

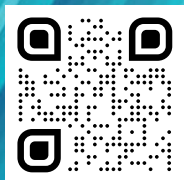


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NOVEMBER 2023

TANZANIA

WHY TANZANIA IS SET TO HOST THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AUTISM

DAILY NEWS REPORTER NOVEMBER 30, 2023

In 1911, when German Psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler coined the concept of autism to describe a symptom of the most severe cases of schizophrenia, a concept he had also created, nobody had it in mind that people with the ailment would be associated with social communication and interaction.

As time went by the World Autism Organisation (abbreviated WAO) was initiated and as an international organization it was dedicated to improving the quality of life of people with autism and their families. Since then a lot has occurred and on 2nd-3rd December, Tanzania is set to host the International Conference for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (ICAN) at the Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre (JNICC), Dar es Salaam.

The milestone event was organized jointly by Victorious Centre of Excellence and Autism Connect. Victorious Centre of Excellence is an organization that provides extensive rehabilitation therapy services and extracurricular activities to individuals with autism spectrum disorders in Tanzania with the goal to successfully include them into the communities through focused efforts to create social awareness. Equally, Autism Connect is an International organization committed to creating awareness, providing education and facilitating comprehensive care for individuals with Autism around the world. Their joint effort will present the two-day conference, which will aim to raise awareness about Autism and provide a platform for professionals and experts from around the world to share experiences and discuss recent developments in the field.

The conference to be graced by the Minister of Health, Ummu Mwalimu, will automatically add the strong peace and cooperation the government is presenting to woo foreigners, especially academicians to run such workshop and conferences in the country. Speaking to reporters in Dar es Salaam, yesterday, Sarah Laiser, Director of Victorious Center of Excellence and ICAN Chairperson, expressed her excitement about the conference, stating: “We are excited to host ICAN, as it provides a special opportunity for medical professionals to connect with their colleagues in dealing with Autism from all corners of the world.”

She added: “The conference aims to facilitate the exchange of ideas and clinical results between parents and professionals, ultimately leading to better care for individuals on the Autism Spectrum.” Tanzania has been chosen as the host for ICAN due to the unique challenges Africa faces in dealing with Autism, according to the organisers. “The rising incidence of Autism is a pressing concern, with recent research from the USA’s Center for Diseases Control (CDC) there is a startling finding that 1 in 36 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. In Tanzania and across Africa, cases have surged over the last two decades, presenting significant

challenges. Children affected by autism encounter hurdles in communication, lack speech, face barriers in education, and often exhibit hyperactive and aggressive behaviors,” she pointed out.

According to Ms Laiser, the challenges are further exacerbated by the lack of awareness and cultural beliefs surrounding Autism in Africa. “In light of these hurdles, ICAN represents hope for our children. “This conference is not just an event; it is a catalyst for change, illuminating the path toward a brighter future for individuals on the Autism Spectrum. Together, we can embrace this opportunity, working hand in hand to bring hope, support, and expertise to those who need it most.” She said. The conference will bring together professionals from Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, as well as delegates from various parts of the world.

Further according to Ms Laiser, the unique event is an excellent opportunity for professionals to highlight their work, exchange knowledge, and network with peers who are driving progress in Autism research and care. “Parents of special needs children from different parts of the world will have the chance to learn about the ground breaking work being done in their own countries and globally,” she said. Ms Dolly Thakkar, Chief Operating Officer of Autism Connect, added, “At ICAN, the newest and latest research developments happening all over the world, as well as new treatments for Autism, will be discussed. This conference will provide a unique platform for scientific and medical discussion, with the final beneficiaries being the children on the Autism Spectrum.” According to Ms. Thakkar, the conference will also feature distinguished guest speakers from various countries including Tanzania, Kenya, India, United States of America (USA), South Africa, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates (UAE). “The good thing is, the Minister of Health, Umyy Mwalimu , will grace the conference and her attendance clearly signifies the government’s commitment and support in improving the lives of individuals with Autism,” she said.

In a nutshell, Autism spectrum is a disorder that impacts the nervous system. The range and severity of symptoms can vary widely. Common symptoms include difficulty with communication, difficulty with social interactions, obsessive interests and repetitive behaviours. Early recognition, as well as behavioural, educational and family therapies may reduce symptoms and support development and learning

Source: Daily News

GERMANY'S PRESIDENT APOLOGISES FOR KILLINGS IN TANZANIA UNDER COLONIAL RULE

STEINMEIER SOUGHT FORGIVENESS FROM THE DESCENDANTS OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO

GERMAN PRESIDENT FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER

PUBLISHED ON 1 NOV 2023 11 NOV 2023

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier apologised for colonial-era killings in Tanzania during Germany's rule and vowed to raise awareness of the atrocities in his country, in a step towards "communal healing" of the bloody past.

"I would like to ask for forgiveness for what Germans did to your ancestors here," Steinmeier said during a visit to the Maji Maji Museum in the southern Tanzanian city of Songea. "I want to assure you that we Germans will search with you for answers to the unanswered questions that give you no peace."

Tanzania suffered under German colonial rule for decades before and after the start of the 20th century, and saw one of the region's deadliest uprisings from 1905 to 1907.

During the revolt — known as the Maji Maji Rebellion — between 200,000 and 300,000 Indigenous people were murdered, as German troops systematically wiped out villages and fields, experts say.

In 2017, Tanzania's then-government said it was mulling legal action to seek compensation from Germany for the people who were starved, tortured, and killed by its forces.

'COMMUNAL PROCESSING'

Steinmeier said Germany was ready to begin a "communal processing" of the past, as he met with descendants of an executed leader of the colonial-era revolt.

"What happened here is our shared history — the history of your ancestors and the history of our ancestors in Germany," Steinmeier said, pledging to "take these stories with me to Germany, so that more people in my country will know about them".

Steinmeier said Germany would also work to find and return the skull of an executed colonial era leader — Chief Songea Mbanu — and others whose remains were plundered and brought to Berlin more than a century ago.

During the visit, Steinmeier laid a flower at the grave of Chief Songea, whom he called a “brave leader”.

John Mbano, a descendant of Chief Songea who met with the German president, said he welcomed the gesture and hoped Tanzania could build a strong relationship with Germany.

Bottom of Form “We have been crying for years, now it is the time to end our crying,” the 36-year-old lawyer told AFP.

ADDRESSING COLONIAL CRIMES

Germany’s long-standing commitment to historical remembrance has centred around the atrocities it committed during World War II, specifically the slaughter of six million Jews and other minorities during the Holocaust.

However, in recent decades the country has also begun coming to terms with some of its colonial-era atrocities, including in Tanzania and Namibia.

