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



MEDIA MONITORING

27 May 2015

GENERAL STORIES

Afrique centrale: les chefs d'État décident de la réforme de la CEEAC

Source: Agence d'Information d'Afrique central

Par Guy-Gervais Kitina

Au terme du XVIème sommet de la Communauté économique des États d'Afrique centrale (CEEAC), tenu le 25 mai à N'Djamena (Tchad), les dirigeants des pays membres ont convenu d'engager une réforme en profondeur de l'organisation dont la mission incombe au nouveau président en exercice, Ali Bongo Ondimba qui a succédé à Idris Déby Itno.

26 Mai 2015 - Consacré aux questions de paix, de sécurité, de développement et économique principaux défis majeurs pour la sous-région, la 16ème conférence a été l'occasion, pour les chefs d'État de passer en revue le fonctionnement interne de l'organisation qui, selon eux, connaît des difficultés de financement.

Le sommet qui s'est tenu dans un contexte marqué par la menace de la secte Boko Haram et le risque d'instabilité de la sous-région a condamné la tentative de coup d'État qui a failli déstabiliser les institutions burundaises. Pour un meilleur suivi de la situation dans ce pays, les dirigeants ont désigné l'ancien président tchadien, Gukuni Ouedey comme leur représentant spécial au Burundi.

Au sujet de la lutte contre la secte islamiste, les dirigeants de cet espace ont évoqué la nécessité d'aider le Cameroun et le Tchad dont les économies connaissent des difficultés du fait de l'action de Boko Haram. Outre les questions de paix, de sécurité et

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de développement, celles portant sur la libre circulation dans cet espace ainsi que la prolongation « technique » de la transition en Centrafrique a également ont fait l'objet d'une attention des chefs d'État à ce sommet.

Financement du développement

Dans l'optique de pourvoir l'organisation des moyens nécessaires pour son développement, les dirigeants de la Céeac, conscients des défis à relever, ont réitéré leur engagement d'instaurer la taxe communautaire d'intégration imputable sur les exportations des États membres. Cette taxe destinée à financer le développement de la sous-région prévoit un paiement de 13% pour les États tels que : le Congo, le Gabon, le Cameroun, l'Angola, la Guinée Équatoriale contre 10% pour le Tchad.

« À ce jour, nombreux sont les États qui accumulent une forte ardoise, en dehors de la République du Congo », indiquent des sources proches du secrétariat général de la Céeac. D'où la décision d'un audit envisagé pour assainir la gestion de l'organisation.

Le Rwanda réintègre la CEEAC

Huit ans après son retrait momentané de la Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique centrale, en 2007, le Rwanda a signé lundi à N'Djamena, à l'issue des travaux du 16ème sommet, son retour dans la grande famille de la Céeac. « La Céeac nous a manqué parce que le Rwanda est un pays qui est à cheval entre l'Afrique centrale et l'Afrique de l'Est. Nous avons gardé des relations très proches avec des pays membres. Le Rwanda qui s'est stabilisé est prêt à contribuer à la Céeac. C'est avec un grand plaisir que le Rwanda revient au sein de la famille de la Céeac », avait annoncé son ministre des Affaires étrangères, Louise Mushikiwabo, le 27 octobre 2014 lors de la manœuvre militaire « Loango 2014 » à Pointe Noire.

Pour elle, le Rwanda n'avait pas quitté la Céeac, mais avait suspendu sa participation en attendant sa reconstruction après le génocide de 1994.

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D.R. CONGO

Nord-Kivu: vive tension dans le site de transit des FDLR à Kanyabayonga

Source: Radio Okapi

26 Mai 2015 - Une vive tension a été constatée lundi 25 mai dans le camp de transit des rebelles rwandais des Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR) à Kanyabayonga au Nord-Kivu. Selon des sources locales, l'agitation est partie de l'incompréhension entre la délégation du programme de démobilisation DDR3 des FARDC venue de Goma et les ex-combattants rwandais.

La délégation aurait voulu amener avec elle deux ex-officiers FDLR, pour des raisons que notre source n'a pas révélées. Ce qui a fait soulever d'autres combattants qui attendent leur démobilisation.

Ces derniers se seraient attaqués aux quatre membres de la délégation blessant ainsi leur chef à coup de couteau. Il s'agit d'un officier des FARDC.

À en croire la même source, les FARDC ont dû tirer plusieurs coups de feu, blessant grièvement 3 ex-combattants. Une des victimes serait dans un état critique.

Cette situation a créé la panique. Le camp a été vidé. Une cinquantaine de combattants ont trouvé protection à la base de la Mission des Nations unies pour la stabilisation en RDC (Monusco), alors que d'autres se sont volatilisés dans la nature.

La même source a indiqué qu'une dizaine d'enfants-dépendants-ont été récupérés par la population et ramenés à la base.

Pour l'instant, le camp serait contrôlé par les FARDC.

Environ 280 ex-combattants FDLR et leurs dépendants sont présentement dans ce camp de transit depuis fin mai dernier. Ils attendent leur transfert au centre de transit Bahuma à Kisangani.

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Congo soldiers clash with Rwandan rebels in camp

Source: Reuters

Kinshasa, 25 May 2015 - Congolese soldiers clashed with Rwandan Hutu rebels being held in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on Monday, wounding at least six, as an agreement to move the rebels from one transit camp to another fell apart.

Congolese troops were moving rebel officers from a camp in Kanyabayonga in North Kivu province, which is run jointly by the country's United Nation mission and Congo's army, to a larger camp in the northern city of Kisangani. From there they would be returned to Rwanda, or possibly to a third country.

