high level of tension and anxiety due to the ongoing violence.

"We are deeply concerned about the political crisis and the humanitarian crisis," Perriello said. "We still believe there is a path forward, but it has to be one in which all Burundian leaders agree to a political dialogue, and the important leadership that the region has shown, through the East African Community, resumes with some urgency to address a situation where you've seen approximately over 200,000 [refugees] already and ongoing sporadic violence."

Civil society groups in Burundi say the apparent escalation of violence could slowly plunge the country into chaos and possibly a return to civil war. Their comments came after Come Harerimana, president of the CNDD FDD chapter in Kanyosha district, was killed Wednesday.

His murder is the third high profile attack in four days as the crisis in Burundi deepens. The African Union, East African Community (EAC) and the Burundian government have all called for calm following the recent killings.

Special envoy Perriello says it would be unfortunate for Burundi to lose the significant progress the country has made over the years since the end of the civil war in 2005.

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“Burundians need to continue to hear those calls for calm and the path forward,” said Perriello.

**Ongoing Peace Talks**

Opponents of President Pierre Nkurunziza say peace talks with the government have yet to get to the fundamental problems that are the reasons behind the tension and violence. They contend that Mr. Nkurunziza is to blame following his decision to seek and win re-election, despite protests that he violated both the constitution and the Arusha peace accord that effectively help ended the civil war.

Perriello says it is unlikely that the issues can be resolved until they come up in the talks.

“The United States and the international community are ready to support the regional leadership to force this political dialogue forward that is so important,” said Perriello.

“The point of the dialogue is to address these extremely difficult questions that continue to remain under the surface of the political crisis. But, people need to come to the table. We’ve seen very constructive steps forward when the East African Community and South Africa and others have been a constructive part of this. So, we are eager to resume that and stand ready to support it.”

**Mediation**

Former Burundi President Domitien Ndayizeye was quoted in a local newspaper as saying that the country needs a mediator with more global appeal to help end the crisis. His supporters say Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, chosen by regional leaders to help negotiate a settlement, has not been overly effective.

Perriello says Museveni has played a constructive role so far.

“The United States and the international community are less dedicated to a specific individual or process than the overall momentum to resume this political dialogue with regional leadership from the EAC from the AU [African Union]. And that has to resume with a sense of urgency and importance because we do see things escalating. We have not passed the point of no return, we can see that kind of solution going forward,” said Perriello.

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## Rumours and violence are fuelling the uncertainty in Burundi

### OPINION

Source: The Guardian

By Carina Tertsakian (Human Rights Watch)

**5 August 2015** - On Monday morning, panic spread after rumours began circulating on social media that Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, Burundi's leading human rights activist, had been killed. In reality he was alive and well, working away as usual, documenting human rights abuses and trying to alert the world to the crisis engulfing his country.

Rumours are common in Burundi and, thankfully, many of them turn out to be false. So I breathed a sigh of relief for Mbonimpa – for a few hours. At around 6pm, I started getting calls informing me that Mbonimpa had been shot. I immediately phoned his family and colleagues in Burundi's capital, Bujumbura, hoping it would prove to be just another false rumour. But this time, it was true. Soon after Mbonimpa left his office, at around 5pm, a man on a motorbike fired shots into his car, injuring him in the face and neck. He was rushed to hospital and taken into intensive care. He is slowly recovering but still very weak.

The fact that these rumours had been circulating since the morning is disturbing. There is no easy explanation, but one thing is clear: this was a well-planned, targeted attack, and one of Burundi's most prominent human rights defenders only narrowly escaped death.

Mbonimpa, 67, is president of a well-known human rights organisation that he founded in the 1990s – after a spell in jail – to defend the rights of prisoners. But he is more than just a figurehead for the group. He is a hands-on, indefatigable activist, campaigning on the frontline every day and refusing to succumb to repeated threats from the government.

In May last year he was thrown into prison, charged with endangering state security, for comments he had made on the radio. After he became seriously ill, he was released on medical grounds in September, but the charges are still hanging over him. Despite this, he has continued his work.

