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



MEDIA MONITORING

2 June 2015

DRC

Congo opposition splits threaten first peaceful power transfer

Kinshasa, 2 June 2015 - Personal ambition and dissent within Democratic Republic of Congo's largest opposition party could offer President Joseph Kabila a chance to hang onto power when his term ends, threatening the nation's first peaceful transition.

Splits within the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), the oldest and traditionally most vociferous opposition party, are marking a turbulent run up to elections due in 2016, when Kabila is meant to step aside after two elected terms.

Following decades of conflict and misrule, Congo is trying to stamp out remaining pockets of rebellion and build on relative stability that has helped it to lure investors and rival Zambia as Africa's top copper producer.

However, violent protests in January over whether Kabila might try to stay on showed the potential for trouble in the giant nation, whose past bouts of conflict have sucked in nations across central Africa.

Since its foundation in 1982, the UDPS has stood up first to long-time ruler Mobutu Sese Seko and then Laurent Kabila, who ousted him in 1997 and was the current president's father.

However, the man who has led the party from the outset, Etienne Tshisekedi, is now 82 and receiving medical treatment abroad. During this absence, his son Felix has divided the party by accepting an offer of dialogue from Kabila that some UDPS members and most other opposition parties have rejected as a tactic to delay the presidential vote.

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Another African giant, Nigeria marked its first democratic transition of power with the inauguration of President Muhammadu Buhari last Friday. But Congo has yet to achieve such a handover since independence from Belgium in 1960 and its record of violence is grim. One study estimated that 5.4 million people died in the decade to 2008 alone from a range of conflicts plus related disease and malnutrition.

Kabila's spokesman has said the president intends to respect the constitution. But Kabila, who succeeded his assassinated father in 2001 and won elections in 2006 and 2011, has so far refused to comment on his political future after next year.

Jean Omasombo, a Congo expert at the Royal Central Africa Museum in Belgium, said nominating Felix Tshisekedi to a high post could help Kabila to soften public opposition if he tries to stay in office. "Kabila would like to put in place a government that can help him draw closer to public opinion while trying to keep himself in power," Omasombo said.

Excuses for delaying the election could include a lack of funding for the vote, a stalled decentralisation process and violence that persists near Congo's eastern border, but events elsewhere in Africa show they would involve risk.

In Burkina Faso, an attempt to change the constitution provoked a revolution last year while Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza has faced protests and a coup attempt over his own push for a third term.

FAMILY POLITICS

Felix Tshisekedi said talks - proposed by a Kabila envoy in May - are aimed at ensuring a series of local, regional and national elections are well organised. Opposition leaders have repeatedly dismissed the timetable as unrealistic.

He rejects suggestions that he wants to join Kabila's government. "It is not a question for us of going to discuss a government of national unity or transition. No, no, three times no," he told Reuters in a sparsely furnished office at his home in Limete, a Kinshasa district and opposition stronghold.

Many party stalwarts still accuse Felix and his mother, Marthe, of a power grab while the state of his father, nicknamed "the Sphinx", remains unclear outside the family.

Francois Tshipamba Mpuila, a founder of the UDPS, criticised the Tshisekedi family from Belgium, where he leads the party's national federation. "For them, the party ... is a private and exclusive property of their biological family," he wrote, accusing family members of striking a deal with Kabila.

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Albert Moleka, Etienne Tshisekedi's former chief of staff and spokesman, left the party this year after accusing family members of stopping him seeing his ex-boss.

Moleka also suspects Tshisekedi Senior's signatures on official statements have been doctored. "The mother always wanted her son to become a minister," he said.

SPHINX TO RETURN?

Etienne - seldom seen without his flat cap before his treatment - still commands authority in the party for his long career in opposition including to Mobutu, when he earned the Sphinx nickname for not speaking much but causing a lot of trouble when he did.

Last month he endorsed the idea of talks in a statement issued from Belgium, and Felix has dismissed talk of schisms as posturing by those looking to replace his father.

Felix says his father suffers from diabetes and hypertension, but insists he will return home to run in the election next year, despite Moleka's assertions that the illness is more serious and will prevent this.

Party supporters have never accepted Etienne's defeat by Kabila in 2011, an election that European Union observers deemed "not credible" due to fraud.

Felix Tshisekedi said international mediation was needed to ensure Kabila sticks to any promises secured in the dialogue.

Much of the UDPS rank and file, whose admiration for the elder Tshisekedi is matched only by their hatred of Kabila, dislike the conciliatory stance towards the president.

Some senior party members have even begun informal talks on a new leadership, according to people with knowledge of the discussions. Others, though, resort to hyperbole in describing their hopes for a triumphal return of the Sphinx.

"Without him, it'll be the death of all the Congolese people," said Francois Nkunza, a lawyer and UDPS member.

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RDC: les chefs religieux exigent un consensus sur le calendrier électoral

Source: VOA

Le président Joseph Kabila les a reçus lundi à Kinshasa dans le cadre des consultations en vue d'un dialogue national.

1er juin 2015 - Le représentant de la Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (Catholique), l'abbé Léonard Santedi a indiqué, après la rencontre avec le président Joseph Kabila, que les évêques étaient unanimes à réclamer un consensus sur le calendrier électoral.

L'opposition dont une partie refuse de prendre part au dialogue initié par Joseph Kabila, avait, dans son ensemble, rejeté le calendrier électoral de la Commission nationale électorale indépendante (Céni) et en avait proposé un autre.

"Tout dialogue doit se faire dans le respect (...) de la Constitution et surtout des délais constitutionnels en ce qui concerne l'organisation des scrutins", et il faut créer un "climat de confiance" nécessaire pour "réussir le processus électoral", a insisté l'abbé Santedi.

