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



MEDIA MONITORING

7 May 2015

D.R. CONGO

RDC: l'ONU «reste préoccupée par les arrestations arbitraires»

Source: RFI

6 Mai 2015 - En RDC, le militant du mouvement lutte pour le changement (Lucha), Fred Bauma, a finalement été déféré au parquet et transféré à la prison le mardi 5 mai, après 50 jours de détention par les services de sécurité et sans accès à un avocat. Il n'a pas encore été notifié les charges qui pèsent contre lui, tout comme pour Yves Makwambala, un autre militant arrêté lui aussi à la mi-mars. Le chef du bureau des Nations unies pour les droits de l'homme au Congo, José-Maria Aranaz, appelle les autorités à mettre fin au recours à la détention arbitraire en RDC.

RFI : quelle est votre réaction après l'annonce du transfert de Fred Bauma à la prison centrale de Makala ?

José-Maria Aranaz : Le transfert de Fred Bauma au parquet judiciaire, après cinquante jours de détention en isolement, sans accès à la justice et sans supervision judiciaire est une bonne nouvelle. Même si nous restons encore préoccupés par l'utilisation de l'arrestation arbitraire et sans accès à la justice contre les membres de l'opposition, membres de la société civile et les défenseurs des droits de l'homme.

Est-ce que c'est un point que vous avez soulevé auprès des autorités congolaises ?

Oui, on a insisté beaucoup dans toutes nos réunions et dans le processus de dialogue avec les autorités sur le fait qu'il faut en finir avec les arrestations arbitraires sans accès

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à la justice. La détention arbitraire sans accès à la justice est une violation des droits de l'homme et il faut mettre tous les détenus, le plus tôt possible, à la disposition des autorités judiciaires.

DRC army in fierce fight with Uganda rebels

Source: Reuters

Kinshasa, 5 May 2015 - The army of Democratic Republic of Congo killed 16 Ugandan Islamist rebels over the weekend in fierce fighting, a military spokesperson said on Tuesday, part of a campaign to drive the militants from the country's volatile eastern region.

Congolese forces launched Operation Sukola I early last year against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), who are accused of massacring some 300 villagers near the town of Beni in North Kivu province between October and December.

Four Congolese government soldiers were also killed in Sunday's fighting, which took place in Kokola, about 40km north of Beni, according to Major Victor Masandi, an army spokesperson for the operation.

"The toll from the battle is 16 ADF killed, six AK-47s recovered," he said.

The ADF was formed in the 1990s to fight the Ugandan government but it has transformed into a secretive Islamist group that now operates on the Congolese side of the border, where it is active in the illicit trade in timber and gold.

Overnight attacks on civilians blamed on the rebels have declined since the army stepped up operations against the group late last year, though dozens of civilians have still died this year in similar massacres.

The Congolese government said last week its forces had killed the group's third highest ranking commander.

The ADF's leader, Jamil Mukulu, was also reported arrested in Tanzania last week, but the Ugandan government told Reuters it was still trying to verify whether Mukulu was in fact in custody.

Army spokesperson Masandi said the ADF had been significantly weakened by pressure from the operation. He said the group had been reduced to about 50 fighters operating in isolated clusters, well below a recent United Nations estimate of around 500 combatants.

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He blamed the ADF for an attack on Monday targeting a helicopter belonging to Congo's UN peacekeeping mission, known as Monusco.

In a statement on Monday, Monusco said the helicopter was able to land safely, attributing the attack to unidentified armed men.

Eastern Congo, where a 1998-2003 conflict resulted in millions of deaths, remains plagued by dozens of armed groups that prey on the local population and exploit its vast reserves of gold, tin and diamonds.

4 UN peacekeepers found in east Congo after ambush attack that killed 2 others

Source: AP

Kinshasa, 6 May 2015 - A spokesman for the U.N. mission in Congo says four missing U.N. peacekeepers have been found following an attack that left two others dead.

Felix Prosper Basse told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the four Tanzanian peacekeepers who went missing during the attack have been located.

Basse said it still wasn't clear which of the many armed groups in eastern Congo was responsible for the killings, though others have said that members of a Ugandan rebel group may have carried out the attack.

The ambush came a day after gunfire hit a helicopter carrying the mission's force commander in the same region.

Mineral-rich eastern Congo has been plagued by a number of armed rebel groups since the Rwandan genocide two decades ago.

30 killed in ethnic clashes in DR Congo

Source: <http://news.videonews.us/30-killed-ethnic-clashes-dr-congo-0711340.html>

7 May 2015 - At least 30 indigenous Pygmies were killed in an attack by members of the ethnic Bantu majority in the northern part of Katanga region southern the Democratic Republic of Congo, a source said Wednesday.

