

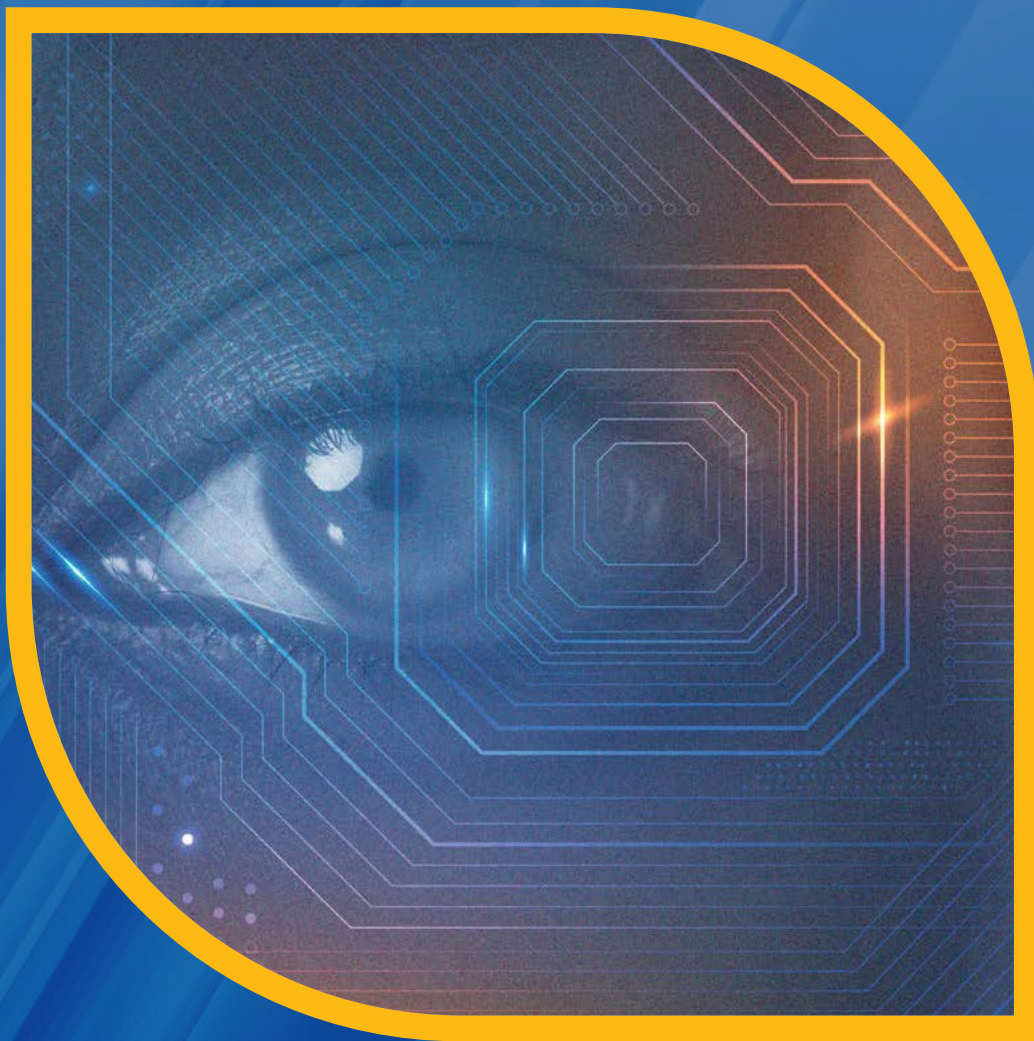


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APRIL 2024

ETHIOPIA

SOMALIA EXPELS ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR AMID SOMALILAND PORT DEAL DISPUTE

MOGADISHU ALSO SHUTS DOWN ADDIS ABABA'S CONSULATES IN HARGEISA AND GAROWE AMID RISING TENSION OVER A SOMALILAND PORT DEAL WITH ETHIOPIA.

4TH APR 2024

Somalia has announced the expulsion of Ethiopia's ambassador from the country amid rising tensions over a port deal dispute in the breakaway region of Somaliland.

Ethiopian Ambassador Mukhtar Mohamed was sent home for consultations, the office of Somalia's prime minister said on Thursday. Mogadishu is also shutting down Ethiopia's consulates in Hargeisa, the largest city and capital of Somaliland, and Garowe, the capital city of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland.

"The plain interference of Ethiopia's government in the internal affairs of Somalia is a violation of the independence and sovereignty of Somalia," Somalia's prime minister's office said in a statement.

In a brief statement on X, Somalia's Foreign Minister Ali Omar added that Mohamed had been given 72 hours to leave the country. "Somalia stands firm on its sovereignty," he wrote. "Our resolve in protecting our territory is steadfast."

Al Jazeera's Catherine Soi, reporting from the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, said the expulsion was a major diplomatic escalation.

"It appears that with what's going on, it's going to be a huge setback" in efforts to resolve the deal peacefully, Soi said.

The dispute arose after landlocked Ethiopia agreed on a memorandum of understanding on January 1 to lease 20km (12 miles) of coastline in Somaliland.

Under the deal, the coastland around the port of Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden, will be used by Ethiopia for 50 years for military and commercial purposes.

Ethiopia said it wanted to set up a naval base there and offered possible recognition of Somaliland in exchange, prompting defiance and anger from Somalia – which accused Ethiopia of trying to annex part of its territory – and fears the deal could further destabilize the Horn of Africa.

'LANDGRAB'

Somalia claims Somaliland as its own territory, even though the northern region has enjoyed effective autonomy since 1991.

Somalia says the deal amounts to a landgrab, while Ethiopia says the deal is of a commercial nature and vital to its economic needs.

Somalia also felt that the Ethiopian government bypassed Mogadishu in reaching the deal, Al Jazeera's Soi said.

Adding to the tension was Ethiopia's recent meeting with officials from the semi-autonomous Puntland region of Somalia to discuss "bilateral" cooperation, she added.

In January, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said in an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera that his country would "defend itself" if Ethiopia goes ahead with the deal.

Mohamud said Ethiopian assets would have to cross into Somalia's territory to reach the leased area and warned Addis Ababa against taking such a step.

"So far Ethiopians haven't come into Somalia. If they will, then that will be a problem at a different level," Mohamud said.

He also accused Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of having kept him "in the dark" about the deal with Somaliland when they met in Djibouti in late December for "very good" talks on the "unity" of Somalia, just days before the MoU was signed.

Asked whether he thought there could be a win-win solution to the crisis, which has stoked fears of a prolonged diplomatic rift, he said the ball was in Ethiopia's court. "We want Ethiopia to have access to the sea, there is no question about that," Mohamud said, adding that the federal government was ready to negotiate a deal with Addis Ababa.

"But grabbing a piece of land, we are not ready for that."

SOURCE: ALJAZEERA AND NEWS AGENCIES: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/4/somalia-expels-ethiopian-ambassador-amid-somaliland-port-deal>.

CHILDREN AMONG 16 DEAD AFTER ASYLUM-SEEKER BOAT CAPSIZES OFF DJIBOUTI: UN

At least 28 others are missing after a boat carrying 77 asylum seekers sinks, according to the UN's migration agency.

At least 16 people are dead and 28 others are missing after a boat carrying asylum seekers capsized off the coast of the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti, according to the UN's migration agency.

The accident occurred on Monday night, about two weeks after another boat carrying mainly Ethiopian asylum seekers sank off the Djibouti coast, killing several dozen people, on the perilous so-called "eastern migration route" from Africa to the Middle East.

"Tragedy as boat capsizes off Djibouti coast with 77 migrants on board including children," the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Tuesday in a post on X.

