

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

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



MEDIA MONITORING

23 July 2015

DRC

'Repressive climate' in DR Congo ahead of polls: HRW

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

Kinshasa, 23 July 2015 - Human Rights Watch on Wednesday warned of a "repressive climate" in restive Democratic Republic of Congo ahead of an election cycle due to start later this year.

Local and provincial elections are scheduled for October, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2016, in which the opposition fears President Joseph Kabila, in power since 2001, will try to extend his rule.

Kabila is barred by the constitution from seeking a third five-year term at the end of his mandate late next year, but has so far rejected opposition demands to announce he will step down when his term ends.

HRW chief Kenneth Roth said his organisation was deeply concerned about "continuing serious human rights violations" in the country, parts of which have been wracked by conflict for years.

"While we have seen some progress in reining in impunity and improving security in eastern Congo, we are deeply concerned about the repressive climate in advance of elections," he told reporters in Kinshasa.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

Roth cited a crackdown on freedom of expression and a clampdown on activists, political leaders and others who have spoken out against attempts to allow Kabila to stay in power.

"Across the country, authorities have sought to silence dissent through threats, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and killings," he said.

Roth highlighted "the security forces' use of excessive force against demonstrations in Kinshasa and other cities in January" in which he said Republican Guard soldiers shot dead at least 38 people in Kinshasa and another five in Goma in the east.

Sprawling DR Congo has been the scene of some of Africa's bloodiest wars.

Its mineral-rich North Kivu region has been torn apart by conflict for over two decades and the UN's Congo mission has stationed most if its 20,000 peacekeepers there.

BURUNDI

Burundi election results to be announced Friday

NEWS STORY

Source: AP

Bujumbura, 22 July 2015 - Results from Burundi's presidential election will be announced Friday, with incumbent Pierre Nkurunziza expected to win a third term that his opponents allege is unconstitutional.

About 72 percent to 80 percent of the country's 3.8 million voters cast ballots Tuesday, said electoral commission head Pierre-Claver Ndayicariye.

Violence on Monday night, as well as an opposition boycott, hindered turnout in the capital. Three people, including two police officers, were killed by gunfire in opposition strongholds.

Agathon Rwaswa, the main opposition figure, said his attempts to campaign had been frustrated by the government, and the U.S. and Britain said the election was not credible due to the intimidation of Nkurunziza's opponents.

The Coalition of Independence of Hope, which supports Rwaswa, will reject the outcome, said Charles Nditije, who is part of the coalition.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

More than 100 people have died in protests since April when the ruling party announced Nkurunziza would seek a third term. The demonstrations triggered an attempted coup in May that was quickly put down by forces loyal to Nkurunziza. Earlier this month, the government said it crushed a rebellion in northern Burundi, killing 31 insurgents and arresting 171 others.

Many fear that Nkurunziza's efforts to stay in power could bring renewed conflict in Burundi, which gained independence from Belgium in 1962. Since then, it has had four coups and a civil war that killed 250,000 people.

"The attitude of the government is pushing people to create a rebellion," said Francis Nyamoya, secretary general of opposition party Movement For Solidarity and Democracy.

"If it is necessary, force will be used to push out Nkurunziza," he said, adding that members of his party are being killed.

Burundi's president ready to form unity government after poll: adviser

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters

By Edmund Blair, editing by Drazen Jorgic and Catherine Evans

Bujumbura, 22 July 2015 - Burundi's president would not oppose forming a national unity government after an election boycotted by the opposition but if he wins a third term would not cut it short, a presidential official said on Wednesday.

"A government of national unity is not a problem for Pierre Nkurunziza, we are ready to do so," Willy Nyamitwe, adviser to President Pierre Nkurunziza, told Reuters after a leading opposition figure called for such a step. But he rejected the idea of cutting short any new five-year mandate as "impossible."

Burundi Opposition Leader Calls for Unity Government to Avert Conflict

NEWS STORY

Source: Reuters

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

22 July 2015 - Burundi's leading opposition politician called on President Pierre Nkurunziza to hold talks with rivals and form a national unity government after a disputed election, saying it could help avert a new conflict in the poor African nation.