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Bienvenu Kalunga, the head of the NGO Coalition of Indigenous Peoples, said that Bantu members had attacked Nyunzu locality in Katanga with blunt weapons, killing 30 members of the Pygmy minority and then escaped.

Bantus are yet to comment on the attack.

“We feel sorry for such an attack,” Kalunga said, going on to call for intervention of the Congolese army UN troops.

The Congolese army said, meanwhile, that it did not plan to take any action against the attack.

“The army prefers not to resort to force at present,” army chief of staff Gen. Kifwa told The Anadolu Agency.

He said the army would wait until negotiations between Bantus and Pygmies come against a hard wall.

“Using force at the present time will only increase the number of victims,” he added.

The UN mission in Congo known as MONUSCO has not reacted to the attack yet.

Mission head Martin Kobler has recently vowed to work to bring an end to conflicts in the southern region and to deploy a large number of troops in the region, home to more than 5,000 refugees now.

UN reinforces east DR Congo troops after peacekeepers killed

Source: AFP

7 May 2015 - The United Nations has sent reinforcements to its Democratic Republic of Congo peacekeeping force near the eastern town of Beni after two soldiers were killed and 13 others wounded in an ambush on Tuesday.

“This morning [Wednesday, 6 May 2015] we sent reinforcements to the Beni area -- a rapid response unit to back up those caught in ambush,” Felix Prosper Basse, spokesman for the UN’s MONUSCO DR Congo mission, told AFP a day after two Tanzanian peacekeepers and two civilians were killed near Beni.

The attack was the second within 48 hours on UN personnel in the country. On Monday, a UN helicopter carrying MONUSCO’s military leader, Brazilian General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, was fired upon by unknown gunmen and forced to make an emergency landing.

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Basse added that Santos Cruz would also travel to Beni -- a trading hub in an area regularly targeted in attacks by Ugandan rebels from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

Santos Cruz's objective, Basse said, was to coordinate "robust measures" against members of the ADF suspected of staging Tuesday's deadly ambush.

The shadowy ADF, which launched an insurgency in neighbouring Uganda against President Yoweri Museveni in the mid-1990s, is accused of killing more than 260 civilians in and around Beni between October and December last year.

In addition to the two Tanzanian peacekeepers killed in the ambush, 13 other UN troops of unknown nationality were shot and wounded, MONUSCO said.

On Wednesday, Ugandan police announced they had requested the extradition of ADF boss Jamil Mukulu, who was arrested last month in Tanzania. He is wanted on suspicion of a range of crimes, including terrorist acts and murder.

Last month, the ADF's third most senior figure, Kasada Karume, was killed in fighting with Congolese troops, the national army said.

A further 28 ADF fighters have been killed, 22 wounded, and eight captured in battles in the region since the weekend, according to civil society sources.

"Today, despite what one might think... the ADF has never been so weak," said General Jean Baillaud, deputy commander of the MONUSCO mission.

He added the process of "eradicating" the rebels had reached a "crucial phase."

The slain Tanzanian soldiers were members of a 3,000-strong UN intervention brigade, itself part of a broader 20,000 MONUSCO force struggling to quell violence by scores of armed groups operating in the east of mineral-rich DR Congo.

The UN Security Council condemned the attack and reiterated that targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law.

The members of the Council also expressed deep concern at the "security crisis" in eastern DR Congo, which they blamed on "ongoing destabilizing activities of foreign and domestic armed groups.

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BURUNDI

Burundi crisis talks in bid to end political violence

Source: AFP

Bujumbura, 6 May 2015 - Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza faced growing pressure Wednesday over days of deadly protests triggered by his bid for a third term in power, with the UN voicing concern and the opposition demanding the presidential poll be delayed.

The head of the UN's refugee agency, Antonio Guterres, said he was "extremely worried" by the exodus sparked by the crisis.

Tens of thousands have fled the small central African nation.

While the government and opposition held talks, protesters defied calls to end demonstrations after more than a week of street battles, in which over a dozen people have been killed.

Nkurunziza, a former rebel leader from the Hutu majority who has been in power since 2005, has come under intense international pressure to withdraw from the June 26 election.

"This is a last chance... they have to come up with concrete solutions so that elections can be held in acceptable conditions," a diplomat said of the talks, warning international funding for the polls could be cut if a deal was not struck.

But the main opposition leader Agathon Rwaswa said the crisis had already gone too far, demanding a delay because the "credibility of the electoral process is already in doubt" and calling for the ruling party's youth wing, a powerful militia called the Imbonerakure, to be disarmed.

He also criticised the police, who have fired live rounds at protestors.

On Wednesday, the police arrested a leading activist, Audifax Ndabitoreye, for "insurrection," an AFP journalist witnessed.