Germany’s mass killings of Nigeria’s Indigenous Herero and Nama people in the early 1900s has been referred to by many historians as the first genocide of the 20th century.

In 2021, Germany announced an agreement with Namibia that would formally recognise its colonial-era massacres as genocide and provide redress to impacted communities, without offering formal reparations.

That agreement, which drew concerns from some groups representing the Herero and Nama people, has yet to be officially approved. Berlin’s Museum of Prehistory and Early History has been conducting research on around 1,100 skulls that were looted from historic German East Africa and brought to Germany. In September, it said researchers had found living relatives of people whose skulls were looted in Tanzania.

German East Africa — today’s Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi — existed from 1885 until Germany’s defeat at the end of World War I, when it lost its colonies under the Treaty of Versailles.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES

SOMALIA

SOMALIA: AL-SHABAAB INFIGHTING – THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY FOR THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY EFFORT?

17 NOVEMBER 2023

From 14 October to 10 November 2023, ACLED records over 160 political violence events and more than 220 fatalities in Somalia. Galgaduud region saw the highest number of fatalities, with almost 90 recorded during the reporting period, driven by a deadly al-Shabaab suicide vehicle-borne IED attack and subsequent clash with security forces. This occurred amid a halt in the counter-insurgency campaign in Galgaduud and Mudug regions since mid-October. Lower Shabelle and Hiiraan regions followed, with almost 40 reported fatalities each.

The most common event type was battles, at nearly 120 events, followed by explosions/remote violence, with almost 30 events.

AL-SHABAAB INFIGHTING: THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY FOR THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY EFFORT?

Al-Shabaab has maintained stable leadership under Ahmed Diriye for about nine years. During this period, the group made advancements in areas under its control, collected taxes, and coordinated between the regions and the command center in Jilib.² The al-Shabaab executive council has provided general operational strategies, including overseeing shifting tactics, and has been involved in the planning of high-profile attacks, with regional representatives, or shadow governors, implementing the strategies with their on field fighters. This strong connection between the leadership in the headquarters and leaders on the ground allowed coordinated attacks against security forces and civilians across different regions in Somalia.

However, a leadership crisis has recently emerged within al-Shabaab. The counter-insurgency, launched by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud when he took power in 15 May 2022, mobilized security forces against al-Shabaab. As this operation began, a dispute within al-Shabaab surfaced in the group's areas of control and strongholds in Galgaduud, Middle Juba, and Mudug regions. Disputes over leadership succession and operational strategies against government operations have led to internal conflict and, in some cases, violent clashes among al-Shabaab militants. This report outlines the reasons behind al-Shabaab's infighting and its impact on the group's activity in Somalia.

MAPPING AL-SHABAAB'S INTERNAL CONFLICT: GALGADUUD, MIDDLE JUBA, AND MUDUG REGIONS

The instability at al-Shabaab's Jilib command center in Middle Juba region began shortly after the government launched its counter-insurgency operation in late August 2022. From late December 2022, ACLED records 13 armed clashes among members of al-Shabaab, resulting in at least 80 fatalities as of 10 November 2023. These clashes have concentrated in Ceel Dheer and Ceel Buur towns in Galgaduud region, Jilib town in Middle Juba region, and Xarardheere village in Mudug region — all traditional al-Shabaab strongholds. Clashes in Galgaduud and Mudug regions were related to defections and surrenders to the security forces. Most of these clashes occurred from the end of December 2022 to February 2023, at the peak of the government counter-insurgency operation in these two regions. Meanwhile, clashes in Jilib began in April 2023 and were linked to disagreements within the executive on strategies for responding to the government's counter-insurgency operation. More recently, there was a spike in clashes in October 2023, during which ACLED records four armed clashes among members of al-Shabaab, with the majority — three out of four clashes — occurring in Jilib in Middle Juba.

Before the counter-insurgency operation began, only one armed clash among members of al-Shabaab had been reported in February 2021, after Diriye took over the leadership. Before Diriye was appointed as a leader, al-Shabaab experienced a similar leadership crisis. Between 2010 and 2014, Sheikh Mukhtar Robow, also known as Abu Mansur — al-Shabaab's then-deputy leader and spokesman — and Ahmed Abdi Godane, the then-leader, were in disagreement over management and operational strategies.⁴ This disagreement led to clashes between fighters loyal to the two leaders. Due to the dispute, Robow withdrew his troops from Mogadishu and, in 2013, left al-Shabaab with some loyal fighters based in Hudur, Bakool region. In August 2017, Robow surrendered to Somali authorities with his fighters. The leadership question currently facing al-Shabaab thus far seems to mirror this previous dispute.

INTERNAL LEADERSHIP FEUDS

Diriye, also known as Ahmed Umar Abu Ubaidah, assumed leadership of the militant group in 2014 after his predecessor, Godane, was killed in a United States airstrike in Lower Shabelle.⁶ It was initially expected that Mahad Warsame (also known as Mahad Karate) would lead the group after Godane's death. However, the executive council elected Diriye as leader to facilitate the transfer of power, as he hailed from the same conservative wing as Godane. Karate was appointed as deputy. Following years of relative stability, a contest for succession between al-Shabaab's top leaders began after Diriye's health deteriorated in 2022, escalating into violence during the government's counter-insurgency operation.

Karate has been at odds with Diriye over al-Shabaab's strategies and direction since August 2022. This disagreement emerged after the government intensified its counter-insurgency operations and crackdown on al-Shabaab's financial networks, including blocking more than 250 bank accounts and shutting down internet services and about 70 mobile phones belonging to the group. Due to this pressure from the government, al-Shabaab leaders disagree on the response strategy to the government's military and non-military operations.

Karate has been working to undermine Diriye's support within the al-Shabaab executive council and the group's foreign fighters wing – the Muhajirin – by attacking members loyal to Diriye. In April 2023, fighters loyal to Karate clashed with a group of foreign fighters from Kenya called Jaabir, who are loyal to Diriye. The clash killed five people, and fighters loyal to Karate detained several foreign fighters in Jilib. The former leader of the foreign fighters, Salmaan Muhaajir, who is from Kenya, was appointed by Diriye. However, Karate appointed another fighter from Sudan to lead the foreign fighters wing and diminish the powers of Kenyan fighters loyal to Diriye. The conflict escalated on 3 April 2023 after Muhaajir called all foreign fighters to regroup and launch a retaliation attack at the Jilib detention center to free their members. Mohamed Amin, an al-Shabaab senior intelligence officer and a close ally of Karate – anticipated a convoy of several foreign fighters moving from Kabsuuma heading to Jilib and arrested them at Kabsuuma bridge, Lower Juba.¹² Foreign fighters constitute special wings for al-Shabaab, with members mainly from neighboring countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania, and some from Western countries. These foreign fighters provide a wide range of services to al-Shabaab, including training and medical services.