Agathon Rwasa, a former rebel leader like Nkurunziza in Burundi's civil war, told Reuters action was needed to prevent generals behind a foiled coup in May taking up arms in a crisis triggered by Nkurunziza's bid for a third term in office.

The opposition has accused Nkurunziza of violating the constitution by seeking another term and boycotted Tuesday's vote, all but handing him victory. The president cited a court ruling saying he could run again.

"Some have already been waving the threat of armed struggle," Rwasa, the head of the opposition Amizero y'Abarundi coalition told Reuters in a villa overlooking the capital.

One of the generals behind the May coup attempt told Reuters this month that force was the only option after dialogue and international pressure had failed to stop Nkurunziza running.

Nkurunziza's third-term bid has plunged the nation into its worst crisis since the end of a civil war in 2005, stoking tensions in a region with a history of ethnic conflict.

"For the sake of Burundi, the idea of a government of national unity can be accepted," Rwasa said.

His demands from the government included preparing for early elections, which meant that any new term for Nkurunziza be limited to six months or a year. He also said those given posts in a unity cabinet must have real influence on policy, to tackle issues such as corruption and fixing strained foreign relations.

President Nkurunziza's adviser said the leader would not oppose a unity government. "We are ready to do so," Willy Nyamitwe told Reuters. But he rejected as "impossible" the idea of cutting short any new mandate.

FORMIDABLE RIVAL

Rwasa, a candidate who like others pulled out of the race, is widely seen as Nkurunziza's most formidable rival, with support in the capital and in the countryside, where the president has his powerbase.

Rwasa acknowledged it was "hard to believe" the government would accept a unity government along the lines he outlined, but said international pressure might help push for new elections.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

The government has in the past accused the opposition of trying to secure power through talks because they feared defeat at the ballot box. Opponents say the vote was unfair, citing a media clampdown and violence they blamed on the government.

Rwasa said his message to the failed coup plotters now threatening force was: "War can only destroy, while dialogue can help us overcome all these troubles of ours."

The African Union said on Wednesday it had started sending military observers, to check on an agreement to disarm militias, and human rights experts to Burundi.

The tension particularly worries neighbouring Rwanda, which has the same ethnic mix and suffered a genocide in 1994 that killed 800,000 people.

Fear and Loathing in Burundi: As Votes Are Counted an Embattled President Clings On To Power

NEWS STORY

Source: International Business Times

By Erin Banco

22 July 2015 - Wearing a zip-up jacket and sneakers, Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza was greeted like a god as he biked up to the polling station in his northern hometown of Buye. Shouts of "Our savior!" were heard as townsfolk ran beside him, clapping their hands and calling out words of encouragement as he went to cast his ballot in Tuesday's presidential election.

But Nkurunziza, viewed in some parts of rural Burundi as a latter-day Jesus Christ, is getting an international reputation as an iron-fisted authoritarian, clinging on to power and violently cracking down on pro-democracy protesters.

International humanitarian organizations have called on the U.N. Security Council to send a mission to Burundi to see that mass atrocities are not carried out in the fallout from the election. Dozens of people have already died in protests in the world's third-poorest country, which emerged from civil war only a decade ago.

The embattled president is vying for a third term, even though many countries, including the U.S., have said they will not recognize the election results. By running again, Nkurunziza is flouting a Burundian law that asserts presidents are allowed to sit for only two terms.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

Last month, Nkurunziza's party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy, won a sweeping victory in parliamentary elections -- a win that's also been refuted.

Opposition politicians accused the president of violating the constitution and boycotted the vote. Some of the presidential candidates pulled out of the race, claiming the election was not credible. In the lead-up to the election, the capital's residents took to the streets -- two people were killed on voting day, but relative quiet has since ensued.

A Burundian opposition activist, who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, said the capital was functioning normally Wednesday, but some banks and shops were still closed -- most companies in Burundi have been shut down for months because of the country's dwindling economy.

'Must Not Simply Stand By'

But human rights advocates say the violence could take a turn following the vote-counting. "The international community must not simply stand by and wait for mass atrocities to unfold, thereby risking a major conflict of regional proportions before it finally decides to act," a statement issued by the office of the U.N. high commissioner for human rights said.

