

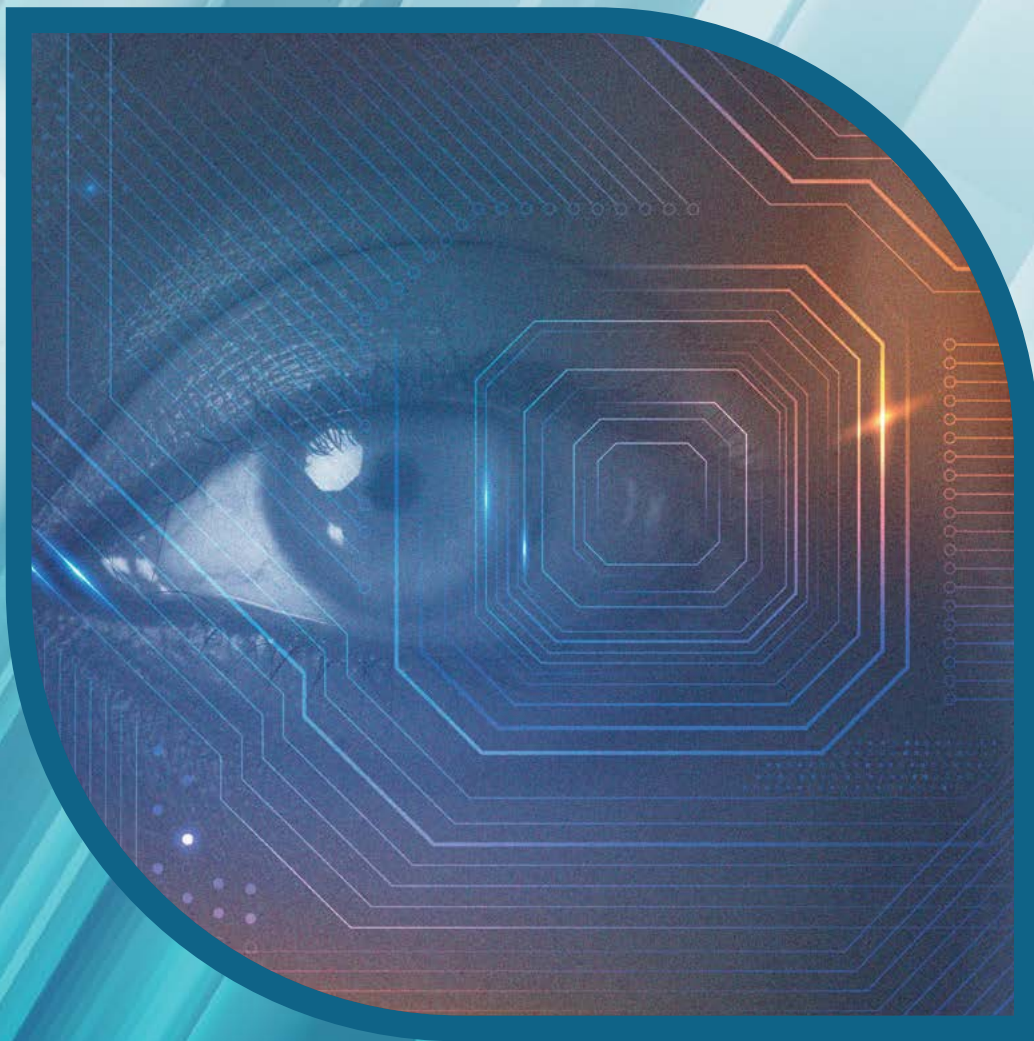


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MARCH 2023

SOUTH SUDAN

7TH MARCH 2023

SOUTH SUDAN'S KIIR SACKS FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir on Wednesday sacked Foreign Affairs minister, Mayiik Ayii Deng without giving reasons. In a decree announced on the state-owned television (SSBC), Kiir assigned the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deng Dau Deng to act as the new minister. Mayiik, a former Presidential Affairs minister, became Foreign minister in 2021. His removal comes barely a week after Kiir fired the Defence minister Angelina Teny and Interior minister Mahmoud Solomon through a presidential directive. The armed opposition faction (SPLM-IO) led by First Vice President Riek Machar rejected the unilateral removal of the Defence minister, calling for reinstatement. In August last year, the parties to the revitalised peace agreement announced the extension of the transitional government for additional 24 months

SOURCE:

<https://sudantribune.com/article271643/>

18TH MARCH 2023

KIIR PROMISES 'END TO TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENTS'

President Salva Kiir on Saturday promised citizens that the country is heading to "a free and fair" election in 2024, saying his government is committed to ending transitional periods which he blames for causing "problems". Speaking to thousands of citizens who came out to welcome him following his arrival from Juba to Western Bahr el Ghazal State's capital Wau, Kiir told the people of Wau to prepare for elections saying the country should have a democratically elected government. "I accepted the extension of the transitional period by 24 months to give the political parties ample time to prepare for general elections. We want to bring an end to transitional governments. We should have a democratically elected government, so you, the people of Wau, should prepare for elections," he said. "If you win elections as a political party, you can form your government, and if you lose, please do not cause conflict. Power-sharing has brought us a lot of problems. There will be free and fair elections," the head of state said.

FREE EDUCATION

The president called on parents to send their children including their daughters to school so that they contribute to the development of the country. “No child should stay at home without being taken to school, I urged you to take all the children to school, especially girls,” he said. “Girls are no longer sold for high bride price but must go to school and contribute to the development of the country,” he added.