"At least 28 missing. 16 dead," it said, adding that the local IOM branch was "supporting local authorities with search and rescue effort".

Yvonne Ndege, a spokeswoman for the agency, told the AFP news agency that the 16 deaths included children and an infant, without offering further details.

Ethiopia's ambassador to Djibouti, Berhanu Tsegaye, said on X that the boat was carrying Ethiopians from Yemen and that the accident occurred off Godoria in northeastern Djibouti.

He said 33 people, including one woman, survived.

Another boat carrying more than 60 people sank off the coast of Godoria on April 8, according to the IOM and the Ethiopian embassy in Djibouti.

The IOM said at the time that the bodies of 38 people, including children, were recovered, while another six people were missing.

The Ethiopian embassy had said the boat was carrying Ethiopians from Djibouti to war-torn Yemen.

Each year, many tens of thousands of African asylum seekers brave the "eastern route" across the Red Sea and through Yemen to try to reach Saudi Arabia, escaping conflict or natural disaster, or seeking better economic opportunities.

"On their journeys, many faces life-threatening dangers including starvation, health risks and exploitation – at the hands of human traffickers and other criminals," the IOM said in a statement in February.

Ndege said the IOM's data from 2023 showed that "the number of people trying to cross is on the rise".

According to the IOM, Ethiopians make up 79 percent of about 100,000 people who arrived in Yemen last year from Djibouti or Somalia, the remainder being Somalis.

Africa's second-most populous country, Ethiopia is blighted by various conflicts and several regions have suffered from severe drought in recent years.

More than 15 percent of its 120 million inhabitants depend on food aid.

In February, the IOM said that according to its Missing Migrants Project at least 698 people, including women and children, had died crossing the Gulf of Aden from Djibouti to Yemen last year.

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/23/children-among-16-dead-after-asylum-seeker-boat-capsizes-off-djibouti-un>

ETHIOPIA: EPO WEEKLY UPDATE (23 APRIL 2024) [EN/AM]

SITUATION SUMMARY

Last week, clashes between forces from Amhara and Tigray regions expanded in disputed territories in Southern Tigray zone, Tigray, while armed clashes between government forces and insurgencies continued in Amhara and Oromia regions.

CLASHES EXPAND IN DISPUTED TERRITORIES IN TIGRAY

In a major escalation of hostilities between armed forces from Amhara and Tigray regions, clashes were reported in disputed territories in Raya Alamata, Zata, Ofla, and Alamata woredas in Southern Tigray zone. Fighting began on 13 April and continued through 15 April, ending when federal forces intervened and controlled Alamata town. According to authorities in the host communities of North Wello and Wag Hamra zones, the number of displaced people due to the renewed hostilities had reached more than 50,000.

Clashes in Southern Tigray zone — officially recognized as part of Tigray region but de facto administered by officials from Amhara region — were recorded in February for the first time since the end of the northern Ethiopia conflict in November 2022. Clashes also occurred at the end of March. Last week's confrontation marked a significant escalation of clashes, both geographically and in number, and threatens the delicate peace achieved through the Pretoria agreement.

Getachew Reda, president of the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray, issued a statement indicating that the clashes were a “work of diehard enemies of the Pretoria agreement.” The Amhara regional government issued a statement accusing the Tigray People’s Liberation Front of invading areas with active identity questions — referring to the status of Western and Southern Tigray zones, which Amhara region claims as an ethnic homeland — and inciting war. Federal authorities commented on the clashes and asked that all sides respect the Pretoria agreement and have reiterated their commitment to resolve the issues of disputed territories via a referendum. Clashes are likely to continue to expand in these areas and could draw in wider fighting, demonstrations, and prolonged violence in the coming weeks.

CONTINUED CLASHES IN AMHARA

In Amhara region, clashes between government forces and Fano militias were also reported. Clashes between Fano militias and the Ethiopian National Defense Force soldiers were reported in West Gojam, Central Gondar, South Gondar, North Shewa, and Awi zones. In Feres Bet, West Gojam zone — an area where conflict has occurred frequently since November 2023 — government forces claimed to have killed 64 Fano fighters during clashes, wounding several others. In Awi zone, heavy weapons fired by government troops during clashes reportedly resulted in the deaths of at least five civilians.

CLASHES AND A TRANSPORT STRIKE IN OROMIA

Armed clashes persisted in Oromia region. Clashes between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) — referred to by the government as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)-Shane — and government forces were reported in and around Batu town (Ziway) in East Shewa zone, and in East Wollega and West Shewa zones. A number of violent incidents targeting transport drivers were also reported in and around Meki town, where a political officer for the Oromo Liberation Front party was assassinated a week earlier. At least one driver was reportedly killed, four gas station workers were kidnapped, and at least one truck and several ‘Bajaj’ three-wheeled vehicles were set ablaze by OLA/OLF-Shane forces in Meki who were enforcing a transportation strike in response to the killing of the political officer the week prior.

Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-epo-weekly-update-23-april-2024-enam>

RWANDA

KAGAME BLAMES THE WORLD'S INACTION AS RWANDA COMMEMORATES THE 1994 GENOCIDE WITH LINGERING SCARS

APRIL 7, 2024

KIGALI, Rwanda (AP) — Rwandan President Paul Kagame blamed the inaction of the international community for allowing the 1994 genocide to happen as Rwandans on Sunday commemorated 30 years since an estimated 800,000 people were killed by government-backed extremists.

Rwanda has shown strong recovery and economic growth in the years since, but scars remain and there are questions about whether genuine reconciliation has been achieved under the long rule of Kagame, whose rebel movement stopped the genocide and seized power. He has been praised by many for bringing relative stability but vilified by others for his intolerance of dissent.

Kagame led somber commemoration events in the capital, Kigali. Foreign visitors included a delegation led by Bill Clinton, the U.S. president during the genocide, and Israeli President Isaac Herzog.

The killings were ignited when a plane carrying then-President Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, was shot down over Kigali. The Tutsis were blamed for downing the plane and killing the president, and became targets in massacres led by Hutu extremists that lasted over 100 days. Some moderate Hutus who tried to protect members of the Tutsi minority were also killed.

Rwandan authorities have long blamed the international community for ignoring warnings about the killings, and some Western leaders have expressed regret.

Clinton, after leaving office, cited the Rwandan genocide as a failure of his administration. French President Emmanuel Macron, in a prerecorded video ahead of Sunday's ceremonies, said that France and its allies could have stopped the genocide but lacked the will to do so. Macron's declaration came three years after he acknowledged the "overwhelming responsibility" of France — Rwanda's closest European ally in 1994 — for failing to stop Rwanda's slide into the slaughter.

"It was the international community which failed all of us, whether from contempt or cowardice," Kagame said in a speech after lighting a flame of remembrance and laying a wreath at a memorial site holding the remains of 250,000 genocide victims in Kigali.

He also shared the story of a cousin whose family he tried to save with the help of U.N. peacekeepers. She did not survive. She did not survive.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame, left and his wife, first lady Jeannette Kagame, President of the Central African Republic Faustin-Archange Touadéra, centre and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and his wife Zinash Tayachew stand, during a ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, held at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, in Kigali, Rwanda, Sunday, April 7, 2024. (AP Photo/Brian Inganga)

"We will never forget the horrors of those 100 days, the pain and loss suffered by the people of Rwanda, or the shared humanity that connects us all, which hate can never overcome," U.S. President Joe Biden said in a statement.