The dispute between Diriye and Karate is still active. Currently, it appears that Karate has more supporters within al-Shabaab than Diriye, primarily due to clan affiliations.¹³ Karate is from the Habar Gedir sub-clan of Hawiye clan, while Diriye is from Dir clan. The Dir clan does not have a stronghold in the al-Shabaab executive council and is considered an 'outside clan.'¹⁴ Some key members of the group aim to end the Dir clan leadership within al-Shabaab through Diriye's removal." Diriye has signalled his intention to hand over control to Sheikh Adan Abdirahman Warsame,¹⁶ also known as Adan Sunne, from Isaaq clan. Diriye introduced Sunne to the al-Shabaab executive council in April 2022, a move perceived as undermining prominent al-Shabaab leaders like Karate. Nevertheless, Karate seems prepared to take over the helm of al-Shabaab. On 15 September 2023, he appeared at an al-Shabaab meeting in Middle Juba region, issuing threats to the Somali government, United States forces, and others involved in ongoing counter-insurgency operations in Hirshabelle and Galmudug states.¹⁸ As this dispute deepens, it will likely result in a mix of power struggles, ideological/tactical differences, clan divisions, resource competition, and external pressures.

OUTCOME AND PROSPECT OF AL-SHABAAB'S LEADERSHIP FEUD

The leadership dispute and recent infighting within al-Shabaab have affected the cohesiveness of the group's strategy amid active conflicts with security forces. The leadership feud has led to disagreements among al-Shabaab members, particularly regarding decisions to surrender when militants [lost control of several strongholds and strategic towns in Hirshabelle and Galgaduud regions](#). On 31 December 2022 and 1 January 2023, two groups of al-Shabaab militants clashed in Xarardheere in Mudug region after one group of militants attempted to defect and surrender to security forces. The clashes reportedly resulted in at least 17 militants killed and several others injured. A similar clash was also reported on 20 February 2023 at the same location, resulting in at least 14 militant fatalities. These disagreements between militants occurred amid [intensified operations in the region](#). Despite al-Shabaab leaders' attempt to stop defections, two high-ranking Leaders-Abdi Abdullahi and Nur Abdullahi Maalingur, also known as Nur Deeq – surrendered to the government in August 2023 in Bahdo and Wisil town. The ongoing dispute among top leaders and the defection of some district-level leaders

and fighters have slightly affected al-Shabaab's engagements with security forces. Violence involving al-Shabaab decreased from February to June 2023 and in October compared to the previous monthly average of events since August 2022 when the counter-insurgency began. The infighting has exposed the vulnerabilities of al-Shabaab and created multiple opportunities for the government. There is the possibility that these dissenting voices may lead to the formation of splinter groups or that dissenting leaders with loyal backing may defect to the government side-similar to Robow's surrender following the 2010 to 2014 internal dispute. Moreover, as the disagreements deepen, al-Shabaab executive members may fail to provide strategies to overcome the government offensive and come up with operational tactics for the continuity of general al-Shabaab activities.

Source: www.aljazeera.com

KENYA

KENYA'S OGIEK PEOPLE FIGHT ON AGAINST EVICTION FROM MAU FOREST

PUBLISHED ON 24 NOV 2023

Nairobi, Kenya – For years, the Kenyan government has sought to protect the Mau Forest, spanning around 4,000 hectares across several counties, from encroachment and destruction by people who fell trees to sell for charcoal and firewood. But human rights groups have said these efforts have been marred by human rights violations that are yet to stop.

From 2004 to 2006, 100,000 people were evicted from the forest, according to separate reports by rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as well as the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. These bodies also allege that serious abuses have been committed by successive governments to date.

The latest wave of evictions, which began on November 2, affected more than 1,000 of the Ogiek, a community that has been predominantly hunter-gatherers for centuries in the area in and around the forest.

“As I know it myself, we have lived here for 174 years,” Wilson Ngusilo, a chairperson of the Ogiek council in Narok County in southwest Kenya, told Al Jazeera. “I buried my father on this land at the age of 105 years, and I am personally 69 years old myself. I have known this as my home and don’t know where I am supposed to go. The displaced Ogiek said most of their homes were torched by Kenya Forest Service officers. “Whenever the [officers] meet someone on the way carrying their belongings towards their home, they snatch the belongings and throw them into a river,” Ngusilo said. “On day one, 250 officers came and another 60 joined them the next day. They even brought down my permanent house after destroying it for two days straight.”

Members of the community have been scattered across the area and now live in makeshift structures made of donated nylon bags. They said they are waiting for the government to show them an alternative place to call home. “Those whose houses have been burned and have not been lucky to get the structures have gone into the forest to take shelter under trees against the heavy rainfall that’s ongoing,” said Daniel Kobei, executive director of the Ogiek People’s Development Program (OPDP). “They use tree bark to cover themselves and especially their children.”

A HISTORY OF EVICTIONS AND LITIGATION

The Ogiek were first evicted by the British colonial government after it occupied Kenya in 1920. They moved to other parts of the forest and set up their lives again. “In fact, most of them

were even turned into forest guards by the colonial government when it failed to evict them,” Kobei told Al Jazeera. “They used to put up beehives and protect the forest.” Initially, the Ogiek only hunted and gathered food inside the forest, mainly depending on bees for honey. But they began intermarrying with nomadic communities like the Maasai and Kipsigis, and they lived in the forest together, which led to increased farming and burning of charcoal for sale as a source of income. When the forest was declared a national reserve in 1954, the Ogiek claimed exclusive ownership of the place and thus began a long battle with successive governments. By 1996, the Ogiek petitioned the Kenyan Parliament over the issue, but having failed to extract a favourable commitment, they turned to the courts.

President Daniel arap Moi’s government tried – in 1992 and 2001 – to settle the Ogiek within the forest after a tea-planting project barred communities from nearby areas from crossing into what was designated as forest land, but it became hard to resolve because some of those communities moved in, claiming to be part of the Ogiek community. The Ogiek decided to go to court, even as the authorities began evictions in the mid-2000s. The case dragged on for almost 12 years in the Kenyan judicial system, so the Ogiek resolved to approach regional justice mechanisms for a permanent solution. They filed a case with the Arusha, Tanzania-based African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR), and after six more years, it delivered a landmark ruling on May 26, 2017, in their favour. The Kenyan government appealed the decision, but the ACHPR ruled against it again in 2022. “The reparation [judgement by the ACHPR] was done again on June 23, 2022, in the same court in Arusha, underscoring what is to be done, which included restitution to be given their land,” Kobei told Al Jazeera. “And there was some compensation [157,000 shillings (\$1,026) per person] to be given. The government was to publish the ruling, both the merit and the reparation, the judgment, which they have not done.”

