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



MEDIA MONITORING

9 April 2015

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

RDC: l'armée affirme avoir délogé les FDLR de 35 localités

Source: Radio Okapi

Les Forces armées de la RDC (FARDC) affirment avoir repris le contrôle de trente-cinq localités occupées jusque-là par les rebelles rwandais des FDLR au Sud et Nord-Kivu. C'est ce qu'a annoncé mardi 7 avril le commandant de la troisième zone de défense de l'armée congolaise, Général Léon Mushale, qui faisait un premier bilan des opérations lancées contre ces combattants rwandais depuis le 29 janvier dernier.

8 avril 2015 - L'officier de l'armée congolaise précise que parmi les localités récupérées, 21 sont situées au Sud-Kivu et 14 dans la partie sud du parc des Virunga, au Nord-Kivu.

La même source indique que les militaires congolais ont également neutralisés 237 rebelles FDLR dont 13 ont été tués.

Le général Léon Mushale parle également de 85 armes lourdes et légères et plusieurs munitions récupérées.

Au cours de ces opérations, quatre cases ont été incendiées, deux civils tués et un autre blessé.

Le général Mushale ne donne pourtant aucun bilan du côté FARDC, mais affirme que l'armée se comporte bien sur le terrain des opérations.

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« Nos forces armées sont une armée respectueuse du droit international humanitaire. C'est la raison pour laquelle il y a eu un faible taux des tués parmi les FDLR », fait savoir le général Léon Mushale.

Le commandant de la troisième zone de défense des FARDC accuse les rebelles FDLR de continuer à tuer, à enlever et à violer.

« Les FARDC sont déterminées donc à éradiquer l'ennemi FDLR », assure-t-il.

Depuis le mois de janvier, l'armée congolaise mène seule l'offensive contre les FDLR. Le gouvernement congolais a renoncé au soutien de la Monusco, dans ces opérations militaires. Des divergences sont apparues entre les Nations unies et son partenaire congolais sur la présence dans la chaîne de commandement de deux généraux soupçonnés de violation des droits de l'homme.

RDC : Une dizaine de soldats tués

Source: Le Figaro.fr avec Reuters

8 avril 2015 - Une dizaine de soldats de la République démocratique du Congo (RDC) ont été tués lundi [6 avril] dans une embuscade tendue dans l'est du pays par des rebelles rwandais des Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), a-t-on appris aujourd'hui [8 avril] de source militaire.

L'attaque s'est produite dans le secteur de Masisi, dans la province du Nord-Kivu. Deux colonels figurent au nombre des victimes, a précisé cette source, un membre des forces armées congolaises s'exprimant sous couvert de l'anonymat. Le bilan est le plus lourd depuis le déclenchement, en février, d'une offensive armée contre les rebelles.

Formées pour l'essentiel d'anciens soldats et miliciens hutus rwandais impliqués dans le génocide du printemps 1994 au Rwanda, les FDLR comprendraient quelque 1.400 combattants. Le groupe rebelle est considéré comme l'un des principaux facteurs de violences dans l'Est congolais.

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DRC Opposition Protests Exclusion of Youth Vote

Source: Voice of America

8 April 2015 - An opposition party in the Democratic Republic of Congo is protesting an electoral calendar that it says will deny many young people the right to vote in local elections this year.

Opposition parties in the DRC have been contesting the electoral process for months, with deadly consequences in January, when according to Human Rights Watch, at least 40 people were killed in street protests. The government denies that figure and has said about a dozen people died.

Those protests led to the announcement of an electoral calendar, but now opposition activists are contesting the date set for local and provincial elections this year, which they say is too soon. They say logistics are not in place and many young voters would be excluded.

New calendar called unconstitutional

Speaking at a public meeting on the streets of Goma, Christian Badosse, a local spokesman for the Engagement for Citizenship and Democracy [ECIDE] party said the new calendar is unconstitutional.

He said this is because the constitution clearly states everyone over the age of 18 has the right to vote.

According to the calendar announced by electoral commission president Abbe Appollinaire Malu Malu, the local elections this year will be based on lists of voters drawn up in 2011, and anyone not on those lists will not vote.

As Badosse pointed out, that excludes people who were under 18 in 2011, but are now between 18 and 22.

He told the crowd that recently, many young Congolese died for the right to vote.

"You exerted pressure in the streets between January 19th and 22nd," Badosse told the mainly young audience, saying it is possible many Congolese died in those protests.

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Maluku cemetery probe

Badosse suggested there now is a question over the figure of 40 victims cited by Human Rights Watch. He said there is now an inquiry about the bodies found at Maluku cemetery near Kinshasa.