The arrest of the dual Burundi and Dutch national, who has played a key role in the demonstrations, came a day after he called for further protests.

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East African foreign ministers, from neighbouring Rwanda and Tanzania as well as Kenya and Uganda, met in the capital Bujumbura Wednesday, where at least 16 people were wounded in further clashes, according to the Red Cross.

Regional leaders will hold a crisis meeting on May 13 in Tanzania, the ministers said.

The government and opposition also held talks, after furious protesters rejected a constitutional court ruling allowing Nkurunziza to stand again.

The court's vice-president fled the country after refusing to sign the judgement.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Monday he was "deeply concerned" about Nkurunziza's decision to run again, which he said "flies directly in the face of the constitution".

- 'Enough crises' -

Burundi's foreign ministry declared that "peace and security reigned" across the country, apart from "a few districts of the capital... shaken by illegal demonstrations and violence triggered by certain political opponents."

Vice-President Prosper Bazombanza pleaded for the protests to end, offering to release demonstrators who had been arrested, lift arrest warrants issued for key activists and reopen independent radio stations -- provided "protests and the insurrection stop".

Burundi, where a 13-year civil war between Tutsis and Hutus ended only in 2006, has been rocked by violent protests since the ruling CNDD-FDD nominated Nkurunziza to stand for a third term.

Critics say his candidacy violates the constitution and the Arusha accords that ended the civil war.

Nkurunziza's supporters counter that he is eligible to stand again since his first term in office followed his election by parliament -- not directly by the people, as required by the current constitution.

Over 35,000 Burundians have already fled to neighbouring nations, mainly to Rwanda.

Expressing concern at the situation, UNHCR chief Guterres said: "We thought Burundian refugees were something we would never have to discuss again, unfortunately we are back to having a significant outflow of Burundians."

"It must stop. We have enough crises in the world," Guterres said in Kenya.

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Rwanda has warned Burundi it must protect civilians and said it has received reports linking the violence to ethnic Hutu rebels from the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), who fled Rwanda into Democratic Republic of Congo after the 1994 Rwandan genocide of mainly Tutsis.

Rwanda has previously sent troops into DR Congo to tackle the rebels.

Burundi's foreign ministry dismissed the reports, saying such forces would not be "tolerated on Burundian territory."

Burundi: le pouvoir propose le dialogue pour sortir le pays de l'impasse

Source: Agence d'Information d'Afrique centrale (<http://www.adiac-congo.com/content/burundi-le-pouvoir-propose-le-dialogue-pour-sortir-le-pays-de-limpasse-31903>)

Par Fiacre Kombo

La Cour constitutionnelle du Burundi a validé le mardi 5 mai, la candidature du président sortant Pierre Nkurunziza pour un troisième mandat. Le gouvernement propose en contrepartie de cessation des manifestations, la libération des opposants arrêtés, la réouverture des radios privées...

6 Mai 2015 - « Le gouvernement est disposé à relâcher les jeunes gens qui ont été arrêtés au cours des violences enregistrées dans les différents quartiers de la capitale, à condition qu'ils renoncent explicitement à la récurrence », a indiqué le vice-président burundais, Prosper Bazombanza. Le pouvoir en place a par ailleurs proposé d'autoriser la réouverture des stations radio interrompues dès le début des contestations de la rue. Aucun incident majeur n'a été signalé depuis mardi dans la capitale Bujumbura.

Prosper Bazombanza a fait savoir que les autorités sont prêtes à engager des négociations franches avec l'opposition afin de mettre fin à la crise. Une première tentative de discussion sur les prochaines échéances électorales sous l'égide de la Mission électorale de l'ONU dans le pays, a réuni mardi des représentants du gouvernement, de l'opposition et de la société civile. Mais ce tête à tête n'a pas permis d'apaiser les esprits.

Les manifestants étaient remontés contre la validation par la Cour constitutionnelle de la candidature du président sortant Pierre Nkurunziza. En effet, les Sages de la Cour constitutionnelle burundaise ont estimé que la candidature pour un troisième mandat du président Nkurunziza, ne viole pas la loi fondamentale actuelle du pays.

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« L'article 96 qui limite à deux les mandats présidentiels au Burundi, veut dire que le nombre de mandats au suffrage universel direct est limité à deux seulement et l'article 302 créé un mandat spécial au suffrage universel indirect et qui n'a rien à voir avec les mandats prévus à l'article 96 », a décidé la Cour dans sa décision du 5 mai 2015.

