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JULY 2024

UGANDA

DOZENS ARRESTED IN UGANDA ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTS

24 JULY 2024

Dozens of people have been detained in the Ugandan capital Kampala after joining scattered anti-corruption protests in defiance of an official ban.

Lawyers said around 60 people, including a prominent TV presenter and three young protest leaders, were hurriedly brought before courts and remanded in custody following a march on the country's parliament on Tuesday.

President Yoweri Museveni, who has ruled Uganda for almost four decades, had [warned before the event](#) that protesters were «playing with fire».

The march was organized on social media amid anger over long-running allegations of corruption involving several high-profile public officials. The protests were partly inspired by demonstrations last month in neighboring Kenya which forced President William Ruto to drop planned tax rises.

Police previously announced that they had refused to give permission for the march and would not allow any demonstration that threatened Uganda's "peace and security".

On Tuesday, riot officers were seen manning roadblocks, while members of the security forces sealed off roads and stood guard around the parliament building.

Pictures showed marchers holding signs that read "Stop corruption" and calling the parliament a "den of thieves". Another said: "We are peaceful protesters".

Others showed protesters being manhandled by police and pushed into the back of riot vans.

"We are tired of corruption," protester Samson Kiriya told AFP news agency through the bars of a van after being arrested.

Those detained included well-known television and radio presenter Faiza Salima as well as three protest organisers - George Victor Otieno, Kennedy Ndyamuhaki and Aloikin Praise Opoloje. Bernard Oundo, president of the Uganda Law Society, said one hearing saw 50 people charged.

"This was a rushed trial. They were arrested and taken to court in a very short time and remanded to prison without securing them bail," he said.

"We will ensure these people receive justice."

On the eve of the march, Uganda's main opposition leader, Bobi Wine, said security forces had besieged the Kampala headquarters of his National Unity Platform party.

He said some of his party officials had been "violently arrested" and that the offices had been turned into a "military barracks".

Writing on X following the march, Bobi Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, said: "Salutations to all who have courageously marched and are still marching against corruption and misrule - even in the face of very brutal actions by the military and police!

"The cowards have been picking up young people whose only crime is lifting up a placard."

He added that legal and welfare teams would be made available to those who needed them.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ceqde3dqd05o>.

Earlier this year, the UK and US imposed sanctions on a number of Ugandan officials, including parliament speaker Anita Among and three former or serving ministers, over alleged involvement in corruption.

CRACKDOWN ON UGANDA'S OPPOSITION AHEAD OF PROTESTS

22 JULY 2024

Uganda's main opposition leader Bobi Wine says security forces in the capital Kampala have besieged the headquarters of his party on the eve of an anti-government demonstration.

Soldiers and police had turned the offices of the National Unity Platform (NUP) into "a military barracks", and had "violently arrested" some party officials, he said.

Police did not confirm the arrests, but reportedly said that they had taken "precautionary steps" to prevent "mobilization for the protest".

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni warned on Saturday that organizers of the planned march to parliament were "playing with fire".

Young Ugandans have been mobilizing support online for the march to demand an end to what they say are high levels of corruption and bad governance.

They have partly been inspired by their counterparts in neighboring Kenya, whose recent mass protests forced their president to axe plans to increase taxes.

Bobi Wine, a former music star whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, denied the NUP was organizing the protest in Uganda.

However, he said his party supported "every effort to protest against injustice, corruption and misrule".

On X, he accused the security forces of being "cowards" who had also blocked roads leading to the offices of the NUP in Kampala.

Police spokesperson Kituuma Rusoke told AFP news agency that the NUP's "activities raised a red flag and we took precautionary measures".

- Top designer vows to regrow dreadlocks cut after Uganda arrest
- Uganda's Museveni: How an ex-rebel has stayed in power for decades

Bobi Wine is the strongest challenger to Mr Museveni, who has held office for almost 40 years. He is popular amongst young people and has been arrested numerous times. He was first elected to parliament in 2017, and ran against Mr Museveni in the 2021 election, which was marred by state repression.

Meanwhile, protesters in Kenya have threatened to occupy the main international airport in the capital, Nairobi, on Tuesday.

The protesters are demanding President William Ruto's resignation, and justice for victims of police brutality.