L'opposition accuse le président Kabila de manœuvrer en vue de se maintenir au pouvoir ou d'imposer un troisième mandat alors qu'il en a déjà accompli deux à la tête du pays et que la Constitution en fixe justement la limite à deux.

Le chef de l'Eglise protestante, Mgr Marini Bodo, a, lui aussi, confirmé que le dialogue tournait autour du calendrier des élections.

La Céni vient de prolonger l'enregistrement des candidatures pour les élections locales que l'opposition boycotte dans sa grande majorité.

Le président Kabila prévoit de recevoir mardi l'archevêque de Kinshasa, le cardinal Laurent Monsengwo dont les prises de position pèsent dans l'opinion nationale congolaise.

Joseph Kabila entame les consultations par les confessions religieuses

Source: APA

1er juin 2015 - Le président de la République démocratique du Congo (RDC), Joseph Kabila Kabange, a entamé, lundi au Palais de la nation (siège de la présidence de la

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République) à Kinshasa, les consultations avec les chefs des confessions religieuses, sur les questions d'actualité dans ce pays, dans le cadre du dialogue qu'il a préconisé.

Les chefs de principales confessions religieuses, notamment catholique, protestante, kimbangusite, islamique et Armée du salut se sont ainsi entretenus avec le chef de l'Etat congolais à qui ils ont soumis plusieurs préoccupations relatives notamment aux élections.

La délégation de la Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO), conduite par son président, Mgr Nicolas Djomo, a dit avoir soumis au président Joseph Kabila notamment les problèmes relatifs au consensus national autour du calendrier électoral, en vue de la restitution de la confiance entre tous les acteurs politiques, à la sécurisation du processus électoral ainsi qu'au respect de la Constitution.

La délégation de l'Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC, église protestante), conduite par son président, Mgr Pierre Marini Bodho, s'est prononcée pour le dialogue ainsi que pour le respect des lois et des institutions du pays.

Quant à celle de la Communauté islamique du Congo (COMICO), elle s'est également dit favorable au dialogue, compte tenu du fait que calendrier électoral, compte des problèmes liés au calendrier électoral. « Oui au dialogue, s'il y a un problème entre les gens, il faut dialoguer. Nous sommes favorables à ce dialogue », a affirmé son représentant.

La délégation de l'Armée du salut a dit s'être entretenu avec le chef de l'Etat congolais sur les élections et le dialogue « qui doit être tenu entre les fils et filles de ce pays ». « Nous devons respecter le calendrier de la CENI, il faut que les fils et filles de ce pays se mettent ensemble pour dialoguer », a déclaré le chef de cette confession à l'issue de l'entretien.

Le programme des consultations prévoyait également l'entrevue ce même lundi entre Joseph Kabila et les chefs coutumiers.

Ces consultations, entamées avec les chefs des confessions religieuses, devront s'étendre à la classe politique, de la majorité au pouvoir et de l'opposition, ainsi qu'à d'autres membres de la société civile.

L'opposition est partagée sur ce dialogue politique, certains partis de la plateforme s'étant déjà prononcés contre sa tenue, notamment le Mouvement de libération du Congo (MLC) de Jean-Pierre Bemba, l'Union pour la nation congolaise (UNC) de Vital Kamerhe ainsi que le regroupement de l'opposition républicaine pilotée par le président du Sénat (chambre haute du parlement), Léon Kengo wa Dondo, pendant que d'autres sont favorables à ce dialogue.

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La RDC prévoit la tenue en 2015 des élections provinciales, urbaines, municipales et locales et en 2016 les élections législatives et présidentielle.

RDC: départ timoré pour les consultations du président Kabila

Source: RFI

1er juin 2015 - La presse était présente au palais de la Nation, vendredi et samedi, mais aucune trace visible des principaux intéressés. Les confessions religieuses étaient pourtant attendues par le président Joseph Kabila pour le début des consultations prévues dans le cadre du dialogue annoncé depuis quelques jours.

Après les représentants des religions étaient annoncés les acteurs politiques mais les principaux partis d'opposition ont décliné l'invitation. Les diplomates, eux, sont annoncés pour le début de la semaine prochaine. Pourtant, quelques ambassadeurs ont déjà été reçus samedi 30 mai à leur demande.

Mais pour certains observateurs, c'est la forme même de ces rencontres qui semble poser problème: dialogue ou consultations? Certains invités aimeraient avoir des précisions avant de s'engager. Ils sont en effet nombreux à soupçonner quelques pièges qui seraient tendus par le pouvoir au travers de cet exercice.

BURUNDI

UN envoy urges restraint among all Burundian parties; heads to region for weekend summit on crisis

Source: UN News Centre

29 May 2015 - The United Nations Special Envoy for Burundi today travelled to Tanzania where he hopes an East African community summit over the weekend will help reinforce dialogue among the Burundian parties amid concerns raised by UN agencies that the current political instability and violence puts children at risk and could lead to a humanitarian crisis.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said that amid the ongoing crisis in Burundi, children are at risk, especially those who have been exposed to violent clashes and

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demonstrations along with the more than 60,000 refugees who had fled to neighbouring countries.

“Prolonged insecurity was likely to have a massive impact on an already vulnerable population,” said UNICEF spokesman Christophe Boulierac told the UN press briefing in Geneva, Switzerland.

At the same briefing, the World Food Programme (WFP) spokesperson Elisabeth Byrs, said the agency is concerned that the political instability in Burundi could lead to a humanitarian crisis.