Rwanda's ethnic composition remains largely unchanged since 1994, with a Hutu majority. The Tutsis account for 14% and the Twa just 1% of Rwanda's 14 million people. Kagame's Tutsi-dominated government has outlawed any form of organization along ethnic lines, as part of efforts to build a uniform Rwandan identity.

National ID cards no longer identify citizens by ethnic group, and authorities imposed a tough penal code to prosecute those suspected of denying the genocide or the "ideology" behind it. Some observers say the law has been used to silence critics who question the government's policies. Rights groups have accused Kagame's soldiers of carrying out some killings during and after the genocide in apparent revenge, but Rwandan authorities see the allegations as an attempt to rewrite history. Kagame has previously said that his forces showed restraint in the face of genocide.

Kagame said Sunday that Rwandans are disgusted by critics who have "questioned and revised" the history of the genocide. "Rwandans will always challenge it," he said, adding that preventing another genocide requires political measures such as those now in place.

"Our journey has been long and tough," he said. "Rwanda was completely humbled by the magnitude of our loss, and the lessons we learned are engraved in blood. But the tremendous progress of our country is plain to see and it is the result of the choice we made together to resurrect our nation."

He added, "The foundation of everything is unity. That was the first choice — to believe in the idea of a united Rwanda. A night vigil will be held later on Sunday as part of a week of remembrance activities."

Naphtal Ahishakiye, the head of Ibuka, a prominent group of survivors, told The Associated Press that keeping the memory of the genocide alive helps fight the mentality that allowed neighbors to turn on each other, killing even children. Mass graves are still being discovered across Rwanda 30 years later, a reminder of the scale of the killings. "It's a time to learn what happened, why it happened, what are the consequences of genocide to us as genocide survivors, to our country, and to the international community," said Ahishakiye.

He said his country has come a long way since the 1990s, when only survivors and government officials participated in commemoration events. "But today even those who are family members of perpetrators come to participate."

Kagame, who grew up a refugee in neighboring Uganda, has been Rwanda's de facto ruler, first as vice president from 1994 to 2000, then as acting president. He was voted into office in 2003 and has since been reelected multiple times. A candidate for elections set for July, he won the last election with nearly 99% of the vote.

Rights activists and others say the authoritarian Kagame has created a climate of fear that discourages open and free discussion of national issues. Critics have accused the government of forcing opponents to flee, jailing or making them disappear while some are killed under mysterious circumstances. Kagame's most serious political rivals are his Tutsi ex-comrades now living in exile. Though mostly peaceful, Rwanda also has had troubled relations with its neighbors.

Recently, tensions have flared with Congo, with the two countries' leaders accusing one another of supporting armed groups. Relations have been tensing with Burundi as well over allegations that Kigali is backing a rebel group attacking Burundi. And relations with Uganda are yet to fully normalize after a period of tensions stemming from Rwandan allegations that Uganda was backing rebels opposed to Kagame.

Source: <https://apnews.com/article/rwanda-genocide-anniversary-commemoration-6322893ec7fa443177a70e00f796d-fc9>.

UK PASSES CONTROVERSIAL BILL TO SEND ASYLUM SEEKERS TO RWANDA AFTER TWO YEARS OF CHALLENGES

APRIL 23, 2024

CNN —

The UK parliament has finally passed a contentious bill that will allow the government to send asylum seekers to Rwanda for their claims to be considered by the East African nation.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's efforts had been stuck between opposition in the Houses of Parliament and challenges in the British courts, as lawmakers and activists have sought to scupper the legislation on human rights grounds.

Sunak celebrated his success on Tuesday morning, saying: "We introduced the Rwanda Bill to deter vulnerable migrants from making perilous crossings and break the business model of the criminal gangs who exploit them. The passing of this legislation will allow us to do that and make it very clear that if you come here illegally, you will not be able to stay."

However, the bill's passage was condemned by activists and the United Nations. Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said in a statement: "Protecting refugees requires all countries – not just those neighboring crisis zones – to uphold their obligations."

"This arrangement seeks to shift responsibility for refugee protection, undermining international cooperation and setting a worrying global precedent."

Amnesty International UK called the legislation "a stain on this country's moral reputation" that "takes a hatchet to international legal protections for some of the most vulnerable people in the world."

Sunak's inability to implement the policy has caused considerable embarrassment, as the British government has sent millions of pounds to Rwanda to fund a scheme which to date has failed to deliver any results.

It is designed to deter irregular migration into the United Kingdom, particularly people traveling on illegal – and dangerous – small boats from France, arranged by criminal gangs.

The challenge facing the UK was underscored on Tuesday morning when five people were reported dead after attempting to cross from France into England. A small boat with more than 110 passengers "became overcrowded, resulting in several casualties" off the coast of Wimereux, northern France, according to a statement from French officials. At least five people died; three men, one woman and one child, the statement sent to CNN said

In theory, the legislation will see some landing in the UK sent to Rwanda where their asylum claim will be considered. Planes carrying people to that country are not expected to leave before mid-July. If their claim is accepted, they will stay in Rwanda. If it is declined, the bill says they cannot be deported by Rwanda to anywhere other than the UK, though it is unclear what would ultimately happen in this scenario.

Two years after the scheme was first conceived, the absence of any deportations so far has been considered a major failure for Sunak, who has previously marked out stopping small boats as a key priority.

The Supreme Court of the UK ruled last year that the policy is unlawful "because there are substantial grounds for believing that asylum seekers would face a real risk of ill-treatment by reason of refoulement to their country of origin if they were removed to Rwanda."

Refoulement is the practice where asylum seekers or refugees are forcibly returned to a place where they would face persecution or danger, against important principles of international human rights law.

The judges also found that Rwanda's asylum system, its poor human rights record, and its previous failure to comply with non-refoulement agreements meant that the British government could not be sure asylum seekers would have their claims considered safely and properly.

They also noted that, as recently as 2021, the UK government criticized Rwanda for “extrajudicial killings, deaths in custody, enforced disappearances and torture.”

The government responded by introducing the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill in January of this year, which effectively enshrines in UK law that Rwanda is a safe country, overriding the judges’ concerns.

Home Secretary James Cleverly said in a video posted on X on Monday that “the Safety of Rwanda Bill has passed in Parliament and it will become law within days.”

He added that the act would “prevent people from abusing the law by using false human rights claims to block removals. And it makes clear that the UK Parliament is sovereign, giving the government the power to reject interim blocking measures imposed by European courts,” he added.

LONG DELAYS

Even with the bill passed, it is possible that the government will face legal challenges in the European Court of Human Rights, as the UK is still a signatory to the European Convention of Human Rights. The European court has previously barred it from sending asylum seekers to Rwanda.

The bill has suffered long delays because of attempts to amend it. A process colloquially known as “ping pong,” where the two parts of the UK’s parliament – the House of Commons and the House of Lords – send legislation back and forth, has been going on for months. Every time the House of Lords makes amendments to the bill, the House of Commons, where Sunak has a majority, must vote to remove them.

The bill’s passage is not necessarily a major political win for Sunak. Even if the policy stopped all the small boat crossings Sunak says he wants to prevent, it would still barely touch the sides in terms of the UK’s net migration figures. In 2022, the number of people arriving by small boats was 45,744, according to Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford. Net migration the same year, according to government figures, was 745,000.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks during a news conference ahead of a crunch vote on the Rwanda legislation on April 22, 2024.

Toby Melville/PA

This is a problem for Sunak and his governing Conservative Party, as they are set to face the public in a general election that must be called before the end of this year. Parties on the right – most notably Reform UK, the new political home of arch-Brexiteer Nigel Farage – will push the issue of illegal migration as hard as possible.

