

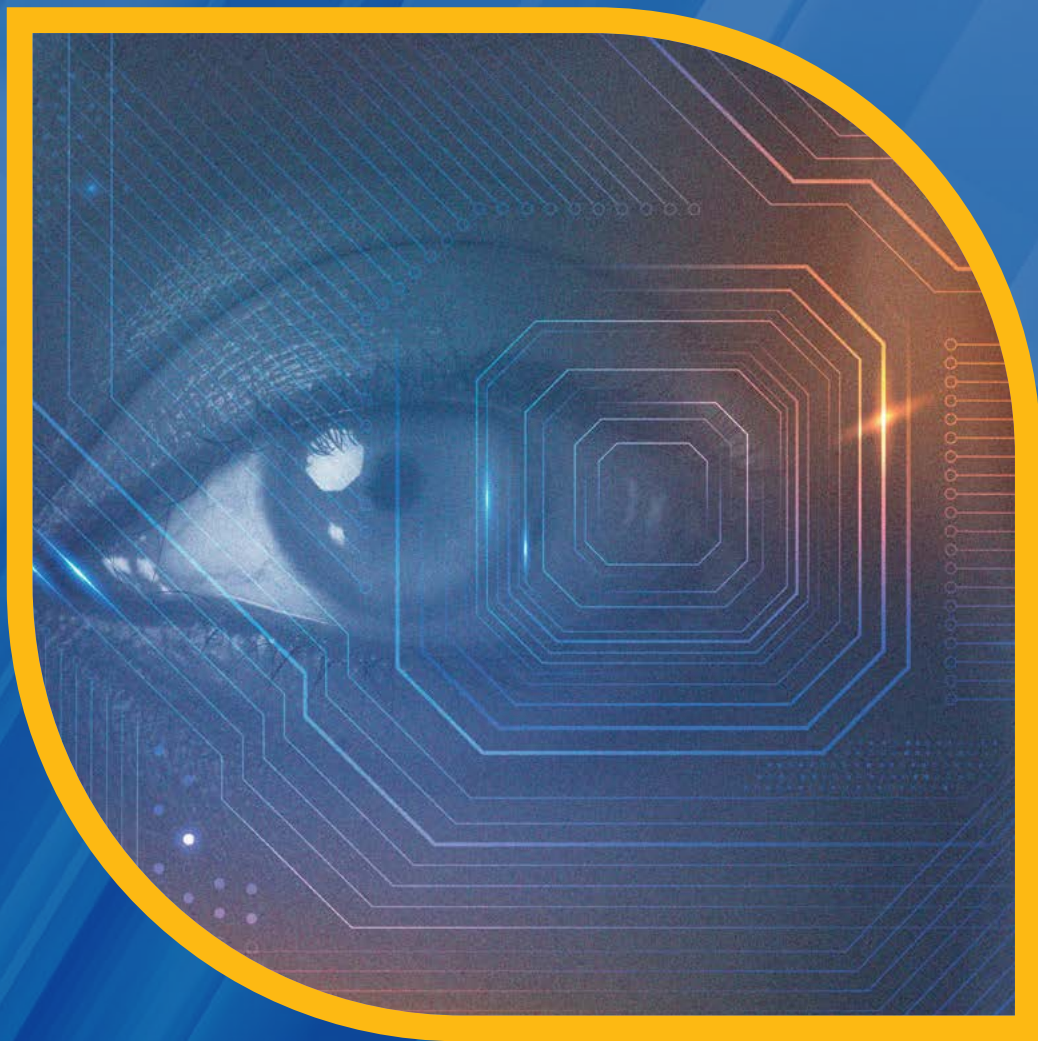


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MARCH 2024

RWANDA

BRITISH GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG SAYS UK'S RWANDA DEPORTATION PLAN COULD COST NEARLY 500 MILLION POUNDS

MARCH 1, 2024

LONDON (AP) — The British government's contentious plan to send some asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to Rwanda could cost nearly half a billion pounds, or about \$630 million, plus hundreds of thousands for each deported person, a report said Friday.

The National Audit Office report — issued at the behest of parliamentary committees that complained of being in the dark about costs of the plan — provided the most comprehensive cost estimate so far.

The Conservative government had earlier only revealed a 290-million-pound (\$366 million) commitment, so the new figures opened the plan to wider scrutiny from critics.