“It was also affecting food security inside Burundi, which is already one of the poorest and most food insecure countries on earth,” Ms. Byrs said.

In the Burundian capital, Bujumbura, Said Djinnit, UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes and facilitator of the political dialogue, today called on all Burundian parties to exercise restraint and to refrain from any action that could generate violence and increase tensions.

“Despite persisting divergences on the core issue of the presidential term,” he said, “the parties agreed to pursue their dialogue and have exchanged views on confidence building measures and mutual commitments regarding the management of the electoral calendar, guarantees and measures for the holding of free, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections, and Constitutional political rights and freedoms.”

Mr. Djinnit spoke to reporters today before travelling to Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, to participate in the East African Community Summit on Sunday.

The envoy said he hopes the summit will provide further guidance and impetus to reinforce the Burundian dialogue, and called on all Burundian parties to exercise restraint and to refrain from any action that could generate violence and increase tension.

Meanwhile, in Geneva, UNICEF spokesman Christophe Boulierac said that since the start of the crisis five children had been killed by bullet wounds, including one just yesterday morning, and 200 children had been injured since the start of the street protests in and around Bujumbura on 26 April.

He also expressed concern over cases of the unlawful detention of children in prisons and said that UNICEF was working with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to identify children who may have been arbitrarily arrested and unlawfully detained in Bujumbura prisons in an effort to secure their release and reunite them with their families.

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WFP spokesperson Byrs said her agency was providing food assistance to more than 60,000 Burundian refugees who fled to Rwanda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Burundi to Consider Summit Request for Election Delay

Source: VOA

1 June 2015 - A spokesman for Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza said the government is open to the proposal made by leaders of the East African Community (EAC) to delay elections for at least six weeks.

Deputy presidential spokesman Gervais Abayeho said the Burundian Electoral Commission, in collaboration with political parties, will consider the EAC request and come up with a proposal for the government to consider.

In a statement issued Sunday following an emergency regional summit in Dar es Salaam, the East African leaders also called "on all parties to stop the violence" and create "conditions for the return of refugees" who have fled political violence.

Abayeho said that while the government is open to the EAC proposal, any changes must remain within the limit set by the Burundi's constitution which mandates that the president-elect be sworn in by August 26. He said the country does not want a situation where a political vacuum occurs.

"First of all, the government appreciates the position of the summit that elections must take place in Burundi, contrary to what opposition parties and some civil society organizations have been saying that conditions are not conducive for elections," he said.

Abayeho said the electoral commission will now take up the proposal made by the East African leaders.

"As regards the postponement as requested by the summit, the electoral commission with all political parties and other stakeholders will look into the matter and come up with a proposal that will be submitted to the government," Abayeho said.

He said whatever decision is made must take into consideration Burundi's constitution which mandates that the president-elect be sworn in by August 26.

"What the world must know is that the electoral calendar should remain within the limit set by the constitution because the president-elect must be sworn in on the 26th of

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August. Otherwise, going beyond this schedule could lead to a kind of political vacuum and this is what the government will not like to see happen,” Abayeho said.

Local and parliamentary elections are scheduled to be held June 5, while the presidential election is scheduled for June 26.

Abayeho said this makes the EAC request for postponement more urgent. He said he believes the government and the electoral commission will get together this week to look into the matter.

Meanwhile, opposition leaders Sunday called on protesters to return to the streets Monday, saying they were disappointed that EAC summit did not demand Nkurunziza drop his decision to run for a third term.

The president's critics say a third term would violate the constitution. But his supporters say he is eligible to run because parliament, not voters, elected him to his first term in 2005.

The East African leaders also called on all parties to disarm all youth groups and stop the violence to create "conditions for the return of refugees" who have fled political violence.

The opposition has been complaining about what it called the “militarization of the ruling CNDD-FDD party’s youth wing” known as Imbonerakure and accused the government of supporting the violence. He said the protesters are also to blame for the violence, particularly against police officers.

Nkurunziza did not attend Sunday’s emergency meeting in Dar es Salaam. During his last trip to Tanzania last month, a coup attempt was launched against him. Abayeho said that had nothing to do with the president’s decision.

“Even countries like Somalia, which is facing insurrection by al-Shabab, or a country like Nigeria with the Boko Haram insurrection, the presidents of those countries do go out of those countries for even several days. So, if the president did not attend the summit, it means he had another agenda to attend to,” Abayeho said.

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Regional leaders urge further postponement of Burundi elections

Source: Xinhua

Dar-Es-Saalam, 1 June 2015 - The leaders from the East African Community (EAC) partner states on Sunday expressed their concerns at the political crisis on Burundi, calling for further postponement of elections in the East African country.

"The summit concerned at the continued impasse in Burundi and the need for further dialogue, called for the longer postponement of the elections in Burundi for a period not less than one and a half month," a communique said after an emergency summit of the EAC heads of state on the situation in Burundi, which brought together Presidents from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

Parliamentary and presidential elections in the tiny central African country are scheduled to be held on June 5 and June 26, respectively.

Read by the EAC Secretary General Richard Sezibera, the communique said the EAC leaders called on all political parties to stop violence.

"The leaders also called for the disarmament of all armed youth groups and for the creation of conditions for the return of refugees who have fled following weeks of political violence," said Sezibera.

The summit was attended by the EAC current chairman President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda while President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi were represented by their ministers of foreign affairs.

South African President Jacob Zuma also participated as a special guest in the summit for his pivotal role in the negotiations that had succeeded in bringing peace and stability to Burundi following the civil war.

