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FEBRUARY 2023

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

6TH FEBRUARY 2023

ATROCITIES BY RWANDA-BACKED M23 REBELS.

Abuses by M23, Militias Aided by Congolese Army Foment Ethnic Violence in North Kivu. The Rwandan-backed M23 armed group has committed summary executions and forced recruitment of civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Human Rights Watch said today. The Congolese army is responding to the M23's offensive by collaborating with ethnic militias with abusive records. The warring parties have increasingly appealed to ethnic loyalties, putting civilians in remote areas of North Kivu province at a heightened risk. "Rwanda-backed M23 rebels in North Kivu are leaving behind a growing trail of war crimes against civilians," said Thomas Fessy, senior Congo researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Rwanda should end its military support for the M23 while Congolese government troops should prioritize protecting civilians and cease using abusive militias as proxy forces.

Recent investigations by the United Nations Group of Experts on Congo, as well as Human Rights Watch Research, provide significant photographic and other evidence that Rwanda is not only giving logistical support to the M23, but that Rwandan troops are reinforcing or fighting alongside the armed group inside Congo. The Rwandan government has denied supporting the M23 rebels. The renewed hostilities by the M23, the Congolese army, and various other armed groups has forced more than 520,000 people to flee their homes, according to the United Nations.

This has exacerbated an already catastrophic security and humanitarian situation in North Kivu and the broader eastern region. The humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières has warned of a potential health disaster as cholera spreads rapidly in camps for displaced people outside Goma. The North Kivu provincial capital. between October 2022 and January 2023, Human Rights Watch interviewed in person and by phone 48 survivors and witnesses of abuses as well as victims' family members, local authorities, activists, UN staff, security personnel, members of armed groups, journalists and foreign diplomats.

SOURCE:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/06/dr-congo-atrocities-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels>

IMF STAFF CONCLUDES VISIT TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

15TH FEBRUARY 2023

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff team led by Mercedes Vera Martin conducted a staff visit in Kinshasa during February 8-14, 2023, to discuss recent economic developments, the economic outlook, and progress on reforms supported by the ongoing Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement.

“Preliminary data show significantly stronger real GDP growth in 2022 than previously anticipated. Growth is now estimated at 8.5 percent, as stronger-than-expected mining production (which grew at about 20 percent) more than compensated for a downward revision to non-extractive growth (to 3.2 percent from 3.9 percent). Annual inflation reached 13.1 percent at end-2022 on account of higher food, energy, and transport prices. Preliminary data also suggest that the current account deficit widened in 2022, due to strong import growth and deteriorated terms of trade. Despite this deterioration, the Central Bank of Congo (BCC) has reported gross international reserves at US\$4.6 billion, about \$300 million above the previous projection.

The 2022 overall fiscal balance is estimated to have deteriorated as spending increased to address the security situation and arrears repayments. “Growth for 2023 is projected at 8 percent, but there are important downside risks from the armed conflict in the East, uncertainty ahead of the elections, the continued effect of the war in Ukraine, and adverse terms-of-trade shocks. In this context, sustaining prudent macroeconomic policies will help bolster resilience to external shocks. Additional revenues would help build fiscal buffers and improving export prices will facilitate building up reserves.

SOURCE:

<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/02/15/pr2341-imf-staff-concludes-visit-to-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>

KENYA

MORE KENYANS HIT BY CLIMATE CHANGE COUNT ON FISH FARMING

9TH FEBRUARY 2023

An increasing number of farmers are surviving drought and downpours by supplementing their income by raising fish. When Elijah Murithi grew bananas in the 1980s and 1990s, central Kenya's increasingly erratic weather meant the farmer could rarely make a steady income from the thirsty crop. Prolonged dry spells killed Murithi's young plants, and long, intense rainy periods produced a glut of bananas that forced him to lower his prices to sell them. Even when he shifted to coffee, which needs less water, the farmer still struggled to produce reliable yields. But that changed in 2021 when he added an unusual crop to his farm: fish. A fishpond filled with more than 1,500 tilapia now allows him to harvest rainwater during heavy rains and use some of it to irrigate his crops when dry spells hit, Murithi said. Now he makes a decent living through drought or downpours, growing coffee and vegetables year-round while making extra income selling fish.

SOURCE:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/9/feature-crop-of-the-future-more-climate-hit-kenyans-count-on-fish-farming>

3RD FEBRUARY 2023

KENYAN POLICEMAN GET SENTENCES FOR MURDER OF HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER.

Kenyan police authorities have been accused of running hit squads targeting those, including activists and lawyers, investigating alleged rights abuses by officers. A Kenyan court has handed long prison sentences to a former police officer, two serving ones and their civilian informant for the 2016 murder of human rights lawyer Willie Kimani. The "court finds the murder most foul with its meticulous planning and execution," the judge, Jessie Lessit, said on Friday. Kimani, his client Josephat Mwendwa and their driver Joseph Muiruri were killed shortly after filing a complaint of police brutality. Mwendwa, a motorbike taxi driver, accused lead defendant Frederick Leliman of shooting him for no reason at a traffic stop in 2015. At the time of his death, Kimani was working for International Justice Mission, a global legal rights group that helps investigate and document police killings and brutality. Their bodies were later recovered

from a river outside the capital Nairobi. The case caused outrage in Kenya, where police have faced frequent allegations of brutality and extrajudicial killings but are almost never charged. Kimani's body was found with wrists bound with rope. Three of his fingers had been chopped off and his eyes appeared to have been gouged out. The judge singled out Leliman for acting "in flagrant abuse of his office" and masterminding the murder. He was sentenced to death by the court, however, Kenya usually commuted death sentences to life in prison and has not carried out any executions since 1987.

The two serving police officers, Stephen Cheburet and Sylvia Wanjiku, and their civilian informant, Peter Ngugi, were given prison sentences ranging from 20 to 30 years. Cliff Ombeta, a lawyer for the three officers, told AFP that all would appeal the sentencing. "This judgement cannot stand the test of any court of appeal judges," he said.