“These figures reveal the extortionate bill the taxpayer will have to pay the Rwandan government for an unworkable and inhumane scheme that will not deter people seeking protection on our shores,” said Enver Solomon, chief executive of the Refugee Council.

No asylum-seeker has been sent to Rwanda under the plan, which has been blocked by the courts, though the U.K. government has already paid 220 million pounds (\$278 million) to the government in Kigali under the Economic Transformation and Integration Fund to support the country's growth.

The plan is aimed at deterring unauthorized migrants from making dangerous English Channel crossings in unsafe boats. Under the plan, asylum-seekers would be sent to Rwanda, where their claims would be processed and where they would stay if approved.

Human rights groups have attacked the plan as cruel and unworkable.

After the Supreme Court blocked the plan as unlawful, Britain and Rwanda signed a treaty pledging to strengthen protections for migrants and lawmakers in the House of Commons approved a bill that declared the east African nation a safe country. The bill still needs approval in the House of Lords, where it has run into resistance.

The audit showed an extra 100 million pounds would be spent for the partnership through 2026 and 120 million pounds (\$151 million) would go into the fund after 300 migrants are relocated to Rwanda.

In addition, each migrant's plane ticket would cost 11,000 pounds (\$13,900). Another 20,000 pounds (\$25,200) would be paid to Rwanda for each relocated asylum seeker and nearly 151,000 pounds (\$190,000) would be spent over five years for processing costs and living expenses for each person who stays in Rwanda.

"This report reveals the national scandal the Tories have been trying to hide," said Yvette Cooper, a Labor member of Parliament.

"Its shocking analysis shows the costs of the failed Rwanda farce are even higher than previously thought," she added. "In order to send less than 1% of U.K. asylum seekers to Rwanda on a few symbolic flights, the taxpayer will be forced to fork out over half a billion pounds — with no ability to recover any of the money already sent."

The Home Office defended the plan and said the government would focus on starting flights once the Safety of Rwanda Bill is passed and the treaty between the two nations is in place.

"It is vital we respond to illegal migration with bold, long-term solutions," a statement read. "Unless we act, the cost of housing asylum seekers is set to reach 11 billion pounds (\$13.9 billion) per year by 2026. Illegal migration costs lives and perpetuates human trafficking, and it is therefore right that we fund solutions to break this unsustainable cycle."

Source: <https://apnews.com/article/britain-rwanda-asylum-seeker-deportation-plan-6391f3c0937cf5fb5d-51812c581fe822>.

RWANDA MAN IN US CHARGED WITH LYING ABOUT HIS ROLE DURING THE 1994 GENOCIDE

MARCH 21, 2024

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Federal authorities have charged a Rwandan man who they accused of repeatedly lying about his involvement in murders and rapes during the country's 1994 genocide to win asylum and citizenship in the United States.

Eric Nshimiye, of Ohio, was arrested Thursday on charges that include falsifying information, obstruction of justice and perjury, authorities said.

The obstruction and perjury charges stem from his testimony in the 2019 trial of his one-time medical school classmate, who was convicted of hiding his involvement in at least seven murders and five rapes during the genocide. An estimated 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were then killed by Hutu extremists.

"For nearly 30 years, Mr. Nshimiye allegedly hid the truth about crimes he committed during the Rwandan genocide in order to seek refuge in the United States, and reap the benefits of U.S. citizenship," Acting U.S. Attorney Joshua Levy of Massachusetts said in a statement.

In addition to lying about his involvement in murders and rapes, Nshimiye also lied about his former classmate's involvement in the genocide, authorities said.

Nshimiye was being held Thursday following an initial appearance in federal court in Ohio and authorities said he will appear at a later date in federal court in Boston, where the charges were filed.

Court records didn't show a lawyer for Nshimiye and a phone number for him or his family was not immediately available Thursday.

Nshimiye was a medical student at the University of Rwanda campus in Butare in the early 1990s. Authorities accuse him of killing Tutsi men, women and children using a nail-studded club and machete.

His victims included a 14-year-old boy and a man who sewed doctor's coats at the university hospital, authorities said.

Witnesses in Rwanda have identified the locations of the killings and drawn pictures of Nshimiye's weapons, authorities said. Nshimiye also participated in the rapes of numerous Tutsi women during the genocide, authorities said.