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

The evictions began again in November just as Britain’s King Charles III was visiting Kenya, his first state visit since succeeding his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, to the throne. The environment ministry said it was reclaiming parts of the Mau Forest from “encroachment and illegal logging activities”. It also urged the police and KFS to carry out the exercise in a humane manner. But the Ogiek said this has not been the case Kobei said a local court order obtained on November 15 halted the evictions but there are still police officers manning the roads in the Sasimwani area of Narok County. The security agents have reportedly been threatening people from going back to their destroyed homes and promising to continue with the evictions.

On November 6, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights through its Kenya representative, Solomon Ayele Dersso, sent a letter to the Kenyan government, saying it was gravely concerned about the ongoing evictions.

It called for “the cessation of the evictions to limit the irreparable damage that may be caused to the lives, bodily integrity, sources of livelihoods, family life, safety and security” of the Ogiek.

Three days later, Minority Rights Group Africa, a nonprofit working for the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities and Indigenous peoples, described the exercise as “an illegal, violent eviction campaign”.

According to the group, the Kenyan government's actions are in direct violation of the two landmark judgements issued by the ACHPR.

“[The] judgments ... made it clear, inter alia [among other things] that the Ogiek are an indigenous people and are owners of their ancestral lands in the Mau Forest; that the government of Kenya should restitute Ogiek ancestral land through the process of demarcating, delimiting and granting collective title to the Ogiek in the Mau Forest; that the Kenyan government is required to consult Ogiek on any matter regarding their ancestral land, and that the government could not use conservation as a justification to evict the community,” it said in a statement on November 9.

The Kenyan government said at the time of the ruling that it accepted the judgment but has yet to comment on the current evictions.

Meanwhile, the Ogiek said they hope to see more international pressure on the authorities to let them be. “We call upon the international community to pressure or talk to the government of Kenya to respect such a small, Indigenous minority community not to be in this quagmire of always crying for their land rights and evictions,” Kobei said. “That’s our wish and desire that we can develop like other Kenyans and pursue other important issues in the country.”

Source: www.aljazeera.com

ETHIOPIA

SITUATION SUMMARY

PUBLISHED ON 15 NOVEMBER, 2023

Clashes between Fano militias and the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) intensified in Amhara region. Meanwhile, peace talks between the government and the Oromo Liberation Army led to reduced violence in Oromia region.

In **Amhara** region, clashes between Fano militias and the ENDF intensified last week, spanning Central Gondar, North Wello, West Gojam, East Gojam, South Wello, and North Shewa zones. Airstrikes conducted by the ENDF targeting Fano militias struck a school in Ankober woreda, causing civilian casualties. Fano militias were able to briefly take control of Lalibela town, withdrawing after clashes on 8 November. Fighting and artillery shelling in close proximity to the 11th century rock-hewn church and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage site led to concerns for the church's wellbeing. Clashes between the Fano militias and the ENDF forces have persisted for months and continue to escalate.

Furthermore, last week, clashes erupted between Amhara and Oromo ethnic militias in areas near the Oromia special zone, resulting in at least 18 fatalities. Violence between Oromo and Amhara communities near the border of Oromia Special and North Shewa zones is recurrent (for more, see the EPO Oromia Special Zone and North Shewa Conflict page).

In **Oromia** region, on 7 November, sources revealed an ongoing second round of peace talks between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA, also referred to by the government as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane) and representatives from the federal government in Tanzania. A report indicated the presence of top officials from both sides, including the OLA commander Kumsa Diriba, later joined by Redwan Hussein, national security adviser to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and Dr. Gedion Timothewos, the Ethiopian Minister of Justice.³ The first round of peace talks in May 2023 concluded without an agreement (for more, see the EPO May 2023 Monthly: Violence Returns to Oromia Despite Attempted Peace Talks). Conflict involving OLA/OLF-Shane in the Oromia region has persisted since the group split from the Oromo Liberation Front party in 2019, resulting in hundreds of casualties and an estimated 1.4 million people being displaced.⁴

In **Central Ethiopia** region, violence continued in Welkite town of Gurage zone. On 10 November, unspecified youths attacked students at Aberus Higher Secondary School, leading to 30 people injured. The incident concluded only when the police intervened with tear gas. Violence in Gurage zone, particularly in Welkite town, has been ongoing since October. The recently established Central Ethiopia region divided Gurage zone into three administration levels; East Gurage woreda was designated as a separate zone, while Kebena and Mareko woredas were designated as special woredas.⁵ Since then, tensions have been high in some areas where frequent clashes occurred due to disputes over boundaries.

In **Tigray region**, four additional high-ranking officials, including two zone administrators, were dismissed last week as part of the ongoing political strife between the Tigray interim administrative government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).⁶ The four officials, who were also top leaders of TPLF, were accused of failing to perform their tasks properly by the interim government.⁷ This removal follows the dismissal of six other administrators two weeks ago (for more, see the EPO Weekly: 21-27 October 2023).

Categories: Amhara, Battles, Oromia, Strategic Developments, Weekly Report 15/11/2023

Sources: EPO Weekly Update (15 November 2023)

JOINING BRICS GREAT MOMENT IN ETHIOPIA'S DIPLOMACY: MOFA STATE MINISTER

ON NOV 30, 2023

Addis Ababa, November 30, 2023 (FBC) – Ethiopia's entry into BRICS is one of the great moments the country has achieved in its modern diplomacy, Foreign Affairs State Minister Misganu Arga said today.

In his opening remarks at a consultative workshop organized by the Authority for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the Institute of Foreign Affairs on Ethiopia's admission to BRICS, he noted that Ethiopia has not joined an ideology camp rather a bloc which entertains all diverse voices of the globe.

As Ethiopia is a defender of multilateralism, the state minister said Ethiopia joined BRICS to defend its interests in creating an inclusive world order.

ENA quoted the State Minister as saying: "Joining the BRICS family, which manages 30 percent of the world GDP, means a lot to accelerate Ethiopian economy."

To this end, Misganu called on civil society organizations to advocate Ethiopia's interest in global organizations and serve as the voice of the country's national interest.

Recall that Ethiopia joined the BRICS mechanism last August 2023. This is anticipated to facilitate the country's economic growth and help forge strong and lasting diplomatic cooperation with the powerful BRICS bloc family.