Last Friday, the government announced that more than 400 bodies have been discovered in a mass grave at Maluku. The deputy prime minister said these were bodies of the destitute and of children who died in infancy.

The government has announced a judicial investigation into the circumstances surrounding the grave.

The United Nations mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo has welcomed that announcement and says the U.N. human rights office will 'accompany' the investigation.

The ECIDE meeting was stopped by police after about 10 minutes.

"I knew the police would come," said someone in the crowd. There were no arrests and no violence.

RWANDA

Rwandan rebel group kills 10 soldiers in eastern Congo ambush

Source: Reuters World Service

8 April 2015 - Rwandan rebels in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo killed around 10 soldiers in an ambush this week, an army source said on Wednesday, the insurgents' deadliest attack since the start of a military campaign against them in February.

The military source, who asked not to be identified, said that two colonels were among those killed and several other soldiers were injured in the attack by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).

The ambush took place on Monday in the Masisi region of north Kivu province, he said.

The FDLR, a Hutu force of some 1,400 fighters, includes soldiers and militiamen involved in neighboring Rwanda's genocide in 1994. It has embedded itself in the communities of eastern Congo, a region plagued by dozens of armed groups.

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FDLR fighters have sought to exploit the region's rich deposits of gold, diamonds and tin and waged periodic war with the Kinshasa government and other armed groups.

Many analysts say that defeating the FDLR is critical to breaking a catastrophic cycle of violence in eastern Congo.

However, a slow start to the military campaign has raised doubts about its ability to defeat the FDLR, which has fought alongside the army in the past against other Rwanda-backed rebels.

General Leon Mushale, the top Congolese army commander in eastern Congo, said only 13 FDLR fighters had been killed since the campaign began. He said this was because the army was taking care not to incur civilian casualties.

At least one Congolese soldier was killed in the first week of the campaign, but military authorities have not given an overall toll for their casualties.

FDLR fighters have fled deeper into the dense forests of eastern Congo rather than risk open combat. The army says it has captured dozens of towns held by the rebels and that hundreds of combatants have been captured or surrendered.

The operation is being carried out unilaterally by the Congolese army after a row over alleged human rights violations by two Congolese commanders led the U.N. peacekeeping force to withdraw its support.

Rwanda says French genocide papers could answer 'dark' questions

Source: AFP

8 April 2015 - Rwanda said Wednesday that France's declassification of documents relating to the 1994 genocide will shed light on unanswered questions over the mass killings, in which Kigali accuses Paris of having an indirect role.

The French decision Tuesday concerns documents in the Elysee presidential palace relating to Rwanda between 1990 and 1995, spanning the genocide which claimed at least 800,000 lives.

"The president had announced a year ago that France must provide proof of transparency and facilitate remembrance of this period," a source in French President Francois Hollande's office said.

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Rwandan Minister of Justice Johnston Busingye said Wednesday that Paris should ensure that all the documents are released.

"The Franco-Rwanda political, diplomatic and military relationship during the 1990-1995 period has been a tightly guarded domain," Busingye told AFP.

"Perhaps the goings on at the time will finally be opened up, and it will shed light on the many dark and grey questions still unaddressed. One only hopes that the declassification is total."

The papers, which include documents from diplomatic and military advisors as well as minutes from ministerial and defence meetings, will be available to both researchers and victims' associations, the French presidency said.

Ties between France and Rwanda are strained, with Rwandan President Paul Kagame accusing Paris of complicity in the genocide because of its support of the Hutu nationalist government that carried out the mass slaughter, mainly of ethnic Tutsis.

- Survivors welcome declassification -

Paris has repeatedly denied the accusations and insists that French forces had worked to protect civilians. Relations between both countries were completely frozen from 2006 to 2009.

The president of Ibuka, Rwanda's genocide survivors' association, called for documents to be made available as soon as possible.

"Let them do it and do so quickly, it is interesting, it is good," said Jean-Pierre Dusingizemungu, saying it could shed light on France's role and actions through the period of the genocide.

The genocide was sparked by the killing of country's president, a Hutu, when his plane was shot down in April 1994.

Kagame last year caused a stir by repeating his accusations against France before commemorations to mark the 20th anniversary of the genocide which ran from April to July 1994.

He notably said that France had not "done enough to save lives" and had not only been complicit but "an actor" in the massacre of Tutsis.

He also spoke of "the direct role of Belgium and France in the political preparation of the genocide, and the participation of the latter in its actual execution".

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Former French Prime Minister Alain Juppe, who was President Francois Mitterrand's foreign minister at the time of the genocide, termed the accusations "intolerable" and urged Hollande to "defend France's honour."