Nshimiye fled Tutsi rebels and made his way to Kenya where, in 1995, he lied to U.S. immigration officials to gain refugee status in the United States, authorities said.

Nshimiye has lived and worked in Ohio since 1995, and ultimately gained U.S. citizenship, authorities said.

Source: <https://apnews.com/article/rwanda-genocide-united-states-citizenship-064ba856a653d0cec4fd87e-6a8e51425>.

TANZANIA

TANZANIA AND RWANDA TO OPEN NEW BORDER POINT.

MARCH 24 2024

Rwanda and Tanzania are moving to open a new border post, as the two countries deepen trade ties at a time trade and political forces pull regional partners in different directions. The new post will be opened at Tanzania's Kyerwa district in Kagera Region to provide a second passage for people and goods and reduce pressure on the Rusumo border post.

Tanzania's Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, January Makamba, said this in Kigali during his recent four-day visit to Rwanda.

"We want to make it easy for people of the two countries to cross and visit each other," he said. "We have talked about the possibility and readiness to open a new border front in Kyerwa, and we are ready to have it operational."

The minister, who led a delegation that included senior officials from the Tanzanian Ministries of Transport, Trade and Industry, ICT, Agriculture, Energy, and other key parastatals, said Tanzania is committed to expand business with Rwanda.

Read: Samia, Kagame discusses trade expansion deals

"We are committed to being a reliable partner, and keen to expand business with Rwanda. Tanzania is Rwanda's second largest trading partner, the potential to be first exists," he said.

He highlighted existing business projects Rwanda and Tanzania are involved in such as the Rwandan dairy factory located in Mwanza, which opened up the Tanzanian market to Rwandan milk.

"Rwanda uses Tanzania broadband infrastructure for a certain amount of capacity in its connectivity. We have committed to be a reliable partner in this area, and we are keen to expand this."

Rwanda's Minister of Trade and Industry, Jean Chrysostome Ngabitsinze, said a second border post would come with a lot of economic prospects and trade value for Rwanda.

"We must work together to solve common challenges and prioritise things that will improve the lives of people from our two countries. The bilateral relations between our two countries have always been excellent and they keep improving to greater heights."

Rwanda's Minister of Trade and Industry, Jean Chrysostome Ngabitsinze, said a second border post would come with a lot of economic prospects and trade value for Rwanda.

"A new border post is a good proposition; it will even be much closer to Rwanda. It will definitely ease the cargo pressure on Rusumo. From a trade perspective, this is a development that we welcome," he said.

The new border post is part of a raft of measures to scale up trade ties between the two East African countries. Others include harmonisation of levies, a concern which was raised by Rwandan and Tanzanian truckers.

Read: High hopes border reopening will cut cost of goods

Dodoma and Kigali have enjoyed good bilateral and trade relations over the years, with volumes of Rwanda bound cargo going through Tanzania growing exponentially in the past three decades.

The armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo has recently put the two countries on a collision course, as Dodoma signed up to deploy its military in eastern DRC under the Southern African Development Community, alongside Malawian and South African armies to help the Congolese army defeat the M23 rebel group, who Kinshasa says are backed by Rwanda.

Western powers like the US and even UN experts have cemented these claims, which Kigali continues to reject.

Rwanda is the third largest user of Dar es Salaam port, with more than 80 percent of its cargo going through it.

As relations with DRC -- Rwanda's leading trading partner for years -- collapse, Kigali will have seen the need but nurture ties with strategic regional neighbours like Tanzania.

Rwandans buy cereals, cement, garments, fuels, and many other goods from Tanzania.

Source: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/tanzania-and-rwanda-to-open-new-border-point-4565966>.

UGANDA

STATE HOUSE INVESTORS PROTECTION UNIT, UNOC DISCUSS PROGRESS OF OIL AND GAS SECTOR

MARCH 6, 2024

The State House Investors Protection Unit Head, Col. Edith Nakalema has assured Ugandans that the government is committed to ensuring that the target of producing the first oil in 2025 is achieved.

“Government is not only committed to deliver the first oil but it is also looking forward to ensuring that the interests of Ugandans are projected so that they benefit from the oil,” she said.