"There was some unrest and the... soldiers shot in the air," said Daniel Ruiz, the head of the mission's North Kivu office. "In principle, there was an agreement. In reality, it turned out differently." Six people were injured, he said.

It was not immediately clear what provoked the clash. A local activist said the rebels had stockpiled arms in the camp, but his claim could not be confirmed.

A similar transfer on Monday from a camp in Walungu in neighbouring South Kivu province to Kisangani went smoothly, Ruiz said. The governor of North Kivu and an army spokesperson both said they did not have enough information to comment.

More than 11 000 rebels from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda have been demobilized and returned to Rwanda since 2002. Their number includes remnants of the Hutu militia that took part in the 1994 Rwandan genocide before fleeing across the border.

But repatriations have slowed to a trickle, as remaining fighters say they fear reprisals from the Rwandan government. UN officials have raised the possibility of sending them to a third country, but none has been found yet.

In February, Congo's army launched a campaign against the estimated 1 400 rebels still active, vowing to eradicate them from Congolese soil.

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DR Congo army ready to work with UN troops in country's southeast

Source: Radio Okapi

24 May 2015 - The FARDC's [DR Congo Armed Forces] second defence zone, which covers Katanga, Orientale and Occidental Kasai provinces [in southeastern DR Congo], has said it is ready to collaborate with Monusco [the United Nations Stabilization Mission in DR Congo] peacekeepers who are soon set to be deployed in Mitwaba [Katanga] for the restoration of peace.

Major-General Jean Claude Kifwa, commander in charge of the above mentioned defence zone said so in reaction to the announcement made on Thursday 21 May by the UN secretary-general's special representative in the DR Congo, Martin Kobler, promising to deploy UN troops in Mitwaba's main town. In an interview with the UN-sponsored Radio Okapi's reporters, he said he had already deployed a battalion of the DR Congo government military' rapid intervention forces in Pueto, main town of the territory with the same name situated about 350 kilometers from Lubumbashi.

Listen to him in an interview with the UN-sponsored Radio Okapi's Lubumbashi-based Collins Juma Musompo.

[Gen Kifwa] We are partners and if Monusco is in the DR Congo, it is because it was invited by our government and on the basis of the UN Security Council's resolutions. We see no inconvenience. We shall complement each other and collaborate like we have always done.

[Reporter] Shall you work together to restore peace in Mitwaba?

[Gen Kifwa] Due to military strategy we cannot expose what we shall do. Wait and when the time comes you will know.

The military has missions which are very specific and defined by the DR Congo legislators. The first mission is to defend the national territory's integrity against any sorts of threats; aggression, rebellions and mutinies. The second mission is to protect people and their property and the third mission is that we are a development army. Behold, it is in the sovereign framework that we execute our missions.

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RWANDA

Rwanda: Opposition backs removal of presidential term limits

Source: APA

26 May 2015 - Rwanda's second largest political party, the Parti Social Démocrate (PSD), has backed the removal of term limits which restrict presidents to only two terms in office. The resolution was declared at the closure of a two-day PSD national congress which was held in Kigali on Monday in which new party leaders were elected.

Dr Vincent Biruta, the PSD president, who doubles as Minister for Natural Resources, told journalists that his party no longer believes in term limits and had decided to remove them from the party's constitution, while also backing their removal from all levels of the country's political leadership.

"In our political party, we do not believe in term limits. We feel that this should be determined by the people" he said.

Dr Biruta said his party had established a committee to scrutinise aspects of the constitution for amendment, including article 101.

He also disclosed that the party was preparing to field its presidential candidate for the polls, even if the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) endorses President Paul Kagame.

Prior to this announcement, a heated debate ensued among party members, with some opposing the removal of term limits, especially for the country's president.

Rwandans who will go to the polls in 2017 are split by the debate on whether the constitution should be amended to allow President Kagame to seek re-election after his two terms expire.

Kagame is the sixth president of Rwanda and commanded the rebel force that ended the 1994 Rwandan genocide which killed over 800, 000 people.

He is held in high regard for steering the country's socio-economic transformation.

In his press conference in March, President Kagame had hinted that he was not go for a third term, although he would be waiting for those who believe in it to convince me.

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BURUNDI

Crise au Burundi: faire prévaloir la voie du dialogue pour un règlement (ONU)

Source: Algérie Presse Service (<http://www.aps.dz/les-breves/breves-monde/14268-crise-au-burundi-faire-pr%C3%A9valoir-la-voie-du-dialogue-pour-un-r%C3%A8glement-onu>)

Bujumbura, 26 Mai 2015 - L'Envoyé spécial du Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies dans la Région des Grands Lacs, Said Djinnit, a assuré lundi que le "dialogue" est la solution qu'il faut pour résoudre la crise politique au Burundi.

La déclaration des responsables religieux du Burundi qui prônent le dialogue a été appuyée par l'Envoyé spécial de l'ONU.

"je partage leur conviction que ce n'est qu'à travers le dialogue qu'on peut trouver des solutions aux problèmes. Mais, ce dialogue a été interrompu par la tentative de coup d'Etat. Nous sommes confiants que c'est par la reprise des pourparlers qu'on pourra aller vers la recherche de solutions aux problèmes qui sont sur la table", a soutenu M. Djinnit.

Le processus du dialogue a été entaché par l'assassinat du président d'un parti politique, l'Union pour la Paix et la Démocratie (UPD), Zed Feruzi, samedi dernier. La société civile a décidé de quitter la table du dialogue juste après cet assassinat.