Source: www.fanabc.com

SUDAN

UNRAVELLING THE CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN DARFUR

1 DECEMBER 2023

SUDAN AT A GLANCE: 28 OCTOBER – 24 NOVEMBER 2023

Since fighting first broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 15 April, ACLED records over 3,250 events of political violence and more than 12,190 reported fatalities in Sudan. From 28 October to 24 November, ACLED records over 360 political violence events and over 1,690 reported fatalities.

While Khartoum state had the highest number of political violence events, with over 240, West Darfur state had the highest number of fatalities, at approximately 860, and nearly 16 political violence events. The most common event type was battles, with 170 recorded, followed by explosions and remote violence events, at more than 120. Compared to the previous four weeks, ACLED records a 10% decrease in battles and a 38% decrease in explosions and remote violence in Sudan.

UNRAVELLING THE CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN DARFUR

Although the second round of peace talks was held in the Saudi city of Jeddah from 26 October to 7 November, the RSF continued to advance relentlessly, further consolidating its territorial dominance in Darfur. By the end of November, the RSF controls four out of five Darfur states. Meanwhile, warring parties continued to fight in Khartoum to control strategic locations and secure an alternative route to connect the tri-cities in Khartoum. This report analyzes this fight for access to the tri-cities and the conflict dynamics in Darfur.

KHARTOUM'S DISCONNECTED TRI-CITIES

Sudan's capital city, Khartoum, is the main battleground of the conflict that has engulfed the country since April. Between 28 October and 24 November, ACLED records 108 battle events in Khartoum – a 17% decrease compared to the preceding four weeks. Fighting raged in two main areas within the capital city. The first is Shambat bridge, a supply route used by the RSF to link Omdurman with Bahri. The bridge was bombed on 11 November, with both the RSF and the SAF accusing each other of responsibility for the bombing.¹ However, it is more likely the SAF is behind the bombing of the bridge as it effectively isolated RSF forces in Bahri from those in Omdurman.² Moreover, it cut off RSF reinforcements and weapons supplies in Darfur from reaching Bahri and Khartoum, as other bridges in Omdurman are under the SAF control.

A second primary battleground is Jabal Awlia, which serves a strategic function for several reasons. Jabal Awlia is located south of Khartoum on the east bank of the White Nile river, separating the RSF-controlled Omdurman on the west and the SAF-controlled Air Defense Base in Khartoum on the east (see map below). On the north of Jabal Awlia, RSF forces housed in

the nearby Tayba military base prevent the SAF from advancing towards the besieged Armored Corps base in southern Khartoum, which remains unable to secure reinforcements.

Jabal Awlia bridge also serves as a critical link between Khartoum and Omdurman, potentially offering the RSF an alternative route to reach Khartoum. Following the bombing of Shambat bridge, the RSF movements were limited between Khartoum's tri-cities because the SAF controlled the west ends of al-Halfaya, al-Fitahab, and White Nile bridges, in addition to the east end of Jabal Awlia bridge linking Omdurman.

Finally, Jabal Awlia hosts the Air Defense base, making it a prized target for the RSF. The RSF has directed its war efforts towards the base to gain control of both sides of Jabal Awlia bridge and thus secure an access point to Khartoum as an alternative to Shambat bridge. Heightened clashes at the Air Defense base resulted in the bombing of Jabal Awlia bridge over the White Nile on 18 November, a week after the same fate befell the Shambat bridge. Both the RSF and the SAF blame each other for the bridge's partial destruction.³ On 20 November, the RSF overtook the Air Defense base.

Persistent clashes between the SAF and the RSF have cut off access to entire neighborhoods in Khartoum, Omdurman, and Bahri, leading to severe shortages of food, water, and electricity.⁴ Civilian displacement continues, particularly in Jabal Awlia. Multiple disease outbreaks, including acute watery diarrhea, cholera, measles, dengue, and malaria further compound Sudan's precarious humanitarian situation, which the United Nations Refugee Agency described as "unimaginable." The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that millions of people "lack access to food, water, shelter, electricity, education, health care and nutrition," including in the capital region which "remains the epicentre of displacement and fighting."

HIGH TENSIONS IN NEWLY RSF-CONTROLLED DARFUR

In November, the RSF continued advancing in Darfur, claiming control of four states (*see map below*). The RSF besieged Darfur's main urban areas, offering the SAF to surrender and withdraw without fighting. Mediation initiatives facilitated by native administrations played a crucial role in enabling the fall of Nyala, Zalingei, El Geneina, and El Daein cities to the RSF. Given current limitations in ensuring regular reinforcement and supplies to their troops, the SAF chose to relinquish their bases one after another.

Yet, since the RSF gained control of the majority of Darfur, armed clashes have significantly subsided in RSF-controlled areas, as SAF forces withdrew from Darfur region to Kordofan region. This shifts the conflict dynamic as RSF now focuses on Kordofan region. The RSF is transitioning to the de facto ruling authority in Darfur, with the RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, encouraging local communities to form autonomous governing entities. Despite these efforts, clashes have occasionally erupted between RSF-allied militias, such as the Salamat and Habbaniya ethnic militias, over land ownership disputes. Such continued conflicts raise questions about the RSF's ability to rein in local ethnic groups and manage inter-ethnic tensions. Moreover, the RSF has restricted civilians from fleeing to Chad in an effort to assert that Darfur is safe. The RSF has reinstated police forces and appointed RSF commanders to

lead the captured SAF military bases. However, the looming fear of complete RSF control over Darfur has spurred the formation of new alliances and united previously rival factions. The mobilization to defend El Fasher has brought together various factions, including those that did not sign the Juba Peace Agreement.

While most RSF attacks on SAF garrisons in Darfur lack a discernible pattern of directly targeting civilians based on their ethnic identity, the clashes in West Darfur, particularly in El Geneina, have exhibited an inclination toward ethnically targeting and forcibly displacing the Masalit people. Following days-long clashes with the SAF, the RSF overtook the SAF 15th Infantry Division Headquarters (HQ) in El Geneina city on 4 November. Subsequently, RSF members raided the city, targeting mostly ethnically Masalit civilians, looting houses, and setting fire to shelters for internally displaced people. Estimates from several reports indicate these attacks killed between 800 and 1,300 people, including Masalit Farsha – a prominent leader in the Sultanate of Dar Masalit – and nine members of his family.¹² As a result, civilians fled to Chad until the RSF and allied militias closed the border on 8 November. Masalit ethnic group is the majority in El Geneina. Historical grievances and land ownership disputes amplify these attacks, further exacerbated by the participation of the Sudan Alliance Movement and the Masalit militia against the RSF, intensifying the complexity of the conflict in previous encounters.