There is also a danger that Sunak gets dragged into a wider debate around the UK leaving the ECHR, should deportations be blocked by the European court after the bill passes. This issue has already caused deep divisions between different sections of the Conservative Party.

To date, the Rwanda policy has cost the British government £220 million (\$274m), and that figure could rise to £600 million after the first 300 people have been sent to East Africa. That leaves Sunak open to criticism from both the left and the right, who can say not only that the policy violates international human rights law, but that it is expensive and ineffective.

The opposition Labor Party, currently expected to win at the next general election, has already said that it will scrap the policy should it come to power.

Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/04/22/uk/uk-passes-rwanda-bill-intl/index.html>

TANZANIA

FLOODS KILL 58 IN TANZANIA WITH HEAVY RAINS PERSISTING

MORE THAN 100,000 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE FLOODING, WHICH HAS HIT TANZANIA'S COASTAL AREAS ESPECIALLY HARD.

15 APR 2024

Floods have killed 58 people in Tanzania over the last two weeks, spurring the East African country to seek an answer in major infrastructure projects.

The government announced the death toll late on Sunday as heavy rains continued to lash the country. April marks the peak of Tanzania's rainy season, and it has been exacerbated this year by the El Nino phenomenon, which has caused droughts and floods across the globe.

"From April 1 to April 14, 2024, there were 58 deaths caused by the heavy rains, which led to flooding," government spokesman Mobhare Matinyi told a press briefing, stressing that the country's coastal region was one of the worst affected.

"Serious flood effects are experienced in the coast region where 11 people have so far died," he added.

Tanzania has plans to construct 14 dams to prevent flooding in future, the spokesman said.

Just four months ago, at least 63 people were killed during floods in northern Tanzania that also triggered devastating landslides.

On Friday, eight schoolchildren drowned after their bus plunged into a flooded gorge in the north of the country. A volunteer in the rescue operations also died. Overall, at least 126,831 people were affected by the flooding, Matinyi reported.

More than 75,000 farms have been damaged in the coastal and Morogoro areas – about 200km (124 miles) west of the economic capital, Dar-es-Salaam.

Essential supplies, including food, have been distributed to those affected.

Other parts of East Africa have also been experiencing heavy rains. Flooding in neighbouring Kenya is reported to have killed at least 13 people.

Infrastructure has also been damaged and those living in flood-prone areas are being urged to move.

Scientists from the World Weather Attribution group have said the rainfall in East Africa "was one of the most intense ever recorded" in the region between October and December.

“Climate change also contributed to the event, making the heavy rainfall up to two times more intense,” the AFP news agency reported, citing the group, adding that the exact contribution of global warming was unknown.

SOURCE: ALJAZEERAANDNEWSAGENCIES: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/15/scores-killed-as-heavy-rains-trigger-floods-in-tanzania>.

DAR ES SALAAM. GOOD MORNING! THE CHANZO IS HERE WITH A RUNDOWN OF MAJOR NEWS STORIES REPORTED IN TANZANIA.

DAR ES SALAAM RC: THE CITY NEEDS A MAJOR OVERHAUL OF ITS DRAINAGE SYSTEM

APRIL 29, 2024

The Regional Commissioner of Dar es Salaam, Albert Chalamila has called for an overhaul of the Dar es Salaam drainage system. Chalamila explained that drainage system and water pathways have been blocked in the city as the result of human activities.

Chalamila was speaking during a joint press conference with the Minister of Works, Innocent Bashungwa on the assessment of damage caused by ongoing rain in the country.

“I iterate my earlier analysis, we have not been hit with flooding, what is there, is the obstruction of water pathway and drainage system which now causing water to go to people’s homes and other places. What Dar es Salaam needs at the moment is a major overhaul of the city drainage system,” argued Chalamila.

Chalamila also highlighted that most roads in Dar es Salaam are not suitable anymore because of the increase of vehicles, and weight that pass on those roads. Chalamila also faulted the road design that does not incorporate a drainage system leading to water-destroying roads.

“Most road designs in Dar es Salaam have been built at surface level dressing, road design which can last up to 8 years. But we need different designs that can last longer based on the number of vehicles and weight that passes on these roads,” explains Chalamila.

On his end, the Minister of Works Innocent Bashungwa said so far, the government has ensured anywhere where there is an emergency, road is opened within 24 hours.

“As the rain continues, it will not be prudent to build permanent roads where damage has happened. But we are continuing with the assessment, up to now the estimated cost to restore damaged infrastructures stands at Shs. 600 billion,” said Bashungwa.

TANZANIA COLLECTED SH. 12.6 BILLION IN DIGITAL TAX FROM GLOBAL TECH COMPANIES

Tanzania has collected a total of Tsh. 12.6 billion from global tech companies that do not have residency in the country. This was revealed on April 29, 2024, by the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) Official, Hudson Kamoga during a meeting with Tanzania editors.

The country collected the revenue between July 2023 and March 2024. The Digital Service Tax, introduced in July 2023, mandates non-resident digital service providers to remit 2 percent of their transaction volume registered in the country to the authorities.

Companies are required to voluntarily register on a platform designed by TRA and remit the required tax.

WORLD BANK AND REGROW PROJECT IN TANZANIA: A TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

Tanzania has promised to proceed with its controversial Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth Project (REGROW) even without funding from the World Bank, which pulled out of the project following allegations that human rights abuses have accompanied the project's implementation.

We look at the key events leading up to the funding suspension which occurred thanks to years of pressure from affected Tanzanians and human rights groups, which accused the Bretton Woods institution of violating its own policies by continuing to fund the project:

September 28, 2017: World Bank approves US\$150 million, or Sh388.6 billion, credit for the implementation of the Resilient Natural Resource Management for Tourism and Growth Project, or REGROW, to improve conservation management in Tanzania.

GOVERNMENT TO CLEAR OVER 18 BILLION DEBTS OWED TO TANZANIA MEDIA HOUSES

The Minister of Information, Communications, and Information Technology, Nape Nnauye, said that the government is in the process of clearing debt of over 18 billion owed to various media outlets in the country.

Nnauye made these remarks on April 29, 2024, at the 13th annual professional meeting of the Tanzania Editors Forum (TEF) in Dodoma.

Nnauye highlighted that five billion shillings are debts accrued by local authorities who showed no signs of reducing or paying off the debt, underlining that they will be a new push to settle them, with the remaining amount being debts from the central government.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR A BOLDER TANZANIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Tanzania's foreign policy engagements have taken a more dynamic turn under the leadership of President Samia Suluhu Hassan, taking strides towards a rebuilding of greater diversity and trust in external partnerships after a period of comparative isolationism under her predecessor.

The official review of foreign policy underway since 2023 is now a chance to consolidate this revival and ensure that Tanzania's external relations deliver maximum benefit for the country's citizens, without compromising on core values.

Between 2022 and 2024, the international affairs policy institute Chatham House and the Tanzania office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) have partnered on a research project to analyse the status of Tanzania's foreign policy. The project has brought together foreign affairs experts and policymakers to discuss the opportunities presented under the review process.

Source: <https://thechanzo.com/2024/04/30/the-chanzo-morning-briefing-tanzania-news-april-302024/>

DAR ES SALAAM: THE Tanzania Trade Development Authority (Tantrade) has said the upcoming Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair (DITF) is set to generate some 445,000 US dollars.

The two-week international trade fare scheduled from 28th of June to 13th of July will bring in some international companies and generate the much-needed foreign exchange. So far 400 global firms confirmed to participate in the 48th DITF starting from 28th June to 13 July.

Tantrade Director General Ms Latifa Khamis told Daily News over the weekend that the fair apart from facilitating international trade and wooing investment will also generate 445,000 US dollars.