SOURCE:

<https://www.sudanspost.com/kiir-promises-end-to-transitional-governments/>

18TH MARCH 2023

TWO JOURNALISTS HELD OVER KIIR VIDEO FREED

The last two journalists of a group of seven detained over a video that went viral, which shows President Salva Kiir wetting his trousers, have been released, a media lobby group said. The seven journalists -- staff at the state-owned South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC) -- were arrested and detained in January by National Security officers as part of an investigation into the source of the clip, which went viral on social media in December. Speaking to Radio Tamazuj on Saturday, the President of the Union of Journalists of South Sudan (UJOSS), Oyet Patrick Charles, said journalists Garang John and Jacob Benjamin were released without charges on Thursday evening. “We can confirm as UJOSS that the last two people who had remained at the facility of the National Security Service are now out; we have had contacts. We appreciate the government for releasing them and for listening to all the calls we have been making to ensure that they are free, and now they are free,” Oyet said. “As of now, there is no journalist who is in detention in any part of the country according to our record,” he added.

In a Facebook post on Saturday morning, Journalist Garang John said: “Dear all, note that I am out of jail after 60 days of confinement. My health is totally compromised. I cannot feel my brain. Doctors are yet to figure out what is wrong with my lungs. I am completely weak and tired but it shall be well.” Reech Malual, Deputy Chairman of the South Sudan Bar Association, said the arrest and release of journalists without charges put their freedom and rights in jeopardy. “Arresting people without investigating or without any suspicion and just releasing them after their freedom has been put in jeopardy is not right. It is an abuse of power,” Malual said. “I would still urge the National Security to follow the law.” South Sudan’s constitution requires detainees to be produced before a court within 24 hours. Despite this, authorities routinely detain suspects for long periods, including during investigations and subsequent trials. South Sudan ranks 128th out of 180 countries on the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) press freedom index. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, freedom of the press is “extremely precarious” in South Sudan, “where journalists work under constant threat and intimidation, and where censorship is ever-present.”

SOURCE:

<https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/two-journalists-held-over-viral-kiir-video-freed>

ETHIOPIA

21ST MARCH 2023

ETHIOPIA REJECTS US WAR CRIME ALLEGATIONS AS 'INFLAMMATORY'

The US allegations were “partisan,” the foreign ministry said, adding: “The US statement is inflammatory.” Washington on Monday accused all parties to the conflict of committing war crimes. But it singled out Ethiopian, Eritrean and regional Amhara forces for crimes against humanity, without mentioning the Tigrayan rebels. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who last week made his first visit to Ethiopia since a breakthrough November 2022 peace deal between the federal government and Tigrayan rebels, on Monday made a forceful call for accountability on his return to Washington. He said the State Department carried out a “careful review of the law and the facts” and concluded that war crimes were committed by federal troops from both Ethiopia and its ally Eritrea as well as by the rebel Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and forces from the neighbouring Amhara region. “Many of these actions were not random or a mere by-product of war.

They were calculated and deliberate,” Blinken said as he presented an annual rights report. Blinken added that the State Department also found crimes against humanity by Ethiopian, Eritrean and Amhara forces, including killings and sexual violence, although he did not mention the TPLF. Ethiopia’s foreign ministry said the US statement “unfairly apports blame among different parties in the conflict.” “The statement appears to exonerate one party from certain allegations of human rights violations such as rape and other forms of sexual violence despite the clear and overwhelming evidence about its culpability,” it said. “This partisan and divisive approach from the US is ill-advised,” it added, calling it “unwarranted”. TPLF officials did not respond to AFP requests to comment about the US report. Blinken had called for accountability during his trip to Addis Ababa, where he held an unusually long meeting with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and spoke separately with senior TPLF leader Getachew Reda. But he did not directly mention war crimes or crimes against humanity and sounded upbeat about the prospects for peace during his visit.

The war badly soured US relations with Ethiopia, Africa’s second most populous nation and long one of Washington’s major partners on the continent. Abiy had earlier voiced anger when Blinken during the war spoke more generally about crimes against humanity, and the Ethiopian leader has rejected UN-led efforts for a probe. On Tuesday, the foreign ministry said Washington’s statement “undercuts the support of the US for an inclusive peace process”. The United States has estimated that some 500,000 people died in the

two-year conflict, making it one of the deadliest wars of the 21st century and dwarfing the toll from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The war began in November 2020 when the TPLF, once the major powerbroker in Ethiopia, attacked military installations in the Tigray, triggering a major counteroffensive. As allegations of atrocities mounted, the US imposed sanctions on Eritrea, an authoritarian state whose relations with Washington were already poor, and booted Ethiopia from a major trade pact, although it held back on further actions against the warring parties.

SOURCE:

<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230321-ethiopia-rejects-us-war-crime-allegations-as-inflammatory>

14TH MARCH 2023

ETHIOPIA IS NOT READY FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Now that the two-year civil war in Tigray and its surrounding regions is over, discussions have begun about transitional justice in Ethiopia. Meanwhile, a policy debate is taking place in the United States on whether and how to lift economic restrictions put on Ethiopia due to its massive human rights violations during the war. In a debate between those favouring condemnation versus engagement, the latter group seems to have gained the upper hand. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is due in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, on Tuesday. The United Nations Human Rights Council is also about to hear a report this month on Ethiopia and possibly vote on the future of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE). Not surprisingly, therefore, the Ethiopian government is keen on proposing a transitional justice process—on its terms. Although the world should rejoice at the prospect of transitional justice in the wake of a bloody civil war that claimed around 600,000 lives—according to Olusegun Obasanjo, Horn of Africa envoy for the African Union—Ethiopia is unfortunately unprepared to embark on this task. A transitional justice mechanism is designed to promote or bring about accountability, justice, sustainable peace, and reconciliation in post-conflict and transitional societies through judicial and other processes that include prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, repentance, and various kinds of institutional reform.