SOURCE:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/3/kenyan-policemen-sentenced-for-killing-of-human-rights-lawyer>

ANALYSIS WARNS OF FOOD INSECURITY FOR 5.4 MILLION KENYANS

21ST FEBRUARY 2023

More than 5.4 million people in Kenya will likely experience acute food insecurity beginning in March and almost 1 million children are likely to suffer malnutrition this year as East Africa faces the worst drought in decades, an international initiative reported Tuesday. The analysis by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification predicated an increase in the 4.4 million Kenyans currently facing high levels of food insecurity in a country with a population of about 47.5 million. The current figure represents a 43% increase compared to the same period last year. Kenyan President William Ruto last week led a national prayer day for rain and promised to institute policies that would ensure the country's people have enough to eat. Rain forest for March but the Kenyan Meteorological Department said there would be delayed start of rainy season in northern Kenya, which is mostly arid and semis-arid. The region has had six failed rainy seasons, with less than usual rainfall in some areas and no rain in others.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/kenya-government-william-ruto-nairobi-climate-and-environment-6e0955fc8c399135bc7c8e566cca522f>

UGANDA

3RD FEBRUARY 2023

AFTER 102 CHILDREN, UGANDAN VILLAGER SAYS ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

Musa Hasahya Kasera says his vast family includes 12 wives, 102 children and as many as 578 grandchildren. Musa Hasahya Kasera has so many children he can't remember most of their names. The Ugandan villager is struggling to provide for his vast family, which he says includes 12 wives, 102 children and 578 grandchildren and now feels enough is enough. "At first it was a joke, ... but now this has its problems," the 68-year-old said at his homestead in the village of Bugisa in Butaleja district, a remote rural area of eastern Uganda. "With my health failing and merely two acres [0.8 hectares] of land for such a huge family, two of my wives left because I could not afford the basics like food, education, clothing," he said. Hasahya, who is currently unemployed, has become something of a tourist attraction.

He said his wives now take birth control to stop the family from expanding further. "My wives are on contraceptives, but I am not. I don't expect to have more children because I have learned from my irresponsible act of producing so many children who I can't look after." Hasahya's brood lives largely in a dilapidated house, its corrugated iron roof rusting away, or in about two dozen grass-thatched mud huts nearby. He married his first wife in 1972 at a traditional ceremony when they were both about 17, and his first child Sandra Nabwire was born a year later. "Because we were born only two of us, I was advised by my brother, relatives and friends to marry many wives to produce many children to expand our family heritage," Hasahya said.

SOURCE:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/2/3/after-102-children-ugandan-villager-says-enough-is-enough>

15TH FEBRUARY 2023

UGANDA THREATENS TO CLOSE UN HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE.

The Ugandan government should immediately reverse its decision to end the mandate of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Uganda, Human Rights Watch said today. On February 6, 2023, Uganda's Foreign Affairs Ministry informed the

OHCHR Uganda Country Office that it would not renew its agreement to host the UN entity beyond its current three year term ending in February 2023.

Concerned UN Member countries should press the Ugandan government to reverse its decision to close the Un office and ensure that nongovernmental organizations have a safe environment to work in. “shutting down the UN human rights office is just the government action to stifle those working to promote respect for human rights in Uganda,” said Oryem Nyeko, Uganda researcher at Human Rights Watch.” Instead of removing another critical voice from the Human Rights ecosystem, Ugandan authorities should create an enabling environment for rights advocates to work. The then-Un Commission on Human Rights established the Un human rights office with the government backing in Uganda in 2005 to focus on human rights in conflict-affected northern and north-eastern Uganda.

In 2009, its mandate was extended to cover the entire country and all human rights issues, including: training human rights defenders and security officials; monitoring human rights abuses; and facilitating the follow-up of recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms, through close partnerships with the national human rights body, the Uganda Human Rights Commission. Uganda currently hosts the largest stand-alone UN human rights office in Africa. In its letter to the UN Human Rights Office in Kampala, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said it made the decision because of the government’s own “commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights,” and the existence of “strong National Human Rights Institutions and a vibrant civil society.” The ministry said it would continue its “cooperation with the OHCHR headquarters either directly or through its permanent mission in Geneva”

SOURCE:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/15/uganda-threatens-close-un-human-rights-office>

24TH FEBRUARY 2023

MUSEVENI REFUSES TO ENDORSE HIS 2026 SOLE CANDIDATURE

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni yesterday Thursday declined to append his signature on an endorsement poster endorsing him for the 2026 elections. Museveni who has been in power since 1986 was requested by the area leaders and a section of voters in Omoro district to sign a campaign board committing him to contest in the 2026 presidential elections.

The possibility of his son Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba replacing Museveni in 2026 has naturally died down after the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party leadership endorsed him to contest again in the next upcoming elections. In his speech, the LC V chairperson Omoro, Douglas Peter Okello noted that he is representing voters in Omoro district who had in their wisdom, taken a decision and endorsed Museveni as the sole candidate for the 2026 general elections.

Okao who was clad in a yellow NRM T-shirt said that all voters in the 18 administrative units in the district had reached the Museveni sole candidate decision. The president in response said he doesn't want to be diverted and that there is time for everything, noting that Ugandans should now be focusing on wealth creation through calculative commercialised agriculture.

“I don't want to be diverted into so many other things - I don't know what! Okay, thank you very much. There is a problem in Apaa, here, where there no problem, work! Now regarding the elections of 2026, I thank you very much for proposing to support your old man, but let's handle that at the right time. Let's cook and then dish the food. We're still cooking. Don't bring plates when we're still cooking. So, I thank you very much but let's concentrate on chasing poverty,” said Museveni.

The president took time to lecture the electorates on commercial farming on the four-acre model which includes planting an acre of coffee, an acre of fruits, an acre of pasture, and food, commercial agriculture, and irrigation practices in arid conditions. Others he said are poultry farming in the backyard for eggs, piggery, fish farming for those near wetlands, and also dairy farming. The president later visited another farm in Paicho sub county, Gulu district, and Oding Youth Skilling Hub in Unyama sub county, Gulu district.