"We [Tantrade] generate foreign exchange by encouraging more foreign exhibitors to participate at the fair. "Therefore, we expect to generate sizeable foreign currencies between June and July when foreign companies from seven countries participate at the fair," Ms Khamis said.

The DITF organizer said so far international and local exhibitors have booked almost 50 per cent of the space for the coming Dar fair (DITF) two months ahead of the event. The success was mainly attributed to government's efforts to woo foreign exhibitors to the fair.

Tantrade data showed that exhibitors have booked 2100 of the spaces, estimated as 47 per cent of the entire area by mid this month.

"The target is to make sure the spaces are booked well ahead of time to enable us to carry out some rehabilitation and renovation. "The idea is to finish each and everything before the fair starts...not to continue doing some works after the fair started," Ms Khamis said.

Tantrade planned to finalise space booking by the end of next month and allocate the spaces to exhibitors to enable them to renovate the pavilions ahead of the opening day.

One of the notable achievements of this year's effort to attract international exhibitors will be showcased by China presenting them from three provinces up from one of last year.

China's Shandong Province participated last year with over 150 exhibitors. So far seven countries have confirmed to participate at the exhibition—also known as Sabasaba fair. The countries are Algeria, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Türkiye, Korea and Japan.

Source: <https://dailynews.co.tz/tantrade-sabasaba-to-generate-us-445000/>

UGANDA

STATEMENT FROM NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR JAKE SULLIVAN ON UGANDAN COURT UPHOLDING THE ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY ACT.

APRIL 04, 2024

The Uganda Constitutional Court’s decision to uphold most aspects of the Anti-Homosexuality Act is deeply disappointing, imperils human rights, and jeopardizes economic prosperity for all Ugandans.

While the Court overturned some clauses of the law, in failing to fully overturn the Act, the Court has left LGBTQI+ persons vulnerable to hate-fueled violence, discrimination, persecution, life imprisonment, or even the death penalty – simply for existing as they are. As President Biden said when this legislation was enacted: “No one should have to live in constant fear for their life or being subjected to violence and discrimination. It is wrong.”

As directed by President Biden, the United States continues to assess implications of the AHA on all aspects of U.S. engagement with the Government of Uganda and has taken significant actions thus far. The United States will continue to hold accountable individuals and entities that perpetrate human rights abuses in Uganda, both unilaterally and with partners around the world.

Yesterday’s ruling is a missed opportunity for Uganda—not only to uphold the human rights of all Ugandans, but also to reaffirm the importance of dignity, compassion, and tolerance for all. The United States remains committed to the Ugandan people and has the greatest respect for Uganda’s human rights defenders that are bravely fighting for the rights of all. We will continue to work to strengthen democratic institutions, protect human rights, and accelerate the fight against corruption, in Uganda, at home, and globally.

Source: <https://ug.usembassy.gov/statement-from-national-security-advisor-jake-sullivan-on-ugandan-court-upholding-the-anti-homosexuality-act-april-04-2024/>

TAX PROTEST SHUTS DOWN BUSINESSES ACROSS UGANDA

17 APRIL 2024

KAMPALA—Businesses shut down in major towns and cities across Uganda on Wednesday in protest at high taxes and a newly enforced revenue collection system.

The week-long action was launched by the Federation of Uganda Traders Association on Tuesday and has spread from the capital Kampala to many other parts of the country.

“We have called on all businesses in the country to close in protest until the government hears our voice,” FUTA president John Kabanda told AFP.

“We are pressing ahead with the strike and we are determined to close for even a month until the government acts on our demands.”

Shops and other businesses including butchers, bakers and eateries have shut their doors, protesting at high interest rates and taxes, with VAT at 18 percent, and a new levy on imported clothing.

The action was triggered by the government’s enforcement of a tax regime known as EFRIS requiring that all receipts and invoices submitted to the revenue authority must be digital.

Uganda’s minister of state for finance, Haruna Kyeyune Kasolo, said the businesses were protesting because they did not understand the new system.

“The striking traders must appreciate the new system because it is for the good of their businesses while enabling the country to collect taxes as opposed to (relying on) foreign funding,” he told AFP.

But local traders voiced anger at the tax burden they are facing.

“I joined the protest to save my business. We are tired of paying high taxes yet we have other high operational costs,” said Bernard Musoke, a 48-year-old who runs a mixed retail shop in Kampala’s main commercial district.

“Should we continue to pay high taxes for the government officials and parliament to embezzle and live in luxury?”

Sylvia Atwenda, a 31-year-old mother of three who trades in cosmetics and hair accessories, told AFP that people had set up businesses to support their families, not fund the government.

“Instead of taking away all that we have, we appeal to the government to give us subsidies and support our businesses to grow and not kill them.”

Source: <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/tax-protest-shuts-down-businesses-across-uganda-/7573400.html>.

KENYA IRISH POTATOES STUCK AT BUSIA BORDER OVER NEW UGANDAN TAX

APRIL 18, 2024

Close to 30 trucks from Kenya loaded with tons of Irish potatoes destined for Uganda are stuck at the Busia border after Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) doubled withholding tax on products from the neighboring country.

Other 20 trucks were reportedly impounded by the tax body in Jinja on April 12 when the new withholding tax policy, which pushed the levy to 100 percent, was implemented.

According to importers of the Irish potatoes from Kenya, they have been paying withholding tax of Shs120,000 for each truck, but in the new tax policy, URA seeks Shs1,200,000 from each truck, which the tax body has, however, denied.

Mr Ibrahim Bbosa, the URA Commissioner Public and Corporate affairs, said URA had increased withholding tax of 6 percent with a customs value of \$0.4 (Shs1,560) on each kilogram of Irish potatoes imported into the country, which increases the tax from Shs9 to Shs93.6 on each kilogramme.

According to Mr Bbosa, the product has previously been “undervalued”, the reason the tax body was reviewing it by 100 percent.

“We have reviewed and increased withholding tax on Irish potatoes coming into the country, but not to the value the importers are talking about,” he clarified.

He further explained that importers and clearing agents had been using a wrong value of \$0.4 which is the custom’s value and directly computing it with the current exchange rate, which pushes the tax per kilogram of Irish potatoes to Shs1,560.

Haji Ali Mande, the chairman Uganda Clearing Agents and Forwarding Association Jinja branch, said the implementation of the tax that started on April 12 was “hurriedly done” and “too high” for the importers.

“Whereas URA was saying it had increased the tax from Shs9 to Shs93.6 per kilogramme of Irish potatoes imported into the country, the trucks that were impounded in Jinja had paid Shs1,560 on each kilogramme,” he said.

“We just heard that 15 trucks carrying Irish potatoes from Kenya had been impounded by URA, only to be told that they had to pay a new levy of Shs1,560 on each kilogramme instead of the old levy of \$0.058 (Shs240),” he added.

Haji Mande now fears that since a new withholding tax was implemented on a Kenyan product, the

neighboring country may retaliate and impose a blockade on Ugandan goods like it has done in the past.

Kenya, which is Uganda's leading trading partner has in the recent past imposed bans on Ugandan goods, including sugar, sugarcane, maize, milk and eggs.

Mr Yahaya Kamba, a clearing agent who clears Irish potatoes at the Busia border, said because of the policy, URA impounded 15 trucks in Jinja, while a notice was sent to Eldoret, Nakuru and Kisumu, all in Kenya, instructing against dispatching trucks that have not paid the new tax.

Mr Paul Chuka, also a clearing agent at the Busia border, said the increment in tax makes it very expensive for importers.