Nkurunziza a été élu pour la première fois en 2005, au suffrage universel indirect, c'est-à-dire, par le Parlement. Il a ensuite été réélu en 2010 au suffrage universel direct, après l'amendement du mode de désignation à la présidentielle. Selon les sages burundais, « le renouvellement une seule et dernière fois de l'actuel mandat présidentiel au suffrage universel direct pour cinq ans n'est pas contraire à la Constitution du Burundi. »

Les manifestations au Burundi ont fait déjà plus de dix morts et plusieurs personnes blessées. Des milliers de Burundais continuent de fuir leur pays pour se réfugier dans les pays voisins, notamment au Rwanda et en République démocratique du Congo, indiquent des ONG humanitaires.

Burundi president says a third term would be his last

Source: Reuters

6 May 2015 - Burundi's president said on Wednesday [6 May 2015] that, if elected for a third term in June, it would be his last and he would not run for office again after that, his spokesman said on Wednesday.

President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third term has triggered protests in the past week. Protesters say the constitution limits the president to two terms he has served.

The constitutional court ruled his first term did not count because he was picked by lawmakers not elected by a vote. But the opposition say the court is biased and have vowed to keep protesting until he backs down.

The row has plunged the nation into its worst crisis since the end of a 12-year civil war that pitted rebels from the majority Hutu ethnic group against the then Tutsi-led army.

East African foreign ministers met Nkurunziza in Burundi on Monday to discuss crisis, which has stoked tensions in a region with a history ethnic conflict and driven almost 40,000 Burundians to flee to neighboring states.

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“He told them (the ministers) that if re-elected he would not seek another term,” presidential spokesman Gervais Abayeho told Reuters, adding the president would deliver the same message in an address ready for broadcast later on Wednesday.

Nearly 40,000 Burundians have fled to neighboring Rwanda, Tanzania and Democratic Republic of Congo in the past month as tensions have ratcheted up over Nkurunziza’s third-term bid, the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR said.

The tensions particularly worry Rwanda, which has the same ethnic mix as Burundi and suffered a 1994 genocide that killed 800,000 people, most of them Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Burundi’s Red Cross said 16 people were injured in protests held in different parts of the capital on Wednesday. Protests have shown little sign of spreading beyond Bujumbura so far.

Civil society groups say the death toll has reached at least 12 people since protests erupted after Nkurunziza, a former leader of a Hutu rebel group, announced his decision on April 25 to run again. Police put the death toll at half that number.

Presidential challenger Audifax Ndaditoye was arrested at a hotel in the capital Bujumbura where the east African ministers held meetings on the crisis. It was not immediately clear if he was participating in the talks.

Ndaditoye, who is not affiliated to the main opposition parties and wants to run as an independent, told reporters as he was led away by police that he was arrested for “participating in an insurrection movement.”

“I am a victim because I have been protesting clearly against the third term for Nkurunziza which is illegal and unconstitutional,” he said.

The government calls protests an insurrection and has detained scores of people. Nkurunziza told the ministers he was ready to release those under 18 and would also give an amnesty to others if protests stopped, the presidential spokesman said.

“All lights are blinking in Burundi. All alarms are going. So where’s the fire brigade,” Jan Egeland, the head of the Norwegian Refugee Council and former top humanitarian official for the United Nations, told a news conference in Geneva, calling for international action.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said this week in Nairobi during a regional trip that running for a third-term “flies in the face” of the constitution. Washington has said it would take measures against any individuals responsible for violence.

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Britain's Foreign Office noted in a statement: "Reports of intimidation against members of the constitutional court do not give the impression of an independent court that was able to come to an impartial decision."

A senior member of the court was reported to have fled the country this week. The government dismisses charges of intimidation and says it allows free speech.

Burundian police arrest opposition head claiming he is wanted for insurrection

Source: AP

By Jerome Delay and Andrew Njuguna

Burundi, 6 May 2015 - Burundian Police arrested an opposition leader Wednesday after he attended a meeting of foreign ministers from the East African Community who were seeking a solution to the unrest in the country, triggered by President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third term.

Police failed to pull opposition leader Audifax Ndaditoye from the meeting between East African Community foreign ministers and Burundi leaders at a hotel in the capital Bujumbura. Officers in plain clothes then waited for him outside the hotel. He first resisted being arrested, but later gave himself up to the police.

Police showed journalists a warrant of arrest for Ndaditoye which said he was wanted for insurrection.

Protests have rocked Burundi's capital since the ruling party announced on April 25 that it had nominated Nkurunziza as its presidential candidate.

Ndaditoye said intervention by the East African Community was late.

"They should have come a long time ago. Everyone knew the situation was getting worse... You have a government militia that terrorizes people," he said.

Whether he himself is dead or alive the protest movement will continue, Ndaditoye added.

"I know behind me there are thousands, millions of Burundi citizens who believe things will change, who know in their flesh things must change," he said.

Foreign ministers from East African Community nations travelled to Burundi Wednesday to help seek a solution to the problems. They included ministers from Rwanda,

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Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, said Edwin Limo, a spokesman of Kenya's foreign ministry.