At least 50 people have been killed and 413 injured since the demonstrations started on 18 June, according to the state-funded Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.

Some protesters stormed parliament on 25 June setting part of it on fire and stealing the mace, the symbol of the legislature's authority.

On Sunday, Mr Ruto said the protest organisers could not remain "anonymous", and should "step forward and tell us what is this violence going to achieve".

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn09e0599jwo>.

"Enough is enough," he said.

Kenya's main opposition leader Raila Odinga has expressed solidarity with the protesters, saying there had to be justice for victims before any talks with the government could take place.

Mr Odinga's position could undermine Mr Ruto's attempt to include members of the opposition in his cabinet - a move which he hopes will help end the youth-led protests.

UGANDA PROTEST ORGANIZERS PLAYING WITH FIRE, PRESIDENT SAYS

21 JULY 2024

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni has warned protesters that they will be "playing with fire" if they press ahead with plans to stage an anti-corruption march to parliament on Tuesday.

Young Ugandans have been organizing the march on social media to demand an end to corruption in government.

They have been partly inspired by their counterparts in neighboring Kenya, who organized mass demonstrations that forced President William Ruto to drop plans to increase taxes. The protests have since morphed into calls for his resignation.

In a televised address, Mr Museveni warned the Ugandan organizers that their planned protest would not be tolerated.

"We are busy producing wealth... and you here want to disturb us. You are playing with fire because we cannot allow you to disturb us," he

said.

Mr Museveni is accused by his critics of ruling Uganda with an iron hand since taking power in 1986, but his supporters praise him for maintaining stability in the East African state.

The president also accused some of the protest organizers of "always working with foreigners" to cause chaos in Uganda. He did not elaborate.

Police had earlier announced that they had refused to give permission for the march to take place.

One of the main protest leaders told AFP news agency that they would go ahead with it.

"We don't need police permission to carry out a peaceful demonstration. It is our constitutional right," Louez Aloikin Opolose was quoted as saying.

The UK and US governments-imposed sanctions on Uganda's parliamentary speaker, Anita Annet Among, earlier this year after she was accused of corruption.

She has denied any wrongdoing.

The sanctions bar her from travelling to the UK and the US. The UK also said that it would impose an asset freeze on her.

The UK has enforced similar sanctions on two government ministers who were sacked by Mr Museveni after they too were accused of corruption.

Mary Goretti Kitutu and Agnes Nandutu have been charged in court over a scandal involving the theft of thousands of metal roofing sheets that were intended for vulnerable communities in the north-eastern Karamoja region. Both have denied the charges.

In Kenya, President Ruto also called for an end to the protests that have hit his government, saying: "Enough is enough."

The protests are the biggest in Kenya since Mr Ruto took office after winning elections in 2022.

Activists have planned further demonstrations for Tuesday to demand his resignation and for

an end to what they call bad governance.

Addressing a rally in western Bomet County, Mr Ruto said the protest organizers could not remain "anonymous", and should "step forward and tell us what is this violence going to achieve".

Some protesters stormed parliament last month setting part of it on fire and stealing the mace, the symbol of the legislature's authority.

Protest organizers say their demonstrations have largely been peaceful. They accuse the police and the military of responding with brute force, and killing peaceful protesters.

At least 50 protesters have been killed and 413 injured since the protests started on 18 June, according to the state-funded Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.

Kenya's main opposition leader Raila Odinga has expressed solidarity with the protesters, saying there had to be justice for victims before any talks with the government could take place.

Mr Odinga's position could undermine Mr Ruto's attempt to include members of the opposition in his cabinet - a move which the hopes will help end the youth-led protests.

Source; <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cv2g6378125o>.

UGANDAN TIKTOKER JAILED FOR INSULTING PRESIDENT

11 JULY 2024

A Ugandan court has sentenced a 24-year-old man to six years in prison for insulting the president and the first family through his video posted on TikTok.

Edward Awebwa was charged with hate speech and spreading "misleading and malicious" information against President Yoweri Museveni, First Lady Janet Museveni and son Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who is the head of the military.

The court also heard that Awebwa had shared abusive information and had said there would be an increase in taxes under President Museveni. He had pleaded guilty and asked for forgiveness.

The presiding magistrate said that while he had pleaded for mercy, he did not look remorseful for his actions, and the words used in the video were "really vulgar".