The situation for Mbonimpa and other activists has worsened significantly in the last few months. Burundi has been in political turmoil since April, when public demonstrations began to protest against President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term in office. Police responded with a brutal crackdown, and scores of people were killed. Human rights activists, journalists and members of opposition parties were among the prime

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targets, with many forced to flee the country. Mbonimpa is one of the few whose chose to remain.

I was last in Burundi in June, just before the controversial elections. The mood was gloomy. There were frequent clashes between police and demonstrators, and shooting almost every night in certain neighbourhoods of Bujumbura. Most people were getting on with their lives, at least in the daytime. But come nightfall, the streets emptied, and private conversations revealed deep fears. Almost everyone I spoke to said they didn't know what would happen from one day to the next. It was not uncommon to find that a person I spoke to one day had vanished the next, joining the more than 140,000 who have fled the country.

Nkurunziza was re-elected in July, but the polls were boycotted by most opposition parties and by many voters too. In a rare show of international consensus, many governments, as well as the United Nations and the African Union, agreed that basic conditions for free and fair elections had not been met.

Burundi seems to be heading into an increasingly uncertain and chaotic situation. The day before Mbonimpa was shot, the former head of the intelligence services, General Adolphe Nshimirimana – a powerful figure and close ally of Nkurunziza – was assassinated in the capital.

The attacks against Mbonimpa and Nshimirimana, both targeting senior, high-profile public figures, seemed deliberately designed to provoke. It's imperative that the Burundian authorities act swiftly to prevent revenge attacks, investigate these incidents, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Just as pressing as the violence gripping Burundi is the almost total suppression of independent media: the main private radio stations – the primary source of information for most people – were taken off the air more than two months ago. In a country where rumours are rife, the lack of independent news quickly becomes not only frustrating, but also dangerous.

Until this week, I was tempted to think many of these rumours were nothing more than hearsay – but after what happened to Mbonimpa, I am no longer sure.



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## SOUTH SUDAN

### Warring South Sudan rivals restart peace talks

#### NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

By Karim Lebour

**6 August 2015** - South Sudan's rival forces began peace talks on Thursday, as international pressure mounts ahead of an August 17 deadline to strike a deal to end 19 months of civil war.

The conflict has left tens of thousands dead and has been marked by widespread atrocities on both sides.

"We have now reached a critical juncture whereby participants of this phase will make decisions that may impact the destiny of the people of South Sudan," chief mediator Seyoum Mesfin said at an opening ceremony.

Delegates met in the Ethiopia capital Addis Ababa, under mediation from the regional eight-nation bloc IGAD, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

South Sudan's civil war began in December 2013 when President Salva Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of planning a coup, setting off a cycle of retaliatory killings that has split the poverty-stricken, landlocked country along ethnic lines.

"We have not been able to count the number of dead," Seyoum said.

Diplomats have said repeatedly that patience has run out over the country's civil war.

"You have had enough time to consult, since the proposals are the very same issues that you have been discussing for the last 19 months," Seyoum said.

#### - 'Senseless war' -

But the mood was far from friendly, with chief rebel negotiator Taban Deng saying the government in Juba had "lost all legitimacy" while his government counterpart, Nhial Deng Nhial, was dismissive of proposals that he said put Machar on a level footing with Kiir.

Regional mediators, backed by US President Barack Obama during his recent visit to Kenya and Ethiopia, have given Kiir and Machar until August 17 to halt the civil war.

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Kiir and Machar, who are expected to appear later in the process, effectively face an ultimatum, a "final best offer," according to one senior US administration official.

Failure to strike a deal could lead to a range of punitive measures including an arms embargo and targeted sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes.

After the collapse of the last round of talks, mediators expanded involvement to create an "IGAD-plus" group.

It now also includes the United Nations, five more African Union nations from across the continent -- Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa -- as well as China and the "Troika": Britain, Norway and the US.

Norwegian diplomat Jens-Peter Kjemprud, speaking for the Troika, warned the parties of the need to strike a deal.

"You have the opportunity to resolve outstanding issues before August 17," he said. "If not, the international community will look at new ways to resolve the conflict."