Burundi election officials are still counting votes, but analysts on the ground told International Business Times that Nkurunziza will win. Electoral Commission President Pierre-Claver Ndayicariye said Wednesday that around 74 percent of the country's 3.8 million registered voters cast their ballot, but outside observers say that number seems too high. Local news outlets said Tuesday that voter turnout was low and estimated there were more election officials than voters at any given station.

Protests continued to take place in the capital during the election. The demonstrators threw Molotov cocktails at police officers, demanding the election results be thrown out. But in the north, it seemed, many residents voted for Nkurunziza, claiming he saved them during the country's civil war and he would continue to protect them in the future.

"There has been quite a strong media campaign by the ruling party in the rural areas," Yves Niyiragira, a Burundian analyst living in Kenya, said, adding that Nkurunziza and his party have planted stories in local papers to gain support. "In the rural area there are people who really support him because that's what they've been told."

Platform of Fear

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

"But also if you look at the level of education of [rural] people in Burundi, the majority of them can't read or write," Niyiragira said. "It is hard for them to read the constitution and make a decision for themselves. That is the problem."

Beyond media influence, there are some people in Burundi who believe in Nkurunziza and his ability to rule. Nkurunziza, a former Hutu rebel leader, was the first president to be democratically elected since the start of Burundi's civil war in 1994.

"There are some of Burundi people who consider Nkurunziza as a liberator or as the one who has brought peace to Burundi," Spageon Ngabo, a Burundian activist, said. He was chosen as president in 2005 and reelected 10 years later -- since then opposition parties have accused him of behaving increasingly like a dictator. "Nkurunziza uses the media to keep true information away and to nourish people with false information," Ngabo said.

Other pro-democracy protesters believe that Nkurunziza operates on a platform of fear. In his first public appearance since the attempted coup against his government in May this year, he announced, "It's either me or [terror group] al-Shabab." One activist, who fled Burundi after becoming the target of security forces, said that even though 1 in 7 citizens cannot read, they still have means of understanding the truth.

On condition of anonymity he told IBTimes, "Many of them don't even really believe in the president. They're just scared. They've been told that if they don't support him or run alongside him to the polling station they will be killed."

UGANDA

Ugandan rebel chief charged with crimes against humanity

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

Kampala, 22 July 2015 - A Ugandan rebel leader accused of killing hundreds of civilians was charged in court Wednesday with crimes against humanity and mass murder, a police spokesman said.

Jamil Mukulu, leader of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), was arrested in neighbouring Tanzania in April, before being extradited to Uganda earlier this month.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

The ADF is a Ugandan Islamist militia based in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, with alleged links to Al-Qaeda.

"He faces charges of mass murder and crimes against humanity," police spokesman Fred Enanga told AFP, adding he also faced treason charges. "He was charged with two of his accomplices and the court is starting to hear the case."

Mukulu appeared in court under heavy security in the town of Jinja, some 85 kilometres (50 miles) east of the capital Kampala, along with two other men accused of being ADF members.

Journalists were barred from the court during the hearing, but were allowed to photograph the suspects.

The ADF rebels launched an insurgency in Uganda against President Yoweri Museveni in the mid-1990s and later established bases on the Congolese side of the border.

The ADF are accused of looting, the forced enlistment of child soldiers and illegal trade in tropical timber.

Starting the mid-2000s the rebels began striking at the army and civilians, after authorities started to try to run them out of DR Congo.

The rebels are accused of murdering -- primarily with machetes and farming tools -- hundreds of people in a string of massacres.

The United States listed the ADF as a terrorist organisation in 2001, and Uganda's government accuses it of links to Somalia's Shebab and to Al-Qaeda.

While no clear ties between the ADF and jihadist movements have been uncovered, the deputy UN peacekeeping chief in DR Congo, General Jean Baillaud, said earlier this month they had a "terrorist aspect" that could draw them closer to African jihadist movements.