Burundian government has insisted that parliamentary elections will take place on June 5 despite weeks of civil unrest on the streets of the capital Bujumbura and nearby provinces that has left at least 30 people dead and tens of thousands fleeing to neighboring countries.

Burundi has been thrown into a political crisis following growing opposition to an attempt by President Nkurunziza to run for a third term in office.

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Nkurunziza not pressured by region to abandon re-election

Source: AFP

Despite a call by East African leaders for Burundi to delay its upcoming elections this month, no pressure was put on the president to step down.

1 June 2015 - The Burundian government said it was open to a request by East African leaders on Sunday to delay upcoming elections in the face of violent protests sparked by President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term.

But the regional leaders, after holding emergency talks on the Burundian crisis in Tanzania, stopped short of asking Nkurunziza to abandon his re-election bid, prompting the opposition to urge supporters to return to the streets in even greater numbers.

"We are disappointed because the summit said nothing on the question that we are concerned about. We did not descend on the streets to get the elections delayed by a month and a half," said one of the protest leaders, Pacifique Nininahazwe.

"We are going to stage even bigger demonstrations than we have done so far in order to get Nkurunziza to leave office," he vowed.

Burundi's parliamentary elections are currently scheduled to take place on June 5 while the presidential election is slated for June 26.

East African leaders on Sunday added to international pressure on Burundi to delay the ballot after weeks of civil unrest that has left at least 30 people dead and seen tens of thousands flee the central African nation. The turmoil even led to a failed coup attempt earlier this month.

"The summit, concerned at the impasse in Burundi, strongly calls for a long postponement of the elections not less than a month and a half," the East African Community (EAC) said in a statement read out by its secretary general Richard Sezibera.

The statement also called "on all parties to stop violence" and for "the creation of conditions for the return of refugees" who have fled the turmoil.

In response, government spokesperson Philippe Nzobonariba told AFP: "The Burundian government welcomes the proposal of the heads of state" to delay the elections.

He added that the leaders meeting in Dar Es Salaam "did not discuss" the controversy over Nkurunziza's third bid because it was a sovereign issue and the government considered the matter "closed".

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The crisis in Burundi erupted in late April after the ruling party designated Nkurunziza, in power for 10 years, as its candidate for upcoming elections.

The opposition and rights groups say this violates the constitution as well as a 2006 peace deal that ended a 13-year civil war.

The war left hundreds of thousands dead and there are fears the current crisis could push the impoverished, landlocked country back into conflict.

‘Masquerade’

With talks between Nkurunziza and the opposition deadlocked, Sunday’s EAC summit was seen as an important opportunity to resolve the crisis.

The talks were attended by leaders from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda as well as South African President Jacob Zuma. But Rwandan President Paul Kagame, a key regional player and Burundi’s neighbour, sent a minister to represent him.

Nkurunziza himself was also absent from the talks.

It was during a regional summit on May 13 in Tanzania’s economic capital, attended by Nkurunziza, that a top general launched an unsuccessful bid to oust him – and the president is seen as being wary of again leaving the country.

Nkurunziza, a former rebel leader from the Hutu majority and a born-again Christian, insists he has every right to stand again, arguing that for his first term in office he was appointed by parliament and not after a general election.

Asked to rule on Nkurunziza’s candidacy, Burundi’s constitutional court found in favour of the president but not before one of the judges fled the country, claiming that its members were subject to death threats.

Key international donors have withdrawn their support for the polls, as has the influential Catholic Church in Burundi, and on Saturday it emerged that a senior member of the election commission had also fled the country – further plunging preparations for the polls into disarray.

The country’s main opposition leader, Agathon Rwaswa, has said the elections would be a “masquerade” if they went ahead as scheduled.

Demonstrators on the streets of Bujumbura said they were disappointed by the outcome of the summit.

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“It doesn’t change anything. One month is not enough. There are lots of problems – independent media has not reopened, the rights of protestors are violated. All of this needs to be resolved before elections can be held,” said Antoine, an anti-Nkurunziza activist who asked that his full name not be published.

Burundi opposition leaders call for fresh protests

Source: Al Jazeera

2 June 2015 - Opposition leaders in Burundi say a big protest against President Pierre Nkurunziza will be held in the capital, Bujumbura, on Tuesday.

But with several protest leaders having left the country and others in hiding, it is unclear whether many opposition members will actually heed the call to march.

Protests against Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third term have been going on for weeks. More than 20 people have been killed by security forces and 90,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries.

The call for fresh protests came as Burundi's government on Monday held out the possibility of a postponement of elections.

Parliamentary elections are currently scheduled to take place on June 5 while the presidential election is slated for June 26.

OPINION: Burundi's fragile peace can still unravel

A summit of leaders of the East African Community - comprising Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda - and South Africa's President Jacob Zuma on Sunday called for postponement of the elections for at least a month and a half.

'Slight reshuffle'

Presidential spokesman Gervais Abayeho said the electoral commission was looking into the request and would advise the government.

"They will make a proposal to the government to see if it is possible to make some adjustments on the calendar. But the government is receptive of the proposal made by the summit," he said.

"We believe any reshuffle of the calendar will be anytime soon. I think there will be some slight reshuffle."

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The opposition and rights groups say the president's third-term bid violates a constitutional two-term limit as well as a 2006 peace deal that ended a 13-year civil war.

Nkurunziza, a former rebel leader, insists he has every right to stand again because he was elected to his first term by parliament, not directly by the people.

Gelase Ndabirabe, spokesman for the ruling CNDD-FDD party, said it also supported the postponement.

"We are ready to invite all partners in the issue to put effort, stop protests, for what they called protests have cost many lives," he said on national radio.