Face à cette situation, M. Djinnit a exhorté toutes les parties aussi bien du côté pouvoir et du gouvernement que du côté opposition et société civile à faire preuve de retenue en vue de maintenir l'esprit du dialogue.

Il a, dans ce contexte, rassuré le peuple burundais du soutien de la communauté internationale et les partenaires au développement pour surmonter la crise politique dans ce pays de la région des Grands Lacs.

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Civil society sets conditions for resumption of talks with Burundian authorities

Source: Radio France Internationale.

25 May 2015 - [Presenter] After the assassination of Zedi Feruzi in Burundi, the opposition decided to suspend its participation in secret discussions with the government that was conducted under the aegis of the United Nations.

The civil society, on its part, refused to dialogue with the government. Gabriel Rufyiri, one of the key figures of Burundian civil society laid down the conditions to be fulfilled for a resumption of dialogue

[Rufyiri] We first ask that there be credible investigations that will be able to find out the motive, the authors and the executors of the crime because today, we are in total insecurity in Burundi.

Secondly, the government, especially CNDD-FDD party, should not continue to accuse us of everything. We have been accused of being coup plotters and assassins. Burundian civil society is one that is in the process of asking the president to back out of his official candidacy for a third presidential term. We ask that the rights to protest and to access information be respected.

Burundi : vers la délocalisation du Secrétariat exécutif de la CIRGL pour question de sécurité

Source: Agence de presse Xinhua

26 Mai 2015 - Le secrétaire exécutif de la Conférence internationale sur la région des Grands Lacs (CIRGL), Alphonse Ntumba Luaba, a annoncé lundi une éventuelle délocalisation du Secrétariat exécutif de cette institution vers un autre pays pour question de sécurité du personnel et pour le bon fonctionnement de la Conférence.

"Les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement de la CIRGL ont décidé au cours du sommet de Luanda la délocalisation temporaire du Secrétariat exécutif de la Conférence pour permettre la sécurité, la sûreté et le fonctionnement effectif du Secrétariat", a déclaré le Pr Luaba, à l'issue d'un entretien avec l'Ombouudsman burundais Mohamed Rukara, sans révéler le pays où sera provisoirement déménagé le Secrétariat exécutif.

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Il a toutefois fait savoir que les personnes du Secrétariat ne vont pas tous partir, disant que ceux qui sont stressés par l'insécurité au Burundi ont "le devoir de leur permettre de se délocaliser".

Il a demandé au gouvernement et au peuple du Burundi d'aider le Secrétariat exécutif de la CIRGL en renforçant la paix et la sécurité, la raison d'être de la CIRGL étant la consolidation de la paix et de la sécurité, ce qui va, a-t-il dit, "rassurer mon équipe à demeurer sur place".

Depuis fin avril, le Burundi traverse une crise politique en raison de la candidature du président Pierre Nkurunziza à l'élection présidentielle du 26 juin. Ce dernier briguera un troisième mandat tandis que les partis de l'opposition et des organisations de la société civile l'accuse de violer la Constitution et l'accord de paix conclu à Arusha en 2000, qui limitent à deux le nombre de mandats du président de la République.

Les violences ayant émaillé les manifestations contre le troisième mandat du président Nkurunziza ont déjà fait des dizaines de morts.

La CIRGL comprend 12 Etats membres, à savoir l'Angola, le Burundi, la République Centrafricaine, la République du Congo, la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), le Kenya, l'Ouganda, le Rwanda, le Soudan, le Soudan du Sud, la Tanzanie et la Zambie.

Elle a été créée suite aux nombreux conflits politiques qui ont marqué la région des Grands Lacs.

Burundi: Regional Bodies Condemn Killing of Burundian Opposition Figure

Source: The New Times

26 May 2015 - Regional and international bodies have come out to condemn the alleged assassination of one of Burundi's opposition figure, Zedi Feruzi, who headed an opposition political party, UPD-Zigamibanga.

Feruzi and his bodyguard, who were buried yesterday, were shot on Saturday evening under unclear circumstances though fueling further protests in the country.

The organisations include; the UN, East African Community, Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

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In a joint statement released on Monday, the regional and international bodies condemned the assassination and the preceding grenade attack which claimed eight lives and injured an estimated 40 people.

Both incidents took place in the capital, Bujumbura.

They jointly pleaded with the Burundian government to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes against civilians and political leaders.

The organisations further urged the government to guarantee the security of all citizens, respect their human rights and exercise restraint at all times especially while handling demonstrations.

"These events should serve as a wakeup call to the political leaders in Burundi to act diligently and engage resolutely in searching for peaceful resolution of their differences through dialogue," the joint statement reads in part.

The remarks come a day after the opposition parties suspended talks with the government saying that the political climate was not conducive for deliberations.

Violent protests entered the fifth week with dozens dead and over 100,000 seeking refuge in neighbouring countries including Rwanda, where nearly 30,000 have been given refuge.

Burundian opposition calls for stronger anti-third term protests

Source: BBC Monitoring Africa

25 May 2015 - [Presenter] Burundian opposition and civil society will resume protests against a third term for President Pierre Nkurunziza and also to condemn the killing of Zedi Feruzi. Opposition supporters accuse the government of being behind this. It called on protesters to come out and protest with more vigour from today. This is what Chauvineau Mugwengezo, the honorary president of UPD [Union for Peace and Democracy] party had to say.

[Mugwengezo] This assassination, instead of demoralizing us, has made us come together stronger. Due to this assassination, the entire Burundian population finally understood that there is no other choice but to continue to protest otherwise, we risk we risk witnessing our collective death, That is the reason why for us, the assassination of Zedi Feruzi must help us to advance further ahead and ascribe to a logic that consists of continuing our fight so that the gains of democracy, those of Arusha become the

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gains that assure social existence, guarantees political life, democracy and respect for national democratic values.