"The accused deserves a punishment which will enable him learn from his past so that next time he will respect the person of the president, the first lady and the first son," magistrate Stella Maris Amabilis said.

He was sentenced to six years for each of the four charges against him, which are to run concurrently.

Rights groups regularly denounce Ugandan authorities for violations of human rights and freedom of expression.

In 2022, award-winning Ugandan author Kakwenza Rukirabashaija was charged with two counts of "offensive communication" after making unflattering remarks about the president and his son on Twitter.

He fled the country to Germany after spending a month in jail, where he claimed he had been tortured.

Activist and writer Stella Nyanzi, who is also in exile, had earlier been jailed after publishing a poem that was critical against Mr Museveni.

President Museveni has been in power since 1986 - 14 years before Awebwa was born.

In 2022 he signed into law a against speech which rights groups criticized, saying it was aimed at suppressing freedom of speech online.

Last year, the constitutional court ruled that a section of the act that penalized "offensive communication" was unconstitutional.

Ugandan human rights lawyer Michael Aboneka said Awebwa had been charged under the same broader law that they are still challenging in court because "it is vague".

He told the BBC Newsday programme that the president and his family should expect to be criticized "at whatever angle".

"Unless they are saying that they are going to arrest every Ugandan for criticizing them at every point," he said.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cv2g6378125o>.

SOMALIA

SOMALIA: BOMBER HITS MOGADISHU CAFE DURING EURO 2024 FINAL

JULY 15, 2024

A suicide bomber has struck a cafe in central Mogadishu, as football fans were watching the Euro 2024 finals. A police spokesman said at least five people were killed with another 20 injured.

A powerful explosion struck outside a cafe in the center of the Somali capital Mogadishu late on Sunday, as a group of customers had gathered to watch the final of the Euro 2024 tournament there.

There were conflicting early reports on casualty numbers but state media cited police spokesman Major Abdifatah Aden Hassan as saying that at least five people had died and at least another 20 were injured. Investigators warned these preliminary tallies were likely to rise.

WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FAR?

Images online appeared to show a large fire in the vicinity of the Top Coffee Cafe in the aftermath.

Police cordoned off the area, which is close to the presidential palace compound known as Villa Somalia and was busy at the time of the blast. The cafe is a popular hangout for government employees.

Investigators said they believed that a car parked outside the cafe had exploded. It was not immediately clear whether a suicide bomber was inside the vehicle.

The force of the large blast also caused damage to nearby buildings.

NO CLAIM OF RESPONSIBILITY, BUT AL-SHABAB ACTIVE AND POWERFUL IN SOMALIA

No group claimed responsibility in the immediate aftermath.

The attack was reminiscent of one in 2010 by the Islamist al-Shabab militia in Uganda, perpetrated by the group rooted in Somalia. Back then, it set off bombs at a venue in Kampala, where a much larger crowd of hundreds had gathered to watch the World Cup final. In total 74 people were killed.

The al-Qaeda-linked group opposes football, saying it is against their religion. It recently attempted an attack during a football tournament at the local stadium in Mogadishu.

Al-Shabab has been waging an insurgency for some 17 years against Somalia's government, with bombings in Mogadishu and other cities common in recent years.

FATAL ATTEMPTED JAILBREAK IN THE CAPITAL ON SATURDAY

There had been a relative lull in recent weeks and months but this was shattered earlier in the weekend.

On Saturday, five inmates described by law enforcement as al-Shabab fighters were killed in a shootout with prison guards in a bid to break out of Mogadishu's main prison.

Three guards were also killed and 18 others wounded in the incident.

Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has pledged "all-out" war against the militants. Government troops have joined forces with local clan militias in a military campaign supported by the African Union and by US air strikes.

Despite this, al-Shabab retains a strong presence in rural Somalia and claimed earlier this year to have taken control of multiple locations in the center of the country.

Somalia's government has protested plans to gradually withdraw troops from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) from the country, and to leave Somalian forces in charge of security operations, by the end of this year. The rate of withdrawal has already been slowed in response to this request, with 2,000 more ATMIS troops than originally planned remaining in the country at least for a few extra months.

Questions persist about the country's security and if it can handle the withdrawal. Control of Mogadishu was only wrested back from al-Shabab in 2010 with African Union assistance.