Last week, the European Union and the Catholic Church pulled out from observing the elections, saying the vote cannot be fair because of daily unrest and a crackdown on media.

The opposition had also called for the elections to be postponed.

Burundi's poll body downplays impact of withdrawal of Catholic Church

Source: Xinhua

The withdrawal of the influential Catholic Church from Burundi's electoral process will not affect the operations of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) and its affiliated commissions, CENI spokesman Prosper Ntahorwamiye said Thursday.

Bujumbura, 1 June 2015 - "We have taken note of the withdrawal of the Catholic clergy from the provincial electoral commissions (CEPI) and communal electoral commissions (CECI). However, we shall not hurry to replace them unless if the replacement is only meant to ensure the various commissions have the required quorum to carry out their functions," Ntahorwamiye said.

According to him, the immediate effect of the decision by the highest authority in the Burundian Catholic church is that 11 priests out of a total of 163 members of CEPI and 33 priests out of a total of 645 CECI members will withdraw from CENI's provincial and communal commissions.

On Wednesday, the Burundi Conference of Catholic Bishops announced the withdrawal of its members from CENI commissions due to the recent developments in the electoral process.

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The withdrawal was announced just a week before the country holds legislative and communal elections.

On May 12, the Catholic Church had threatened to withdraw from the electoral process due to lack of ideal conditions for a free and fair election. Alexandre Niyungeko says he received death threats after publicly opposing the president's plan to run again. Like dozens of other human rights activists, journalists and opposition officials he has gone into hiding to protect himself from what he says are death squads backing the government.

A climate of fear has engulfed Burundi as attacks against those opposed to President Pierre Nkurunziza are on the rise.

Climate of fear engulfs Burundi as journalists and opposition are attacked ahead of polls

Source: AP

31 May 2015 - "The life of anyone who opposes Pierre Nkurunziza is in danger. People are being assassinated here and there," leading opposition figure Agathon Rwaswa told The Associated Press.

The protests, which have left 20 dead and hundreds injured, came to a head on May 13 when an army general announced a coup against the president while he was out of the country at a regional summit about the crisis in neighboring Tanzania. The attempt was defeated in 48 hours and has been followed by a spike of attacks on anyone opposing the president.

On May 23, opposition leader Zedi Feruzi, who had called for the protests, was killed in a drive-by shooting that also killed a bodyguard and wounded a journalist. A day earlier two people were killed in a grenade attack on a market.

Some neighborhoods in the capital are now experiencing almost daily running battles between police firing live bullets and stone-throwing protesters who vow not to leave the streets until the president drops his candidacy. Protesters barricade their neighborhoods at night and stay awake in fear of late night attacks by police or pro-government militia.

Even the vice president of the country's election commission doesn't feel safe and fled the country over the weekend. Spes-Caritas Ndironkeye left for Canada without notifying her boss, said commission spokesman Prosper Ntahorwamiye.

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The media in particular has been targeted, with grenade attacks against four independent radio stations and a TV station, leaving just the state-owned media on the air. Journalists who witnessed the attacks charge that it was done by government intelligence officials and police.

"I am deeply worried by the extremely tense situation in Burundi. We are receiving alarming messages from human rights defenders and journalists fearing for their safety," the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said recently.

Burundi, a country of 10 million people which exports mostly coffee and depends heavily on foreign aid, experienced an ethnic-based civil war from 1993 to 2003 which killed at least 250,000 people.

The current violence has led to a mass exodus of more than 90,000 refugees fleeing the country since the protests began, many of whom fled violence before.

Presidential elections are slated for June 26, but regional leaders on Sunday called for the poll to be postponed to create an environment more conducive to the polls.

Niyenguko, the head of the journalists' union, said he went into hiding after he was told that members of the ruling party's youth wing were planning to kill him.

After he gave an interview on TV about the coup saying it was the consequence of Nzurunziza's candidacy, he received dozens of messages telling him his days were numbered.

He then moved his family to somewhere he hoped they would be safe and chose another location for his own hiding place.

"It's a shame and irresponsible to see security forces and intelligence service attacking media daily, as if there were no laws," he said. "I feel like a father who is unable to protect his own children."

Two Burundi electoral body members flee amid protests

Source: Xinhua

The vice-chairperson of Burundi's National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), Spes-Caritas Ndironkeye, and Illuminata Ndabahagamyé in charge of administration and finance at the CENI fled Burundi Friday night, the CENI spokesman confirmed Saturday.

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31 May 2015 - “We heard the news last (Friday) night like other citizens, but until now, we don’t have any evidence at the office showing that the two commissioners have left the country (Burundi),” said Prosper Ntahorwamiye, Spokesman of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI).

According to him, none of them submitted a “letter of resignation” before departing.

“Personally, I haven’t yet contacted them in order to verify the information, but I got the information,” said Ntahorwamiye.

Earlier this month, the vice-chairman of the Burundian Constitutional Court Sylvere Nimpagaritse fled Burundi to Rwanda fearing.

The two commissioners are reported to have fled the country amid ongoing protests against the third term bid of Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza.

Meanwhile, regional leaders from the East African Community (EAC) including Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are Sunday to hold a summit in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania to discuss Burundi’s unrest.

Burundi has been in turmoil since April 25 when Nkurunziza’s party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), announced that he will run for a third term in the June elections, despite warnings at home and abroad.

Clashes between protesters and police, mainly in Bujumbura, have left more than 30 dead, according to Burundi’s civil society groups.

Nkurunziza has been in power since 2005.

Opponents say his decision violates the constitution and the 2000 Arusha Agreement that limits the president to two terms in office.