A UN report in May said the ADF had committed "systematic and extremely brutal" attacks in the last three months of 2014 that could constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

UN official resigns amid scandal over handling of sex abuse report

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

A top UN official who was allegedly informed of a sex abuse scandal before it became public is resigning, a spokeswoman for the United Nations said on Wednesday.

22 July 2015 - Flavia Pansieri, the number two at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva is stepping down for health reasons, UN spokeswoman Vannina Maestracci said.

Her resignation comes as the global body faces criticism over how it reacted to the allegations of child sex abuse in the Central African Republic.

“I can confirm that Flavia Pansieri has resigned and she cited health reasons for her resignation,” Maestracci said.

Pansieri, a long time UN worker named to her position three years ago, was informed of allegations of child sex abuse carried out by French soldiers in CAR in the summer of 2014.

A Swedish diplomat working for the commissioner who authored the report was punished for not respecting the body’s protocols.

The UN’s handling of the incident, brought to light by The Guardian newspaper, was widely criticized by aid groups.

The United States and several aid agencies called for the United Nations to carry out a thorough investigation into the sex scandal, and the global body set up an independent commission last month to conduct an internal review.

France is also conducting an investigation.

Maestracci said she could not confirm if Pansieri testified to the UN commission, which is expected to report its findings in September.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

Over a dozen French soldiers sent to the Central African Republic to help restore order in 2013 after a coup are accused of sexual abuse of children as young as eight years old who were begging for food.

The soldiers were not under the control of the United Nations.

The UN report also accused soldiers from Chad and Equatorial Guinea, an aid group that saw the report said.

US envoy to the United Nations Samantha Power recently said the claims contained in the UN report on the incident were “very credible and very disturbing.”

UN official in Central Africa urgently appeals for halt in attacks on aid workers

NEWS STORY

Source: India Blooms

The top United Nations humanitarian official in the Central African Republic (CAR) condemned on Wednesday the surge in violence against aid workers in the country and appealed to all belligerents to allow them to do their jobs safely, particularly in the wake of a recent attack against a UN food convoy on a major supply route killed its driver.

23 July 2015 - “I condemn the violence and call on all belligerents to respect and protect humanitarian workers who provide assistance to thousands of people affected by conflict in the country,” said Humanitarian Coordinator Marc Vandenberghe in a statement issued in Bangui, the capital of the CAR.

He strongly condemned the attack against a World Food Programme (WFP) food convoy on 18 July near Baboua, in the north-western part region.

The convoy of 20 vehicles escorted by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) peacekeepers, received gun shots that fatally wounded the driver and his vehicle immediately reversed causing injuries to other passengers.

“Humanitarian access continues to be hampered by various constraints in the country, particularly violence against civilians and humanitarian workers,” the humanitarian coordinator said.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

He said, “The upsurge in armed attacks on the Main Supply Route 1 from the west of the country threatens the continuity of humanitarian activities in the country.”

He underscored the urgent appeal of the humanitarian community in the country to all parties to the conflict to refrain from attacking humanitarian workers, “and they allow them to do their jobs and save lives safely in the whole country.”

More than two years of civil war and sectarian violence have displaced thousands of people in CAR amid ongoing clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka alliance and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian.

The United Nations estimates that some 450,000 people remain displaced inside the country while thousands of others have sought asylum across the borders.

KENYA

GES 2015, a turning point for Kenya

NEWS STORY

Source: Standard Digital (Kenya)

23 July 2015 - As US President Barack Obama makes his historic visit to Kenya for the Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES), Kenyans, and indeed the world, will be watching keenly. This is because this particular GES is fundamentally different from the ones before it.