In Bujumbura, roads were barricaded with trees as protests continued for a second week. In the Kinondo area of the city, police fired shots into the air to disperse demonstrators who had been staging a sit-in.

Vladimir Monteriro, a U.N. press officer in Bujumbura, said a U.N.-facilitated meeting between the government, the opposition and civil society started Tuesday.

Burundi's Constitutional Court on Tuesday validated the president's controversial bid for a third term but the deputy president of the court, who fled to Rwanda ahead of the ruling, called it unconstitutional.

Jean Minani, an opposition party leader, said the opposition will use all peaceful means to ensure that Nkurunziza does not contest in the elections because it's unconstitutional.

Burundi's constitution says the president is elected by universal direct suffrage for a mandate of five years, renewable only once.

Nkurunziza was first installed as president in 2005 by Parliament to lead a transitional government. He won the 2010 presidential election as the sole candidate. Opposition members boycotted, saying they feared it would be rigged.

At least nine people have been killed in the protests and more than 20,000 Burundians have fled to Rwanda, fearing political violence.

Le président burundais invité à participer à un sommet d'urgence de l'EAC

Source: Agence de presse Xinhua

7 Mai 2015 - Des envoyés spéciaux de la Communauté est-africaine (EAC) ont invité mercredi le président burundais Pierre Nkurunziza à assister à un sommet d'urgence des chefs d'État sur le Burundi qui aura lieu le 13 mai à Dar es Salaam en Tanzanie.

"Nous sommes venus l'inviter (le président Pierre Nkurunziza) et le convaincre d'assister à un sommet d'urgence sur le Burundi qui aura lieu le 13 mai à Dar es Salaam en Tanzanie, et il a accepté", a annoncé aux journalistes le ministre tanzanien des Affaires étrangères, Bernard Membe, après sa réunion avec M. Nkurunziza mercredi après-midi.

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Ces envoyés spéciaux n'étaient autre que les ministres des Affaires étrangères du Kenya, de Tanzanie et du Rwanda.

M. Membe a indiqué que le ministre ougandais des Affaires étrangères n'avait pas pu venir au Burundi car d'autres devoirs l'en empêchaient.

La visite des envoyés spéciaux constitue une mission d'enquête visant à collecter "autant d'informations factuelles que possible" pour une bonne préparation du sommet d'urgence sur le Burundi, a indiqué M. Membe.

"Maintenant que la Cour constitutionnelle a rendu sa décision, nous sommes venus obtenir l'assurance que la violence ne serait plus tolérée, et chercher la certitude que les élections seront libres, équitables et pacifiques", a déclaré M. Membe.

M. Nkurunziza a tenté de les rassurer lors de leurs entretiens, a-t-il dit, ajoutant qu'ils espéraient que le sommet des chefs d'État de l'EAC pourrait examiner les moyens de rapatrier au moins 20.000 demandeurs d'asile ainsi que de réduire la violence et de créer la confiance au sein de la population.

Le ministre tanzanien des Affaires étrangères, Bernard Membe, a également indiqué que les envoyés spéciaux devaient rencontrer les dirigeants de partis politiques au Burundi.

Plusieurs communes de Bujumbura, la capitale de ce pays d'Afrique de l'Est, sont depuis le 26 avril le théâtre de manifestations de l'opposition et de la société civile contre la candidature de M. Nkurunziza à un troisième mandat.

Au moins 13 personnes ont été tuées dans les manifestations, selon le président de l'Association burundaise pour la protection des droits Humains et des détenus (APRODH), Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa.

Burundi: Why Rwanda's Concerns over Burundi Crisis Are Legitimate

OPINION

Source: The New Times

By Arthur Asimwe

6 May 2015 - The Government of Rwanda issued a statement on Monday in which it expressed serious concern" over the deteriorating political situation in neighboring Burundi.

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Many eyes were on Rwanda, waiting to see its position and when a statement came out, some described it as short of detail but diplomatically long enough to send a message.

Like they say, when your neighbour's house is on fire, beware of thine own. Therefore, with the increasing violence and unrest in Burundi, the timing was right for Rwanda to express concern.

Besides that, Rwanda and Burundi share more than mere borders. The historical linkage between the two countries provides Kigali with every legitimate reason to be worried about an unstable Burundi.

For starters, Burundi is what some authors have coined as the 'Twin Brother' of Rwanda. Geographically, demographically, culturally and linguistically, we are inter-linked. We share a common bitter colonial history under Germans, who gave way to Belgians, who handed over to the neo-imperialism era led by the French.

These imperialists sowed seeds of ethnic diversity in which we later harvested dead seeds of conflict, genocide and decades of political hopelessness.