SOURCE:

<https://observer.ug/news/headlines/76940-museveni-refuses-to-endorse-his-2026-sole-candidature>

SOMALIA

22ND FEBRUARY 2023

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES FLEE FROM SOMALILAND CLASHES

SOMALIS ARRIVE IN ETHIOPIA FROM DISPUTED TOWN OF LAS ANOD, WHERE AT LEAST 82 PEOPLE HAVE DIED IN FIGHTING

More than [60,000 Somali refugees](#) have fled to Ethiopia after an escalation in fighting in the town of Las Anod, in the Sool region, where tensions between local people and the governing Somaliland authorities have been building for weeks. The UN said the refugees had arrived in part of Ethiopia that had been badly hit by drought after five consecutive failed rains, and that many people were sleeping in the open, or sheltering in schools and other public buildings.

Olga Sarrado Mur, spokesperson for the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, said: “Exhausted and traumatised, they have arrived with very little, only taking what they could carry. Women told staff from UNHCR that they had had to sell their belongings to pay for transportation to reach safety. Many of them have lost loved ones in the clashes or have been separated during flight.”

The UN said 89% of the [185,000 internally displaced people](#) (IDPs) from Las Anod and surrounding areas were women and children, who were without proper shelter. The Red Crescent said some people had been displaced earlier from areas facing severe drought after repeated failed rains.

at least 82 people have been killed in fighting that has involved shelling of civilian areas, with damage to health facilities, as well as electricity and water supplies, the UN said.

SOURCE:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/feb/22/tens-of-thousands-of-refugees-flee-from-somaliland-clashes>

8TH FEBRUARY 2023

\$2.6 BILLION APPEAL TO SUPPORT MILLIONS AMID HISTORIC DROUGHT AND FAMINE FEARS

Somalia is in the midst of *the longest and most severe drought in its history*, following five consecutive poor rainy seasons, which has devastated the country. Roughly *8.25 million people*, nearly half the population, require immediate lifesaving. They warn that *famine is a strong possibility* from April to June and beyond if humanitarian assistance is not sustained and the next rainfalls are insufficient. “The efforts of local communities and the scale up of humanitarian assistance prevented famine thresholds from being surpassed in 2022, but millions of lives remain on the line,” said Adam Abdelmoula, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia. The drought, which is also affecting parts of Kenya and Ethiopia, is the worst in four decades.

The Horn of Africa has become [hotter and drier due to climate change](#), and at least [36.4 million people](#) across the region need emergency assistance to survive, according to the UN’s humanitarian affairs agency, [OCHA](#).

In Somalia, more than 1.4 million people have been displaced while at least 3.5 million livestock have died, destroying livelihoods and reducing children’s access to milk. “The people of Somalia are paying the price for a climate emergency they did very little to create,” said Salah Jama, Deputy Prime Minister in the Federal Government. Although technical famine thresholds have not been reached, OCHA said the situation in Somalia is extremely alarming as prolonged and extreme conditions hMeanwhile, amid an anticipated reduction in funding for humanitarian assistance, some 8.3 million Somalis will likely experience high levels of acute food insecurity between April and June.

This includes more than 727,000 who are likely to face catastrophic conditions. Furthermore, about eight million people do not have access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services. Cholera and measles cases have surged, along with acute malnutrition, while conflict and insecurity continue to drive needs and hamper humanitarian access.

SOURCE:

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133272>

22ND FEBRUARY 2023

SOMALI SECURITY FORCES END AL-SHABAB SIEGE THAT KILLED 10

Security forces in Somali have ended a siege by al-Shabab extremists that killed 10 people and wounded three others at a home in the capital, Mogadishu. The Information Ministry late Tuesday said the al-Qaida-linked fighters launched the rare attack on a private home with a suicide bombing. Al Shabab often attacks hotels and government buildings. Al Shabab claimed that the home of a senior army officer also contained members of the Macawisley militia who had been wounded in the ongoing offensive against the extremists that began last year. The al-Shabab statement was released by the group's radio arm, Andalus.

Dozens of communities in central Somalia have been recaptured from al-Shabab during the offensive, which has led the extremists to carry out retaliatory attacks in Mogadishu and elsewhere

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/politics-al-shabab-mogadishu-6efcb4c814a64df99c0f8da891fcff15>

RWANDA

15TH FEBRUARY 2023

RWANDA SAYS CONGOLESE SOLDIERS ATTACK ITS BORDER ARMY POST.

Rwanda's army said its troops briefly exchanged fire with soldiers from Congo early Wednesday, in a new spike in tension between the neighbors who have accused each other of supporting armed rebel groups on the other side of the border. Congo denied that account. A statement said that twelve to fourteen Congolese soldiers entered the no man's land near the western district of Rusizi and opened fire at a Rwandan border post, in an act of provocation.

Our security forces responded and (the Congolese) soldiers withdrew, the Rwandan statement said. There were no casualties on the Rwanda side and situation is calm. Congo's government said there were clashes between its military and a group of bandits near the border in Bukavu, but denied entering the neutral zone.

In no case did the arm cross the neutral zone, let alone open fire in the direction of Rwanda, Theo Ngwabidje Kasi, governor of Kivu province, said in a statement. Congo for months has accused Rwanda of supporting an armed rebel group called M23, that's fighting eastern Congo.

The conflict in eastern Congo has gone for decades, with more than 100 armed groups fighting for control of valuable resources while others protect their communities, and has triggered an exodus of refugees. Congo for months has accused Rwanda of supporting and armed group called M23, that's fighting in eastern Congo.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/politics-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-government-rwanda-e75edfb0ea0986e0426052196fdf1c4a>

8TH FEBRUARY 2023

RWANDAN DRIVER FINED AFTER GUILTY PLEA FOR REPORTER'S DEATH

A driver whose car hit and killed a Rwandan investigative journalist has pled guilty and has been fined by a court. Moise Emmanuel Bagirishya was fined \$920 for involuntary manslaughter, three weeks after the crash which killed John William Ntwali.