Col. Nakalema made the remarks today during a joint media briefing with the Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) held at the State House Investors Protection Unit Offices in Kampala.

She explained that as the unit, they are mandated to project every investment in the country including those in the oil and gas sector.

“Every investment should be protected to ensure steady progress of our motherland,” Col. Nakalema emphasized.

On her part, the UNOC’s Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Proscovia Nabbanja assured Ugandans that the country’s oil and gas sector is progressing well.

“A lot of work has been done and we should be able to meet the deadline of the first oil production come 2025,” Ms. Nabbanja said.

Ms. Nabbanja also clarified that the overall function of UNOC is to handle the Government of Uganda’s commercial interests in the petroleum sector and to ensure that the resource is exploited in a sustainable manner.

“Uganda’s confirmed petroleum resource base is currently estimated at 6.5 billion barrels of Stock Tank Oil-Initially-In-Place (STOIIP). Of this, between 1.4 to 1.7 billion barrels are estimated to be recoverable. Currently, only 40 percent of the Albertine Graben is licensed,” she said.

The CEO further disclosed that the government has already set up a commercialization plan that will ensure sustainability of petroleum production in the country.

The commercialization plan involves the setup of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), the Kabalega Industrial Park and the Uganda Oil Refinery at Kabaale, Hoima District.

“The commercialization plan for Uganda’s oil and gas resources is two-fold; a 60,000 barrel per day refinery and the EACOP, which will deliver Crude oil to the international market,” she noted.

“The Kabalega Industrial Park is among UNOC’s key midstream projects. The project is a 25.97 square meter expansive land and UNOC through the Uganda Refinery Holding Company leads its development, operationalization and management with a 51 percent shareholding. Its economic benefits include adding up USD 4.9 bn per annum to national GDP, creating a fiscal impact of USD 1.2 bn per annum and creating 35,000 job opportunities.”

On the other hand, Ms. Nabbanja asserted that UNOC solely operates the Jinja Storage Terminal, a 30-million-litre refined petroleum products storage facility in Jinja.

“Jinja Storage Terminal is a bonded storage facility that stores fuel for oil marketing companies to clients and keeps government strategic stock to ensure security of petroleum supplies,” she disclosed.

She also said that the government is developing another storage terminal in Namwabula, Mpigi and it will serve as a storage facility for both the government strategic reserves and provide fuel storage for oil marketing companies.

SOLE IMPORTATION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS:

Ms. Nabbanja informed the media that following the enactment of the Petroleum Supply (Amendment) Act, 2023, UNOC acquired the sole importation status in December 2023 and it will source petroleum products from the international Market and supply the oil marketing companies.

“The move is meant to ensure security of supply, ultimately reversing the past trend of price hikes triggered by shortages. It also eliminates middlemen whose margins affect prices.”

Ms. Nabbanja reassured Ugandans that the EACOP project as well as other oil and gas projects are being developed in accordance with the internationally accepted standards for managing environmental and social impacts.

“There are many socio-economic benefits from the oil and gas sector such as infrastructure development, improved welfare, skills transfer and employment.”

Source: <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/media/state-house-investors-protection-unit-unoc-discuss-progress-oil-and-gas-sector>.

KENYA

KENYA, HAITI SIGN ‘RECIPROCAL’ AGREEMENT ON POLICE DEPLOYMENT: RUTO

THE AGREEMENT WOULD ALLOW KENYAN POLICE TO LEAD A UN-BACKED MISSION IN THE GANG-RIVEN CARIBBEAN NATION.

1 MARCH 2024

Kenya and Haiti have signed a “reciprocal” agreement to deploy police from the East African country to lead a United Nations-backed law and order mission in the gang-riven Caribbean nation, Kenyan President William Ruto has said.

Ruto said on Friday that he and Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry had “discussed the next steps to enable the fast-tracking of the deployment”, but it was not immediately clear whether the agreement would counter a court ruling in January that branded the deployment “unconstitThe deal was signed as the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince was racked by deadly gang-related violence, forcing businesses and schools to close and flight cancellations.

Kenya had previously said that it was ready to provide up to 1,000 personnel, an offer welcomed by the United States and other nations that had ruled out putting their own forces on the ground.

But a Nairobi court said the decision was unconstitutional, in part because the two countries had not signed a reciprocal agreement on the issue.