[Announcer] The assassination of Zedi Feruzi was condemned by the United Nations. Its Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the crime and renewed his call for calm and restraint.

The same sentiments were echoed by the European Union that demanded Burundian authorities to pursue those responsible for this assassination and to take the necessary measures to avoid the spread of political violence.

East African leaders to hold summit on Burundi violence

Source: Reuters

By Clement Manirabarusha and Goran Tomasevic

Bujumbura, 26 May 2015 - East African leaders will meet on Sunday to discuss the crisis in Burundi as violent clashes between police and anti-government protesters continue and the opposition has boycotted talks to resolve the stand-off.

Rights groups say at least 20 people have been killed by police since protests erupted in late April against President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term in office. An opposition leader was killed on Saturday.

Police fired toward protesters and gunfire was heard in several parts of the capital Bujumbura on Tuesday, a Reuters witness said. Many roads are blocked and businesses closed.

The Reuters witness saw a dead body in the flashpoint district of Cibitoke in the early evening, when gunfire was heard in the area, but no details on the incident were immediately available.

Members of the military attempted a coup on May 13 while Nkurunziza was abroad at the last East African Community (EAC) summit, aimed at ending the row over his plan to stand again. The putsch failed but protests have rumbled on.

The EAC said on Twitter late on Monday that another leaders' summit would be held in Dar es Salaam on Sunday, with ministers meeting on Saturday. Nkurunziza's office said it was unclear if the president would attend.

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"It's too soon to know, but Burundi will be represented, that is for sure," said presidential spokesman Gervais Abayeho.

Nkurunziza's decision to try for a third term unleashed Burundi's worst political crisis since a civil war ended in 2005. Many people fear the violence could lead to renewed ethnic bloodletting between the Hutu and Tutsi communities.

Some 800,000 people were killed in a 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda, which has a similar ethnic make-up. The current unrest has prompted around 70,000 Burundians to flee abroad, according to the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR.

Critics say Nkurunziza's bid violates the constitution. The president's supporters disagree, and say a constitutional court ruling allows him to run.

"I can't go to work and I don't know how to get to the office as policemen are shooting," said Claude, a resident of the capital's Buyenzi district who declined to give his full name.

Jacqueline, who lives in the Cibitoke area, added: "Two grenade explosions were heard at dawn but we don't know about casualties yet."

The presidency on Tuesday said Nkurunziza had signed a decree on May 21 for the elections to be financed by increasing the country's deficit and trimming the budgets of the education, health and seven other ministries.

About 44 billion francs (\$28 million) need to be found to fund the elections, the document states. Domestic debt will be increased by 28 billion francs, while 14 billion francs will be raised from ministry savings. Another one billion should be saved from what the document calls "other products".

The government also put out a statement on Tuesday asking "patriotic citizens" to contribute money to a special account at the central bank to finance the election.

Burundi sets June 26 for presidential elections

Source: New Vision

Burundi has set June 26 for presidential elections taking a sharp turnaround from the guidance of East African Community member states that polls must be extended so that reconciliation between warring factions takes shape.

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26 May 2015 - Speaking to journalists in Kampala, Burundi's deputy chief of State protocol, Ambassador Albert Nasasagare said that: "Presidential elections will be held on June 26."

"I appeal to the people of Burundi to respect the rights of others. When you don't like a leader, you vote them out -- that is what democracy is all about," he said.

Nasasagare was speaking at a meeting hosted by Pastor Robert Kayanja, the chairman AFRI-AID, an organization that was set up to help people in needy situation.

Jean Bosco Barege, the Burundi Ambassador to Uganda also attended the meeting, which was held at Miracle Center Church in Rubanga.

Pastor Kayanja appealed for calm in Burundi, revealing that shortly after the coup attempt in the country, President Pierre Nkurunziza telephoned him thanking him for praying for Burundi.

Following an attempted coup on May 13, this week Burundi's political situation erupted again after a key opposition figure, Zedi Feruzi, of the Union for Peace and Development was assassinated on May 24.

Nasasagare said that Government has opened investigations into the assassination of Feruzi and that the culprits will be arrested and paraded in court.

Nkurunziza's bid to run for a third term has resulted into protests, especially on the streets of Bujumbura.

The protestors say that by Nkurunziza seeking a third term, he is defying the Arusha peace deal that ended the civil war in 2005.

Pastor Kayanja said that the United Nations has already passed \$250m (sh750b) for the Burundi crisis.

He, however said that this shows that "someone somewhere is benefiting from the Burundi crisis" because you cannot put a figure to combat a situation when you have not fully assessed its gravity.

"We are praying for Burundi," he said.

In a communiqué issued shortly after the East African Community meeting over Burundi on May 12, the chairman of the bloc, Jakaya Kikwete, the President of Tanzania, called for a postponement of the elections in Burundi until violence in Burundi.

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Burundi's Nkurunziza 'invites patriotic citizens' to fund controversial re-election bid

SOURCE: France 24 with AFP

26 May 2015 - The government of Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza on Tuesday appealed for public donations so that it could go ahead with controversial elections that have sparked weeks of civil unrest and a coup attempt.

A statement from the presidency said funds were needed to beef up its "commitment to reinforce a democratic culture based on the universal principle that people can choose their leaders".

"The government invites patriotic citizens convinced by this noble principle to give a voluntary contribution to help the efforts that are already supported by other friends of Burundi," the statement added.