To succeed, a process of transitional justice ought to fulfil a number of criteria that are lacking in Ethiopia. On the heels of the November 2022 Pretoria agreement, which halted active fighting between warring parties in Tigray but not human rights abuses that were reportedly continuing, Ethiopia's Ministry of Justice rather surreptitiously issued a policy paper in January, which contained vague commitments to transitional justice and accountability. Ominous signs of what is to come are already reflected in the policy paper itself, which puts notions of "sovereignty"

and “national dignity” at its centre. In addition to being a sign of insincerity, the adoption of such an ultranationalist position is deeply ironic. After all, any serious investigation is likely to find that Eritrea, a foreign state, was invited by the Ethiopian government to occupy Ethiopian sovereign territory, where it allegedly committed some of the most egregious human rights violations of the war. The fact that the dominant view in Washington today advocates U.S. reengagement with Ethiopia on the grounds that national interest must trump human rights is thus welcome news for Ethiopia’s government.

It perfectly aligns with the government’s urgent desire and need to use the principle of national sovereignty as an impenetrable shield against international accountability. The cantering of sovereignty and national pride in a human rights-related document is a prescription for failure. In our view, the Ethiopian government has adopted such a hyper nationalist position in a bid to shield itself from international or regional processes of accountability, including possibly a hybrid mechanism such as the one that exists between the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It appears to be interested in a monitoring and truth process through an expanded EHRC mandate, which it hopes can continue to monitor the cease-fire with the OHCHR’s regional office (which it proposes as the independent/international element) while still pursuing its own domestic investigations either through a revamped Inter-Ministerial Taskforce or a special prosecutor. Even though it may be an exaggeration to equate this proposal, as some have done, to letting Russian President Vladimir Putin investigate alleged war crimes by his own soldiers in Ukraine, it is not so different.

The international community should be skeptical because the current initiative proposes to attain transitional justice without a transition—either from war or from authoritarianism. Furthermore, while the cessation of hostilities between the government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) seems to be holding, Eritrean soldiers still remain in border regions and eastern parts of Tigray as well as continue to commit human rights violations. In the Oromia region, a government offensive has been underway against the Oromo Liberation Army and Oromo Liberation Front. Describing the goal of the offensive, an Ethiopian official said, “to kill the fish drain the ocean.” As was the case with previous transitional justice initiatives conducted exclusively by the Ethiopian government, they can be used by the government to thwart justice while staving off external pressure. The commission of inquiry established to investigate crimes against humanity in the Gambella region in 2004 was probably the most successful effort in diverting international attention, including that of Africa’s regional system of human rights enforcement.

The commission of inquiry for Addis Ababa, established to investigate 2005 post-election violence, also mostly failed because it was similarly designed to be unsuccessful. Although this commission had come close to reaching a rather timid conclusion confirming the excessive use of force by the police, it was not granted even that much leverage as a curious series of events led to the early suspension of parliament and, later, the resignation and eventual exile of the chairperson of the commission. And the commission of inquiry established in 2006 by Oromia’s parliament, and the Federal Parliamentary Assembly established in 2022 are two more recent examples of investigatory bodies that were established to cover up rather than expose human rights violations. Even if one takes the Ethiopian government’s commitment

to transitional justice at face value, it lacks the capacity to achieve it. It does not command enough faith among people. Ethiopia's beleaguered judicial system, whose president and deputy president resigned under dubious circumstances after serving for a very brief period, is in no shape to deal with complex war crimes and crimes against humanity cases. What's more, the judiciary, especially the Federal Supreme Court and the Council of Constitutional Inquiry, have been active participants in the electoral dispute that set off the constitutional crisis that preceded and may have led to the outbreak of the war in Tigray.

The constitutional crisis traces its origin to a hearing led by the president of the Federal Supreme Court in a historic spectacle that was broadcast to millions of Ethiopians on live TV. The hearing, in addition to excluding critical voices, paraded a cascade of experts seemingly testifying in support of what would turn out to be the cancellation of the 2020 elections. The judicial determination, which gave the government unhindered discretion over elections under the guise of COVID-19 measures, was opposed by major opposition parties expected to win or make significant gains in 2020. The decision ushered in a series of crackdowns in the Oromia region in a little over two weeks, and the Tigray war commenced five months later. The unanimous judicial decision in the government's favour formed part of the drumbeat that accompanied the war. An aura of legality proved to be a critical component of a war that was justified on the basis of these decisions and waged as a "law enforcement operation" or an operation "to uphold the rule of law and constitutional order."

Ethiopia's government does not just have the will to thwart justice; it has the experience and capacity to do so as well. It has already shown itself to be a capable operator in its attempts to disrupt, defund, or terminate the ICHREE; it has begun an open campaign targeting influential U.N. member states and regional organizations to this end. Before discounting the regime's ability to succeed in its efforts, one would do well to remember that Ethiopia had been a leading actor in ensuring impunity for former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in connection with the genocide in Darfur as well as in coordinating the campaign for the mass withdrawal of African nations from the Rome Statute.