"When you compute the withholding tax with the Shs1,560 that URA is implementing, it pushes the importers into costs, requiring one to pay \$200 fees (Shs800,000) to Uganda National Bureau of Standards (Unbs), which is unaffordable to the importers," he said.

Mr Samuel Jumba, an importer of Irish potatoes based in Kisenyi, Kampala, said traders are counting losses after the products perished following their impounding by the tax body.

Ms Mariam Milly Namwasa, an importer who is based in Mbale City, said the new tax was increasing the cost of doing business.

She said she buys one kilogram of Irish potatoes at KShs30 (about Shs900), but has to incur transport costs and sells each kilogram on the Ugandan market between Shs1,500 and Shs2,000, fearing that the Shs1,560 tax on each kilogram would make it difficult for her to access market.

Mr Juma Yahaya, the Secretary General Uganda Clearing and Forwarding Association-Busia, said the tax risked making the Irish potatoes "totally unaffordable" to Ugandans.

"Importers are going to push the cost to the final consumer, meaning if a plate of Irish potato chips has been going for Shs3,000, we should expect to buy it at not less than Shs6,000," he said.

Mr Pius Baleno, a truck driver, said even after two days, he was yet to have his goods cleared to proceed to Uganda because of the new tax policy.

Sources: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/kenya-irish-potatoes-stuck-at-busia-border-over-new-ugandan-tax-4594592>.

KENYA

KENYA - FLOODS, UPDATE (UN OCHA, RELIEF WEB, KENYA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT, MEDIA) (ECHO DAILY FLASH OF 12 APRIL 2024)

Heavy rainfall continues to affect northern, central and eastern Kenya since the beginning of the long rainy season (from March to May), causing rivers overflow (in particular the Tana River), floods, flash floods and triggering landslides that have resulted in more casualties and widespread damage. The most affected Counties are: Marsabit, Turkana, Tana River, Garissa, Kirinyaga, Muranga, Kiambu, Meru, Kisumu, Nairobi and Kitui.

UN OCHA reports, as of 11 April, 13 fatalities, approximately 15,000 displaced people and a total of around 20,000 affected people across the aforementioned Counties. The Nairobi County is the worst affected with 11 fatalities and around 9,000 displaced people. In addition, the same source reports several closed roads and highways.

Over the next 72 hours, more heavy rainfall with locally very heavy rainfall is still forecast over most of the country.

Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/kenya-floods-update-un-ocha-reliefweb-kenya-meteorological-department-media-echo-daily-flash-12-april-2024>.

DOZENS KILLED IN KENYA AS WEEKS OF HEAVY RAIN DEVASTATE REGIO

APRIL 29, 2024

A CNN team on the ground in Kenya's Rift Valley town Mai Mahiu has seen overturned vehicles, uprooted trees and homes which had been swept away in mass flooding.

Larry Madowo/CNN

At least 71 people have been confirmed dead and 110 people are in hospital following floods near the town of Mai Mahiu in Kenya's north-western Nakuru county, Nakuru governor Susan Kihika confirmed to CNN on Monday.

According to Kihika, flooding in the region was exacerbated by the bursting of a dam, though

locals and first responders have told CNN that the disaster was caused by water blowing through a tunnel under a railway bridge with a clogged culvert.

Kenya has grappled with weeks of heavy rains and devastating flash floods.

A CNN team on the ground in Mai Mahiu has seen overturned vehicles, uprooted trees and homes which had been swept away in mass flooding.

CNN witnessed damage to one of the most affected areas from flooding in Nakuru county, which spanned several kilometers in every direction. A distraught man told CNN that he feared several of his family members were still buried under the mud and debris.

Rescue teams are digging through the mud and debris trying to find survivors, Kihika told CNN, warning that the death toll could rise significantly.

The incident comes as flooding has inundated large swathes of Kenya, killing at least 103 people and forcing thousands of residents from their homes since March, government spokesperson Isaac Maigua Mwaura said Monday.

A man uses a stick to cross a river after heavy flash floods wiped out several homes when a dam burst, following heavy rains in Kamuchiri village of Mai Mahiu, Nakuru County, Kenya on April 29, 2024.

Thomas Mukoya/Reuters

In Mai Mahiu, Kihika said a serious situation was unfolding as floodwaters swept away people and homes.

“We are trying to get a handle on the situation but it’s a bit overwhelming but we’re doing the best we can especially to reach those who have been carried away because we hope that some are still alive,” Kihika said.

Access to Mai Mahiu, 20 miles north of the capital Nairobi, had been difficult as part of the road had been cut off from recent heavy rains, Kihika said. Teams are clearing debris as they try to reach survivors and pullout bodies, she added.

On Monday, the Kenya Red Cross Society said several people were taken to a health facility in Mai Mahiu due to the flash floods affecting Kamuchiri village.

“The floodwaters are reported to have originated from a nearby river that broke its banks,” the group said.

Kenya has registered heavy rain since mid-March but downpours have intensified over the past week, leading to mass flooding.

“Kenya is facing a worsening flood crisis due to the combined effects of El Niño and the ongoing March-May 2024 long rains,” IFRC Secretary General and CEO Jagan Chapagain said in a post on X, referring to the climate pattern that originates in the Pacific Ocean along the equator and impacts weather all over the world.

“Since November 2023, El Niño triggered devastating floods and river overflows, causing more than a hundred deaths and widespread damage.”

A man is seen in flood waters near a submerged church compound, after the River Tana broke its banks following heavy rains at Mororo, Kenya, on Sunday, April 28.

Andre Kasuku/AP

A another climate fluctuation called a positive Indian Ocean Dipole, similar to El Niño but which originates in the Indian Ocean along the East Africa coast, is also intensifying the rains, said Joyce Kimutai, a researcher at Imperial College London’s Grantham Institute the former principal meteorologist at the Kenya Meteorological Department.

And behind these natural climate patterns, the long term-trend of human-caused global warming is “highly likely” to be influencing the heavy rainfall, as warm air tends to hold more moisture, Kimutai told CNN.

The Horn of Africa, a region of East Africa that includes Kenya, is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in the world.

A drone view shows damaged houses after heavy flash floods wiped out several homes when a dam burst, following heavy rains in Kamuchiri village of Mai Mahiu, Nakuru County, Kenya on April 29, 2024.

Edwin Waita/Reuters

The deadly rains across the Horn of Africa at the end of last year, which killed at least 300 people, were about twice as intense as they would have been without climate change, according to a December analysis from scientists at the World Weather Attribution (WWA) initiative.

The impact of Kenya’s most recent rains also may have been worsened by falling on very hard, dry soils after years of catastrophic drought, which affected many parts of Kenya, killing livestock and crops and causing widespread hunger and water insecurity. This drought was made 100 times more likely by planet-heating pollution from fossil fuels, an April WWA analysis found.

“When people are still reeling from one extreme weather event, it makes them highly vulnerable to another,” Kimutai said.

A damaged passenger bus stuck on a fallen tree after heavy flash floods wiped out several homes when a dam burst, following heavy rains in Kamuchiri village of Mai Mahiu, Nakuru County, Kenya, on April 29.

Thomas Mukoya/Reuters

Some 131,450 people have been affected as floods swept through almost half of Kenya.

Images and video from Nairobi, which has been badly impacted, show people stranded on rooftops or salvaging what they can from homes destroyed by the flash floods.

Other video shows vast flooding around the Tana River, with large parts of the surrounding area underwater. Roads, buildings and vehicles are submerged.

The Ministry of Education announced Monday that all primary and secondary schools would postpone the start of the new school term for one week until May 6.