Ntwali was riding as a passenger on a motorbike when the accident happened on Jan. 18. He was investigating and exposing human rights violations in Rwanda and activists had called for investigations into his death. The motorist who pleaded guilty will also pay \$500 for injuries to the motorcyclist who was carrying Ntwali.

The prosecution during the trial had asked the court to jail the motorist for two years and fine him \$1,800 after he pleaded guilty and asked for forgiveness. The law in Rwanda allows 30 days to appeal but Ntwali's family has told local media they will not file an appeal.

Dozens of African civil society groups and press associations on Tuesday called for an independent investigation into Ntwali's death, saying the official explanation lacked sufficient evidence.

"Rwandan authorities have failed to provide a police report, the exact location of the alleged accident, any photo or video evidence or detailed information on the others involved in the accident," the statement said.

Ntwali had previously expressed fears for his life and told the Human Rights Watch rights organization that he had received phone threats and strangers had visited his house. Ntwali had been described as Rwanda's last independent journalist and lauded for his brave reporting on human rights violations.

SOURCE:

<https://apnews.com/article/crime-legal-proceedings-rwanda-accidents-human-rights-ca0c424ade323c4d313ef21f3cdca85f>

DJIBOUTI

1ST JANUARY 2023

REGIONAL LEADERS VOW TO SUPPORT SOMALIA'S WAR AGAINST AL-SHABAB

The leaders of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia met Wednesday in the Somali capital to discuss the ongoing fight against al-Shabab militants. The security summit took place amid an offensive by Somalia and its allies against the Islamist militants. Somalia in the past year has won significant victories against the group, which has also increased its counterattacks. At least four mortar shells landed near the presidential palace in Mogadishu Wednesday, ahead of a meeting of heads of state and governments from the region. There were no casualties reported in the attack, for which al-Shabab claimed responsibility.

The Frontline States Summit went ahead with Kenyan President William Ruto, Djibouti's president, Omar Guelleh, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia and the host, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. Earlier, Somalia's information minister, Daud Aweis, told journalists in Mogadishu the leaders would discuss efforts by the Somali army and its clan militia allies to ensure peace in the region. He said, the discussions here in Mogadishu will focus more on the operations of the Somali National Army in cooperation with the citizens with the aim of achieving lasting peace in the Horn of Africa and ensuring that the state of security in Somalia does not only end in Somalia but also extends to neighbouring countries.

Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia contribute troops to the African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia, ATMIS. However, security analysts say today's gathering explores more enhanced engagement among Somalia's neighbours. A communique from the meeting noted that the regional countries had agreed to mobilize resources to support the ongoing military operations in Somalia. Matt Bryden is the founder of Sahan Research, a security and policy research group focusing on the Horn of Africa. "The meeting of the frontline states in Mogadishu today, and the heads of state is really an essential step in advancing the fight against al-Shabab independently of wider peace and security issues, such as the role of ATMIS and security cooperation, economic cooperation between these neighbouring states," he said. Bryden said the engagement among the regional states is long overdue, noting the regional bloc IGAD has previously called on member states to deal with al-Shabab as a regional problem.

Bryden said although al-Shabab is centered in Somalia, it has carried out deadly attacks throughout the region, especially Kenya, and has made incursions into Ethiopia and Djibouti. "So, this is about Somalia and its neighbors not simply cooperating on the conventional or counterinsurgency battle against al-Shabab inside Somalia. It is about investigating, identifying and disrupting al-Shabab's networks of financiers, facilitators and active supporters across the entire region," he said. Following the conclusion of the summit, the leaders of the four countries

said they had agreed to establish a joint coordination mechanism and jointly plan a decisive operational strategy against the Islamist militants. The U.N. Security Council has set December 2024 as the exit date for African Union forces from Somalia. However, that milestone has been termed overly ambitious in light of inadequate preparation among Somali security forces and the current strength of al-Shabab.

SOURCE:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/regional-leaders-vow-to-support-somalia-s-war-against-al-shabab/6943380.html>

24TH FEBRUARY

DJIBOUTI HOLDS PARLIAMENTARY VOTE BRANDED AS SHAM BY OPPOSITION

ONLY TWO PARTIES ARE CONTESTING SEATS IN THE 65-MEMBER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN FRIDAY'S ELECTION.

The tiny Horn of Africa [nation of Djibouti](#) is voting in parliamentary elections on Friday that have been boycotted by the main opposition parties, who have branded the polls a sham. Only two parties are contesting seats in the 65-member National Assembly, where veteran [President Ismail Omar Guelleh's](#) ruling Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP) is assured of victory.

Despite its diminutive size, Djibouti enjoys a strategically crucial position at the mouth of the Red Sea, using it to woo trade investors and foreign military powers. The opposition charges that the poll, which follows a presidential ballot in April 2021 that saw Guelleh re-elected for a fifth term with 97 percent of the vote, will not be free and fair. Despite its diminutive size, Djibouti enjoys a strategically crucial position at the mouth of the Red Sea, using it to woo trade investors and foreign military powers. The opposition charges that the poll, which follows a presidential ballot in April 2021 that saw Guelleh re-elected for a fifth term with 97 percent of the vote, will not be free and fair.

The main opposition parties, including the Movement for Democratic Renewal and Development (MRD) and the Republican Alliance for Democracy (ARD), have announced they will not take part. Elections in our country are still not free, not transparent and not democratic," the MRD said in a statement in January, describing Friday's vote as nothing more than a "charade". "The people of Djibouti are deprived of their right to freely choose their leaders," it added, denouncing the country's "single party" system. Djibouti's 230,000 voters will choose MPs for a five-year term, with the law stipulating that 25 percent of the 65 seats must go to women. In the last legislative ballot in 2018, the UMP – which emerged from a party that ruled Djibouti since independence from France in 1977 – won 58 seats.