The Ethiopian government and, more importantly, its more educated members and backers should take a step back and reassess the potential harm to the country of yet another failed transitional justice initiative. Opposition groups—in this case, the TPLF and others—should have a principled approach that creates a united front on the issue of transitional justice for Ethiopia. The international community, which by now must have regretted the role it played in contributing to the success of the side that won the palace wars of 2018, must ensure that the authors of mass atrocities in the Tigray war would ultimately face transitional justice. Transitional justice must deliver justice to the victims; it should not protect the perpetrators of brutality.

SOURCE:

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/03/14/ethiopia-tigray-war-crimes-transitional-justice-human-rights/>

ETHIOPIA: AT LEAST FOUR KILLED AT ADWA VICTORY CELEBRATION

Ethiopia celebrated the 1896 victory of the Adwa battle fought against the Italian colonial army. At least four people lost their lives after the security officers fired live ammunition at the crowd in Addis Ababa while they celebrated the 127th Adwa Victory Day. This year's celebration has more political significance and was celebrated with unusual fanfare. Usually, the day was mainly celebrated by WWII veterans, almost all of whom are dead. Preparations for the 127th celebration of Adwa were underway for many weeks and included practice parades that today displayed the might of the Ethiopian armed forces. Armoured vehicles and missile-carrying vehicles rolled in front of the guests while fighter jets roared above. This year the government limited the celebrations to the main venue at Meskel Square. Prime Minister Abiy didn't attend the celebrations. However, many Addis Ababans, either by choice or in defiance of the government's decision, flocked to the traditional celebration venue at Piazza neighbourhood.

Police have blocked streets that lead to Piazza. The unauthorized Piazza event was celebrated in front of the controversial Minelik statue that stands near the Giorgis church. An eyewitness told Gedab News, "it was not clear whether it was a protest-demonstration, or a celebration. Soon a clash with the police ensued." Security officers reacted by firing teargas canisters and live bullets. At least four people have died in the incident including a student and a teacher. The toll of the killed and wounded is expected to be higher. For the last four years, Ethiopia was marred by civil wars caused by ethnic conflicts and rivalries. So far, the conflicts have resulted in the depletion of the country's foreign currency reserve and has destroyed the infrastructure that it built over a three-decade period. In the last two years alone hundreds of thousands of civilians and soldiers were killed or wounded. More were displaced or fled to the neighbouring countries. The tense situation has escalated to a serious religious split particularly among the Tewahdo Christians, the largest religious denomination in Ethiopia. Meanwhile, drought and famine are devastating the Borena region of South Ethiopia. According to our reporter, "It's reminiscent of the Wollo famine of 1973" that brought about the end of the Solomonic dynasty and the downfall of its last monarch, emperor Haile Selassie

SOURCE:

<https://awate.com/ethiopia-at-least-four-killed-at-adwa-victory-celebration/>

TANZANIA

19TH MARCH 2023

DAR ES SALAAM

Tanzania has become a hub for food exports, feeding countries in the African region as well as rest of the world, latest statistics from the Bank of Tanzania (BoT) and the Ministry of Agriculture show. The central bank data shows that in the period of five years from 2018 to 2022 the country sold vegetables worth \$1.01 billion (Sh2.4 trillion). During the same period Tanzania also exported grain crops (mostly rice and maize) worth \$999 million (Sh2.3 trillion). These statistics indicate that Tanzania is among the top five rice producers on the entire African continent and the largest rice producer in East Africa” the BoT said in a statement issued on March 17, 2023. In the 2020/21 season, Tanzania produced 1.85 million tonnes of rice, while the country’s annual demand is around 1 million tonnes. This means that there was an excess of 850,000 tonnes of rice. In the same season, Tanzania produced 6.5 million tonnes of maize, compared to the country’s annual demand of 6 million tonnes.

Fish and fish product exports on the other hand reached S\$800 million (Sh1.9 trillion), while fruit exports were worth \$71.4 million (Sh170 billion) between 2018 and 2022. These statistics come as President Samia Suluhu Hassan curtain raised for the Africa Food Systems Forum, a major agricultural conference scheduled to be held in Tanzania from September 5-8 this year. The launch took place at State House in Dar es Salaam. Since taking office in March 2021, President Samia has doubled the government’s budget for agriculture to levels never seen since independence in 1961. The Samia administration has also invested in seed subsidies, fertilizer subsidies, seed production, and irrigation farming, all of which has contributed to the impressive productivity over the past five years.

SOURCE:

<https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tanzania-among-top-food-exporters-in-africa-says-bot-4163674>

17TH MARCH 2023

UNIDENTIFIED ILLNESS KILLS FIVE IN TANZANIA, SPARKS EBOLA FEARS

Health officials in Tanzania are investigating an illness that killed five people in the country's northwest with Ebola-like symptoms, raising fears that it could be the deadly virus. Tanzania's Ministry of Health late Thursday issued a statement saying seven people in northwest Kagera region showed symptoms such as fever, vomiting, bleeding and kidney failure. The ministry sent audio comments by Chief Medical Officer Tumaini Nagu to media. She said rapid response teams at the regional and council level have been sent to probe the unknown disease to understand and analyse it further. Nagu said samples have been taken from patients to identify the source of the disease. Social media posts in Tanzania noted the symptoms were like those for Ebola, a deadly virus that causes high fevers, severe bleeding, and organ failure. Kagera borders Tanzania's northern neighbour Uganda, which had an outbreak of the rare Sudan strain of Ebola from September last year to January that was blamed for 77 deaths.