Source: <https://www.dw.com/en/somalia-bomber-hits-mogadishu-cafe-during-euro-2024-final/a-69660243>.

THE LOOMING THREAT: A RESURGENCE OF ISLAMIC STATE AND INTER-CLAN FIGHTING IN SOMALIA

31 JULY 2024

THE LOOMING THREAT: A RESURGENCE OF ISLAMIC STATE AND INTER-CLAN FIGHTING IN SOMALIA

Since May, the Islamic State (IS) in Somalia has been increasingly active in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland. After airstrikes by the United States in May targeted IS positions and threatened the life of its leader, Abdulqadir Mumin, the Somalia branch of IS has waged several attacks on security forces and business centers, locking horns with al-Shabaab for control of strategic mountain ranges in Puntland. Elsewhere in Somalia, violent inter-clan fighting took place in the Mudug and Galgaduud regions of Galmudug state. In Lower Juba, Somali security forces intensified operations against al-Shabaab while the militant group continued to engage with security forces to protect its strongholds.

ISLAMIC STATE'S EXPANSION IN PUNTLAND

In the last week of May, the US, in coordination with the Somali National Army (SNA), conducted three airstrikes targeting IS positions in Puntland. These are the first round of airstrikes against IS since April 2023. One of these airstrikes targeted Abdulqadir Mumin – the leader and founder of IS in Somalia – in the vicinity of Dhadar village, Bari region, on 30 May. Mumin survived the attack, but three militants, including a commander, were killed. US officials believe that the IS threat is growing in Somalia after top IS members allegedly traveled to Somalia to expand and develop links in the region. Further, some US officials believe that Mumin is the head of IS worldwide.

Despite this increasing threat that the Somalia branch of IS reported to represent regionally and globally, reports indicate that the group has between 100 and 400 fighters, largely operating in the northeastern Puntland state. Its activity has been fairly limited in 2024, during which time ACLED records approximately 10 events in Somalia. ACLED records 13 and 18 events in 2023 and 2022, respectively.

However, IS is reported to have expanded its activities in its stronghold of Puntland. Significantly, IS has gained control of the Buuraha Cali Miskat mountain range, previously held by al-Shabaab, in Bari region. This rugged terrain is strategic to the group because it provides militant hideouts and training camps. Despite the presence of al-Shabaab, IS has also increased its influence in the port city of Bosaso and the surrounding remote villages in Qandala district. One factor has facilitated this expansion: Qandala district is home to the Ali Saleban, a sub-clan of the Majeerten clan, from which Mumin hails. Militant presence in this district makes it easier for the group to recruit followers and establish control.

To finance its battle for control of the strategic areas in Puntland, IS has increased its monthly payments from businesses, which the group considers 'taxes.' This money is used to pay fighters and support the group's activities, including recruitment. Those who delay or refuse to pay face the threat of targeted violence; IS militants conduct hand grenade attacks against businesses that fail to comply with their demands for payment. After IS started asking for higher amounts in 2023, businesses began closing due to threats from the group. For instance, in June 2024, two large private hospitals in Bosaso town closed in the face of IS extortion demands. These hospitals were two of the last few lefts in the city that provided diagnostic services. In the group's latest attacks on 19 and 25 June, IS ordered Bulsho Trading Company and Towfiiq General Trading in Bosaso to pay 'tax.' In response, the owners closed the companies, that supplied goods such as construction materials and food items, for fear of attack. Similarly, in 2023, a prominent company in Puntland closed its business centers after the group demanded 500,000 US dollars and targeted the company with a hand grenade attack.

INTER-CLAN FIGHTING ESCALATES IN MUDUG

Inter-clan fighting continues to affect domestic stability in Somalia. Since February 2024, the number of armed clashes between clans has been trending upward, leading to June being the month with the highest number of recorded clashes in the last 12 months and continuing well into

July in Gedo, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, and Lower Juba. Nearly half the clashes recorded in June were in Mudug region in Galmudug state. Power struggles between various clans, each vying for control and influence over different regions, fuel the violence. Incidents are typically related to disputes over grazing fields, the construction of water walls and dams, and unresolved clan revenge disputes.