During previous peace talks held in luxury Ethiopia hotels, Kiir, Machar and their entourages have run up millions of dollars in expenses while failing to sign a single lasting agreement.

At least seven ceasefires have been agreed and then broken within days, if not hours.

At home, South Sudan's bishops have called on leaders to put the fate of the country before their pursuit of power and settle a deal.

"There is no moral justification for this senseless war," the influential Council of Churches, a coalition including all the key Protestant and Roman Catholic bishops, said in statement.

"It is unacceptable that people continue to kill and be killed while leaders argue over power, positions and percentages."

## **South Sudan crisis talks are not all-inclusive, says opposition leader Lam Akol**

NEWS STORY

Source: RFI

By Laura Angela Bagnetto

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**6 August 2015** - Members of South Sudan's government and South Sudanese opposition groups, including the rebels led by former vice president Riek Machar, are slated to meet on Thursday for peace talks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The talks are brokered by regional group Intergovernmental Authority on Development, who have already tabled a plan of their own for peace in South Sudan. RFI spoke to Lam Akol, the head of the National Alliance opposition who were prevented from boarding a plane bound for Addis Ababa to attend the talks.

**Can you tell us what happened?**

Before we boarded, a police officer...came and told us that we are not allowed to travel. On the ground he said that he had directives from the presidency that he had leaders of political parties to not travel unless they had permission from the presidency.

So we saw it as odd, because we are not government officials to take permission from the government. Travelling is a constitutional right, enshrined in our constitution that people should be free to travel when they like.

Do you think this is a personal slight against you or is this a political party issue against SPLM-DC or the New Alliance?

It is against the National Alliance, because our delegation of seven, all of us were told not to travel. So it is clearly against the National Alliance. And we think it's that the government is not comfortable with our point of view in the talks, and they would want government loyal to them to represent the political parties. But of course, IGAD is saying no. The political parties should all be there, so that their opinion is heard. On the same plane there was a delegation of a party that supports the government. They were allowed to go but we were not allowed to go.

**Have you appealed to IGAD regarding this?**

Yes, I told them immediately, as soon as we were told not to board. And I think they will take a decision today.

**Aren't the talks supposed to be all-inclusive?**

Yes, the talks are supposed to be, but you know the government. I think they have been encouraged, because last time, on the 13th of September, they prevented us from travelling to Addis. And the talks continued. So they think that history may repeat itself, and the government is not interested in inclusive talks. They just want to buy time with the rebels, because they are not ready to make the required compromises to bring peace around. They still believe they can score a military victory.

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## South Sudan opposition alleges Juba stopped its peace talks trip

### NEWS STORY

Source: The Guardian

**6 August 2015** - A delegation of South Sudan's opposition parties on Wednesday claimed that Juba prevented them from travelling to Addis Ababa to participate in the peace talks between the South Sudanese warring parties.

"We were on our travel procedures when a police officer told us that there were directives from the Presidency to prevent the delegation from travelling," Lam Akol said.

Akol is the head of the opposition delegation, told newsmen at Juba airport Wednesday.

"Such decisions do not serve the peace issue in any way," Akol said, describing the move as "a flagrant violation" of freedom of movement stipulated in the country's constitution and in international laws.

He said the delegation has received a formal invitation from mediators, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development in Africa (IGAD), to resume talks in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on Friday.

The South Sudanese opposition parties' alliance brings together about 18 political parties that are not participating in the government.

Earlier IGAD announced a reviewed proposed draft peace agreement to be considered by South Sudan's warring parties.

The government is led by President Salva Kiir Mayardit while the South Sudan People's Liberation Movement in opposition is led by former Vice President Riek Machar.

The mediators availed the two sides until Aug. 17 to sign a peace deal to end the violent clash in the newly-born state.

In spite of many rounds of talks under IGAD's patronage, the two South Sudanese rivals have failed to reach a peace deal.

South Sudan plunged into violence in December 2013 when fighting erupted between troops loyal to Kiir and defectors led by his former deputy, Machar.

The conflict soon turned into an all-out war, with the violence taking on an ethnic dimension that pitted the president's Dinka tribe against Machar's Nuer ethnic group.