His supporters argue that his first term does not count as he was appointed by parliament, not elected by people.

Burundi is to hold the legislative and communal elections on June 5 and the presidential election on June 26.

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Burundi: déception chez les manifestants après Dar es Salaam

Source: RFI

Après le sommet de Dar es Salaam qui s'est tenu dimanche 31 mai en Tanzanie, les réactions des Burundais dans les rues des quartiers contestataires de Bujumbura sont amères. La question cruciale du troisième mandat du président Pierre Nkurunziza n'a pas été tranchée, ni même abordée par les chefs d'Etat de l'Afrique de l'Est. Les habitants se disent déçus et prêts à poursuivre les manifestations.

1er juin 2015 - Dans les quartiers contestataires de Bujumbura, comme Cibitoké et Nyakabyga, c'est la déception. Mais c'est aussi la colère, après les recommandations a minima du sommet des Etats d'Afrique de l'Est. Les habitants espéraient un appel à abandonner le troisième mandat du président Nkurunziza. Le simple report des élections d'un mois et demi ne change rien à leur yeux.

« C'est une déception totale, parce qu'on a rien dit à propos de ce troisième mandat. Les présidents de la région n'ont pas de force pour convaincre Nkurunziza pour qu'il retire ce troisième mandat. Il faut que la communauté internationale nous aide pour qu'on puisse sortir de cette crise », comment un citoyen, interviewé par RFI.

«Déception totale », c'est l'expression qui revient aussi dans la bouche de cet autre habitant de Bujumbura: « on avait pas grand-chose à espérer là-bas. C'est la déception totale, totale. Trahison complète. Maintenant c'est rien. On va continuer à manifester, on va continuer à taper fort par nos moyens faibles. Mais la vérité finira par gagner. »

Une déception renforcée par l'absence du président burundais au sommet de Dar es Salaam. « C'est honteux, notre président devait être présent, parce que nous sommes dans le désespoir », estime une habitante.

« On est prêts à mourir »

Résultat, dans le quartier de Nyakabyga, tous promettent de redescendre dans la rue. « Nous manifestons pacifiquement et nous sommes prêts à mourir pour réviser le troisième mandat du président de la République. Il y a maintenant des violences. La police tire à balles réelles sur les manifestants pacifiques qui lèvent les mains. La communauté internationale doit intervenir pour arrêter ces tueries, ces comportements indignes de la police burundaise », s'indigne cet homme.

Un autre insiste: « Malgré les tirs on ne peut pas se retirer vraiment. Là, on est prêts à mourir pour qu'il puisse dégager et respecter l'accord d'Arusha, la Constitution. On va manifester jusqu'à la fin. »

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Même son de cloche dans le sud de Bujumbura, dans le quartier de Musaga, l'un des épacentres de la contestation. « Je ne m'attendais pas à ça. J'attendais purement et simplement le départ de Nkurunziza et le report des élections. Le Burundi est au bout de la guerre, c'est une guerre qui a déjà commencé et nous avons déjà perdu beaucoup de gens dans ces manifestations. Et d'autres gens vont mourir demain ou après demain. Ça veut dire que nous allons avoir encore d'autres morts, c'est vraiment déplorable », s'insurge un habitant.

Chez les leaders de la contestation, la position est identique. Le retrait de la candidature du président à un troisième mandat est un préalable à toute discussion et à l'arrêt des manifestations.

UGANDA

Uganda Opposition Wants Electoral Reforms, Vote Postponed

Source: Voice of America

31 May 2015 - A prominent opposition leader says Ugandans will no longer tolerate rigged elections, after what he says have been years of voter irregularities and polls that are skewed in favor of President Yoweri Museveni and his ruling National Resistance Movement.

Kizza Besigye says there is a need for electoral reforms to ensure an equal playing field for opponents of the NRM before elections are held. Uganda is scheduled to hold a general election next year.

But opposition and civil society groups have called for a postponement of the poll until the electoral reforms are implemented to ensure transparent, free, fair and credible future elections.

Their demands came ahead of a parliamentary group's call for the government to consider rescheduling the upcoming election until constitutional amendments are done to pave way for the electoral reforms.

Besigye says a majority of Ugandans support the call for electoral reforms.

“All the proposals that have been tabled before the parliamentary committee have been all pointing at the need for fundamental electoral reforms. And this is indeed against the

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background of having a country where no single leader has ever handed over power to another,” said Besigye.

He expressed concern that the country could be plunged into political crisis if the government refuses to heed the call of the people to implement electoral reform measures before next year’s vote.

The government proposed measures it says will help clean up the electoral process. Officials say the proposals presented to parliament will instill confidence in future elections.

But Besigye disagreed, saying the administration is only interested in making cosmetic changes in the electoral process. He says there is need for an independent electoral commission that cannot be influenced by the administration.

“The electoral commission is chosen by the president, who is a candidate, who has power to dismiss it. So once you don’t have an electoral commission that is independent you cannot have a process that is credible for all parties,” said Besigye.

“There are many fundamental problems that need to be dealt with, yet there is no time to deal with those problems before the next election ... next year. Therefore anybody recommending that there needs to be a creation of time to undertake these fundamental reforms is saying something that is obviously needed,” he added.

Besigye says the administration often uses state security institutions including the police and the military to influence elections.

But supporters of the NRM say the party has always won legitimate elections deemed free and fair by international poll observers. They dismissed call for a postponement of the election contending that it undermines the constitution.