In Mudug, inter-clan fighting has primarily involved the Habar Gedir Saad sub-clan of the Hawiye clan and the Leelkayse sub-clan of the Darod clan. The dispute between the sub-clans is connected to contested land ownership and the construction of water dams. This dispute began and turned violent in May and escalated in June, with eight clashes between the two parties recorded around Galdogob and Gaalkacyo towns. ACLED records armed clashes between the Habar Gedir Saad sub-clan militia and Leelkayse sub-clan militia on 27 June in five remote villages between Galdogob and Gaalkacyo towns. At least 70 people were reportedly killed and more than 50 injured.

Such inter-clan fighting was also observed in Galgaduud region in Galmudug state. The hostilities in June in Galgaduud were between the Marehan sub-clan from the Darod clan and Sure sub-clan from the Dir clan in Cabudwaaq district. The fighting was linked to the killing of a prominent clan elder from the Sure sub-clan in Laanqeylo village by the Marehan sub-clan militia on 12 April. In response to his killing, the Sure sub-clan militias started regrouping and mobilizing weapons to launch a retaliatory attack targeting members from the Marehan. On 8 June, fighting broke out between the Marehan and Sure sub-clan militias in Laandheer and Halkujir villages, resulting in more than 50 reported deaths. After this round of clashes, the parties agreed to an immediate ceasefire.

The Somali president and members of the Galmudug state administration have accused al-Shabaab and some political figures of influencing the inter-clan fighting in Mudug and Galgaduud regions. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud accused al-Shabaab of inciting conflicts among clans to interfere with the government's operation against the group. Clan militias and security forces have been fighting the militant group during the counter-insurgency operation, which began in August 2022. At the same time, some political figures have been accused of using clan allegiances to gain political seats within the Galmudug administration and at the federal level. Clan-related violence remains a source of instability and disorder, causing widespread loss of lives and large-scale displacement.

SECURITY FORCES INTENSIFY OPERATIONS IN LOWER JUBA

Security forces in Lower Juba and Lower Shabelle conducted counter-insurgency operations against al-Shabaab. In Lower Juba, Jubaland security forces and Danab special forces launched an operation targeting the group's stronghold positions in the Lower and Middle Juba regions in Jubaland state. Security forces cleared IEDs planted by al-Shabaab along the main roads linking Afmadow to Hagar town, where al-Shabaab has been controlling swaths of remote rural villages. This operation intends to flush out al-Shabaab from areas linking Afmadow town to Jamaame town. On 10 July, security forces took control of five villages south of Afmadow after clashes with al-Shabaab. On the same day, clashes between al-Shabaab and security forces spread in villages in the Kismaayo district, resulting in dozens of reported fatalities.

Somali security forces advanced toward al-Shabaab strongholds in Lower Juba, expanding their operation to Middle Juba. In response to al-Shabaab movements in remote areas between Afmadow and Kismayo districts, security forces increased patrol operations to thwart al-Shabaab attacks. At the same time, al-Shabaab regrouped to launch hit-and-run and remote explosion attacks on different fronts, which are similar tactics used in Galgaduud and Middle Shabelle regions to slow down the counter-insurgency operations.

These latest operations conducted by the Somali security forces against al-Shabaab in the Lower Juba region put pressure on the group and threaten its capacity to continue waging war against security forces in the region. The militants have been controlling swaths of villages over the past years but have suffered significant setbacks due to increased military intervention and counter-terrorism efforts by security forces and their international partners.

Source: <https://acleddata.com/2024/07/31/the-looming-threat-a-resurgence-of-islamic-state-and-inter-clan-fighting-in-somalia-july-2024/>.

DRC

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

30 JULY 2024

EXPECTED COUNCIL ACTION

In July, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The anticipated briefer is the Special Representative and Head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita.

MONUSCO's mandate expires on 20 December.

KEY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

MONUSCO ceased its operations in South Kivu in April in accordance with the disengagement plan agreed with the Congolese government and endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2717 of 19 December 2023. According to the mission's 30 April press release, "only uniformed personnel necessary to ensure the security of UN personnel, facilities, convoys, and equipment will be maintained there until withdrawal activities are completed". MONUSCO also indicated that all uniformed personnel will be repatriated from South Kivu by the end of June, with only a residual team of civilian personnel remaining to work on the transition.