In East Darfur, the lone state in the Darfur region that has thus far managed to avoid direct military clashes between opposing factions, a significant local accord has effectively averted hostilities. El Daein city, the capital of East Darfur, is home to the Rizeigat ethnic group, from which several RSF leaders and recruits hail. Rizeigat ethnic militia provides a considerable number of combatants to various fronts in El Daein and other cities throughout Darfur. However, the RSF's resolve to assert control over the entire Darfur region prompted a strategic shift to Rizeigat ethnic group's home territory. Substantial RSF military reinforcements were dispatched after a sizable force from South Darfur state arrived and positioned itself in Umm Waragat, approximately 30 kilometers west of El Daein, with the intention of attacking the SAF 20th Infantry Division HQ.

Despite the native administration in El Daein seeking to dissuade the RSF from initiating an assault, citing the city's importance as a residence for numerous RSF leaders and soldiers, clashes erupted around the HQ and El Daein airport on 20 November. This resulted in the RSF gaining control after the SAF withdrew. RSF also took control over the 82nd Infantry Division HQ in Adila and the Abu Karinka garrison following the SAF's withdrawal from the area. Additionally, the RSF seized the Sufyian oilfield in Jad El Seid locality after engaging in clashes with SAF forces. This development signifies a departure from the prevailing trend in East Darfur, where earlier local agreements had effectively maintained the region's relative immunity from direct military confrontations.

Meanwhile, in South Darfur, political violence has decreased in Nyala since the RSF took control of the city on 26 October. The RSF has reopened markets and is making efforts to encourage people to resume their lives.¹³ Additionally, the RSF has reinstated police forces and appointed commanders for the captured SAF 16th Infantry Division. Meanwhile, from 12 to 21 November, another round of armed clashes between Salamat and Habbaniya ethnic militias broke out in various locations, including Buram, Nadif, and Marfaeena, stemming from a land

dispute. These two ethnic militias last clashed in August. Though not directly related to the wider conflict, this dispute saw the RSF-backed Salamat ethnic militia clashing with Habbaniya forces, allegedly supported by the SAF. The clashes resulted in 30 people reportedly killed.

ALLIANCES AND BATTLE FOR ULTIMATE CONTROL OF DARFUR

On 16 November, the RSF announced the formation of joint security forces after a meeting with leaders of the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council, the Gathering of the Sudan Liberation Forces (GLSF), the Minnawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), and the Justice and Equality Movement.¹⁴ This announcement challenged the Joint Darfur Rebel groups' neutral position, causing internal tensions among the members of the joint groups, leading to various leaders announcing their support for the SAF or affirming their neutrality. For instance, following the RSF announcement, the SLM/A-Minnawi faction, Justice and Equality Movement-Gibril Ibrahim faction, SLM/A-Mustafa Tambour faction, and the political secretary of the GLSF, Salah Hamid al-Wali, declared their intention to fight alongside the SAF against the RSF, abandoning their initial neutrality. The Joint Darfur Rebel groups, comprising four of the signatories of the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement, were established on 27 April 2023 to ensure the protection of civilians in Darfur.

Furthermore, the non-signatory faction of the Juba Peace Agreement, represented by the SLM-A Abdul Wahid al-Nur under the leadership of Yusif Karjakola, the Chief of Staff, arrived in El Fasher on 24 November. The group's primary objective was to safeguard displacement camps in the city amid concerns of potential attacks.¹⁶ If clashes involving all these actors erupt in El Fasher, SAF would be the sole beneficiary in this intricate situation. RSF would confront a large number of rebel groups and might be forced to mobilize more troops from other fronts to this location. The anticipated intense conflict would likely also have a severe impact on civilians, particularly the Zaghawa community and other displaced non-Arab communities that these new alliances are striving to protect. Meanwhile, the RSF would find themselves stretched and depleted as they contend with multiple fronts in Kordofan and North Darfur.

The next target for the RSF in Darfur appears to be El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur and the hometown of the Zaghawa ethnic group, from which most members of the Joint Darfur Rebel groups hail. While the RSF seems to avoid direct confrontations with rebel groups, the fear of clashes between the RSF and the SAF in El Fasher has affected the Darfur Joint Rebel groups, leading to tensions and divisions within these groups. As a result, some rebel groups declared support for the SAF, while others affirmed their neutrality. If the RSF attacks El Fasher, there is a risk of devastating ethnic clashes, similar to what occurred in El Geneina in West Darfur, where the involvement of the Sudan Alliance Movement and the Masalit militia against the RSF worsened the situation, triggering historical grievances and landownership contests. Even though there is no land ownership contest in El Fasher, if members of the Joint Darfur Rebel groups, as well as Zaghawa ethnic militia, mobilize against the RSF, it will create a complex situation when the RSF and the SAF begin to fight in El Fasher.

Source: www.ACLEL.com

ERITREA

NETANYAHU'S CALL TO DEPORT ERITREANS SHOWS ISRAEL'S RACISM IS GLOBAL

INTERNATIONAL LAW BARS ISRAEL FROM PUSHING ERITREANS OUT. BUT THAT, AS PALESTINIANS KNOW WELL, HAS NOT STOPPED IT BEFORE.

NEVE GORDON

NEVE GORDON IS PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AT QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

PUBLISHED ON 6 NOVEMBER 2023

Eritrean protesters clash with Israeli riot police in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Saturday, September 2, 2023. Hundreds of Eritrean asylum seekers smashed shop windows and police cars in Tel Aviv on Saturday and clashed with police during a protest against an event organised by the Eritrean embassy.

When the Eritrean community in Israel, currently comprising an estimated 18,000 asylum seekers, heard that their country was planning a celebratory festival in Tel Aviv, they were up in arms.

Most of them had fled Eritrea 15 years ago due to the repressive policies implemented by the authoritarian leader Isaias Afwerki, who has ruled the country with an iron fist since it gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993.

Their mistake? In Israel, they thought that they were in a democracy that would listen to, and respect, their concerns. They have by now been disabused of that notion — by racist policies and a prime minister for whom the Eritreans are merely a “problem”.

While Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom cancelled the 30-year-anniversary celebrations planned by the Eritrean embassies in their capitals, Israel's police cited freedom of expression and decided not to call off the party. When both Eritrean asylum seekers and supporters of Afwerki's regime gathered outside the event hall, the police also arrived at the scene. Despite warnings voiced by community leaders, however, the officers failed to come sufficiently prepared in terms of numbers and anti-riot gear.

Clashes first ensued between the two Eritrean groups, and, when the police tried to impose order, the protesters collided with them as well. Over 100 people were reported injured, including some 19 seriously.

During the clashes, the police also fired live bullets, which explains why several protesters are currently in hospital in intensive care. Not since the October 2000 protests – when police killed 13 Palestinian citizens of Israel – have police fired live ammunition at demonstrators inside the pre-1967 borders.