Stung by the repeated accusations, France cancelled plans for the justice minister to attend the 20th anniversary commemorations.

A French parliamentary enquiry set up to try to establish the truth about the French role declared that "France was in no way implicated in the genocide against the Tutsis."

But the two rapporteurs, one of whom was Bernard Cazeneuve who is France's interior minister, however admitted the French authorities made "serious errors of judgement."

The United Nations was also taken to task in 1994 for only belatedly recognising that a genocide was in progress.

The announcement of the French declassification of the Rwanda papers came on the 21st anniversary of the outbreak of the genocide on April 7, 1994.

French Rwanda genocide documents not complete, activists warn

Source: RFI

7 April 2015 - Activists have welcomed the French government's decision to declassify archive documents relating to the 1994 Rwandan genocide but said it does not go far enough. "Some documents still have to be declassified," Alain Gauthier, the head of French NGO Collective of Civil Parties for Rwanda, commented on Wednesday.

The papers, essentially official documents from the president's office, span 1990-1995, a period during which France's role has attracted controversy.

The decision comes on the 21st anniversary of the start of the Rwandan genocide in which 800,000 people were killed.

"The declassification of these archives is good news for us, as well as for the Rwandans," Gauthier explains. "However, we should wait to know the content of these documents to see if they are interesting."

"It's a good step but if this had been done 10 years ago we would have said it was courageous. Today my first reaction is to say 'finally'," comments André Guichaoua, a sociologist and Rwanda specialist.

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The declassified papers, which include documents from diplomatic and military advisers, will be available to both researchers and victims' groups.

But the contents of the documents as well as the date of their declassification remain unknown. Gauthier hopes “these documents will shed light on the Tutsi genocide”.

But a lot of documents concerning France’s role in Rwanda are still secret, he points out.

“This won’t stop us from asking for the declassification of every document that is classified. There are others documents still classified, the ones about the French army in particular.”

The announcement is also seen by analysts as an attempt by President François Hollande to improve relations with Rwanda.

Ties between the two countries have been strained since Rwandan President Paul Kagame accused Paris of complicity in the genocide because of its support of the Hutu nationalist government that carried out the mass killings, mainly of ethnic Tutsis.

Green MP Noël Mamère says it is time we get the truth on what happened in Rwanda.

"This genocide killed a million people between April and July 1994 and it’s clear now, after the fact-finding mission conducted in 1998, historical research, officials documents, those emerging today are likely to prove ... not a complicity [of the French state] but a case of blindness of the French state on what was one of the greatest genocides of the twentieth century," he said on Monday.

Still, Alain Gauthier thinks will never completely understand what happened in Rwanda.

“It’s going be very difficult to understand completely what happened in Rwanda. A big number of gray areas remain” he regrets. “We’ll never know all the truth.”

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BURUNDI

Burundi: Renforcement de la coopération avec la RDC Congo et la Tanzanie

Source: AG News (<http://burundi-agnews.org/uncategorized/?p=17120>)

8 avril 2015 - A Bujumbura, le mercredi 01 avril 2015, le Conseil des Ministres du Burundi, sous la présidence du très populaire président africain du Burundi, S.E. Pierre NKURUNZIZA, a adopté le Projet de Mémoire d'entente tripartite entre le Burundi, la Tanzanie et la République Démocratique du Congo sur le Développement des Infrastructures et des Services de Transport, présenté par, Mme Virginie Ciza, Ministre burundaise des Transports, des Travaux Publics et de l'équipement.

Ce Mémoire s'inscrit dans la droite ligne de la politique industrielle burundaise prônant la volonté de toujours désenclaver au maximum le pays. Ici, il s'agit bien entendu du projet de développer le fameux Corridor Central qui est un projet de rail (chemin de fer) devant relier les 3 pays.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Central African militias agree peace deal

Source: News 24

8 April 2015 - Warring forces in the Central African Republic have agreed to a ceasefire deal after months of negotiations mediated by Kenya, Nairobi announced on Wednesday.

The deal was signed between Joachim Kokate, a representative of the mainly Christian anti-balaka rebels, and ex-president Michel Djotodia of the predominantly Muslim ex-Seleka movement, the Kenyan presidency said in a statement.

"There will be many who will try to bring divisions amongst you for their personal benefit," President Uhuru Kenyatta said in the statement.

But he praised the "spirit of brotherhood" the parties had demonstrated.

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An earlier ceasefire deal in January had called for the replacement of CAR's interim government led by President Catherine Samba-Panza and was never recognised by Bangui.

Samba-Panza has not been part of the peace process initiated by Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso.

The January accord was also rejected by the 10-member Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC).