At the time of writing, the Congolese government and the UN were expected to submit an update to the Security Council, due by 30 June, on the implementation of the disengagement plan, including proposals for the next steps in MONUSCO's gradual, responsible, and sustainable withdrawal, pursuant to resolution 2717 of 19 December 2023. Council members were also expecting to receive another report by the Secretary-General, also due by 30 June, on possible UN logistical and operational support for regional forces present in the DRC.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) deployed its force, known as the SADC Mission in DRC (SAMIDRC), in eastern DRC in December 2023 and requested logistical and operational support from the UN. In an 8 May letter to the President of the Security Council, the DRC supported SADC's request. Earlier, in its 4 March communiqué, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) had endorsed the deployment of the force and asked the Security Council to "provide the required material and financial resources to enable SAMIDRC to effectively discharge its mandate". The Chair of the AUPSC formally communicated its decision to the President of the Security Council in a 13 March letter, expressing the hope that the AUPSC's request would be favorably considered. (For more on possible options that the Council could consider in July following the presentation of the Secretary-General's report, see our "In Hindsight" in the April 2024 Monthly Forecast.)

The security situation in North Kivu continued to escalate with intensified fighting between the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC), supported by allied militias known locally as Wazalendo, and the **Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)**. A confidential note circulated to Council members on 9 June regarding the situation in North Kivu described heavy fighting between FARDC and M23 in Kanyabayonga, 80 kilometres from Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu. Projectiles and mortars fired from M23-controlled territories landed in or near the MONUSCO Permanent Operating Base (POB) in the area, injuring a peacekeeper from Malawi and forcing humanitarian actors to suspend their operations, the note said. It also mentioned the joint offensive operation by the FARDC and SAMIDRC against the M23 in Sake, 20 kilometres from Goma, and added that the small-arms rounds fired by SAMIDRC impacted the MONUSCO POB in the area, including its surveillance cameras.

In a 20 June press statement, Council members condemned the recent series of attacks by the M23 and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in North Kivu. Council members expressed their deep concern over the worsening security and humanitarian situation, with the displacement of 350,000 people in the previous week. The members of the Security Council also condemned the threats and pressure by the M23 aimed at MONUSCO and the use of heavy weapons in the vicinity of UN peacekeepers' bases.

HUMAN RIGHTS-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

On 19 June, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, issued a statement expressing alarm at the increasing targeting of human rights defenders in the DRC. According to the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC, from June 2023 to April 2024, incidents of intimidation, threats of physical violence, attacks, and acts of reprisals perpetrated by both State agents and armed groups targeted 387 human rights defenders and 67 journalists. The Special Rapporteur called upon authorities in the DRC "to take all necessary measures to ensure a safe working space and protection for human rights defenders, as well as to guarantee the exercise of their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, in an 18 June statement to the 56th session of the Human Rights Council, said that during his visit to the country in April, he "felt the immense suffering of civilians in the east, including those living in camps for internally displaced people with continued attacks by armed groups." He also called upon the Congolese government and regional and international actors to focus on bringing about peace, security, and trust.

SANCTIONS-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

The Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee submitted its final report (S/2024/432) in late April which, among other things, described the escalating security situation in eastern DRC and noted that "RDF [Rwandan Defense Forces] military interventions and operations...extended beyond mere support for M23 operations to direct and decisive involvement, allowing RDF and M23 to achieve military dominance" in several areas of North Kivu. It also explained how the deployment of advanced military technology affected the conflict dynamics, forcing all FARDC military air assets to be grounded.

On the other hand, the report noted that the Congolese government “continued to use Wazalendo groups and FDLR [Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda] as proxies in the fight against M23 and RDF”. It added that “[t]he instructions of the FARDC chief of staff to end collaboration with FDLR were not heeded” and that the FDLR remained an important factor in the conflict despite coming under pressure. Additionally, the report described the support provided to FARDC by the Burundi National Defence Forces deployed in eastern DRC as part of a bilateral arrangement, by private military companies, and by SAMIDRC.

On 24 May, the Group of Experts briefed the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee on the report, including its findings and recommendations. However, there does not appear to be a consensus among members on some of these recommendations.

On 27 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2738 extending the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions regime until 1 July 2025 and the mandate of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee until 1 August 2025. (For more, see our 26 July What’s in Blue story.)