THE 'ERITREAN PROBLEM'

Following the clashes, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened a special ministerial team to assess the situation and to determine how to handle “infiltrators who violate the law”. Indeed, after over half a year of failing to come up with a strategy for dealing with the mass (overwhelmingly Jewish) demonstrations against his judicial reforms, Netanyahu was back in his element.

First, he characterised the asylum seekers as criminals and said that “the massive illegal infiltration into Israel from Africa constituted a tangible threat to the future of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state”. He then patted himself on the back for building a fence on Israel’s southern border with Egypt which he claimed stopped “hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Africans who would have again stormed the State of Israel”.

Pointing out that “there remains the problem of those who entered before the fence was completed”, he went on to rally his base against the Supreme Court and all those who have been protesting against the government’s efforts to introduce judicial reforms. “We wanted [to do] more,” he said. “We proposed a series of steps ... but unfortunately all of them were rejected by the High Court of Justice.”

Finally, echoing language used by leaders of other dark regimes, he referred to the Eritreans as a “problem” that needed to be resolved and instructed the ministerial forum to “prepare a complete and updated plan to repatriate all of the remaining illegal infiltrators from the State of Israel”.

WHEN THE LAW IS SELECTIVE

Netanyahu’s latest comments fit neatly with his efforts to portray himself as Israel’s saviour from Armageddon, but whereas in the past the culprits had been Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinians more generally, the new existential threat emanates from several thousand Eritrean asylum seekers.

But who are the people that Netanyahu wants to expel?

Often characterised as Africa’s North Korea, Eritrea has institutionalised “forced labour” where mostly men and unmarried women are conscripted into military or civil service indefinitely for low pay – with no say in their profession or work location.

Discharge from national service is arbitrary, procedures are opaque, and as Human Rights Watch reports, conscripts are often subjected to inhumane and degrading punishment, including torture.

Disappearances, extrajudicial executions and prolonged detention are also common, and any resistance to Afwerki's rule is dealt with harshly. That's why an estimated 580,000 Eritreans have sought asylum in other countries.

Moreover, asylum seekers have been targeted for abuses by Eritrean authorities and security forces, both while abroad and in the wake of forced returns from countries like Egypt.

Western countries acknowledge the plight of Eritrean asylum seekers, and according to Shira Abu from the Hotline for Refugees and Immigrants in Tel Aviv, "over 80 percent have been recognised as refugees [in other countries], only Israel's dysfunctional asylum system refuses to examine their applications in accordance with the UN Refugee Convention and internationally accepted standard".

Israel, a country established to house Jewish refugees from Europe, has, as the Palestinians know full well, always resisted extending the cover of international law to non-Jews.

GLOBAL APARTHEID

Even after Saturday's clashes, the government does not have a ready-made solution to the Eritrean "problem". So far, the prosecutors have decided to drop criminal charges against the 50 Eritreans who were arrested in the protests, and they have been moved to administrative detention.

The logic of these moves is clear: the government can imprison the Eritreans without proving criminal wrongdoing, while a criminal record would harm the asylum seeker's chances of being accepted in another country in a process of "voluntary departure". The idea is to pressure the Eritreans to leave Israel on their own.

Yet, even if the imprisoned protesters were to agree to "voluntary expulsion", no Western country will easily accept Eritrean asylum seekers who have been living in Israel for 15 years, and there is no clarity on the solutions that the ministerial committee is currently cooking.

Perhaps, like the UK's plan to ship asylum seekers to Rwanda, Israel will enter some kind of nefarious agreement with another African country in exchange for a promise of Israeli weapons or military training, that may or may not be used against that country's own citizenry.

While within Israel, an apartheid system is used primarily to violate the rights of Palestinians, when it comes to asylum seekers, particularly those from Africa, the logic of apartheid operates on a global scale.

The tragic reality is that in this scenario – imprisoning refugees and treating them like criminals – Israel is in no way an outlier on the international scene. We have seen this in the UK's efforts to deal with its own African migrants. The legal standards pertaining to asylum seekers would not allow repatriation, but this is how global apartheid works in a world divided by haves and have-nots.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.

Source: www.aljazeera.com

SOUTH SUDAN

S. SUDAN: ELECTIONS IN DECEMBER 2024 CONCEIVABLE ONLY IF CRITICAL DECISIONS TAKEN – UNMISS

NICHOLAS HAYSOM (C), SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR SOUTH SUDAN, HEAD OF (UNMISS), IN WAU, SOUTH SUDAN ON NOV. 23, 2023

LAST UPDATED: 25/11/2023

South Sudanese parties, leaders and stakeholders have until the first quarter of 2024 to agree on critical decisions if they are willing to hold free, fair and credible elections on schedule, the Head of the UN Mission in the nation (UNMISS) said Thursday (Nov. 23). “Looking ahead, it would be impossible to envision free, fair, and credible elections in December 2024, unless all South Sudanese parties, leaders, and stakeholders grab the bull by the horns, and agree on a critical mass of decisions by the first quarter of 2024.”

If Haysom welcomed the reconstitution of key electoral bodies such as the National Elections Commission, he said they needed to be urgently resourced and operationalized to execute their mandates.

“Let me underscore that elections are not a one-day event, but a process that incorporates deliberate and thoughtful decisions before, during and after the polls. All these processes must have the full buy-in and support of the South Sudanese, and especially in the case of a country emerging from divisive conflict.”

South Sudan became independent in 2011. After a peace deal in 2018 ended a civil war, elections were due to be held in February this year. However, the government of national unity of Salva Kiir and Riek Machar failed to meet key clauses of the deal.

During the press conference SRSO Haysom also expressed concern over reports of recent violence in the Abyei Administrative Area and Warrap state, urging the government to action peaceful dispute resolution.

UNMISS is continuing to protect civilians and support state authorities Haysom said, but added that transitional security arrangements must be completed. In conclusion, he reiterated that South Sudan must complete its long overdue democratic transition.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan also focused on the nation’s humanitarian emergency, which is exacerbated by the influx of returnees and refugees

escaping conflict in neighbouring Sudan, reduced funding, climate change and continued risks to aid workers.

Source: www.africanews.com

TROIKA STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE IN ABYEI ADMINISTRATIVE AREA AND WARRAP STATE 20 NOVEMBER 2023

The Embassies of Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States are deeply concerned by ongoing violence in Rumameer County, Abyei Administrative Area and Twic County, Warrap State. We express our deepest condolences to the families and communities where casualties have occurred.

We call for calm and restraint and urge all those in a position to influence the communities involved to take all appropriate steps to prevent further escalation and push for an end to the violence.

The Troika note our particular concern at ongoing UNISFA reports of SSPDF presence in Abyei, increasing the presence of weapons in the region and threatening Abyei's demilitarised status.