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The clashes have left thousands of South Sudanese dead and forced around 1.9 million people to flee their homes.

## South Sudan to unveil own plan to end conflict

### NEWS STORY

Source: Al Jazeera

**7 August 2015** - South Sudan's government is due to unveil its own peace plan in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, just days after it refused to sign a regional plan to end the country's ongoing conflict, Al Jazeera has learned.

Ateny Wek Ateny, South Sudan's presidential spokesperson, will not offer any details of the peace plan but said President Salva Kiir is consulting leaders from all 10 states for guidance.

He reiterated his government's refusal to accept the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) plan.

"When we first received the IGAD proposal we were puzzled. This is not a proposal negotiated by the two parties. The role of the negotiators is to bridge the gap, not that the mediators come up with a peace plan," Ateny told Al Jazeera.

Ateny said that IGAD's plan, created by representatives from seven East African countries, did not allow either Kiir or his political opponent Riek Machar, a former vice president, to present their own proposals.

Ateny described the IGAD meetings in Addis Ababa as a "political conference".

"We can work together if we have the proper mechanism," he said.

### Millions displaced

The conflict in South Sudan began in December 2013, when clashes erupted between forces loyal to Kiir and those aligned to Machar.

Two million people have fled their homes to escape the conflict, with 100 000 forced to flee since May alone.

The struggle between the two sides has been dominated by war crimes, including widespread killings of civilians because of their ethnicity or perceived allegiances, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the international rights advocacy group.

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The South Sudanese government says that under the IGAD plan, Machar has to be allowed to share the presidency with Kiir, which it cannot accept.

Furthermore, Atena told Al Jazeera, the call for the military to be moved 23km away from the capital Juba would greatly reduce the number of troops in Kiir's presidential guard and compromise South Sudan's sovereignty.

In July, South Sudan's government forces and armed groups allied to it were accused of carrying out a series of horrific rapes and killings, including burning civilians alive and crushing others under tanks, in devastating violence in Unity state.

HRW said the offensive in rebel-held parts of Unity state is "the latest in a conflict characterised by shocking disregard for civilian life".

The African Union has also released a report on alleged atrocities committed during the conflict. The report, however, was passed on to representatives of Kiir's government only.

### **'Polarised and divided'**

On allegations of the military and pro-government fighters committing widespread human rights violations, Atena denied reports that the country's military was raping and killing civilians.

He said the government has dispatched teams to investigate violations highlighted by HRW and that if they find evidence of atrocities, those responsible would be punished.

"This country is polarised and divided," he said.

"You will find things that will shock you because people don't want to tell the truth. People want to put the government in an awkward position."

## **South Sudan army denies 'starvation' aid blockade**

### NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

**5 August 2015** - South Sudan's army on Wednesday dismissed as "propaganda" rebel claims of an aid blockade aimed at starving them into submission ahead of peace talks to end the 19-month civil war.

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The United Nations and humanitarian agencies have also said aid is being restricted, including into areas already on the brink of famine.

But army spokesperson Philip Aguer denied it had blockaded boats travelling on the Nile river, the main route for aid into the largely roadless northern areas, including areas under rebel control.

While boats were warned they risked coming under rebel attack, reports of a blockade were "mere propaganda not based on concrete facts", Aguer said on Wednesday.

The rebels accuse the government of using aid restrictions as a tool to weaken them.

"The regime is starving these populations as another weapon of war to kill thousands more," rebel spokesman James Gadet said in a statement.

"The pretext that our forces have been attacking barges which had been carrying relief assistance is false."

The UN aid chief Stephen O'Brien warned on a visit to South Sudan last month that river barges carrying food and medical aid were being stopped.

O'Brien on Tuesday repeated the need for "rapid and unhindered access", recalling how he had urged President Salva Kiir to "ensure restrictions on Nile aid transport be lifted immediately."

### **Poisonous atmosphere for peace talks**

South Sudan's civil war began in December 2013 when Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of planning a coup, setting off a cycle of retaliatory killings that has split the poverty-stricken, landlocked country along ethnic lines.