Le ministre ougandais de la Défense s'entretient avec un officiel ounisien sur la contrebande de l'or en RDC

Source: Xinhua

31 Mai 2015 - Le ministre ougandais de la Défense a eu des discussions avec le Comité des sanctions des Nations unies sur la contrebande de l'or dans son pays voisin, la République démocratique du Congo (RDC).

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Selon une déclaration publiée samedi, Crispus Kiyonga, ministre de la Défense s'est entretenu jeudi avec Mme Dina Kavar, représentant permanent de la Jordanie auprès de l'ONU et chef du Comité des sanctions de l'ONU.

Kiyonga a fait savoir à Kavar que l'Ouganda a joué un rôle important dans la lutte contre la contrebande de l'or dans la partie riche en minéraux de l'Est de la RDC.

"Le gouvernement ougandais a fait tout son possible pour coopérer dans la lutte contre la contrebande de l'or en RDC", a déclaré Kiyonga. Il a indiqué que le manque de protection adéquate des ressources naturelles dans l'est de la RDC encourage les forces négatives à exploiter les ressources naturelles illégalement et financer leurs activités terroristes et illégales.

Kiyonga a appelé l'ONU et la communauté internationale à assister la RDC et la région pour endiguer les forces négatives dans cette région.

Les officiels ont également discuté de l'arrestation de Jamil Mukulu, un chef rebelle de l'Alliance des forces démocratiques (ADF), un groupe rebelle ougandais dans l'est de la RDC.

Kiyonga a déclaré que Mukulu serait bientôt extradé vers l' Ouganda à partir de la Tanzanie où il a été arrêté.

SOUTH SUDAN

United Nations Says South Sudan Wants to Expel Humanitarian Coordinator

Source: Reuters

United Nations, 2 June 2015 - The United Nations on Monday said South Sudan has decided to expel the world body's top humanitarian official based in the conflict-torn nation and called on the government to immediately reverse its decision.

A UN statement said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the move by the Juba government to expel Toby Lanzer of Britain, deputy head of the UN Mission in South Sudan as well as its humanitarian coordinator.

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"The Secretary-General calls on the government of South Sudan to reverse its decision immediately," the UN press office said. "He further urges the government to cooperate fully with all United Nations entities present in South Sudan."

The statement said Lanzer has been "instrumental in addressing the increasing humanitarian needs of conflict-affected communities in the country, and ensuring that life-saving humanitarian assistance reaches the most vulnerable."

Lanzer's term was due to end shortly. The United Nations announced on Friday that his replacement will be Eugene Owusu of Ghana.

South Sudan's UN mission did not respond immediately to a request for an explanation about Lanzer's expulsion. Lanzer is quite active on Twitter, where he often posts messages about the dire situation in the country to his nearly 12,000 followers.

Over 40 per cent of South Sudan's 11 million people need food aid, according to figures from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

Forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and rebels allied with former Vice President Riek Machar have been fighting for nearly 18 months in the world's newest state, which seceded from Sudan in 2011. Several ceasefires have been agreed but broken.

The UN Security Council has threatened to blacklist anyone undermining security or interfering with the peace process in South Sudan, but it has not yet imposed worldwide travel bans and asset freezes on any officials in the country.

Top diplomats from Ethiopia and Kenya meet S Sudan's President Kiir

Source: Radio Tamazuj

Juba, 31 May 2015 - Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom and Kenyan Foreign Minister Amina Mohamed visited South Sudan's capital Juba recently and met President Salva Kiir in a bid to halt fighting in the young country.

According to a diplomatic source, the meeting reportedly focused on the mediation by IGAD, a regional bloc which had led peace talks for more than a year until negotiations fell apart in March of this year, Anadolu Agency reported. According to the diplomatic source, the two neighbouring countries are exerting maximum efforts to prevent the total collapse of the peace negotiations between the government and the opposition group.

IGAD failed to call for a round of talks scheduled to take place in last April, according to the source.

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The same source said the meeting which brought together two Foreign Affairs Ministers of Kenya, Ethiopia and President Kiir in the presence of South Sudan Foreign Minister Barnaba Marial Benjamin focused on the prospect of discussing the ongoing conflict in South Sudan at an extraordinary summit in Johannesburg, South Africa on the sidelines of the African Summit which will be held on 14 June.

Kenya urges greater G10 role

Meanwhile, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta recently met with members of the SPLM-G10, a group of former political prisoners who were leading members of the SPLM party and are participating as a third group in the negotiations between President Salva Kiir's SPLM and former vice president Riek Machar's SPLM-In Opposition.

Kenyatta said that the G10 should play an increased role in the peace talks and that the IGAD process should merge with a parallel set of talks between the three SPLM factions which has been taking place in Arusha, Tanzania..

Le Soudan du Sud expulse le coordinateur de l'aide humanitaire de l'ONU

Nations unies, 31 Mai 2015 - Les autorités sud-soudanaises ont décidé d'expulser Toby Lanzer, le coordinateur de l'aide humanitaire dans le pays, a indiqué un porte-parole des Nations unies lundi.

M. Lanzer a joué un rôle clé dans la réponse aux besoins humanitaires grandissants des communautés affectées par le conflit dans le pays et pour s'assurer que l'aide humanitaire qui permet se sauver des vies parvienne jusqu'aux plus démunis, a ajouté le porte-parole dans un communiqué.

Le secrétaire général Ban Ki-moon a condamné cette action et appelé Juba à revenir immédiatement sur sa décision, a-t-il ajouté.

Aucune raison n'a été fournie pour motiver cette expulsion, mais le porte-parole a expliqué que le mandat de M. Lanzer arrivait à son terme et que son remplaçant, Ghanain Eugene Owusu, avait d'ores et déjà été désigné.