Since then the rival sides in the Central African Republic have agreed to recognise the transitional authorities.

The Central African Republic is struggling to recover from a 2013 coup that ousted President Francois Bozize and plunged the impoverished, landlocked country into a spiral of violence pitting the country's Christian and Muslim populations against each other.

The Seleka militia seized power in March 2013 and put rebel leader Djotodia in power, making him the country's first Muslim president.

Djotodia stepped down in January 2014 under strong international pressure for his failure to rein in the rogue ex-rebels who relentlessly murdered, raped and stole from civilians.

In response, largely Christian communities formed "anti-balaka" - or anti-machete - vigilante forces who hunted down Muslims in revenge attacks.

Many critics have viewed the Nairobi talks with skepticism and questioned the ability of the groups to enforce any deal on the ground.

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KENYA

Garissa attack: Hard questions that just won't go away

Source: The Standard (Kenya).

8 April 2015 - "We are working hard to ensure that Kenya is terror-proof," said Deputy President William Ruto after an attack on a bus in Mandera left 28 dead in November last year.

In view of last week's attack on Garissa University, it is evident the State is yet to live up to its promise as contained in the speech he read on behalf of President Uhuru Kenyatta.

In the speech, Mr Kenyatta was quick to commend the security forces for carrying out "two successful operations in their (terrorists') hideouts across the border (that) left more than 100 fatalities, destroyed four technicals and the camp from which this crime was planned".

After the Garissa attack, Mr Kenyatta promised "the severest of response to Al-Shabaab". The country was again informed of two air strikes on terrorists' bases in Somalia. This line of thought, it seems, seeks to placate an increasingly impatient public still searching for answers about their security and how the elite Recce Squad got to Garissa 15 hours after the siege and only took 15 minutes to annihilate the assailants. Appearing on CNN's Christiane Amanpour show on Monday night, Foreign Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed denied the response was as slow as has been made to look. Manoah Esipisu, the President's Spokesman, appearing in the same station, trundled out the oft-repeated line that a lot more students were saved than those who died in the tragedy. The death of a single Kenyan at the hands of the terrorists is one death too many. The Garissa attack left more than 144 young Kenyans dead. That is a big number. It is therefore morally irresponsible for the Government's PR machine to go into overdrive after what everyone acknowledges was a lamentable response. The question is whether the number of casualties would have been that high had the GSU officers been deployed in good time. In the end, the unabashed defence of the operations does more harm to the grief-stricken families of the dead and mocks the public. Instead of trying to justify its failure, the Government should instead admit it did not measure up to expectations and endeavour to remedy things.

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After the Westgate massacre in 2013, few would have expected the response to be as disjointed and delayed. Yet despite all the fumbling and chest-thumping, Joseph Nkaissery, the Interior Cabinet Secretary, takes credit for the honesty and for being in charge of a grave situation. He was uncharacteristically forthright, never got carried away and at no time did he contradict himself like his predecessor Joseph ole Lenku.

SUDAN

Soudan: meeting électoral au Darfour, Béchir s'en prend à l'ONU et à l'UA

Source: MaliActu.net

8 avril 2015 - Le président soudanais Omar el-Béchir s'en est pris mercredi aux Nations unies et à l'Union africaine au cours d'un meeting électoral organisé à El-Facher, dans la région du Darfour en proie aux violences et à la guerre depuis plus de dix ans.

Dans un discours prononcé devant plusieurs centaines de partisans, M. Béchir a estimé que le Soudan n'avait pas besoin de la Mission de l'ONU-UA au Darfour (Minuad) pour régler les conflits dans cette région de l'ouest du pays où des rebelles combattent le gouvernement depuis 2003.

« Avez-vous besoin que l'on vous dise comment vous réconcilier ? Avez-vous besoin de la Minuad ? Avez-vous besoin de l'Union africaine ? Avez-vous besoin des Nations unies ? », a demandé le président qui se présente pour un nouveau mandat à la présidentielle qui se tient sur trois jours à partir de lundi.

« Non ! », criaient les supporters qui répondaient à ces questions.

« Vous êtes ceux qui enseignez la paix et la réconciliation au monde, personne ne vous dira comment faire », a poursuivi le président acclamé par la foule.

Khartoum avait sommé la Minuad –déployée depuis 2007– de se préparer à quitter le Soudan l'an dernier, à la suite d'une enquête lancée par la Mission sur un viol collectif présumé impliquant l'armée au Darfour-Nord.

M. Béchir, réclamé par la Cour pénale internationale (CPI) pour crimes de guerre et crimes contre l'humanité au Darfour, s'exprimait dans la capitale du Darfour-Nord.