The Union for Democracy and Justice (UDJ), the only other party running on Friday, took five of the remaining seven. This election, similar to the presidential polls in 2021, are not really taken seriously by the population any more – the public interest is very, very limited,” Benedikt Kamski, Horn of Africa researcher for Germany’s Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, told AFP news agency. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional bloc, said it would be sending an observer mission. Under Guelleh, the country of one million people has exploited its prime geographical advantage, investing heavily in ports and logistics infrastructure. Flanked by Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, and across the sea from Yemen, the desert nation has remained stable in a volatile neighbourhood.

Foreign military powers including colonial ruler France, the United States and China, as well as Italy and Japan, have established bases or support facilities there. It dreams of becoming the “Dubai of Africa” with the help of foreign investment, notably from China. The Asian giant helped fund a rail link between Djibouti and the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, which opened in 2017. It is also financing Africa’s biggest free trade zone. In January, the government announced a memorandum of understanding with a Hong Kong-based company to build a \$1bn commercial spaceport expected to take five years to build.

SOURCE:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/24/djibouti-to-hold-parliamentary-vote-snubbed-by-opposition>

ETHIOPIA

18TH FEBRUARY 2023

ISRAELI OBSERVER DELEGATION KICKED OUT OF AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT IN ADDIS ABABA

An Israeli observer delegation at the African Union summit in Addis Ababa was kicked out of the opening ceremony on Saturday, the Foreign Ministry said, blaming South Africa and Algeria for the severe diplomatic breach. According to the Walla news site, which first reported the incident, security guards came up to the Israeli delegation during the opening ceremony and demanded they leave.

Video showed the Israelis, led by Foreign Ministry Deputy Director General for Africa Sharon Bar-Li, leaving after several minutes of discussion. “Israel views seriously the incident in which the deputy for Africa, Ambassador Sharon Bar-Li, was removed from the African Union hall despite her status as an accredited observer with access badges,” said ministry spokesperson Lior Hayat. “It is sad to see that the African Union has been taken hostage by a small number of extremist countries such as Algeria and South Africa, driven by hatred and controlled by Iran,” Hayat said. “We call on the African countries to stand against these actions that harm the organization of the African Union itself and the entire continent,” he said. Later Saturday, the Foreign Ministry announced the charge d’affaires at the South African embassy in Israel would be summoned in the coming days for a dressing down by the ministry’s director-general Ronen Levy. “There is no basis in the organization’s rules for the attempt to cancel Israel’s observer status,” the Foreign Ministry said. “There is a clear majority that supports Israel’s observer status at the organization.” The African Union did not respond to a request for comment about the incident. Asked about Israel’s accusations that South Africa and Algeria were behind the move, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa’s spokesman Vincent Magwenya told AFP at the summit: “They must substantiate their claim.”

The issue of Israel’s observer status has caused deep discord in the 55-member bloc. At last year’s summit, a debate on the issue was suspended in a bid to avoid a vote that would create an unprecedented rift in the Union. Instead, a committee was set up that was supposed to give its recommendations at this year’s summit. The relationship with Israel is a rare point of contention for a body that values consensus, with powerful member states, notably South Africa, loudly protesting a decision in 2021 by Moussa Faki Mahamat, chair of the African Union Commission, to accept Israel’s accreditation to the bloc.

The six-member committee was to have included South Africa and Algeria, who opposed Faki’s move to accredit Israel, as well as Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who supported it. Cameroon also asked to be on the committee, while South Africa requested the inclusion of Nigeria as well, diplomats said at the time. The Palestinian Authority has repeatedly

urged African leaders to withdraw Israel's AU accreditation, denouncing its "apartheid regime." The 2021 accreditation handed Israeli diplomats a victory they had been chasing for nearly two decades.

Israel was previously accredited at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), but lost that status when the body was disbanded and replaced by the AU in 2002. Seventy-two countries, regional blocs and organizations are already accredited, including North Korea, the European Union and UNAIDS, according to the AU's website. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made strengthening Israel's relations with Africa one of his main foreign policy goals. Earlier this month he joined visiting President of Chad Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno in Tel Aviv to officially open the African nation's embassy in Israel, a move both leaders hailed as "historic."

SOURCE:

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-observer-delegation-kicked-out-of-african-union-summit/>

15TH FEBRUARY

ETHIOPIA CHURCH SPLIT RESOLVED AMID SOCIAL MEDIA SUSPENSION

LEADERS OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH HAVE AGREED TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES PEACEFULLY AFTER WEEKS OF DEADLY CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN RIVAL FOLLOWERS OF THE SYNOD AND SECURITY FORCES THAT HAVE LEFT AT LEAST 10 PEOPLE DEAD

The church, whose followers form a majority of Ethiopia's more than 110 million population, had split after members in [Oromia](#) declared a new synod on Jan. 22 and expressed a need to exercise their faith in local languages. The church excommunicated several officials who participated in the split. The newly signed agreement allows the use of the Afan Oromo language in churches located in the Oromia region and in other languages across other regions and states that "for this to happen, more budget and manpower will be allocated." At least 10 people have died and hundreds others arrested during unrest in some parts of the capital, Addis Ababa, and in Oromia, the country's largest region.

An agreement was also reached to secure the release of those who were arrested, church officials said. Elders including Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and retired athlete [Haile Gebrselassie](#) were involved in mediating between the two sides, the state-owned Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation reported. Abiy had previously urged church members to resolve their differences and stated that the government would not get involved. He, an ethnic Oromo and a Protestant

Christian, was however accused by some followers of undermining the church and siding with the breakaway synod. The widespread tension had resulted in the suspension of access to social media platforms including TikTok, Facebook and Telegram since Feb. 9. The apps remain offline although many Ethiopians are using them through Virtual Private Networks. No official statement was made when internet access to social media was suspended and there has been no word yet on when it will be back. Social media was being used to mobilize people to attend a rally planned by the church to take place on Sunday and which the government had issued a warning against. The rally was later postponed indefinitely.