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

The Secretary-General’s annual report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), distributed on 4 April, said that MONUSCO documented 733 cases of CRSV in the DRC in 2023, with 88 of these cases having occurred in previous years. Of the total number of incidents, 556 were attributed to non-state armed groups, while state actors were implicated in 177 cases. The report said that sexual violence in the DRC was frequently perpetrated during village raids as retaliation for perceived collaboration with rival armed groups or state forces. The report also referred to a recent visit to the DRC by Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten, during which she drew attention to the surge in sexual violence in and around displacement sites in the country.

In a 30 May update, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) stressed that the escalating conflict in the DRC has not only exacerbated displacement, with women and children constituting the majority of the displaced, but has also led to increasing food insecurity and record rates of gender-based violence (GBV). Limited humanitarian aid and livelihood opportunities have pushed many women and girls into survival sex, with 37 percent of girls estimated to be forcibly married before age 18, according to UN sources. The update also noted that healthcare services for survivors of CRSV, such as sexual and reproductive health care and GBV referral pathways, are severely lacking for communities of internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the update, the NGO Working Group on WPS called on the members of the Security Council to urge the DRC authorities and all armed groups to stop all threats, violence and reprisals against civilians, including IDPs, women human rights defenders, and peacebuilders. The NGO Working Group on WPS also stressed that, in the context of MONUSCO’s transition and disengagement plans, “it is imperative that protection of civilians, sustained humanitarian access, increased humanitarian funding” and respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law be prioritized.

KEY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

One of the key issues for Council members in July is to assess progress in the MONUSCO disengagement process based on updates provided by the Congolese government and the UN to decide on the next steps for the mission's gradual, responsible, and sustainable withdrawal. At this stage, it does not seem feasible for the mission to withdraw from North Kivu and Ituri, the two remaining provinces in eastern DRC, given the current security situation and the prevailing protection challenges. The Council is likely to address this issue in December when MONUSCO's mandate is up for renewal.

The other key issue for Council members in July is how to support regional forces operating in eastern DRC. Their discussion will be informed by the Secretary-General's report, including its recommendations. The most feasible option seems to be to authorize MONUSCO to provide logistical and operational support to SAMIDRC within existing resources in line with resolution 2717. France, the penholder on DRC, is likely to propose a Council product to decide the matter.

COUNCIL DYNAMICS

Council members remain seriously concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC. They all seem to agree that the solution to this long-standing issue is political, and they continue to support regional efforts. Some Council members continue to call for external actors to stop supporting armed groups in eastern DRC. In particular, the US, France, Switzerland, and Slovenia remain vocal on the issue and continue to mention Rwanda's role in the region.

Council members continue to stress that the MONUSCO disengagement process must be implemented in a gradual, conditions-based, and responsible manner. At the last Council meeting on MONUSCO in March, some Council members underscored the need to avoid leaving a security vacuum and called on the Congolese government to assume its security responsibilities to protect civilians. Several Council members drew attention to the safety and security of peacekeepers, given the increasing number of attacks against MONUSCO.

Council members reiterated the need for regional forces to coordinate their operations with MONUSCO. The A3+1 members (currently Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Guyana) supported the AU's call for support to SAMIDRC.

France is the penholder on the DRC. Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone) chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

Source: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-07/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-26.php>.

DOZENS OF DEAD IN DR CONGO CLASHES

THE VILLAGE OF KINSELE, WHERE THE CLASHES HAPPENED, IS IN AN AREA WHICH HAS SEEN A RESURGENCE OF VIOLENCE IN RECENT DAYS.

JULY 15 2024

Dozens of people were killed in clashes between Congolese soldiers and militiamen in a village in western Democratic Republic of Congo, local sources said Sunday, July 14.

The death toll in the village of Kinsele "has already reached 42 'Mobondo' militiamen, nine soldiers and one woman," David Bisaka, a lawmaker for the local province, told AFP.

The Mobondo are considered part of the Yaka community who settled in areas along the Congo River, where the Teke people consider themselves the rightful owners of villages along the river.

"We are collecting the bodies," Bisaka said, adding that the bodies of the soldiers "have already been taken to the morgues in Kinshasa" and that "those of the militiamen are still lying on the ground in Kinsele."