Regional mediators, backed by US President Barack Obama during his recent visit to Kenya and Ethiopia, have given South Sudan's rivals until August 17 to halt the civil war.

Talks were initially slated to start in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa on Wednesday, but neither side has given official confirmation of when they might turn up.

Obama on Tuesday also warned Kiir and Machar that if they fail to strike a deal the US will "move forward with a different plan, and recognise that those leaders are incapable of creating the peace that is required."

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Accusing the government of "genocide" and intending to "starve the people to death", the rebels said government actions may "spoil the atmosphere of the expected peace negotiations in Addis Ababa."

During previous peace talks held in luxury Ethiopia hotels, Kiir, Machar and their entourages have run up millions of dollars in expenses while failing to sign a single lasting agreement.

At least seven ceasefires have been agreed and then broken within days, if not hours.

Over 70% of the country's 12 million people need assistance with some areas on the brink of famine, according to the United Nations. Tens of thousands have been killed.

Aid agencies including Doctors Without Borders (MSF) last month warned of restricted access to some of hardest hit areas, severely limiting specialised food to save starving children, and forcing people into "inhumane conditions".

One in three children countrywide are acutely malnourished and 250 000 children face starvation, the UN says.

## SUDAN

### **Bashir will not participate in UNGA meetings: report**

#### NEWS STORY

Source: Sudan Tribune

**6 August 2015** - The Sudanese president Omer Hassan al-Bashir will not participate in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meetings next month in New York, a newspaper reported.

The privately-owned al-Sayha newspaper quoted sources in the Sudanese foreign ministry as saying that Bashir's participation is unlikely and that a ministerial delegation will probably represent Sudan in those meetings.

These sources also noted that the speakers' list that carried Bashir's name is a provisional one that is subject to change as the event draws closer.

This contradicted remarks made by Sudan's Deputy UN ambassador Hassan Hamid Hassan this week in which he confirmed Bashir's attendance.



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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.

The US State department suggested this week that it has not received a visa application from Bashir yet.

The Sudanese leader faces war crimes and genocide charges by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

## **AU GUEST**

In a related issue, the South African president Jacob Zuma defended his government's decision not to apprehend Bashir during the African Union (AU) summit last June.

"Bashir's coming to South Africa, it was on the invitation of the AU," Zuma said in his first comments on the incident since Bashir's departure.

"He is the guest of the AU," Zuma told Democratic Alliance (DA) opposition MP's who demanded an explanation in parliament.

Mmusi Maimane, head of the DA described Bashir asked Zuma why he had not kept previous promises to enforce the warrant - as all ICC members are bound to do.

"In 2010 you were in this house in this podium... [You were] asked of Al-Bashir came [would you respect the International Criminal Court order that he be arrested]. You said South Africa respects international law and certainly are signatories and will abide by the law," Maimane said according to the Citizen newspaper.

"What has changed in 2010 recently in contravention of a high court order [to arrest Al-Bashir]... your government assisted in allowing him to leave South Africa."

Zuma said the difference between 2010 and now was that Bashir five years ago, had requested to come to South Africa for business interests. He said that Bashir would have been detained if he had visited South Africa as an individual, rather than as a delegate to an AU summit.

The issue has triggered tensions between Zuma and the judiciary amid attacks directed by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to judges.

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The attacks came after the North Gauteng High Court ruled that government had broken the law by allowing Bashir to leave the country despite orders banning his departure pending a decision on his arrest.

The court reprimanded the government for flouting its own laws saying that they undermined the country's constitutional democracy in allowing Bashir's exit.

"A democratic State based on the rule of law cannot exist or function, if the government ignores its constitutional obligations and fails to abide by Court orders. A Court is the guardian of justice, the corner-stone of a democratic system based on the rule of law. If the State, an organ of State or State official does not abide by Court orders, the democratic edifice will crumble stone-by-stone until it collapses and chaos ensues," presiding Judge Dunstan Mlambo said at the time.

Mlambo also invited the National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP) "to consider whether criminal proceedings are appropriate".

Zuma is scheduled to meet with South Africa Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng at the request of the latter to discuss tensions between the executive and the judiciary.