Albert Chalamila, regional commissioner of Kagera, said in audio comments that his office sent to the media that officials are taking precautions. Chalamila said they have continued to educate residents regarding the importance of taking all necessary precautions, including for COVID-19 and other illnesses such as Ebola. He said so far there are no reports of anyone having contracted the Ebola virus. Tanzania is not unfamiliar with rare and mysterious diseases but has never recorded a case of Ebola. An outbreak in the southeast last year of leptospirosis, a bacteria spread by rat urine, sickened 20 people and caused three deaths. In 2019, a disease with Ebola-like symptoms that killed one woman who had visited Uganda led the WHO to question the government's response and lack of sharing information. At the time, the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo was struggling with an Ebola outbreak that was the second largest on record, lasted nearly two years and killed more than 2,000 people.

SOURCE:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/unidentified-illness-kills-five-in-tanzania-sparks-ebola-fears-/7010140.html>

19TH MARCH 2023

TANZANIA SENDS RELIEF TO CYCLONE-HIT MOZAMBIQUE

Tanzania has started to dispatch food aid and self-storage equipment to neighbouring Mozambique to help thousands of people affected by tropical cyclone Freddy. More than 190 people are feared to have died, at least 584 have been injured, and 37 have been reported

missing in the country. In a press briefing Saturday, the acting director of information of the army, Gaudentius Ilonda, said the shipment includes 1,000 metric tons of flour, 6,000 blankets, and 50 tents, as well as two helicopters for rescue services. More than 37 large- and small-tonnage trucks will be used to transport the aid provided by the government all the way to Mozambique, Ilonda says. Members of the army are handling the operation and already two rescue planes with soldiers have been deployed to Mozambique for rescue services to the affected areas. In a Twitter post last week, Tanzanian President Samia Hassan sent a condolence message to Mozambique President Filipe Nyusi regarding the cyclone. In her message, Hassan said Tanzania stands with Mozambique during this difficult time and prays for the departed souls, and wishes the injured speedy recovery. Meanwhile, the situation in Mozambique remains challenging, and officials say the efforts of Tanzania to provide assistance will help to address the immediate needs of those affected by the cyclone.

SOURCE:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/tanzania-sends-relief-to-cyclone-hit-mozambique-/7011896.html>

KENYA

12TH MARCH 2023

TWO FOREIGN TOURISTS DIE IN KENYA NATURE RESERVE CRASH

Two foreign tourists, German and Swiss nationals, have died after the vehicle they were traveling in veered off the road and overturned in Kenya's Maasai Mara national reserve, police said Sunday. The crash happened after the vehicle car got stuck in the mud and veered off the road on Saturday, police said. One other tourist was injured and two others, a German and Swiss national, escaped unhurt. They were part of a tour group, but it wasn't immediately clear who was driving the vehicle. The injured tourist was airlifted to a hospital in Kenya's capital. Nairobi, Maasai Mara Chief Warden Stephen Ole Mining said. Police spokesperson Resila Onyango said the crash was under investigation. Maasai Mara national reserve is a popular destination and features the annual wildebeest migration from the Serengeti in Tanzania. Climate change effects are being felt in the expensive wildlife reserve with little vegetation because of five failed consecutive rainy seasons with less than usual rainfall recorded over the last two years.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/kenya-tourists-killed-tour-crash-maasai-mara-3cbf89a361bef0afb08db8fd-f5c536e1>

10TH MARCH 2023

KENYA JAILS SEVEN FOREIGNERS FOR LIFE OVER DRUG TRAFFICKING.

Six Pakistanis and one Iranian national who were found guilty of trafficking heroin via the Indian Ocean to Kenya's coastal city of Mombasa have been sentenced to life in prison. The foreigners have been in custody since 2014 when they were arrested and charged with trafficking heroin worth 1.3 billion Kenya shillings (\$10 million). Each of the convicts will also be fined 3.9 billion Kenyan shillings, the Mombasa court said Friday. They all have a right to appeal to the higher court. The seven were crew members of a ship Amin Darya, also known as Al Noor, and were arrested while on board while the ship was at sea. The ship was destroyed in an operation that was supervised by then president Uhuru Kenyatta, who reiterated the country's strict stance against drug trafficking.

During the trial, the foreigners accused police of tampering with evidence after the ship was destroyed before the case was concluded. The magistrate, however, said the court was satisfied with the evidence retrieved before the ship was destroyed. Police said they found 377 kilograms (831 pounds) of granular heroin, 33,200 liters (8,770 gallons) of liquid heroin and 2,400 liters (6.34 gallons) of diesel mixed with heroin. The Kenyan public prosecutor had sought a life sentence for each of the men after the court found them guilty last month. Kenya's coast has become a transit point for drug trafficking in the East African region, according to officials.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/heroin-kenya-mombasa-drug-trafficking-pakistan-iran-5869552a20a-c3536a87950f3c1fc71d1>

SOMALIA

20TH MARCH 2023

FORTY THREE THOUSAND (43,000) ESTIMATED DEAD IN SOMALI DROUGHT LAST YEAR.