On Sunday, the Kenya Red Cross Society said 23 people had been rescued and others were missing after a boat capsized at Kona Punda while heading to Mororo, Tana River County, on Sunday.

As of Friday, the group said it has rescued more than 300 people since the onset of the rain in March.

Heavy rains in East Africa have also affected Tanzania and Burundi. Tanzanian Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa said on Thursday that at least 155 people have been killed by flooding in the country.

Source: CNN <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/04/29/africa/kenya-floods-mai-mahiu-intl-hnk/index.html>

DRC

PRESS STATEMENT ON SITUATION IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (5 APRIL 2024)

SC/15654

The following Security Council press statement was issued today by Council President Vanessa Frazier (Malta):

The members of the Security Council met on 27 March to discuss the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They were briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita.

The members of the Security Council strongly condemned the resumption of attacks by the March 23 Movement (M23) in North Kivu and in other areas, worsening security and stability in the region and exacerbating the current dire humanitarian situation. They also condemned all armed groups operating in the country. They demanded the immediate cessation of hostilities and of any further advances by the M23 and its unconditional withdrawal from all occupied areas as agreed through the African Union-endorsed Luanda Process.

The members of the Security Council expressed concern at the number of internally displaced persons in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu, and called on all donors to scale up support in response to the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan. They called on all parties, in particular the M23 and the Congolese armed groups, to allow, in accordance with international law, including applicable international humanitarian law, and consistent with the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access to those in need, and to refrain from any violence against civilians.

The members of the Security Council expressed concern about continued violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights, including gender-based violence and sexual violence in conflict, recruitment and use of children. They further expressed concern about the intensification of misinformation and disinformation. They renewed their condemnation of hate speech targeting any community and fueling intercommunal violence. They emphasized the importance of protection of civilians and ensuring accountability for these violations, including sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The members of the Security Council condemned foreign military support provided to M23 and any other armed group operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and demanded the cessation of such support and the immediate withdrawal of any such external party from the

Democratic Republic of the Congo. They expressed deep concern at the reports of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo on foreign military support for M23 and direct military interventions on Democratic Republic of the Congo territory. They also condemned support, notably provided by military forces, to certain armed groups such as the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) and demanded the cessation of such support.

The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms recent attacks against MONUSCO, its personnel and its assets, resulting in severe injuries among peacekeepers and wished a speedy and full recovery to those injured. They reiterated their strong support for the active steps taken by MONUSCO to implement its mandate, including targeted offensive operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to neutralize armed groups. They requested the Secretary-General, Member States and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of MONUSCO's personnel, in line with resolution 2518 (2020), in line with UN guidelines and best practices to improve safety of peacekeepers. They reiterated the importance of enhancing MONUSCO's local community engagement in its use of strategic communications and stressed the importance of preventing and countering disinformation campaigns and misinformation aimed at undermining the mission's credibility and hindering the implementation of its mandate.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their support to the gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO. In this regard, they emphasized the importance of enhanced communication among MONUSCO, troop- and police-contributing countries and Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities in this process. They strongly encouraged Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities to take concrete action, including acceleration of the security sector reform and timely implementation of the Programmed national de désarmement, de démobilisation, de relèvement communautaire et de stabilisation (P-DDRCS), in accordance with the disengagement plan to avoid any security gaps in South Kivu in order to ensure effective protection of civilians, especially women and children. They reiterated their readiness to consider further steps of this process at the end of this first phase based upon progress towards satisfying the objectives and criteria set out in the disengagement plan and taking into consideration the situation on the ground.

The members of the Security Council called on all parties to maintain diplomatic dialogue and to engage on concrete steps towards de-escalation. They expressed support to all efforts aimed at reaching a cessation of hostilities and commended in particular the efforts of the President of Angola and Chair of the South African Development Community (SADC), João Lourenço, to mediate between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda through the Luanda Process. They welcomed the meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in Luanda on 21 March and encouraged further progress between the two countries in furtherance of durable peace in the region. They further emphasized the crucial role of regional peace processes, in particular Luanda and Nairobi processes, and their continued support by Angola, MONUSCO, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes and international partners.

The members of the Security Council took note of the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué adopted after the meeting on the situation in DRC held on 4 March 2024. They also

took note of the communique of the Extra-Ordinary Summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ Troika Plus SADC Troika of 23 March 2024. They acknowledged steps taken to operationalize the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo and expressed concern at reports regarding the attack on a SAMIDRC base on 27 March. They stressed the importance of protection of civilians and of coordination and information sharing with MONUSCO and the need to carry out all operations in strict compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable. They recalled the provisions outlined in resolution 2717 (2023) regarding the conditions under which MONUSCO could provide its support to an African Union mandated regional force deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed their strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as all States in the region. They reiterated their full support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Bintou Keita, and for the stabilizing actions of MONUSCO.

Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/press-statement-situation-democratic-republic-congo-5-april-2024>.

THE DRC MAY SUE APPLE OVER NEW CONFLICT MINERAL EVIDENCE

- The Democratic Republic of Congo’s lawyers have announced the discovery of new evidence, a month after accusing Apple of using “illegally exploited” minerals from the country’s conflict-ridden east in its products.
- According to Amsterdam & Partners LLP, several whistleblowers have come forward, joining those who have previously provided information about Apple’s supply chain in the country.
- According to a recent statement by the legal representative, «In recent weeks, since the release of Amsterdam & Partners’ Blood Minerals report, we have received new evidence from whistleblowers. As we consider our legal options, it is more important than ever that Apple provide real answers to the serious questions we have raised.

With this development, the lawyers confirmed that the DRC has instructed them to determine, over the next few weeks and months, what legal actions to take under US and French law based on the gathered evidence to establish Apple’s responsibility for the alleged acts.

On April 25, 2024, Amsterdam & Partners LLP confirmed that they had demanded that Apple’s French subsidiaries and the US parent company respond to a series of detailed questions about whether their supply chain is tainted by blood minerals pillaged from the DRC.

With the new statement, they reported that Apple has remained silent, not responding to or acknowledging receipt of the questions.

“Apple’s silence can be seen, at the very least, as a testament to the company’s embarrassment in providing accurate answers beyond the banal and predictable rhetoric of denial served up by Apple’s spokespersons four weeks ago,” the DRC lawyers said.

Meanwhile, a report quoted Apple stating, «Based on our due diligence efforts... we found no reasonable basis for concluding that any of the smelters or refiners of 3TG (tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold) determined to be in our supply chain as of December 31, 2023, directly or indirectly financed or benefited armed groups in the DRC or an adjoining country.”

Remember that in the report (pdf) titled *Blood Minerals: The Laundering of DRC’s 3T Minerals by Rwanda and Private Entities*, Rwanda was also accused of being a source for big tech firms’ products, despite having a lower production scale than the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as laundering 3T minerals and other Congo conflict minerals.

Meanwhile, Rwandan government spokeswoman Yolande Makolo dismissed the claims as a “rehashing of baseless allegations and conjecture, attempting to capitalise on media interest in one of the world’s largest companies.”

She went on to say that it was simply a ruse by the DRC government, which is constantly attempting to divert attention away from Rwanda by making false accusations.

Source: <https://techpoint.africa/2024/05/23/the-drc-may-sue-apple/>

MADAGASCAR

CORAL REEFS AROUND THE WORLD EXPERIENCING MASS BLEACHING, SCIENTISTS SAY

SCIENTISTS WARN THAT MANY OF THE WORLD'S REEFS MAY NOT RECOVER FROM THE INTENSE, PROLONGED HEAT STRESS.