SOURCE:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/ap-romia-ethiopia-nairobi-kenya-b2283730.html>

14TH FEBRUARY

SURVEY PAINTS BLEAK PICTURE OF ETHIOPIA'S STATE OF MIND AFTER TWO YEARS OF WAR

As Ethiopians emerge from two years of conflict, a new Gallup survey paints a bleak picture of people suffering economically and emotionally. The [survey](#) conducted in the fall of 2022, found that a record-high 65% of Ethiopians are struggling to afford food, with food prices rising 43% in 2022 compared to 2021, and certain staple items soaring by more than 80%. Opinion researchers had not been able to enter the country in 2021 and saw a significant change when they returned the following year. Zach Bikus, regional Director-Africa at Gallup said the team interviewed about 1,000 people but were not able to travel to the conflict areas. “This year we were really excited to get back and really hear what the people are thinking,” he said. “And so, the main takeaway from this data that we just collected really is that the past couple of years have been difficult years.” In addition to the conflict, the country is facing its worst drought in 40 years, putting additional pressure on the food supply, the report said. At the same time, income is also under pressure, with 45% of Ethiopians finding it “very difficult” to get by on their present household income, compared to 28% in 2019.

Bikus said he is seeing similar results across the region. “Really, East Africa, in general, is facing this drought, but also the fallout from the Ukraine-Russia conflict,” he said. “Many of the countries in these regions are big importers of wheat, Ethiopia included, and fertilizer. So, really the global pressures on food supply and prices I think are happening in a major impact.” The situation has had a profound effect on Ethiopians’ mental and emotional well-being. When asked to rate their quality of life from 1 to 10, the average rating dropped from 4.5 in 2020 to just 3.6 in 2022, the lowest since 2012.

The survey also found significant increases in people reporting they feel “worry,” “physical pain,” “anger,” and “stress.” “We asked about physical issues, food and infrastructure, but really there’s kind of an emotional component too and how people are feeling themselves in terms of happiness or negative emotions,” Bikus said. “I think that’s another important thing to keep an eye on.” The country faces a monumental task in maintaining peace, restarting the economy and reconciliation in the wake of the conflict, but there has been some positive news, the report noted.

The cessation of hostilities has allowed greater access to humanitarian relief, and the national government has attempted to normalize relations with the international community, including the attendance of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed at the U.S.-Africa Leaders’ Summit in Washington in December. The war between Ethiopia’s federal government with Tigrayan forces may have ended, but the impact on the country has been profound, the D.C.-based global opinion polling company found. Researchers still haven’t been able to access the Tigray region and some of the surrounding areas, Bikus said. “I believe it was about 7% of the population we were unable to talk to,” he said, adding that although the team followed protocols, they are “kind of at the mercy of circumstances sometimes.”

SOURCE:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/survey-paints-bleak-picture-of-ethiopia-s-state-of-mind-after-two-years-of-war/6962761.html>

SUDAN

9TH FEBRUARY

Special envoys from the European Union, Britain, France, Germany, Norway, and the U.S. have vowed to support Sudan's transition to a civilian-led government. The six envoys arrived in Khartoum Wednesday and met with Sudanese political leaders to show support for the country's ongoing political transition. But they agreed to resume financial support to Sudan only once a civilian-led transitional government is formed.

The envoys made the pledge late Wednesday after meeting with the head of Sudan's ruling Sovereign Council, General Abdul Fattah al-Burhan. Speaking after the meeting, Peter Lord, the U.S. deputy assistant secretary for East Africa, Sudan and South Sudan, said the envoys are in Khartoum to acquaint themselves with the ongoing political process. He said they believe that the December 5th political framework agreement is the best basis to form the next civilian-led government in Sudan, and the best basis to establish a constitutional arrangement for a transitional period that results in elections. "It's our strong hope that the parties will make a quick formation of a civilian led-government that is able to lead Sudan out of its current political, economic crises," said Lord.

On December 5th, Sudanese civilian and military leaders signed a power-sharing deal that raised hopes of ending clashes between security forces and protesters that have persisted since the country's October 2021 military coup. Lord said it was their hope that the framework agreement will mark the first step toward forming a civilian-led government, which will prepare the nation for elections. In early January, various Sudanese political forces that were signatories to the framework agreement launched discussions on army and security reforms, transitional justice, and dismantling elements of former President Omar al-Bashir's government.

Khalid Omer Yousif, the official spokesperson for the ongoing political process, welcomed the visit of the six western envoys and says it is a good opportunity for them to learn about the challenges facing the process in Sudan. He said the envoys expressed their understanding about challenges facing the political process in Sudan and their readiness to fully support all the actors to reach an urgent political solution in a short time. The envoys' visit coincided with an official visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Khartoum Wednesday, as part of his African tour to strengthen economic and political ties.

Sudanese political analyst Haj Hamed said Russia was trying to send a signal to Western countries that it also has strong ties with Sudan and it has to protect its interests. "They are the main suppliers of the army with weapons and they are already supporting Himetti [Dagalo] by training and other things," he said. "They have their own companies that are buying gold. So they have to protect this economic interest by standing firm."

The Russians are becoming more aggressive now within their foreign policy as they are now becoming more militarily aggressive in Ukraine." The state-owned SUNA news agency reported

that Lavrov met Thursday morning with General al-Burhan and his deputy, Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo. SUNA reported the meeting focused on Sudanese-Russian relations and ways to enhance them in all fields, as well as the political crisis in Sudan in light of the December framework agreement.

SOURCE:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/western-envoys-vow-to-resume-support-for-sudan-transition/6955615.html>

6TH FEBRUARY

PROPOSED SUDAN-ISRAEL PEACE DEAL TRIGGERS PROTEST IN KHARTOUM

Scores of Sudanese protested in the capital Monday against diplomatic relations with Israel, after last week's surprise visit by the Israeli foreign minister. Dozens of Sudanese protesters chanted "no normalization" with Israel, as they held banners blaming Sudanese military leader Abdul Fattah al-Burhan for committing a "betrayal." Monday's protest comes days after Sudanese and Israeli officials announced that the two countries are moving toward normalizing ties. The announcement was made Thursday after an official visit by the Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Eli Cohen, who met with Sudanese officials in Khartoum.