On Friday, Ruto said he and Henry had “witnessed the signing” of a reciprocal agreement in Kenya’s capital Nairobi.

“I take this opportunity to reiterate Kenya’s commitment to contribute to the success of this multi-national mission. We believe this is a historic duty because peace in Haiti is good for the world as a whole,” Ruto said in a statement.

The UN Security Council approved the mission in early October but concerns in Kenya over Nairobi’s involvement prompted a court challenge.

The ruling threw into doubt the future of a multinational force long sought by Haiti’s government, which has pleaded for international help to confront violence that has left nearly 5,000 dead.

Opposition politician Ekuru Aukot, who had filed the petition against the deployment, told AFP on Friday that he would lodge a case “for contempt of court”.

“We will question the validity of this secretive agreement,” he said.

Haiti, the Western hemisphere’s poorest nation, has been in turmoil for years, with armed gangs taking over parts of the country and unleashing brutal violence, leaving the economy and public health system in tatters.

A prominent gang leader said multiple factions were parlaying to launch attacks on state security forces in a bid to remove Prime Minister Henry.

Known as “Barbecue”, gang leader Jimmy Cherisier publicised the attack in a social media video just before the battles began.

“With our guns and with the Haitian people, we will free the country,” he said.

There are currently no elected officials in Haiti, with Henry sworn in as prime minister with the backing of the international community shortly after the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise. Under a political deal, the prime minister was supposed to hand over power to elected officials by February 7 this year, but this is yet to happen.

SOURCE: ALJAZEERAANDNEWSAGENCIES: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/1/kenya-haiti-sign-reciprocal-agreement-on-police-deployment-ruto>.

DRC

DR CONGO FACING ALARMING LEVELS OF VIOLENCE, HUNGER, POVERTY, DISEASE

MARCH 22, 2024

The World Health Organization warns that hunger, poverty, malnutrition, and disease have reached alarming levels in the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially in the east, where a resurgence of fighting between armed groups and government forces has uprooted millions of people from their homes.

“DRC is the second-largest displacement crisis globally after Sudan, with more people forced to flee the violence since the start of the year,” said Dr. Boureima Hama Sambo, WHO representative to the DRC.

Speaking from the capital, Kinshasa, Sambo told journalists in Geneva Friday that a combination of violence, climate shocks, and epidemics has worsened the humanitarian and overall health situation for millions of people who are struggling to find enough food to eat, a safe place to stay, and help to ward off disease outbreaks.

“Hospitals are overwhelmed with injured people,” he said. “Close to 10 million people are on the move. Poverty and hunger affect a quarter of the population or 25.4 million people. The spread of cholera and other infectious diseases pose significant threats to the populations health.”

United Nations relief agencies say more than two of every five children in the DRC — around 6 million children — suffer from chronic malnutrition, a condition that causes stunting, impairs cognitive development, and in cases of severe acute malnutrition, a risk of death.

Sambo said that, “Combined to malnutrition, diseases are increasing the risk of mortality, especially in children, and putting even more pressure on the health system.

“Women and girls are paying the high price of armed conflict and displacement,” he said, noting that “30,000 cases of gender-based violence were reported in the DRC in 2023. These numbers are among the highest in the world.”

FLOODING HEIGHTENS RISK

Besides conflict-related challenges, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA, says severe flooding has wreaked havoc in 18 of the DRCs 26 provinces, leaving more than 2 million people, nearly 60% of them children, in need of assistance.

The WHO says floods are worsening the risk of diarrheal and water-borne diseases. That, as

well as the outbreak of other diseases, including cholera, measles, polio, yellow fever, anthrax, and plague, has brought an already fragile health system to its knees.

“DRC is facing its worst cholera outbreak since 2017 with 50,000 suspected cases and 470 deaths recorded in 2023,” said Sambo, adding that the risk is particularly high in sites for internally displaced people where “living conditions are dire.”

He said the country is also battling its largest measles epidemic since 2019, with close to 28,000 cases with 750 deaths so far this year

“The combination of measles and malnutrition has a severe health impact on children under five years of age and the lack of access to vaccines and vaccination services further exacerbate the situation,” he said.

THREAT OF MPOX GROWS

In addition to those problems, the WHO warns mpox — previously known as monkeypox — has been on the rise across the country over the last year, with nearly 4,000 suspected cases and 271 deaths reported.