Toby Lanzer, un Britannique qui avait été nommé coordinateur au Soudan du Sud en 2012, devrait prendre prochainement le poste de coordinateur régional humanitaire de l'ONU pour le Sahel.

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La crise humanitaire dans ce pays est l'une des plus grave que doit gérer l'ONU, avec près de 2,5 millions de personnes qui manquent de nourriture.

Le pays est plongé dans un conflit qui a éclaté en décembre 2013 au sein de l'armée sud-soudanaise, minée par des antagonismes politico-ethniques alimentés par la rivalité entre MM. Kiir et Machar à la tête du régime sud-soudanais.

Plus de 120.000 sud-soudanais se trouvent dans des camps des Nations unies.

Soudan du Sud: une nouvelle initiative de paix des pays de l'Afrique de l'Est

Source: VOA avec l'AFP

Les pays d'Afrique de l'Est ont lancé lundi une nouvelle initiative pour tenter de ramener la paix au Soudan du Sud, déchiré par 17 mois de guerre civile.

1er juin 2015 - Ce plan vise à réconcilier le président Salva Kiir et son ancien vice-président Riek Machar, dont la rupture a provoqué le conflit. Toutes les tentatives diplomatiques ont échoué jusqu'à présent et plusieurs cessez-le-feu ont été brisés à peine conclus.

En vertu de ce plan, un groupe d'anciens dirigeants du parti au pouvoir, le SPLM, est rentré à Juba lundi. Ils avaient été arrêtés au début de la guerre civile par les forces du président Kiir, puis expulsés au Kenya peu après.

Les diplomates espèrent que ces personnalités influentes pourront mettre fin à la brouille entre MM. Kiir et Machar, devenu chef de la rébellion.

"Aujourd'hui est un grand jour pour le Soudan du Sud", a commenté le vice-président sud-africain Cyril Ramaphosa à l'aéroport de Juba, où il a accompagné les cinq leaders sud-soudanais. "C'est une nouvelle étape dans le processus de paix".

La délégation diplomatique comprenait également les ministres des Affaires étrangères du Kenya et d'Ethiopie, et le chef du parti au pouvoir en Tanzanie, Abderhamn Kinane - les pays qui ont déjà tenté de lancer, sans succès, des initiatives de paix.

Les pourparlers, sous l'égide de l'organisation intergouvernementale est-africaine Igad, ont abouti à plusieurs accords de cessez-le-feu, quasi immédiatement violés dans la foulée. Des discussions parallèles à Arusha, en Tanzanie, pour réunifier le SPLM, ont encore rendu la situation plus confuse.

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Pendant ce temps, les forces de MM. Kiir et Machar ont continué de chercher à remporter une hypothétique victoire sur les champs de bataille.

La guerre civile dans la plus jeune nation de la planète avait éclaté en décembre 2013, lorsque Salva Kiir avait accusé l'ancien vice-président Riek Machar de fomenter un coup d'Etat.

Depuis, les massacres se sont multipliés et ont fait des dizaines de milliers de morts, notamment pour des motifs ethniques - entre les Dinka de M. Kiir et les Nuer de M. Machar -, avec une concentration des combats dans le Nord, pour le contrôle des précieux puits de pétrole du Soudan du Sud.

TANZANIA

Tanzania vows to punish DR Congo rebels for killing its soldiers

Source: Xinhua

31 May 2015 - Tanzania government said on Friday that it will hunt down and punish Alliance Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels who killed two of its soldiers who were in a UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In early May, two Tanzanian soldiers serving as UN peacekeepers in the DR Congo were killed when their convoy was attacked by suspected ADF rebels in North Kivu, while 13 other peacekeepers were injured and four were reported missing.

Bernard Membe, the East African country's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, told the National Assembly in Dodoma that the action will not go unpunished.

"I want to assure Tanzanians that ADF rebels will pay a costly price for the loss of our heroes..They will pay for their actions and I suppose they have already paid," said Membe.

On Tanzania's relations with its neighboring countries, Membe said the country has maintained cordial relationship will all surrounding countries.

He said the border dispute with Malawi was still being handled by a team of former heads of state for Southern African Development Community (SADC) which is under the chairmanship of former President of Mozambique Joachim Chisano.

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The minister said Tanzanian Presidents Jakaya Kikwete and his Malawian counterpart agreed in January that the issue will be resolved amicably.

Un ex-PM Tanzanien dévoile son ambition présidentielle

Source: Agence de Presse Africaine (APA)

1er juin 2015 - L'ancien premier ministre de la Tanzanie, Edward Lowassa, a fait part de son ambition de briguer la présidence sous la bannière du parti au pouvoir le Chama Cha Mapinduzi aux affaires depuis 54 ans.

S'exprimant lors d'un meeting samedi devant ses partisans à Arusha, dans le nord du pays Lowassa a déclaré que si les Tanzaniens lui accordaient leur confiance en faisant de lui leur prochain président il mettrait fin à la pauvreté.

Lowassa un allié de l'actuel président Kikwete qu'il avait soutenu à la présidentielle de 2005 a également indiqué sa volonté de réformer le système éducatif du pays afin de le rendre plus performant et de combattre la corruption qui plombe l'économie nationale.

Agé de 61 ans, il est largement pressenti pour remplacer Jakaya Kikwete dont le mandat se termine cette année.

Les Tanzaniens vont élire leur prochain président et les membres du Parlement le 25 octobre prochain.

Le parti de Lowassa a obtenu son récipiscé depuis 1961 au lendemain de l'accession du pays l'indépendance.