A new report says an estimated 43,000 people died amid Somalia's longest drought on record last year and half of them likely were children under 5 years old. It is the first official death toll announced in the drought withering large parts of the Horn of Africa. At least 18,000 people and as many as 34,000, are forecast to die in the first six months of this year. The current crisis is far from over, says the report released Monday by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's agency and carried out by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Somalia and neighbouring Ethiopia and Kenya are facing a sixth consecutive failed rainy season while rising global prices and the war in Ukraine complicate the hunger crisis. The UN and partners earlier this year said they were no longer forecasting a formal famine declaration for Somalia for now but called the situation extremely critical with more than 6 million people hungry in that country alone. Famine is the extreme lack of food and a significant death rate from outright starvation or malnutrition combined with diseases like cholera. A formal famine declaration means data shows more than a fifth of households have extreme food gaps, more than 30% of children are acutely malnourished and over two people out of 10,000 are dying everyday.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/somalia-drought-deaths-hunger-9e78f99c101a290304a28a37dadfef0>

7TH MARCH 2023

US CITIZEN, SOMALI CONVICTED IN JOURNALIST'S HOSTAGE-TAKING

Two men have been convicted of helping Somali pirates who kidnapped a US journalist for ransom and held him for 21/2 years, prosecutors said. Mohamed Tahlil Mohamed and Abdi Yusuf Hassan were convicted by a federal jury in New York on February 24 th of hostage-taking, conspiracy, providing material support for acts of terrorism and other crimes that carry potential life sentences. Michael Scott Moore, a German-American journalist, was abducted in January

2012 in Galkayo, Somalia, 400 miles (643.7 kilometers) northeast of the capital of Mogadishu. He was working as a freelancer for the German publication Spiegel Online and researching a book about piracy.

The kidnapers demanded \$20 million in ransom and at one point released a video showing Moore surrounded by masked kidnapers who point a machine gun and rocket-propelled grenade at him. Moore was freed in September 2014. Moore has said his family raised \$1.6 million for his release. Tahlil, a Somali Army officer, left his post to take command of the pirates holding Moore captive and obtained the machine guns and grenade launchers used to threaten and hold Moore, US Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement where Moore was held hostage, abused his government position and led the pirates efforts to extort a massive ransom from Moore's mother.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/somalia-journalist-pirates-kidnapped-3847abae009c9df533821d67baaa3ef>

5TH MARCH 2023

DOCTOR IN EMBATTLED SOMALILAND CITY SAYS AT LEAST 145 DEAD

The director of a hospital in a disputed city in the Somaliland region says at least 145 people have been killed in more than two months of fighting between anti-government fighters and Somaliland security forces after local elders declared their intention to reunite with Somalia. Abdimajid Sugulle, with the public hospital in Las-Anod, told the Associated press on Saturday that more than 1,080 other people have been wounded and over 100,000 families have fled the city of Las-Anod since late December. Most civilian have fled, he said. The director accused Somaliland forces of destroying the hospital's laboratory, blood bank and patient ward in mortar attacks.

The Somaliland forces who are positioned outside the town have been shelling civilian residents and medical facilities indiscriminately. No single day passes without shelling and casualties. Somaliland's defence ministry has denied shelling the hospital, and the government has asserted it has a "continuous commitment" to a cease-fire it declared on Feb. 10. "Indiscriminate shelling of civilians is unacceptable and must stop," the United Nations and international partners warned last month.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/somaliland-somalia-conflict-e3122837fc8f6bdaf48c2e557018a482>

UGANDA

17TH MARCH 2023

HOMOSEXUALITY IS DEVIATION FROM NORMAL – MUSEVENI

Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni has reiterated his stand against homosexuality, saying that the act is unnatural and a deviation from normal. He also accused the west of imposing its beliefs and values on the rest of the world. Museveni made the statement while addressing parliament on Thursday in a sitting held at Kololo Independence Grounds. In a brief statement about the issue that continues to dominate public debate, Museveni told MPs that they will get time and discuss the matter thoroughly. Is it by nature or nurture? We need to answer those questions, Museveni said devian⁵ is he deviant by nature or nurture? We need a medical opinion on that. We shall discuss it thoroughly.

The western countries should stop wasting the time of humanity by trying to impose their practices on other people...Europeans and other groups marry cousins and near relatives, here to marry within a clan is taboo...should we impose sanctions on them for marrying relations? So, we should put sanctions on people who are marrying their cousins in other parts of the world. This is not our job, if they are marrying their cousins that is their problem. The president noted that sex in Uganda and maybe in other parts of African is confidential. Even heterosexuality, even the heterosexuals, they do it confidentially, otherwise how do we come to know that you are a homosexual unless you publicize it? We shall discuss all this, the president assured the MP. Museveni's statement comes at a time the legal and parliamentary affair committee is scrutinizing the new Anti-Homosexuality Bill, 2023 recently tabled before the House by Bugiri Municipality MP, Asuman Basalirwa. In his bill, Basalirwa emphasized the need to improve the Penal Code Act, which was enacted by British colonialists to prohibit recruitment, promotion, and funding of same-sex practices because the vice threatens the continuity of the family and the safety of children.

This is the second attempt by Uganda to have a stand-alone legislation against homosexuality. On December 20, 2013, parliament passed the first Anti-Homosexuality Bill that was tabled by Ndorwa East MP, David Bahati and assented to by the Museveni on February 24th, 2014. However, the Constitutional Court annulled the law on August 1, 2014, on grounds that it has been passed without the requisite quorum. According to the United Nations (UN), Uganda is among the 77 countries across the globe that criminalize homosexual practices.