The appeal comes after former colonial power Belgium, a key donor to the central African nation, announced earlier this month that it was suspending aid for elections following violent clashes between security forces and protesters against Nkurunziza's bid for a third term.

The European Union is also withholding its aid for the polls.

Burundi's crisis erupted after the ruling CNDD-FDD party nominated Nkurunziza to stand again in the June 26 presidential election, prompting street protests by activists and opposition groups that have so far left at least 30 people dead.

Opposition and rights groups say that Nkurunziza's bid for a third five-year term violates the constitution as well as the terms of a peace deal that ended a 13-year civil war in 2006.

Parliamentary polls, initially set to take place on Tuesday, have been postponed to June 5.

France suspends security cooperation

The government's call for public financing of the June election came as France suspended its security cooperation with the impoverished country, the AFP reported Tuesday, quoting an unnamed French diplomat.

The source said aid to the country's police and defence establishment had been halted amid a crackdown on protests against Nkurunziza's re-election bid.

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France currently helps the Burundian army with training for international peacekeeping missions, which are very lucrative for the impoverished country's armed forces.

France also helps train the Burundian police, who have been engaged in a violent crackdown against street demonstrations.

Tensions have been mounting in Burundi since a failed coup attempt against Nkurunziza earlier this month amid fears that the country's embattled leader could stoke old ethnic tensions in a bid to shore up his re-election drive.

On Sunday, thousands took to the streets in the capital, Bujumbura, for the funeral of opposition Zedi Feruzi, who was gunned down in Bujumbura amid a crackdown on opposition supporters and independent news organisations.

Feruzi, head of the small opposition UPD (Union for Peace and Development) party was killed in a drive-by shooting Saturday, leading many opposition figures to go underground.

At least 100,000 Burundians have fled to neighbouring countries, fearing political violence ahead of the elections.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

UN officials didn't follow up on CAR sex abuse claims for months

Source: AP

New York, 26 May 2015 - For months, the UN's top human rights officials knew about allegations of child sexual abuse by French soldiers in Central African Republic, collected by their own staff. But they didn't follow up because they assumed French authorities were handling it, statements marked "strictly confidential" show, even as France pressed the UN for more information about the case.

In a signed statement obtained by The Associated Press, the deputy high commissioner for human rights also says that her colleague who first informed French authorities last July did it because he didn't think the recently created UN peacekeeping mission in Central African Republic would act on the allegations.

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A year after the UN first heard allegations from children as young as 9 that French soldiers had sexually abused them, sometimes in exchange for food, it seems that the only person who has been punished is the UN staffer who told French authorities.

The deputy high commissioner, Flavia Pansieri, says she was distracted from the case by other issues, including budget cuts, from last fall until early March, when her boss, the high commissioner, brought up the case.

"I regret to say that in the context of those very hectic days, I failed to follow up on the CAR situation," Pansieri says in the statement dated March 26. She adds that "both the HC and I knew that on CAR there was an ongoing process initiated by the French authorities to bring perpetrators to justice. I take full responsibility for not having given the matter the necessary attention".

Vicious violence

The Paris prosecutor's office this month, however, blamed the UN "hierarchy" for taking more than six months to supply answers to its questions. The office wanted to speak with a UN human rights staffer who had interviewed some of the children, saying she was willing to talk.

The UN finally handed over written answers on April 29, the Paris prosecutor's office said — the same day that the Guardian newspaper first made the French and UN inquiries public.

French soldiers had been tasked with protecting civilians in Central African Republic from vicious violence between Christians and Muslims. Thousands of scared people had crammed into a camp for displaced people in the capital, Bangui. Residents have told the AP that soldiers offered cookies, other food or bottles of water in exchange for sodomy or oral sex.

It is still not clear where the accused soldiers are now. France has not announced any arrests.

When the allegations were first publicly reported, part of the uproar was over the suspension of the Geneva-based UN human rights staffer who first informed French authorities, Anders Kompass. The UN says he breached protocol in sharing the report without redacting the names in it. The UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services is investigating. He could be fired.

A spokesperson for the UN human rights office, Andre-Michel Essoungou, said on Monday that the office would not comment on Pansieri's signed statement, noting the ongoing investigation of Kompass.

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Investigate and report publicly

While France, like any country, has the responsibility to investigate its own troops, the U.N. human rights office has the responsibility to follow up on alleged abuses and offer its help.

French troops arrived in Central African Republic in late 2013 and had a UN mandate to assist an African Union peacekeeping operation that was later taken over by a UN mission last September. France's defense ministry has said children told UN officials of sexual abuse by French soldiers between December 2013 and June 2014. France says it was informed of the allegations in July.

At that time, the abuse was thought to be still going on.

When the UN peacekeeping mission was created in April 2014, it included human rights staffers with a mandate "to monitor, help investigate and report publicly" on abuses. That included, specifically, abuses against children.

One of the human rights staffers took stories of alleged sexual abuse from children in May and June. Such staffers report to both the UN human rights office and the head of the peacekeeping mission. It is not clear which peacekeeping officials were informed of the allegations. A peacekeeping spokesman did not comment on Monday.

The UN human rights office has no specific guidelines on reporting child sexual abuse, including any requirement for immediate, mandatory reporting.

"No one in the chain of command took action, in other words, until *Kompass* did," said Beatrice Edwards, the executive director of the Washington-based Government Accountability Project. "They were documenting, monitoring and reporting, despite the fact that the abuse was heinous, immediate and ongoing."

After France received the sexual abuse allegations in July, its authorities opened a preliminary investigation, and investigators went to Central African Republic in August.