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Plusieurs centaines de ses partisans étaient présents au meeting électoral, certains d'entre eux arrivés à dos de chameau saluant le président de leurs montures, au milieu d'une forte présence policière.

Les forces de sécurité, fortement armées, étaient également déployées autour de la ville à l'occasion de ce meeting.

M. Béchir, 71 ans, arrivé au pouvoir en juin 1989 à la suite d'un coup d'Etat est assuré d'être réélu face à 15 concurrents peu connus alors que la plupart des partis de l'opposition boycottent l'élection, comme en 2010.

Les électeurs devront élire, outre le chef de l'Etat pour un mandat de cinq ans, les 354 membres du Parlement et ceux des assemblées régionales, avec des résultats attendus fin avril.

Déclenché par une rébellion réclamant la fin de la « marginalisation économique » et un partage du pouvoir avec Khartoum, le conflit au Darfour a fait en 12 ans plus de 300.000 morts et 2,5 millions de déplacés selon l'ONU. Il n'a pas été résolu et est aggravé par une criminalité accrue dans l'ouest de la région et des violences tribales.

Avec l'instabilité qui ronge le pays, M. Béchir a promis durant la campagne « sécurité et stabilité politique et économique ».

Sudan closes border with South Sudan ahead of elections

Source: APA

8 April 2015 - Sudan has closed its border with South Sudan as part of security measures before the presidential elections scheduled to begin on April 13.

The new measures have been put in place in the nine Sudanese states that share border with South Sudan including the five Darfur states, West Kordofan, South Kordofan, White Nile and Blue Nile states.

The police have confirmed that more than 70,000 troops will be deployed all over the country to ensure a secure voting process on Monday.

The East Darfur government reportedly closed all crossings on the border to secure the elections.

The Deputy Governor of East Darfur State Ahmed Kibir said in a press statement that a joint security committee was set up to secure the border with Kordofan State.

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For its part, South Kordofan State Governor Adam Al Fekki confirmed their ability to secure the elections. He said his government has put in place all the necessary measures to secure the election which is one of the citizen's rights.

Meanwhile, Sudan's National Electoral Commission (NEC) has announced the suspension of the process in some troubled areas in South Kordofan State, two days after the rebels claimed capturing some polling materials.

The government has tightened its security measures to protect the voting process scheduled to start on 13 April and continue over three days to 16 April.

The counting process will start on 17 April and the announcement of the results will be on 27 of April, according to the NEC chairman.

Sudan: African Union-UN Mission Condemns Bombings in Central Darfur

Source: UN News Service

7 April 2015 - The Joint African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has confirmed the dropping of 10 bombs which led to the killing of 14 civilians and the wounding of 18 others in Rowata, Central Darfur, on 1 April.

According to a UN spokesperson, yesterday, a verification patrol was dispatched to Rowata. While at the village, the team witnessed another aerial bombardment, consisting of five bombs dropped close to where they were standing.

"The UN Mission strongly condemns such aerial bombings, which cause widespread death, destruction and displacement of populations," the spokesperson said.

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TANZANIA

Tanzania's president Jakaya Kikwete says: I can't wait to step down

Source: The Telegraph

7 April 2015 - Tanzania's outgoing president Jakaya Kikwete has told how he is looking forward to stepping down in October this year, describing the job of leading his country as "stressful and thankless".

Two terms in high office were more than enough for him, Mr Kikwete added during a speech at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars in Washington DC.

"After 10 years, you need to move on. It's been 10 years since I came to this high profile office," he said.

"I was very young, just 55. But what I can tell you about this job is that it is stressful and thankless." His comments might furrow some brows among his neighbours, who have been accused of overstaying their welcome in office.

To the north, Yoweri Museveni has been in office in Uganda since 1986 when he helped to topple dictators Idi Amin and Milton Obote, and is now serving his fourth term amid accusations of electoral fraud and opposition intimidation.

To the west, there were deadly clashes in January after it was suggested that Joseph Kabila, president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, might try to change the constitution to enable him to run for a third term.

Both Malawi and Zambia are beacons in the region for power having changed hands peacefully several times in recent years, but further south in Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, the president, has clung on to high office, allegedly using voter intimidation, violence and poll manipulation, since 1980.

Further west, Angola's Eduardo dos Santos has been in power since 1979.

None the less, Nigeria's Goodluck Jonathan set a strong example for the region last week when he conceded defeat to his presidential rival Muhammadu Buhari in crunch elections.

Asked at the Washington event why he believed African leaders had a tendency to cling to power, Mr Kikwete took a diplomatic approach. "I should not speak on their behalf," he said.