Because of this special historical link, Rwanda cannot afford to turn a blind eye on what is unfolding in Burundi. That would amount to betrayal-something similar to abandoning a brother in a lion's den.

Secondly, an unstable Burundi simply spells bad omen for Rwanda. It has a spillover effect. And it's not only about the growing number of refugees, (nearly 25,000 at last count), that Rwanda has to grapple with; it is also about the ethnic dimension that this conflict might take.

Yesterday, the social media was awash with some tracts being disseminated by Imbonerakure, the militia group of the ruling party, and they read nothing short of a hate ideology.

The problem is that because of the porous nature of our geographical boundaries, this kind of literature finds its way across our borders. And though Rwandans have learnt the bitter way from the consequences of the Genocide and chosen a path of reconciliation and healing, we are not fully insulated from the spillover effect should it happen in Burundi.

Therefore, anything that would awaken these past demons is not something that Rwanda can afford to respond to as a bystander.

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Third and probably most important, is the security connotation to this problem. A fragile Burundi provides a fertile ground for extremist groups to flourish. There are already reports of the rag-tag terrorist outfit FDLR taking advantage of the skirmishes to enter into Burundi.

FDLR is a genocidal force with an ideology that we all know. Their alleged presence in Burundi, if true, must be linked to its desire to spread this ideology and also probably open up a new front for destabilising Rwanda. Rwanda can tolerate anything else but not something that will compromise its security.

Lastly, and a probably the fundamental reason behind the unending unrests that have characterised Burundi, is linked to the political model they chose. Unlike its 'twin brother', Burundi chose to base its political and governance structure on an ethnic backbone-one guided by quotas for the two main groups.

The result of this model is that Burundi remains trapped in the historical web of ethnical differences that continues to breed the evils of mutual suspicion, nepotism, parochialism, undermining one another and a general absence of a common shared vision for the nation.

But for the colonial architects of this divisive narrative, that is what constitutes democracy for Africans. For them, amplifying the ethnic card amounts to freedom of expression and assembly.

Aligning one's political interests along an ethnic group as opposed to having a clear ideology is the democracy we were left with and continue to feast on.

The one that champions values of inclusiveness, consensual dialogue and the demand for collective dignity is very un-African.

However, what is happening in Burundi today is a reflection of the failure of the model they chose, one that only continues to foment divisions among the Burundians as opposed to building social cohesion.

Therefore, because of the difference in governance models between Rwanda and Burundi, the one-time 'identical twins' have grown to become more 'fraternal,' a pair with a striking difference in appearance.

Otherwise, how else would you explain a situation where, on one side, the population is up in arms determined to remove the incumbent and, on the other, the masses are united with one strong voice and determination to have the constitution amended to let their leader stay on.

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As we hope for Burundi to emerge out of the current skirmishes, it is high time it borrowed a leaf from its twin brother.

ANGOLA

Christian sect killings in Angola shrouded in fear and mystery

Source: Reuters

6 May 2015 - The only traces of thousands of Angolan Christian sect members who were camped in these hills are burnt-out vehicles, shacks pocked with bullet holes and bloodstains in the soil.

The details of a police raid on April 16 in the remote hills of central Huambo province have been fiercely contested, sharpening the divide between the ruling MPLA and the main opposition party UNITA, which fought on opposing sides in a 27-year civil war that ended in 2002.

It has also raised awkward questions about the government in Africa's second-largest oil producer, which spent \$6.5 billion on defence in 2013, the biggest slice of its budget and more than any other country in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Angolan police said 13 "snipers" from "The Light of the World" were killed during a raid to capture sect leader Jose Kalupeteka, a popular anti-authority preacher who says the world will end on December 31.

Kalupeteka was arrested during the raid in the Sumi hills, 25 km (15 miles) south of Caala in the central Angolan highlands, a UNITA stronghold. He was paraded in front of the media in a yellow prison jumpsuit on Tuesday.

Police said the raid came after nine police officers were killed by the sect, an offshoot of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. President Eduardo dos Santos' government accuses the group of mistreating its members by encouraging them to live in seclusion and defy Angola's laws.

UNITA and human rights activists say, however, that more than 1,000 civilians were killed by the police and military in a siege aimed at crushing a group that has defied the government.

Police Commissioner Elias Livulu said only 13 were killed and anyone with evidence to the contrary should produce it.

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"I challenge the person who said that to be urged to locate these 1,080 people killed. Because this is a serious accusation," Livulu told state television.

The MPLA-led Huambo provincial government allowed no access to the hills for two weeks after the clashes, making it difficult to speak to any witnesses or sect members.

"I DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ARE"

Residents estimate at least 3,000 members of the sect had gathered for a religious meeting before the police raid.

"I have not seen anyone who lived there since the incident took place," one local resident, who asked not to be named, told Reuters during an May 3 visit, organised by local government, to areas hit by violence. "I don't know where they are."