Pansieri's statement says she first heard about the allegations weeks later, in "most probably September", when a senior legal adviser told her about the French authorities' request for more information.

Disturbing allegations

At the same time, she was told that *Kompass*, the office's director of field operations, had notified French authorities. She asked him why.

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"He felt that no action on it was being taken by the mission in Bangui, nor that there was any intention to do so in the future," her statement says, adding that he said "the names in the report were fake ones and that there was no risk therefore for witnesses".

Kompass has not spoken publicly because his case is still under investigation.

As for how to respond to France's request for additional information, Panisieri said she and legal staff decided to give the French a redacted copy of the same report that Kompass had already given them.

The report was handed over on March 30, a UN spokesperson said this month.

"In the intervening months I have not focused on this matter [which, I repeat, I understood being under investigation by the French authorities]," Pansieri's statement says.

The high commissioner for human rights, Zeid Raad al-Husseini, took up his post Sept. 1. His confidential statement obtained by the AP says his senior legal adviser last fall told him about the report and its allegations being "leaked" to the French. "All of this — aside from the deeply disturbing allegations of sexual abuse — was alarming," his statement, dated March 29, says.

This month, he told reporters he had known there was an investigation but didn't know the details until much later.

Sexual exploitation

Zeid's statement also says he more than once mistakenly thought the allegations were about French troops in Mali, having confused the acronyms for the peacekeeping missions in Central African Republic and Mali, MINUSCA and MINUSMA.

In early March, the issue came to Zeid's attention again. It's not clear why.

On March 12, Pansieri's statement says, she gave Kompass, a Swedish citizen, "the request of the HC that he submit his resignation." Kompass protested. Zeid's statement says Sweden's ambassador indicated to Pansieri that firing Kompass "may affect Swedish funding to the office." Kompass was suspended.

The UN Dispute Tribunal early this month rejected the suspension, saying that not doing so would irreparably harm Kompass' reputation.

Zeid, who a decade ago wrote a landmark UN report on preventing sexual exploitation by peacekeepers, this month asked why France hadn't moved more quickly to pursue the allegations, asking how no one knew before the UN did.

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He also noted the UN's delayed response to the Central African Republic case. "In the way it was eventually handled," he said, "we could have done better at the time."

C. Africa pleads for aid to hold elections

Source: Agence France-Presse

26 May 2015 - The interim president of the Central African Republic, Catherine Samba Panza, urged rich donor countries Tuesday to deliver on aid promised to her war ravaged nation, including funds to pay for elections later this year.

"I reaffirm my determination to organise democratic and credible elections... which will whatever the case take place before the end of 2015," Samba Panza told reporters after a donor's conference at EU headquarters in Brussels.

The Central African Republic government is in an effort to organise elections and leave behind a brutal conflict sparked after a 2013 coup pitting mainly Muslim rebels against Christian vigilantes.

Earlier this month, a national reconciliation forum called for presidential and legislative elections to be delayed to give the transitional authorities more time to organise the polls.

But the recommendation drew protests in the capital city Bangui despite the backing of over 600 national stakeholders including armed groups, political and religious figures and members of civil society.

The "electoral process that will put a democratic power at the head of the country is a clear and absolute priority," said Samba Panza, despite calls in Bangui she step aside.

"Only logistic and budgetary constraints" are responsible for the delay, she added.

According to C. African authorities, Bangui still needs 17 million dollars to hold the elections, which are seen as a critical step to avoid an irreversible descent into a failed state.

"The interim government's efforts are beginning to bear fruit," said France's Development Minister Annick Girardin, also attending the conference.

But the country remains devastated, with 1.4 million people still depending on food aid and 460,000 refugees still too scared to return home from neighbouring Chad, Cameroon and other regional countries.

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Centrafrique : l'Union européenne accroît son soutien financier et politique au pays

Source: Agence d'Information d'Afrique central

Par Nestor N'Gampoula

Une conférence internationale axée sur les besoins humanitaires, la relance et le renforcement des capacités de résilience de la Centrafrique s'est tenue le mardi 26 mai à Bruxelles, en Belgique. La rencontre a permis de mobiliser l'attention et le soutien de la communauté internationale en faveur de la RCA.

26 Mai 2015 - À cette occasion, la Commission européenne a annoncé l'augmentation de son aide à la République centrafricaine d'un montant total de 72 millions d'euros. Ces fonds seront notamment consacrés à l'aide humanitaire (avec une enveloppe additionnelle de 10 millions d'euros). Ils seront aussi destinés à des mesures d'appui budgétaire (40 millions d'euros supplémentaires) et à une nouvelle contribution au Fonds fiduciaire de l'UE pour ce pays (qui bénéficiera d'un complément de 22 millions d'euros). Les premiers résultats et les perspectives futures de ce Fonds (dénommé Bêkou, ce qui signifie « espoir » en sango, la langue principale du pays) ont été également présentés lors de ces assises.

Dans une intervention, le commissaire pour la coopération internationale et le développement, Neven Mimica, a indiqué que le Fonds Bêkou a créé entre les partenaires internationaux des synergies puissantes pour aider les autorités centrafricaines à sortir de la crise que le pays a connue, à consolider l'État et rétablir la paix et la sécurité. « Je me réjouis de la rapidité avec laquelle le fonds Bêkou a été mis en place, ce qui témoigne à quel point l'UE et ses partenaires avaient conscience de la nécessité de réagir rapidement à cette crise. La conférence d'aujourd'hui nous offre l'occasion de mettre en lumière le processus de stabilisation en cours en RCA et la solidarité internationale dont il fait l'objet », a-t-il déclaré.