That represents a higher case fatality than was seen during a year-long, WHO-declared international public health emergency for the disease that began in May 2022. More than two thirds of the current cases, it says, are reported in children.

Mpox, a zoonotic disease first detected in a 9-month-old in 1970 in the DRC, when the country was known as Zaire. Dr. Rosamund Lewis, WHO technical lead for mpox, says children continue to be most at risk of getting infected with and dying from the disease.

“The number of cases has been gradually increasing over time. What we saw in 2023 was more than the doubling of the number of cases compared to 2022 ... There is a clear concern about the continuing spread of the disease, not only by zoonotic transmission but through person-to-person sexual contact,” she said.

“What is also new about transmission in the DRC is that sexual transmission reported for Clade 1, a variant of mpox had not been reported prior to 2023. Now what we are seeing is newly reported sexual transmission in a different part of the country, which is not endemic for mpox.”

Lewis said the disease is spreading in areas “where there is a lot of commercial back and forth, including cross-borders and a vibrant commercial sex trade.”

The WHO reports mpox has expanded to previously unaffected provinces, such that almost all provinces, including Kinshasa, now are reporting cases. It warns that “represents a threat to neighboring countries and beyond.”

WHO representative Sambo observed that humanitarian needs in the country are soaring, with close to 20 million people requiring health assistance this year. Despite all the compounding challenges, he said the WHO has been scaling up its health response since last year.

For example, he said the WHO vaccinated almost 5 million people against cholera in November, most in the eastern provinces, and vaccinated millions of people against a deadly measles outbreak last year. Next week, he said the WHO plans to start a polio vaccination campaign in all 26 provinces.

However, he said that continuing such lifesaving programs will be difficult to do if the health response remains severely underfunded, noting that less than 14 percent of the WHO's \$624 million appeal for this year has been received.

He urges the world not “to turn a blind eye to a situation that could have severe knock-on effects for security and health in the region.”

Source: <https://www.voanews.com/a/dr-congo-facing-alarming-levels-of-violence-hunger-poverty-disease-/7539028.html>.

MADAGASCAR

ELEVEN DEAD, THOUSANDS AFFECTED AS CYCLONE GAMINE BATTERS MADAGASCAR

HOUSES WASHED AWAY AND ROADS DESTROYED AFTER CYCLONE HITS NORTH OF THE INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND.

28 MAR 2024

At least 11 people have been killed and hundreds of homes destroyed as Cyclone Gamane smashed into northern Madagascar, according to officials.

The storm was projected to skim the Indian Ocean Island, but changed course and hit the island's Vohemar district in the early hours of Wednesday.

Video images showed torrents of water rushing through villages and people making human chains in waist-deep water while trying to help those trapped in their houses escape the deluge. Numerous routes and bridges were flooded and cut off.

Six people drowned and five others were killed by collapsing houses or falling trees, with some 7,000 people affected overall.

"It's rare to have a cyclone like this. Its movement is nearly stationary," General Elack Andriakaja, director general of the BNGRC national disaster management office, said in a statement.

"When the system stops in one place, it devastates all the infrastructure. And that has serious consequences for the population. And significant flooding", he said.

The full extent of the damage is still unclear, because many villages in the region were cut off from the rest of the country, making access difficult for rescue teams.

The cyclone moved across the island with an average wind speed of 150km/h (93mph) and heavy rainfall. In some places, winds of 210km/h have been reclassified as a tropical storm and was expected to leave the island on Friday afternoon, according to meteorologists.

Located off the coast of southeastern Africa, Madagascar is regularly affected by severe weather. A year ago, tropical Cyclone Freddy devastated the country as well as the neighboring mainland countries of Mozambique and Malawi. More than 500 people lost their lives.

SOURCE: NEWSAGENCIES: [HTTPS://WWW.ALJAZEERA.COM/NEWS/2024/3/28/ELEVEN-DEAD-THOUSANDS-AFFECTED-AS-CYCLONE-GAMANE-BATTERS-MADAGASCAR](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/28/eleven-dead-thousands-affected-as-cyclone-gamane-batters-madagascar).

By: Wal Nyak Dol, Betty Joggo Wani and Ricardo Makuil Dak

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