We renew our calls upon the Transitional Government to urgently withdraw its troops in line with its commitments under the 2011 Status of Forces Agreement.

Source: www.africanews.com

UGANDA

UGANDA ATTACK: MAN CHARGED WITH TERRORISM OVER HONEYMOON DEATHS

13 NOVEMBER 2023

The recently married couple were on a honeymoon trip to see the wildlife in the west of Uganda when their vehicle was attacked

BY DAMIAN ZANE

BBC News, London

A COURT IN UGANDA HAS CHARGED A MAN WITH TERRORISM ALONG WITH OTHER OFFENCES OVER THE KILLING LAST MONTH OF TWO TOURISTS AND THEIR GUIDE.

Abdul Rashid Kyoto is allegedly a commander in the Islamic State-linked Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militia.

He is accused of killing a honeymoon couple from the UK and South Africa and their Ugandan guide in an attack in a national park on 17 October.

Mr Kyoto made no comment when the charges were read out.

He will be asked to plead once the case reaches the High Court, which is where murder and terrorism trials are heard.

British citizen David Barlow, his South African wife Emmaretia Geyer and Ugandan Eric Alyai were shot dead on a visit to see the wildlife at the Queen Elizabeth National Park. Their vehicle was also burnt.

The attack was blamed on the ADF, which has a presence in western Uganda, but mostly operates in the eastern part of neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.

The two countries have intensified operations targeting the group in recent months.

But on Monday, it was blamed for the killing of 19 people and the kidnapping of several others in the east of DR Congo.

Ugandan tourist guide Eric Alyai was killed alongside the foreign visitors

Among the charges against My Kyoto approved by Uganda's director of public prosecutions were two of terrorism, three of murder and one of belonging to a terrorist organisation.

Pictures from the magistrate's court in eastern Uganda show him dressed in a white tunic, or kanzu, and walking with the aid of a crutch under his right arm.

He was arrested last week in an army operation on Lake Edward, on the border between Uganda and DR Congo.

"Two of his associates were shot dead and others managed to escape in a boat with their weapons," a statement from the prosecution authority said.

The ADF has staged several attacks in Uganda in recent years.

In June, a group of ADF fighters attacked a school in western Uganda, killing nearly 40 pupils.

The group was created in western Uganda in the 1990s and took up arms, alleging government persecution of Muslims.

Muslims make up almost 14% of the Ugandan population, according to official figures, though the Ugandan Muslim Supreme Council estimates the figure is closer to 35%.

Some members of Uganda's Muslim community say they face discrimination in public life, such as in education and the workplace.

After defeat by the Ugandan army in 2001, the ADF relocated to North Kivu province in DR Congo.

Source: www.bbc.co.uk

RWANDA

RWANDA SAYS EAST DRC WAR ‘SERIOUS’ NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

MONDAY FEBRUARY 19 2024

People carry their belongings as they flee from their villages around Sake in Masisi territory, following clashes between M23 rebels and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); towards Goma, North Kivu Province, DRC on February 7, 2024. PHOTO | REUTERS

By *PATRICK ILUNGA*

Rwanda says the ongoing war in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is becoming a national security threat in Kigali, confirming its fears of a possible regional conflict.

Rwanda’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Sunday the war means Kinshasa has specifically abandoned regional efforts at dialogue.

The statement, issued on February 18, follows another communiqué from the US State Department, which called on Rwanda to withdraw its troops from the DRC, however.

Rwanda is “deeply concerned by the abandonment of the Luanda and Nairobi Processes by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and by the international community’s indifference to DRC’s dramatic military build-up”.

“DRC has launched massive combat operations in North Kivu, in contravention of the decisions of regional mechanisms, and clearly aims to expel M23 and Congolese Tutsi civilians into neighbouring countries,” Kigali said.

Officially, Kigali repeated its past allegation that Kinshasa was working in concert with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Rwandan ethnic militia which is directly linked to the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994

The recent M23 advances, condemned by the US and Kinshasa in particular, are due to the DRC’s decision to expel the East African Community Regional Force in December 2023, “which oversaw ceasefire and withdrawal efforts,” Rwanda argued, referring to the defunct EAC force, which deployed between November 2022 and December 2023.

‘PROTECTING TUTSIS’

In November 2023, following American mediation between the DRC and Rwanda, the Congolese army forbade Congolese soldiers to have any contact with the FDLR.

The Rwandan authorities claim that “the FDLR have been integrated into the Congolese army” anyway and argue that Congolese authorities are not protecting the Tutsi communities in the DRC, who are, according to Rwanda, “victims of hate speech and discrimination.”

“Taken together, these facts represent a serious threat to Rwanda’s national security.”

But, Congolese authorities say Rwanda cannot take on the role of protecting citizens of another country. Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi spoke about this to counterparts at the talks held on the sidelines of the 37th African Union summit last weekend.

The question of refugees from the two countries has always been one of the points of contention between Rwanda and the DRC. In May 2023, Kigali and Kinshasa undertook, at the end of a meeting held in Geneva, to enter into a constructive dialogue to create conditions conducive to the sustainable return of Congolese and Rwandan refugees to their respective countries. No significant progress has been made since then.

MISSILE SYSTEMS

Concerning the M23, the United States condemned Rwanda’s support for the armed group and called on “Rwanda to immediately withdraw all Rwanda Defence Force personnel from the DRC and remove its surface-to-air missile systems, which threaten the lives of civilians, UN and other regional peacekeepers, humanitarian actors, and commercial flights in eastern DRC.”

Rwanda’s response is that “the M23 issue must be resolved politically amongst Congolese”.

“It will not be accepted for the problem to be externalised into Rwanda, by force, once again”, added the Rwandan statement.

Rwanda also rejected the terms of the State Department saying it “fundamentally distorts these realities, and stands in puzzling contradiction with the substance and tone of the confidence-building process initiated by the US Director of National Intelligence in November 2023, which created a productive framework for de-escalation.”

Kigali has since said it will seek clarification from the US Government to ascertain whether its statement represents an abrupt shift in policy, “or simply a lack of internal coordination.”

While both countries say they want peace, through regional peace processes, the United Nations is warning of the risk of direct confrontation between the two countries, given the military build-up on both sides.

The DRC has always said it is ready for any eventuality. Rwanda, in its press release, retorts that it “reserves the right to take any legitimate measures to defend our country, so long as this threat exists”.

The issue between the DRC and Rwanda continues to be a major concern for the region, but also for the US, whose Under Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee had talks with President Tshisekedi in Addis Ababa.

Source. www.theafricannews.com

By: Wal Nyak Dol

CSPS
MONITOR



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