Pour sa part, le commissaire pour l'aide humanitaire et la gestion des crises, Christos Stylianides, a plaidé pour une aide soutenue à la Centrafrique. « Nous vivons des temps agités, où de nouvelles crises surgissent à tout moment et partout. Mais nous ne devons pas détourner notre attention des crises humanitaires actuelles comme celle-ci. Les Centrafricains continuent d'avoir besoin de notre aide pour survivre et reconstruire leur vie », a-t-il fait remarquer. Etant l'un des principaux partenaires de la Centrafrique, l'UE a pris d'autres engagements importants allant dans le sens d'un renforcement du soutien financier apporté à ce pays.

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« Après des années de conflit, le peuple de la République centrafricaine mérite un présent et un avenir faits de paix », a déclaré quant à elle la haute représentante et vice-présidente, Federica Mogherini. « Dès le début de cette crise, l'Union européenne a été à ses côtés pour l'aider à trouver le chemin de la reprise, de la stabilité et du développement. Le récent Forum de Bangui a suscité une dynamique de réconciliation nationale portée par les Centrafricains eux-mêmes ; avec la conférence d'aujourd'hui, nous réaffirmons notre volonté, et celle de nos partenaires internationaux, de les soutenir sur la voie de la reconstruction et de la paix », a-t-elle assuré.

La conférence de Bruxelles sur le soutien à la Centrafrique a été organisée à l'initiative de la haute représentante et vice-présidente, Federica Mogherini, du commissaire pour la coopération internationale et le développement, Neven Mimica, et du commissaire pour l'aide humanitaire et la gestion des crises, Christos Stylianides. La délégation centrafricaine à cette conférence a été conduite par la présidente de la transition, Catherine Samba-Panza. Les ministres français, allemand et néerlandais du développement, les ministres des affaires étrangères de la région de l'Afrique centrale ainsi que des représentants d'organisations internationales ont participé également à la rencontre.

La Centrafrique est en proie à une crise depuis 2013. Ses structures étatiques, économiques et sociales doivent être entièrement reconstruites. Au cours de la période 2013-2014, l'Union européenne a déjà mobilisé 377 millions d'euros au titre de l'ensemble des instruments dont elle dispose afin d'aider le pays. En plus d'une aide humanitaire généreuse pour faire face à cette crise, l'UE a joué un rôle de premier plan dans les efforts déployés au niveau international en faveur de la relance et du renforcement des capacités de résilience de la RCA. En coopération avec la France, l'Allemagne et les Pays-Bas, l'UE a lancé en juillet 2014 le premier Fonds fiduciaire européen : le Fonds fiduciaire Bêkou pour la République centrafricaine.

Doté d'un financement initial de 74 millions d'euros, ce Fonds a déjà engagé plus de 47 millions d'euros. Son objectif est de soutenir des mesures couplant les interventions à caractère humanitaire à des programmes de reconstruction et de développement à moyen terme.

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KENYA

Somali militants attack Kenyan police, at least one dead

Source: Reuters

26 May 2015 - Islamist militants from Somalia attacked two police patrols in neighboring Kenya on Tuesday, triggering a gun battle in a rural area hit by a string of cross-border raids, both sides said.

Somalia's al Shabaab fighters said they had killed 25 Kenyan officers, an account contradicted by the police force that said one of its men had died and four had been wounded.

The al Qaeda-linked militants said they ambushed the police about 70 km (40 miles) north of Garissa, a town where the Islamists raided a university and killed 148 people in April.

Al Shabaab militants, fighting to overthrow a Western-backed government in Somalia, have launched several attacks inside Kenya, trying to force it to pull troops from a African peacekeeping force in their homeland.

The assaults have piled political pressure on the Nairobi government, which has promised to carry on with its Somali mission, and devastated Kenya's tourism industry, one of its main sources of foreign income.

Police said one officer had died from his wounds after the attacks in the Fafi and Yumbis areas, one was critically wounded and three others suffered minor injuries.

"A contingent of officers responded for reinforcement and on arrival at the scene, engaged the attackers in a heavy fire-fight," Inspector General Joseph Boinnet said in a statement.

Kenyan media had earlier reported that as many as 20 officers could have been killed, and al Shabaab said 25 died.

"We took all their weapons. There were some Kenyan forces that escaped in the course of the ambush fighting," al Shabaab's military operations spokesman, Sheikh Abdiasis Abu Musab, said.

Somali and African troops have pushed al Shabaab out of Somalia's main cities in recent years. But Tuesday's attacks underlined militants' continuing ability to strike Kenya's frontier regions.

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Last week, al Shabaab attacked Yumbis and hoisted its flag on a mosque where fighters held prayers before heading to another nearby village.

Al Shabaab has killed more than 400 people on Kenyan soil since Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta came to power in April 2013.

Kenyan anti-terrorism forces arrested a "wanted terror suspect" in possession of a Russian-made hand grenade, bomb detonator and plastic explosives in the port city of Mombasa on Tuesday, county police commander Robert Kitur said.

SOUTH SUDAN

Juba welcomes Khartoum leading role in mediation of S. Sudan conflict

Source: Sudan Tribune (Paris)

25 May 2015 - South Sudanese government on Monday said it welcomed the decision by the East African regional bloc of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which requested the neighbouring Sudan to play a leading role in resolving the ongoing internal conflict in South Sudan.

South Sudanese foreign minister, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, said his government would welcome Khartoum's mediation's process which would address root causes of the conflict and respect for sovereignty of the new independent state.