SOURCE:

<https://observer.ug/news/headlines/77161-homosexuality-is-deviation-from-normal-museveni>

22ND MARCH 2023

UGANDA PARLIAMENT PASSES EXTREME ANTI-LGBT BILL

Yesterday, Ugandan lawmakers approved new legislation that entrenches the criminalization of same-sex conduct. It also creates new offenses that will curtail any activism on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues and eradicate LGBT people from any form of social engagement in Uganda. The 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Bill confirms an already existing punishment of life imprisonment for same-sex conduct, while also increasing to 10 years the prison sentence for an attempt at same sex conduct. But one of the most egregious provisions-the bill calls it aggravated homosexuality- calls for the death penalty in certain circumstances, including for serial offenders, or for anyone having same-sex relations with a person with a disability, thereby automatically denying persons with disabilities the capability to consent to sex. The bill also outlaws the promotion of homosexuality, effectively instituting a system of complete censorship on LGBT issues. Anyone advocating for the rights of LGBT people, or providing financial support to organizations that do so, could face up to 20 years' imprisonment. LGBT rights groups could also be deemed unable to legally operate. In addition, anyone who advertises, publishes, prints, broadcasts, distributes material, including digitally, is regarded as promoting or encouraging homosexuality and would face criminal sanction.

The bill also criminalizes any person who fails to report someone they suspect of participating in same-sex acts to the police, calling for a fine or imprisonment for six months. Effectively, supportive family members or friends of LGBT people could be imprisoned if they failed to report their loved ones to authorities. If anyone conducts a same-sex marriage ceremony, they could be imprisoned for up to 10 years. A provision in the bill also outlaws providing accommodation that facilitates the offence of homosexuality. If anyone were to rent a room to a gay couple, for example, they could go to jail for 10 years. Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni has 30 days to assent or reject the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. If the law comes into force, it will violate the rights to freedom of expression and association, liberty, privacy, equality, freedom from discrimination, inhuman and degrading treatment, and a fair hearing-all guaranteed under Ugandan and international law-for all Ugandans.

SOURCE:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/22/ugandan-parliament-passes-extreme-anti-lgbt-bill> Uganda LGBTQ leader says gay bill threatens homelessness

23RD MARCH 20

A PROMINENT LEADER OF UGANDA'S LGBTQ COMMUNITY SAID THURSDAY HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT BECOMING HOMELESS, DESCRIBING ANGUISHED CALLS BY OTHERS LIKE HIM WHO ARE CONCERNED FOR THEIR SAFETY AFTER THE PASSING OF A HARSH NEW ANTI-GAY BILL.

I am worried about being evicted, said Frank Mugisha, head of the banned LGBTQ support group sexual minorities Uganda. I am worried about being evicted from the place where I live, because I don't own property. I could become homeless. The legislation would make it impossible to me to live in this country and work here, he said. Mugisha spoke to The Associated Press amid growing pressure from the United Nations, the United States and others who are urging President Yoweri Museveni to block the legislation passed by lawmakers on Tuesday. The bill prescribes the death penalty for the offense of aggravated homosexuality and life imprisonment for homosexuality. Aggravated homosexuality is defined as cases of sex relations involving those infected with HIV as well as minors and other categories of vulnerable people. Jail terms of up to 20 years are proposed for those who advocate or promote the rights of LGBTQ people.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/lgbtq-rights-uganda-africa-gay-rights-63c0abc5f3ae0dfc8fafb6e92b370944>

RWANDA

25TH MARCH 2023

RWANDA FREES PAUL RUSESABAGINA OF HOTEL RWANDA FAME

Rwanda's government has commuted the 25-year sentence of Paul Rusesabagina, who inspired the film Hotel Rwanda for saving hundreds of countrymen from genocide but was convicted of terrorism offenses years later in a widely criticized trial. Government spokeswoman Yolande Makolo told The Associated Press on Friday that the presidential order was issued after a request for clemency on behalf of Rusesabagina, a 68-year-old US resident and Belgian citizen. Senior US officials said Rusesabagina arrived late Friday at the home of the Qatari ambassador in the Rwandan Capital of Kigali and was expected to leave the country in the coming days.

US President Joe Biden hailed the news, saying Paul's family is eager to welcome him back to the United States, and I share their joy at today's good news. He thanked the governments of Rwanda and Qatar, as well as US government officials who worked to achieve today's happy outcome. Nineteen others also had their sentences commuted. Under Rwandan law, commutation doesn't extinguish the conviction, Makolo added. Rwanda notes the constructive role of the US government in creating conditions for dialogue on this issue, as well as the facilitation provided by the state of Qatar, she said President Paul Kagame earlier this month said discussions were under way on resolving the issue.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/rwanda-rusesabagina-trial-human-rights-5b1d0f01344e454b2ae7474af1da83e4>

19TH MARCH 2023

UK AIMS TO SEND MIGRANTS TO RWANDA IN MONTHS IF COURTS AGREE

Britain's government said Sunday that it could start deporting asylum-seekers to Rwanda in the next few months- but only if UK courts rule that the controversial policy is legal. The Home Office said it was aiming to start flights before the summer as Home Secretary Suella Braverman visited the East African Country to reinforce the Conservative government's commitment to the plan. In the Rwandan capital Kigali, she met with President Paul Kagame and Foreign Minister Vincent Biruta, visited accommodation intended to house deportees from the UK and laid a brick at another housing development for migrants. The project is expected to build more than 1,000 houses.

I have thoroughly enjoyed seeing first-hand the rich opportunities this country can provide to relocated people through our partnership, Braverman said. Biruta said Rwanda would offer migrants the opportunity to build new lives in a safe, secure Rwandan government spokeswoman Yolanda Makolo told reporters the country is ready to receive thousands of migrants from the UK, saying she doesn't consider living in Rwanda a punishment. She said Rwanda is determined to make the agreement a success. Laced through accommodation, education and vocational training.