15 APR 2024

long coastlines from Australia to Kenya to Mexico, many of the world's colourful coral reefs have turned a ghostly white in what scientists say has amounted to the fourth global bleaching event in the last three decades.

At least 54 countries and territories have experienced mass bleaching along their reefs since February 2023 as climate change warms the ocean's surface waters, the US National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coral Reef Watch, the world's top coral reef monitoring body, said on Monday.

"From February 2023 to April 2024, significant coral bleaching has been documented in both the northern and southern hemispheres of each major ocean basin," Derek Manzello, coordinator of Coral Reef Watch, told journalists.

Corals are invertebrates that live in colonies. Their calcium carbonate secretions form hard and protective scaffolding that serves as a home to many colorful species of single-celled algae.

Coral bleaching is triggered by water temperature anomalies that cause corals to expel the colorful algae living in their tissues. Without the algae's help in delivering nutrients to the coral, the corals cannot survive.

"More than 54 percent of the reef areas in the global ocean are experiencing bleaching-level heat stress," Manzello said.

Like this year's bleaching event, the last three – in 1998, 2010 and 2014-2017 – also coincided with an El Niño climate pattern, which typically ushers in warmer sea temperatures.

Sea surface temperatures over the past year have smashed records that have been kept since 1979, as the effects of El Niño are compounded by climate change.

In turn, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the largest coral reef system in the world and the only one visible from space, has been severely impacted, as have wide swathes of the South Pacific, the Red Sea and the Gulf.

“We know the biggest threat to coral reefs worldwide is climate change. The Great Barrier Reef is no exception,” Australia’s Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek said last month.

Caribbean reefs experienced widespread bleaching last August as coastal sea surface temperatures hovered around 1-3 degrees Celsius (1.8-5.4 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal.

Scientists working in the region then began documenting mass die-offs across the region. From the staghorn to brain corals, “everything that you can see while diving was white in some reefs”, marine ecologist Lorenzo Alvarez-Filip from the National Autonomous University of Mexico told Reuters.

“I have never witnessed this level of bleaching.”

At the end of the southern hemisphere summer in March, tropical reefs in the Pacific and Indian Oceans also began to suffer.

Scientists have warned that many of the world’s reefs may not recover from the intense, prolonged heat stress.

“What is happening is new for us, and to science,” said Alvarez-Filip.

“We cannot yet predict how severely stressed corals will do,” even if they survive immediate heat stress, he added.

Recurring bleaching events are also upending earlier scientific models that forecast that between 70 percent and 90 percent of the world’s coral reefs could be lost when global warming reached 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 F) above pre-industrial temperatures. To date, the world has warmed by some 1.2 C (2.2 F).

In a 2022 report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, experts determined that just 1.2 C (2.2 F) of warming would be enough to severely impact coral reefs, “with most available evidence suggesting that coral-dominated ecosystems will be non-existent at this temperature”.

This year’s global bleaching event adds further weight to concerns among scientists that corals are in grave danger.

“A realistic interpretation is that we have crossed the tipping point for coral reefs,” ecologist David Obura, who heads Coastal Oceans Research and Development Indian Ocean East Africa from Mombasa, Kenya, told Reuters.

“They’re going into a decline that we cannot stop, unless we really stop carbon dioxide emissions” that are driving climate change, Obura said.

SOURCE: NEWSAGENCIES: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/15/coral-reefs-around-the-world-experiencing-mass-bleaching-scientists-say>.

WAR, GRIEF AND HOPE: THE STORIES BEHIND THE WORLD PRESS PHOTO AWARD-WINNERS

18TH APRIL 2024

Photographs documenting the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, migration, family and dementia have topped this year's World Press Photo awards – one of the world's most prestigious photography competitions.

Mohammed Salem, Lee-Ann Olwage, Alejandro Cegarra, and Julia Kochetova have been announced as the winners of this year's competition, which is run by the World Press Photo Foundation – an independent, not-for-profit organisation that celebrates the importance of press and documentary photography.

The four winners, selected from a total of 61,062 entries from 3,851 photographers in 130 countries, were praised for their courage, skill and empathy.

Salem won the photo of the year award for his photograph *A Palestinian Woman Embraces the Body of her Niece*, which was published by Reuters. It shows Inas Abu Maamar cradling the body of her five-year-old niece Saly, who was killed, along with her mother and sister, when an Israeli missile struck their home in Khan Younis, Gaza.

Salem, who is Palestinian, described the photo – taken days after his own wife had given birth – as a “powerful and sad moment that sums up the broader sense of what was happening in the Gaza Strip”. The jury said the image had been composed with care and respect, offering both a metaphorical and literal glimpse into unimaginable loss.

Olwage, from South Africa, won photo story of the year for *Valim-babena*, published by the German magazine GEO. The selection of images show “Dada Paul”, who has lived with dementia for 11 years, getting ready for church in Madagascar with his granddaughter Odliatemix. The title is a Malagasy expression referring to children's duties towards their parents.

In Madagascar, a lack of public awareness about dementia means people displaying symptoms of memory loss are often stigmatised. The jury said the story “tackles a universal health issue through the lens of family and care”.

Cegarra, from Venezuela, won the long-term project award for *The Two Walls*, published by the New York Times and Bloomberg, which showcased the resilience of migrants. The project drew from Cegarra's first-hand experience of migrating from Venezuela to Mexico in 2017. The jury praised Cegarra's sensitive, human-centred perspective.

Kochetova, from Ukraine, won the open format award for War Is Personal. Amid the tens of thousands of civilian and military casualties resulting from Russia's war in Ukraine, Kochetova created a web-based project that brings together photojournalism with the personal documentary style of a diary to show the everyday realities of war. The project also includes poetry, audio clips, and music in collaboration with a Ukrainian illustrator and DJ.

Kochetova, who is a regular contributor to the Guardian, said she had not made a choice to photograph war, but "war started and it always was mine". She said since the moment Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, she had been thinking about how the media shapes stories.

"I wanted to make the story of Russian-Ukrainian war as close as is possible to the reader around the globe," she said. "That's why I actually chose the Signal chat as the form – the most secure messenger, usually used by soldiers. It makes these messages feel as close as if it was your phone, your story and your war. It makes words, eyes and hands personal. It gives a face and name to this war – something that we lose in between headlines."

She added that winning the prize "doesn't help my country win". A day before the official announcement of the award, she added, "Chernihiv city centre was hit by Russians, killing 17 people and injuring more than 60. And it's happening daily."

"As a Ukrainian storyteller, I only could hope that this recognition will be the important reminder for the world that war is not over."

The images will be shown as part of the World Press Photo's annual exhibition, which is expected to go to more than 60 locations worldwide, including Amsterdam, London, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Hong Kong and Sydney.

Fiona Shields, the chair of the global jury and head of photography at the Guardian, said the winning images had "such power to convey a specific moment, while also resonating beyond their own subject and time".

She said the photo of the year "truly encapsulates this sense of impact; it is incredibly moving to view and at the same time an argument for peace, which is extremely powerful when peace can sometimes feel like an unlikely fantasy."

Joumana El Zein Khoury, the executive director of World Press Photo, said the winning photographers were "intimately and personally familiar with their topics".

El Zein Khoury also highlighted the risky nature of press and documentary photography. "This past year, the death toll in Gaza pushed the number of journalists killed to a near-record high. It is important to recognise the trauma they have experienced to show the world the humanitarian impact of the war."

More than three-quarters of the were killed in the Israel-Gaza war, making it one of the deadliest years on record.

This year's World Press Photo Exhibition will be at Borough Yards, London, from 3 May to 27 May

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2024/apr/18/war-grief-and-hope-the-stories-behind-the-world-photo-award-winners>

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