Speaking to VOA during Monday's protest, Mohammed Al Safi said, he rejects any form of normalization with Israel. Al Safi, who is a member of the self-described "popular campaign" against normalization with Israel, said al-Burhan's decision doesn't reflect the will of the Sudanese people. "We are at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to raise our voice that Khartoum shall remain the town for 'No to peace, no to normalization and no to recognition of Israel,'" he said. That policy, known as the 'Three Nos,' was established at a 1967 Arab League summit in Khartoum, soon after the 1967 Mideast War when Israel took control of Jerusalem and the West Bank. Another protester, Tamadur Omer, said she took part in the protest to reject the "illegality" of the decision taken by the Sudanese military leaders.

Speaking to VOA while wearing a Palestinian scarf around her neck, she said her religion doesn't allow her to live in peace with the Israeli people. That is why the government's decision doesn't serve the interest of all Sudanese people. "As a Muslim, I reject the normalization in principle and value," she said. "And as a Sudanese people, we will not sell our country to Zionists. Such a decision can only be the mandate of an elected and a legitimate government." Another demonstrator, Al Fadil Abu Basher, said protesters will push to maintain the rejection of any ties with Israel. "This is an unconstitutional and illegal decision and they, the military, do not have the right to take such a decision," he said. "We are ready to face the illegal step with all the rejection [it] means. All means are open for us. Abdurrahman Khaleel, the spokesperson of the Sudanese Foreign Affairs Ministry, downplayed the protest, saying people are free to demonstrate. "It is

normal that part of the Sudanese is against this. They have a right to express their opinion,” he said. In 2020, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco all normalized relations with Israel as part of the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords. Sudan separately announced plans to establish diplomatic ties with Israel in a deal brokered by the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump. In January 2021, Sudan’s government issued a declaration paving the way to normalizing ties with Israel, and later approved a bill abolishing a boycott of the country dating back to 1968.

SOURCE:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/proposed-sudan-israel-peace-deal-triggers-protest-in-khartoum/6950120.html>

22ND FEBRUARY

CALLS FOR INCLUSIVITY AIM TO ACHIEVE GOALS OF SUDAN’S COUP: ARMAN

Yasir Arman, the official spokesman for the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), renewed rejection to open the framework agreement for an unlimited number of political forces, stressing that such attempts aim to achieve the goals of the coup d’état. Despite signing the Political Framework Agreement on December 5, 2022, the head of the Sovereignty Council and the coup’s leader against the civil government, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, calls for opening the agreement to the forces that did not sign it.

Burhan’s position calls come at a time when his deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo “Hemetti”, announced his commitment to the agreement and called to speed up the establishment of a civilian government. In an interview with Al Jazeera TV on Wednesday evening, Arman denied that he is serving as a political adviser to Hemetti following rumours of an alliance between the RSF commander and the FFC groups. He pointed out that this does not prevent him from praising Hemetti’s admission that the coup was a “major historical mistake”. “The framework agreement is a victory for the will of all those who signed it. Also, it is an acknowledgement that the coup was a mistake,” he said. He further called on the signatories to implement the agreement and not delay its implementation. “We want to return to the agenda of the revolution and we will not accept anything else that is at the expense of the December revolution.” He added that the demand to open the agreement to all political forces except the National Congress is ultimately an attempt to achieve the same goals of the October 25 coup, which aimed at excluding the forces of the revolution and the agenda of civil rule. “There are groups that some would like to include, so that the agreement gets dumped.

Then (they would pave the way to) choose a weak prime minister who does not belong to the agenda of the revolution and a weak sovereign council president as well,” he further said. “The framework agreement has no future if it is separated from the forces of the revolution and the agenda of the revolution,” he stressed. He underscored that the framework agreement

represents a common agenda gathering the parties of the military component on one side and between them and the civilian forces on the other side. Also, the non-implementation of the framework would lead to isolating Sudan from the international community again, he said. “This setback will not serve the military or Sudan. So, it is better for us to have the necessary political will to implement this agreement and get the country out of this historical impasse,” he stressed.

On Friday, February 3, al-Burhan stated in the White Nile State that the army would not implement the framework agreement with one side but wanted all the Sudanese political forces to be included. Shems al-Din Kabbashi, a military member of the Sovereign Council two days after al-Burhan statements stressed that they will not move forward with the framework agreement “if other reasonable and acceptable forces do not join it”.

SOURCE:

<https://sudantribune.com/article271184/>

SOUTH SUDAN

23RD FEBRUARY 2023

SOUTH SUDAN'S KIIR CALLS FOR 2.3 MILLION REFUGEES TO RETURN HOME

South Sudan's president is appealing to the more than 2 million South Sudanese refugees living in neighbouring countries to start returning home. Salva Kiir says his government will provide returning refugees with the necessary security. There are more than 2.3 million South Sudanese living as refugees in nearby countries such as Kenya, Uganda and Egypt. Speaking Wednesday in Juba, Kiir said repatriating those citizens was at the top of the government's priority list. "For those who will opt to return to their habitual areas of residence, the government will provide security and will work jointly with partners to organize logistics around what is needed to resettle successfully in those areas," Kiir said. He made the comments while speaking to representatives of South Sudan's large population of internally displaced people. Kiir said the country also intended to resettle the IDPs, though not "Equally, for those who cannot go back to their residence, we have spoken with authorities in the states where IDP camps are located, to set aside land and to resettle them," he said. "I must add that this land, once designated, must be allocated to IDPs and IDPs only."

Pope Francis had a similar gathering with IDP leaders in Juba during his visit to South Sudan earlier this month. Kiir pledged the government would provide the IDPs with security, even though he acknowledged that it would take a lot of persuading for them to leave their current protected areas. Many South Sudanese IDPs were displaced by the 2013 civil war that broke out when Kiir's forces clashed with those of opposition leader Riek Machar. James Kok, a member of the national parliament, echoed the president's message of declaring 2023 as a year of reconciliation, forgiveness and development. necessarily in the areas from which they came. "This message must be sent to all South Sudanese people to let them know that the president has forgiven people this year, and people should also forgive him, so that individuals can continue to move forward and develop the nation," Kok said. In calling for the resettlement of refugees and IDPs, Kiir said nothing about South Sudan's continued political or economic challenges. The country has yet to fully implement the 2018 peace accord that ended the civil war, and parts of the country are dealing with chronic violence. In the Upper Nile region, intercommunal violence, mostly caused by cattle rustling, has sparked a new wave of displacement.