SOURCE:

<https://pnews.com/article/britain-asylumseekers-deportation-to-rwanda-braverman-bd731dfd42d2c8a81c0bbc4a1fde662b>

18TH MARCH 2023

UK MINISTER IN RWANDA TO REINFORCE MIGRATE DEPORTATION PLAN

Britain's interior minister arrived in Rwanda on Saturday for a visit aimed at reinforcing the UK government's commitment to a controversial plan to deport some asylum-seekers to the African country. Ahead of her visit, Home Secretary Suella Braverman said the migration policy will act as a powerful deterrent against dangerous and illegal journeys. Britain's Conservative government wants to stop migrants from reaching the UK on risky journeys across the English Channel, and a deportation agreement signed with Rwanda last year was part of measures intended to deter the arrivals. More than 45,000 people arrived in Britain by boat in 2022, compared with 8,500 in 2020.

Under the plans, some migrants who arrive in the UK in small boats would be flown to Rwanda, where their asylum claims would be processed. Those granted asylum would stay in the African country rather than return to Britain. But the 140 million-pound (\$170 million) plan has been mired in legal challenges, and no one has yet been sent to Rwanda. The UK was forced to cancel the first deportation flight at the last minute in June after the European Court of Human Rights ruled the plan carried a real risk of irreversible harm.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/uk-migration-rwanda-braverman-85b69026bf57762d1b99086bfe5b5b2f>

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

7TH MARCH 2023

FIGHTING CONTINUES WITH THE M23 DESPITE A CEASEFIRE.

Fighting continues on Tuesday in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), despite the announcement on March 3 in Luanda of a new ceasefire accepted by the M23 rebellion, we learned from local sources. Fighting had resumed on Monday morning between the army and the M23 on the northern and southern fronts in the province of North Kivu, leaving several civilians dead and injured according to hospital and humanitarian sources. On Tuesday morning, as the ceasefire was scheduled for 10:00 GMT, clashes continued and both sides accused each other of launching attacks on their positions. "Karuba (about 30 km west of the provincial capital Goma) has just fallen into rebel hands," said a security source. "We attacked them last night but this morning they launched a counter-attack and at this time the fighting continues," added the same source. "The M23 terrorists and their sponsors from the Rwanda Defense Force (the Rwandan army) launched an attack which targeted the Burundian contingent recently deployed as part of the regional force of the East African Community (EAC)," declared Monday evening Lieutenant-Colonel Guillaume Ndjike, spokesman for the army in North Kivu.

He added that this "mortar" attack had also targeted a camp for displaced persons and the city of Mubambiro, causing "enormous damage", 20 km west of Goma. For his part, Willy Ngoma, a spokesman for the M23, told AFP on Tuesday that the Congolese army on Monday attacked "all (its) positions simultaneously" and that the rebellion was still under attack on Tuesday morning. The M23 reacts "in self-defence", he said. The newly announced ceasefire comes after the failure of all previous regional initiatives launched to end the advance of the M23 in recent months in North Kivu.

SOURCE:

<https://www.africanews.com/2023/03/07/drc-fighting-continues-with-the-m23-despite-a-ceasefire//>

3RD MARCH 2023

DRC CITIZENS ARE NOT HAPPY WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO THE COUNTRY

French president, Emmanuel Macron, is due to arrive in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Friday evening, but not everyone is happy about his visit. They want him to support sanctions against Rwanda who they blame for ongoing the war in the east. The newspaper headlines tell it all, with one even calling him a persona non grata. "Let's welcome Macron, let him give his speech, let him give us advice to end the war in the East. Besides, we don't need Macron to put an end to the war, we need to equip our army with all possible capabilities," said Alpha Ngandu who is a seller in Kinshasa. Civil servant, Charles is less accommodating. "Let him stop supporting our aggressors, period. We like the French, but they don't like us, I'm really sorry, I'm against the arrival of Macron," he said. Ahead of his visit, some 150 NGOs called for France to condemn what is widely seen as support by Rwanda for M23 rebels fighting in the east. In a text published by in the press, they said he should "support the call for sanctions" against Kigali, and "help the DRC to organise its legitimate defence". "This visit is part of a situation where the Congolese people would like France end a certain ambiguity with regards to Rwanda. Western countries, notably the United States, have been very clear in their articulation of Rwanda's responsibility in the aggression that the DRC has suffered via the M23," said Hervé Diakese, a lawyer and human rights defender.

The militia, which took up arms at the end of 2021, have conquered large swathes of territory in the eastern DRC province of North Kivu and remain on the offensive despite diplomatic initiatives to try to resolve the conflict. Kinshasa has accused Kigali of backing the mostly Congolese Tutsi group, a charge that is disputed by Kigali but has been confirmed by UN experts and denounced by several Western countries. The French president was in Angola on Friday morning and travelled to Congo Brazzaville in the afternoon, before heading to Kinshasa in the evening, where he will spend the whole day on Saturday.

SOURCE:

<https://www.africanews.com/2023/03/03/drc-citizens-are-not-happy-with-french-presidents-visit-to-the-country/>

Compiled and edited by Nhial Koang Yuot and Anna Dure

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P.O. BOX 619, Hai Jebrona, Adjacent to Martyrs School,
Opposite Simba Playground, Juba, South Sudan.
Tel: +211 (0) 920 310 415 | +211 (0) 915 652 847
<https://csps.org.ss>