"We welcome any initiative for peace as long as that initiative addresses the core issues and does not undermine sovereignty of the Republic of South Sudan," he told reporters in the capital, Juba.

"The government does not have any problem with any initiative intended to bring peace and end this senseless war," he said.

He added that Sudan is a member of the IGAD and also member of the African Union (AU) and therefore the South Sudanese leadership had no problem if president Bashir of Sudan would play a leading role in the mediation process to end the crisis in South Sudan.

"As a government we welcomed the participation of other African countries so that a solution is found to this conflict from the African context," he added.

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The top diplomat made the comment in response to the new mediation initiative which intended to make Khartoum lead the mediation process between president Salva Kiir's government and the opposition faction of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM-IO) led by former vice president, Riek Machar.

Sudanese foreign minister Ali Karti on Sunday disclosed that the Sudanese government accepted a demand by the regional body asking president Bashir to be more involved in its efforts to bring peace in South Sudan as it prepares to launch a new mediation mechanism.

Karti said Khartoum accepted the IGAD proposal and vowed to undertake efforts in this respect after the swearing-in ceremony of president Bashir scheduled for 2 June.

The mediation to end the 17-month long civil war had been led by the Ethiopian prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, also chair of IGAD with Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta as rapporteur.

Talks between the warring parties collapsed on 6 March when the two principal leaders could not agree on almost every contentious issue despite a three-day direct negotiations in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

IGAD is yet to announce a date for resumption of the peace talks as it expands the mediation mechanism to include countries and international bodies outside the African continent.

TANZANIA

Officials: Tanzania to Pick New President, Parliament on Oct. 25

SOURCE: Reuters

24 May 2015 - Tanzanians will pick a new president and parliament on Oct. 25, officials said on Monday, in a national election likely to be dominated by the ruling party despite rising anger at poverty and corruption.

President Jakaya Kikwete is due to step down from the helm of east Africa's second-biggest economy after two terms – the limit set out in the constitution.

Tanzania's main opposition parties have promised to unite behind a single presidential candidate to replace him.

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But analysts have said that plan could be hobbled by long-running in-fighting over policies and leadership, and the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party would still likely win through, albeit with a reduced margin.

Front-runners to become CCM candidate include former Prime Minister Edward Lowassa.

"Only five individuals among the [party's] presidential hopefuls will get a real shot at the post, but about 15-17 individuals are expected to enter the race this year," said Ahmed Salim, senior associate at consultancy Teneo Intelligence in a note to clients.

Tanzania has held a series of relatively peaceful elections since the reintroduction of multi-party polls in 1995 – though political tensions are rising in other parts of the continent as long-running leaders approach term limits.

The decision by the president of neighboring Burundi last month to run for a third five years in office has triggered weeks of often violent protests and a failed coup.

The new election was widely expected in October, though a specific date had not been announced.

Campaigning for this year's presidential, parliamentary and local authority elections will run from August 22 to October 24, the chairman of Tanzania's national electoral commission, Daminan Lubuva, told Reuters.

"We expect to conclude the ongoing registration of voters towards the end of July or latest by the second week of August," he added.

Opposition leaders have said the slow pace of voter registration, which has already held up a referendum on the constitution this year, could disrupt the polls. A new date for the referendum would be announced after voter registration finished, Lubuva said.

Burundi Refugee Crisis Strains Tanzania Camps

SOURCE: Voice of America

Dar Es Salaam, 25 May 2015 - The aid agency Oxfam says more than 70,000 refugees from Burundi have crossed the border into Tanzania fearing political violence at home. Aid agencies are seeking more support as disease and overcrowding take a toll on the refugee population.

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Most of the new arrivals in Tanzania are women and children. They crowd the beach at Kigunga on the shore of Lake Tanganyika – which borders both Burundi and Tanzania - waiting for transport to another refugee camp.

Oxfam communications officer Aimee Brown, working in Tanzania, described desperate conditions at Kigunga.

“It's a very thin strip of beach that's about 800 meters long and behind it is a high mountain, so it's very very cut off. It's rocky, sandy beach and people are living right on the beach all the way down to the water, waiting,” she said.

Most of the refugees who have crossed the border in the past three weeks have been relocated to the Nyarugusu camp through another transit center.

Brown said the influx was putting a strain on humanitarian agencies.

“Currently now at the refugee camp there is also overcrowding, as the camp is above its capacity and also as aid agencies struggle to get enough equipment to respond to the needs of the new arrivals,” she said.

The most urgent need, she said, was shelter – tents to accommodate families, many of whom are now staying in churches and schools. Clean water is also needed as well as the tanks and purification chemicals needed to store and treat it.

Cholera

Health is another major concern. The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) has already reported 3,000 cases of cholera, with up to 400 new cases each day.

Driving this refugee crisis is a pervasive sense of fear, as thousands flee from a volatile political conflict in Burundi.

Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial bid for a third term has prompted massive street protests, deadly clashes with the police and an unsuccessful coup attempt. During the weekend, an opposition leader was assassinated in the capital, Bujumbura and at least three people were killed in a grenade attack.

Brown said when asked why they have fled, refugees typically gave one of two responses.

“The first one is that people have either received direct threats to themselves or their family members, or report that family members of theirs have been killed. Then the other group of people say that they're fleeing almost preemptively, they feel like war is

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about to start, to use their own words, and they want to get out before that happens,” she said.

Agencies working on the ground, including Oxfam, have jointly asked for \$91 million in funding to address the growing crisis in Tanzania up until September.

More than 26,000 Burundians have also fled to Rwanda and nearly 10,000 have crossed into the Democratic Republic of Congo since April.