The thing that prominently stands out about this year's GES 2015 is the choice of Kenya as the destination for the event. It adds a refreshing twist to the event's five-year history. None of the past five GES events have been held in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) before. Past events have instead taken entrepreneurs to the US, Turkey, UAE, Malaysia and Morocco, but not SSA. The choice of Kenya for this year's summit therefore underscores the fact that Africa, and Kenya in particular, has become a centre for innovation and entrepreneurship. Being a centre for innovation and entrepreneurship, however, is one thing. Being able to leverage on this characterisation to rope in US investments is the most crucial but also the hardest part. Now, more than ever, the private and public sector need to pull together to craft collaborative long-term strategies to attract and retain investment, particularly from cash-laden US investors. An area of immediate concern is security. The private sector in Kenya has been appealing to the Government to overhaul security for an extended period. The GES 2015 provides the perfect

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

platform for the private and public sectors to engage the US President in one unified voice and appeal for expanded assistance in tackling insecurity, particularly the appalling vice of terrorism. Being a key global player in the fight against terror, the US can generously support Kenya in its fight against Somalia-based terror group, Al Shabaab. This will not only help safeguard the sound principles of freedom and tolerance that the US and Kenya hold so dear, but it will also serve in the interest of both American and Kenyan businesses operating in the country. Security and investments go hand in hand; you cannot divorce one from the other any more than you can night from day or darkness from light. In addition to pressing for stronger security support from the US, Kenyan businesses, particularly those in the hospitality and the broader tourism sector, will appeal for the lifting of travel advisories imposed by the US. We believe that travel advisories inspire fear rather than courage. And fear is exactly what terrorists want to spread. Kenya is at the forefront of denying terrorists this victory.

President Uhuru Kenyatta recently joined other shoppers at Westgate after it was reopened following the 2013 terror incident that claimed 67 lives. As President Kenyatta and hundreds of other brave shoppers boldly demonstrated, Kenyans will not cede ground to terrorists by giving them what they want. The business community will therefore be keen to urge the US to embrace a similar spirit and lift the travel advisories.

But our advocacy will go beyond simply urging the US to lift travel advisories. The re-establishment of direct flights between the US and Kenya will be top on the agenda during the GES 2015. We want our people to travel more and trade more. Trade, by its very inherent nature, is about movement. Although it is primarily about movement of goods, it is, to a greater extent, about movement of people. Traders and investors need to move in and out of markets to establish distribution networks, meet partners, policy makers and other stakeholders. The summit also provides an opportunity to press for more investments and reflect on some of the investments that US investors have made in Kenya in the past. The US's focus on developing renewable energy in Kenya is not only applauded, but encouraged even further. This is because there is a need to broaden our energy mix beyond our current heavy reliance on rainfall and fossil fuels. No assessment of US engagement with Africa would be complete without mentioning the African Growth Opportunity Act (Agoa), a piece of legislation in the US that grants 39 sub-Saharan African countries duty-free access for around 6,400 different products (mostly garments) into the US market. Kenya is the biggest beneficiary of Agoa under apparels, with imports from Kenya in 2014 totalling \$379 million, the highest in Africa. The 15-year extension of Agoa comes as a boost for Kenya. We will be keen to express our gratitude to President Obama.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudanese government slammed for human rights abuses

NEWS STORY

Source: Anadolu Agency (<http://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/560619--south-sudanese-government-slammed-for-human-rights-abuses>)

By Magdalene Mukami

According to the Human Rights Watch, the Sudan People's Liberation Army committed sexual violence, killed innocent civilians and destroyed villages in late April

22 July 2015 - The Human Rights Watch has accused the South Sudanese government of grave human rights violations in a new report.

According to the report released Wednesday, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) committed sexual violence, killed innocent civilians and destroyed villages during their military campaign in late April this year in Unity State.

The organization said that it had documented more than 30 killings on Mayendit and Nyal towns after the South Sudanese military incursion in May this year. Moreover, the report said that after the fighting in the area ended, military vehicles ran over innocent fleeing civilians.

"Witnesses described soldiers shooting at civilians as they tried to flee, both during periods of fighting between the SPLA and local armed civilians with some IO forces and after fighting had ended. Other civilians were said to have been crushed by tanks," the report said.

A woman from Rubichier village told the Human Rights Watch that the soldiers were so savage that they ran over their tanks over dead civilians to make sure no one was left alive.

"They were running with the tanks after the people and then after they hit them they would roll back over them to confirm that they were dead. After I saw this I ran and escaped," she said.

Those who survived the powerful metal treads of the tank were either shot by soldiers who were on foot or arrested, tortured then killed.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

The Human Rights Watch has called on government officials, including Chief of Staff Paul Malong to be investigated for their roles in the brutal killings and sexual offences in South Sudan.