A chief in Unity state, Juma Nyundeng, said the IDPs made it clear to the president that all they wanted was peace. "We no longer want to see bloodshed," he said. "People are fighting in Upper Nile, and we don't want people from Upper Nile, Abyi and Twic fighting each other. "All we want is peace and our country back so that we can stay together." South Sudan has not seen an extended period of peace since winning independence from Sudan in 2011.

SOURCE:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/south-sudan-s-kiir-calls-for-2-3-million-refugees-to-return-home-/6976379.html>

5TH FEBRUARY

POPE MASS IN SOUTH SUDAN: PONTIFF URGES PEOPLE TO REJECT VENOM OF HATRED

POPE FRANCIS HAS ENDED HIS PEACE PILGRIMAGE TO SOUTH SUDAN BY CELEBRATING AN OPEN AIR MASS ATTENDED BY TENS OF THOUSANDS IN JUBA.

He urged the congregation to reject what he called the “venom of hatred”, and told them to lose no opportunity to build peace. And he pleaded with the country’s leaders to focus on ending conflict.

Before leaving, he told the crowd: “Dear brothers and sisters, I return to Rome with you even closer to my heart.” Excited Catholics, some who camped overnight for the Mass, told Reuters it was a joyful moment. “To this moment I do not sleep, I was very excited,” Jovana Buyom said. “We are really very happy with the coming of Pope because he will give us the message of peace, we can unite as South Sudanese people,” Juach Bol Ayuel said. The Mass, which took place at the John Garang Mausoleum in front of an audience of 70,000 according to estimates, was filled with cheerful worshippers waving flags and deep in prayer. The religious ceremony fell on the last day of the Pope’s visit to South Sudan, which was his first to the country. Since it got independence in 2011, the country has been wracked by civil war after the president fell out with his then vice president in 2013.

Despite a peace deal in 2018, violence driven by ethnic tensions has continued - more than 400,000 people are thought to have died as a result of the conflict.

At least 20 people were killed in a cattle raid on the eve of the religious leaders’ visit.

The Pope, who visited the country alongside other Christian leaders - the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Rev Iain Green shields - has been on a peace mission and pleaded with South Sudanese clergy to raise their voices against injustice on Saturday. He also told them that they cannot remain neutral against injustice: “If we want to be pastors who intercede, we cannot remain neutral before the pain caused by acts of injustice and violence. To violate the fundamental rights of any woman or man is an offence against Christ.” The Pope had a similar message of peace and reconciliation when he visited the Democratic Republic of Congo earlier this week.

SOURCE:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64528622>

4TH FEBRUARY

POPE FRANCIS IN SOUTH SUDAN: THE CATHOLIC PILGRIMS WHO WALKED NINE DAYS TO JUBA

A GROUP OF ABOUT 60 CATHOLIC PILGRIMS ARE RECOVERING AFTER SPENDING NINE DAYS TREKKING THROUGH WAR-TORN SOUTH SUDAN TO SEE POPE FRANCIS IN THE CAPITAL, JUBA.

“My feet are sore, but I am not so tired. When the spirit is with you, you do not get tired,” Night Rose Flea said as she licked her cracked, dry lips.

“I would not have missed coming to Juba for anything. We are here to get the Pope’s blessings. I am confident that with his blessings things will change for this country,” she told the BBC. Driven by faith and a sense of patriotism, the women had set off from Rumbek - some 300km (190 miles) north-west of Juba. Their mission: to join the Pope in prayer for the world’s youngest nation, which has been beset by conflict since its independence in 2011 - a situation that has brought untold misery to millions of its people. “We walked for a couple of hours each day and then we would spend the night in the parishes at the centres where we were. It was tiring but worth it,” said Faith Biel. As they walked for the last few miles, dust and joyful songs filled the air as a caravan of people sang and stamped their feet. The spectacle attracted crowds of onlookers. Some joined in as the dancing became more vigorous. Others, unsure, stood at a safe distance to make way for the group of women dressed in white and wearing headscarves with a print of Pope Francis’s face. Their besmirched clothes, blistered feet and cracked lips attested to the ordeal of the nine-day trek, but they still danced and jumped to celebrate their accomplishment. Refreshments awaited them at Juba’s St Theresa’s Catholic Church, where a welcoming party had also started singing and dancing. One pilgrim, who was shedding tears as she arrived, hinted at the trauma the years of fighting have brought to this country.

“When you have smelled and seen death and hopelessness, then you will search for peace with all the might that you have,” said the woman, who did not want to give her name. “I have lost enough, but along the way I saw love and we all spoke one language - that of peace. I really pray that even after the Pope leaves, we will still be like that,” she continued. “He is a prophet and whatever he prays in the next few days, while on our soil, will come to pass. Things will be different. We are going to be one people.” The church is seen as a symbol of hope for many in South Sudan. It is where many displaced by the country’s conflicts seek refuge. It has also continued to take a leading role in the social welfare of the people and given most of them a sense of belonging. Pope Francis is spending three days in the country and will hold a Mass on Sunday. In a historic first, he travelled with two other Christian leaders - Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland Rev Iain Greenshields. In 2019 Pope Francis kissed the feet of South Sudan’s bitter political rivals, President Salva Kiir and his deputy Riek Machar, when they met at the Vatican. This was an act that shocked many, even if it did not immediately end the fighting. Although that conflict has now subsided, many local

disputes still turn deadly on a regular basis - on the eve of the Pope's arrival, more than 20 people were killed in a cattle raid. Millions of South Sudanese will be hoping - and praying - that the visit of the three religious leaders will mark a new beginning for this troubled country.

SOURCE:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-64509799>

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