Nearby, a soldier wandered through a hillside village where makeshift metal shacks had been burned and looted, clothes were strewn on the ground and pots of food abandoned.

Local human rights activist Angelo Kapwacha said in a report that the raid involved hundreds of police and soldiers armed with machine guns, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, according to a military source he interviewed.

Some members of the sect were singing songs and shouted "our weapon is the Bible" and "Jesus is our protector" during the siege, the military source told Kapwacha.

Rights activist Raphael Marques de Morais wrote in a May 1 article in The Guardian that military sources told him houses were burned down with people inside and sect members were "mown down indiscriminately, many of them praying to the end".

De Morais, who faces trial on charges of defamation due to a 2011 book that alleges links between Angola's military rulers and the "blood diamonds" trade, said his sources told him mass graves were filled in nearby villages.

During a brief and controlled visit to a small part of the affected area, Reuters saw no evidence of burials.

UNITA said it wants an independent investigation, possibly by the United Nations. Huambo Provincial Governor Kundi Paihama told Reuters he had no plans to investigate the clashes.

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RELIGIOUS CRACKDOWN

The Angolan government has in recent weeks been banning church groups, drawing criticism from rights groups who say the MPLA wants to monitor and control faith in a country of 21 million people where religion is influential.

Kalupeteka's popularity is demonstrated in Internet videos of outdoor sermons that show thousands of followers, including women and children, sitting on packed dusty hillsides.

"Mr José Kalupeteka was a bad man," Huambo provincial government spokesman Tony Mendes told Reuters during the visit to the Sumi hills.

"After the governor told him to close this site down he did so for a while. But then he returned here, reopened the site and challenged the government once more," Mendes added.

Angola, which has been ruled by dos Santos for 36 years, has been trying to rebuild its reputation following the civil war and is currently a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.

Dos Santos' opponents, however, say he is more interested in using force to maintain his grip on power than rebuilding the poverty-stricken southern African country.

"President dos Santos needs to review how his legacy will be framed," said Paula Roque, senior analyst at Crisis Group.

"The April 16 clashes can be construed as an opportunity for the government to begin its own investigation and hold its security officers accountable, or it can proceed with a cover up that will only fuel frustrations and dissatisfaction."

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

La Centrafrique promet « des poursuites » contre les militaires français soupçonnés de viols

Source: Le Monde avec l'AFP

6 Mai 2015 - La République centrafricaine a annoncé qu'elle engagerait des poursuites contre les militaires français soupçonnés de viol d'enfants à Bangui. Il s'agit de la

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première réaction officielle du gouvernement centrafricain sur cette affaire, révélée la semaine dernière par le quotidien anglais The Guardian.

« C'est quand même des actes très graves. [...] J'insiste sur le fait qu'il ne faut pas d'amalgame, ce n'est pas "Sangaris", ce n'est pas la France. C'est des individus, c'est des militaires et c'est contre ceux-là que nous nous insurgons », a affirmé le ministre de la justice, Aristide Sokambi à propos des accusations de viols sur mineurs commis en 2014 dans un camp de déplacés, situé près de l'aéroport M'Poko et du camp de l'opération militaire française, mettant en cause quatorze soldats français.

Pas alertés par la France

« Nous déplorons le fait de ne pas avoir été associés à ces investigations, alors que nous avons des accords de coopération avec la France. Donc, j'ai instruit le procureur de la République pour ouvrir une enquête puis essayer de prendre les éléments qui sont déjà à la disposition de la partie française [cette affaire] qui est en fait extrêmement grave », a précisé M. Sokambi.

Le ministre a regretté que son pays n'ait pas été alerté par la partie française. « Le pays aurait dû être associé, parce que tel que les accords le prévoient, nous devons ensemble faire les investigations », a-t-il poursuivi, avant de conclure : « Mais je pense que le plus important [est] que la vérité soit faite sur cette affaire. »

Le ministère de la défense français avait assuré, après les révélations du Guardian, qu'il avait « pris et prendra[it] toutes les mesures nécessaires pour permettre la manifestation de la vérité ».

Central Africa to take 'legal action' against French troops' rape

Source: AFP

Bangui, 7 May 2015 - The Central African Republic will take legal action against the French soldiers accused of raping children in exchange for food at a refugee camp, the country's justice minister has said.

"Legal action will be pursued... These are still very serious acts," said Justice Minister Aristide Sokambi yesterday, insisting his nation was not targeting France but individual soldiers.

Several children - the youngest just nine - allege that 14 soldiers dispatched to the impoverished nation as part of a peacekeeping force sexually abused some of them in exchange for food between December 2013 and June 2014.