Human Rights Watch Africa Director Daniel Bekele said that the attacks on innocent civilians were shocking and savage.

“Government-aligned forces carried out gruesome killings and widespread rapes and burned countless homes as they swept across large parts of Unity State,” Bekele said.

“The devastating offensive in Unity State is the latest in a conflict characterized by shocking disregard for civilian life,” he said.

“Women and girls are bearing the brunt of this brutal offensive as fighters target them for rape, abduction, beatings, and forced labor,” he added.

Bekele accused the government of plotting to forcefully evict civilians from Unity State.

“Brutal attacks on fleeing civilians combined with widespread burning of villages, food, and other items that people need to survive suggests that the government’s aim was to forcibly displace people from their homes,” he added.

S. Sudan troops 'crushed civilians with tanks': rights group

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

By Peter Martell

22 July 2015 - South Sudanese government troops crushed fleeing civilians with tanks, then reversed to check they had killed them, carried out public gang rapes and burned people alive, a rights group said Wednesday.

The report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) has shocking allegations of atrocities committed by government forces in the ongoing 19-month-old war, documenting "deliberate attacks on civilians" that it said constitute war crimes.

"They were running with the tanks after the people, and then after they hit them they would roll back over them, to confirm that they were dead," one woman told HRW.

The attacks were allegedly carried out by government troops and an allied militia from the Bul Nuer tribe.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

Another witness, a 30-year-old woman, said troops in a tank hunted down her nephew.

"I saw him... he was crushed before he reached the river... we were running together, he ran in order to hide," she told HRW.

Another described finding the squashed bodies of her two male relatives.

"Their bodies had been grinded," she said, one of a string of testimonies documented in the HRW report, titled "They Burned it All", based on interviews with 174 victims and witnesses from the northern battleground state of Unity.

- Rebel split risks worsening war -

Civilians fled into swamps to escape, but troops chased them down using amphibious armoured vehicles, raking hiding places with machine guns.

"They were hunting for cows and people," one woman in the Koch area of Unity state said.

Other victims recount government soldiers castrating a man and a 15-year old boy, all part of a deliberate tactic to drive people out of the villages, HRW said.

HRW documented murders "of civilian women and men, including children and the elderly, some by hanging, others by shooting, or being burned alive."

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.

In a likely further worsening of the war, rebel forces have split after Machar sacked a key commander, the powerful warlord Peter Gadet, who was slapped with United Nations sanctions earlier this month.

Rebel spokesman Mabior Garang told AFP it was "an ordinary reshuffle" but declined to give details.

Other victims recount government soldiers castrating a man and a 15-year old boy, all part of a deliberate tactic to drive people out of the villages, HRW said.

HRW documented murders "of civilian women and men, including children and the elderly, some by hanging, others by shooting, or being burned alive."

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.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

In a likely further worsening of the war, rebel forces have split after Machar sacked a key commander, the powerful warlord Peter Gadet, who was slapped with United Nations sanctions earlier this month.

Rebel spokesman Mabior Garang told AFP it was "an ordinary reshuffle" but declined to give details.

The United Nations base in the capital of Unity State, Bentiu, now hosts over 100,000 civilians, more than the ruined town itself, which has swapped hands between government and rebels several times during the war.

Researchers who have worked in South Sudan for years said the "sheer scale" of destruction has been "staggering", with tens of thousands of cattle stolen, the economic lifeline for the people.

For this report, HRW documented 63 rape cases, but said they believed it was only a "fraction" of the total. One woman said rape had become "just a normal thing."

Victim accounts of the attacks are horrific.

"One man put a gun to the back of my head and said 'Watch how we will rape your daughter,'" a victim told HRW.

Another woman said soldiers, "only raped me once because they saw I had recently given birth."

There was no immediate response from South Sudan's government, which has said it is also investigating a recent UN report on alleged atrocities by its troops, including reports that soldiers raped then burned girls alive.

South Sudan rebels split, sacking key warlord

NEWS STORY

Source: AFP

21 July 2015 - South Sudan's rebels have split from a key commander, a spokesman said Wednesday, risking a worsening of a civil war marked by atrocities and failing peace efforts.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

Rebel chief Riek Machar, the country's former vice president, sacked powerful and influential warlord Peter Gadet, who was slapped with United Nations sanctions earlier this month.

Machar has replaced Gadet -- who has operated as a notorious militia chief for decades in the northern battleground state of Unity, swapping sides multiple times -- with another commander also blacklisted by the UN, Major General James Koang Chuol, according to official orders seen by AFP.

Rebel spokesman Mabior Garang told AFP it was "an ordinary reshuffle" but declined to give details.

- Child soldier recruitment -

But a diplomat monitoring stalled talks in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa -- where at least seven ceasefires have been agreed and then rapidly broken -- said it would make striking a lasting deal harder.

"Any further fracturing of opposition forces makes a paper agreement harder to be implemented on the ground," the diplomat said.

Gadet, who was the rebel side's deputy chief of staff for operations, was accused of shooting down a UN helicopter in August 2014 in which three Russian crew members were killed. He has denied the accusations.

He also led the April 2014 attack on the oil town of Bentiu, when hundreds were slaughtered, according to the UN.

Before South Sudan's independence, during the 1983-2005 north-south civil war, Gadet was backed by Khartoum to lead brutal clearances of oil zones in Unity. He later joined South Sudan's army, before switching to the rebel side.

Machar also promoted ex-government general Johnson Olony, accused by aid agencies of forcibly recruiting hundreds of child soldiers, to be commander of the Upper Nile region.

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

Over two dozen armed groups are involved in fighting characterised by shifting alliances, opportunism and historic grievances.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

The war has been characterised by ethnic massacres and rape. Recent attacks have included castration, rape and tying children together before slitting their throats.

A report by Human Rights Watch on Wednesday documented how government troops crushed fleeing civilians with tanks, then reversed to check they had killed them, and carried out public gang rapes and burned people alive.

Some of those attacks were carried out by a government-aligned militia from the Bul Nuer people, the same tribe as Gadet.

The UN Security Council last month imposed sanctions on six commanders -- three from the government forces and three from the rebels.

Machar told AFP earlier this month that the three rebels named -- including Gadet -- were all "innocent."

ZAMBIA

President Lungu expected in Kampala, Uganda this Thursday

NEWS STORY

Source: Lusaka Times (<http://www.lusakatimes.com/2015/07/21/president-lungu-expected-in-kampala-uganda-this-thursday/>)

21 July 2015 - President Edgar Lungu is this Thursday expected in Uganda for a two-day state visit.

President Lungu is during his visit scheduled to hold bilateral talks with his Ugandan counterpart Yoweri Museveni.

According Zambia's High Commissioner to Tanzania and accredited to Uganda Judith Kapijimpanga told journalists in Kampala today that President Lungu's visit is important because it will revive relations between the two countries.

Mrs Kapijimpanga said Zambia and Uganda have enjoyed warm relations which need further strengthening.

"We are calling this visit by our president symbolic because it will revive the relations between Zambia and Uganda which had stalled," she said.

Disclaimer:

This media monitoring is sent to you only for your information. The inclusion of the attached news items is not an endorsement of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in Africa or that of the United Nations Organization. Further use or distribution of this media monitoring must be guided accordingly.

She said Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni last visited Zambia in 2004, while the last Zambian head of state to visit Uganda was president Frederick Chiluba in 1999.

Mrs Kapijimpanga said president Lungu will use his visit as an opportunity to also revive the Joint Permanent Commission between Zambia and Uganda which ceased to exist.

She added that the head of state will also explore other areas of cooperation between the two countries in areas of health, agriculture, education and defence.

“There are intentions to revive the joint permanent commission which has died and we are looking at cooperation in health, education and agriculture.

We also have intentions of our defence collaborating with the military or defence force’s from Uganda,” she said.

Mrs Kapijimpanga said as part of his state visit, president Lungu will visit a drug and chemical factory in Kampala that manufactures Anti-Retroviral drugs.