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"We regret the fact we were not brought into these investigations despite the cooperation agreements we have with France," Sokambi added.

"So I have instructed the public prosecutor to open a probe and seek the evidence already at the disposal of the French."

French troops were deployed to the Central African Republic in December 2013 to help African Union peacekeepers restore order after a bout of sectarian bloodletting triggered by a coup.

Hundreds of troops were stationed at Bangui's M'Poko airport, which was transformed into a giant refugee camp.

Most of the displaced families living amid the abandoned planes had lost everything in the conflict, which pitted mainly Muslim rebels against vigilantes from the majority Christian population.

Prosecutors in Paris have opened an investigation into the reports, with France's defence ministry pledging to take "all the measures necessary for the truth to come out."

The defence ministry has said it immediately launched a probe into the case, sending police investigators to the former French colony on August 1 after receiving the news, but the damning allegations nevertheless only emerged in April when The Guardian newspaper broke the story.

The defence ministry has denied attempting to cover up a potentially devastating scandal. The allegations were contained in an internal UN report that was leaked to French authorities last summer by a UN official.

If proven, the allegations will not only affect the French army but also the Central African Republic, which is trying to find a way out of a conflict that has killed thousands and displaced nearly 900,000 people.

The rape allegations against the French soldiers are not the first to be levelled against workers on international missions.

Soldiers and police from Britain, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Uruguay, Nigeria and Morocco have all been accused of, or arrested for sexual misconduct while on missions for organisations like the United Nations or NATO over the past decade.

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SOUTH SUDAN

Over 500 civilians arrive at UN as fighting continues in Unity state

Source: Sudan Tribune

Benitu, 5 May 2015 - Over 500 civilians fled their homes to United Nations protection of civilian camps as intense fighting continued between South Sudan's warring factions in Unity state this week.

Eyewitness said the fighting mainly escalated in the central heart of Rubkotna and neighboring Guit counties of the oil-rich state.

Multiple sources told Sudan Tribune Tuesday that a number of civilians, mostly women and children were dislodged from their homes allegedly by government forces as they battled the armed opposition south of the state.

"As I speak with you now, since yesterday a big number of women and children have arrived in the camp, they are looking for safety. They lost everything including cattle and properties," said a sources that preferred anonymity.

Fighting has been ongoing for nearly two weeks as the two warring parties resumed hostilities in the oil rich state capital, Bentiu. The rebels accused pro-governments for allegedly carrying out deadly attacks on civilian villages southwest of the state capital.

South Sudanese officials dismissed rebels' claims that government mobilised armed civilians in Lakes and Warrap states to fight rebels.

Toby Lanzer, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator in South Sudan, said aid workers in Bentiu have been prevented from carrying out their work within town, villages and the surrounding neighborhoods.

He said this was likely to interrupt life-saving assistance, including medical support in hospitals for those affected by the ongoing conflict.

"Aid agencies count on the good offices of all parties and officials to respect the freedom of movement required for humanitarian action, so that assistance can reach civilians in need of help, on time," said Lanzer.

According to anonymous officials, Guit County, which has been a battle field between rebels and government, fell under the control of pro-government forces on Wednesday.

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UN accuses S. Sudan of preventing aid workers from leaving base

Source: Xinhua

Khartoum, 6 May 2015 - The United Nations (UN) Mission in South Sudan on Tuesday [5 May] accused Juba of preventing UN aid workers from leaving their base in Bentiu.

"Over the past days, aid workers based in Bentiu, the capital of the oil-rich Unity State, have been prevented from leaving the UN base to carry out their work in Bentiu and surrounding neighborhoods," the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan Toby Lanzer said in a press statement.

"This interrupts life-saving assistance, including medical support in hospitals," Lanzer noted.

The UN official further urged the warring parties to respect freedom of action of the aid agencies operating in South Sudan.

However, a South Sudanese official said the move was "precautionary" to ensure safety and security of the international aid workers.

"This is a precautionary measure through which we are seeking to ensure the safety and security of the UN personnel and international aid workers", South Sudanese Information Minister Michael Makuei told Xinhua.

"There is a security situation known for everybody, therefore we issue orders from time to time for them not to move, particularly in the areas witnessing security tensions," he noted.

Makuei also lashed out at the UN mission in South Sudan, saying "in many occasions the UN personnel do not listen to the government instructions and behave as if they are the government."

Besides South Sudan, UN mission in Sudan also found itself in a tight corner. On Sunday, the Sudanese authorities said that they decided to file criminal suits against the the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

Khartoum accused the UNAMID of killing seven civilians at Kass locality in Sudan's South Darfur State, while the mission said it was in a state of self-defense.

Khartoum says it has many justifications to demand the mission's exit, including that UNAMID has failed to fulfill its task and become a burden for the Sudanese government.

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

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

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