A security source in the province put the overall death toll at 41. He added that the deadly confrontation came at a time when the area, on the outskirts of Kinshasa, has been experiencing a resurgence of violence in recent days.

Since mid-2023, the government has banned reporters from investigating the conflict in the region. Previously, several teams of journalists have been prevented by the Congolese security services from entering the province.

Reports from the area where Saturday's attack took place differ as to the circumstances. Some accuse the Mobondo of launching an assault on the DRC army's position at Kinsele, during which militiamen were killed. Others say DRC troops launched an operation in recent days in response to incursions by Mobondo militiamen around Kinsele.

A government official stationed in Kinsele said on condition of anonymity that at around 5 am on Saturday, Mobondo fighters "attacked the DRC armed forces," whom they accused of having "taken sides with the Teke people."

Source: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/07/15/dozens-dead-in-dr-congo-clashes_6684409_4.html.

SOUTH SUDAN

SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN IN TALKS OVER SAFETY OF NATIONALS

JULY 15, 2024

(JUBA)- South Sudan and neighboring Sudan are discussing mechanisms through which the safety of South Sudanese nationals currently trapped in the conflict areas of war-torn Sudan could be guaranteed.

In 2012, the two countries signed a cooperation granting four freedoms agreement, allowing citizens of both states to enjoy "freedom of residence, freedom of movement, freedom to undertake economic activity and freedom to acquire and dispose of property. Professor Yanga William, one of the concerned citizens advocating for saving lives and properties of South Sudanese nationals in Sudan, called for an extension of the limited duration of notice issued by the Sudanese authorities.

Such an extension, he argued, would allow citizens to prepare and leave safely. South Sudan's Foreign Affairs minister, Ramadan Abdallah Goch said discussions at the top leadership levels are continuing to safeguard the safety of the nationals from South Sudan after reports and graphic images depicting how authorities in Sudan have been handling South Sudanese nationals emerged in recent weeks.

"We have seen reports and graphic images and as the government we have a way of conducting verifications and channels through which such issues are addressed", he told Sudan Tribune.

The South Sudanese official said the government would use appropriate channels to verify and raise the issue which have already attracted public attention.

In recent weeks, there have been graphical images of South Sudanese nationals being thrown on pick-up trucks and put in congested enclosures as waiting areas in preparation for deportation to states in South Sudan at the border with Sudan.

William said authorities in Sudan have launched a crackdown on South Sudanese refugees living in the country, with security forces arresting and deporting them through Jabelein, a border town near the South Sudan state of Upper Nile.

"How arrests are made has been raising concerns. Many fear some of the returnees could face persecution upon return. Others had legitimate reasons for fleeing the country and sought refuge in different states in Sudan which has been hosting both military and political dissidents. Their supporters and leaders have previously used as a haven and used Sudanese authorities as mediators in their grievances with the government of South Sudan under the president", he added.

Gen. Simon Gatwec Dual, a leader of a breakaway faction of the armed opposition faction (SPLM-IO) operating in Kitgwang, an area on the northern Upper Nile State in South Sudan, remains

active. Sources told Sudan Tribune that Dual had not shown up at the talks having reportedly been strapped in Sudan, unable to either return to South Sudan in response to numerous presidential amnesties extended by dissident groups or relocate to a third country.

It is unclear whether some of his fighters had slipped into one of the rival sides in the Sudanese conflict. Stephen Buoy Rolnyang, another rebel leader operating at Sudan-South Sudan border, also had fighters with family members in Sudan.

Rolnyang is participating in the Kenyan-led mediation with the holdout group. Analysts have pointed out that the latest crackdown in Sudan, targeting South Sudanese who have lived and owned properties in different states and cities in Sudan is a depiction of war in which people without known established sides could be a subject of suspicion and distrust.

Military authorities and national security agents, who have powers to arrest without hesitation, have been accusing foreigners and anti-war activists of being agents of the paramilitary Rapid Support Force. Others have, however, claimed that family members of some South Sudanese fighting alongside Sudan armed forces have not been targeted, attracting mixed opinions on the approach.

Source: <https://sudantribune.com/article288307/>.

SUDAN

SUDAN HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

29 JULY 2024

HIGHLIGHTS

- About 25.6 million people – over half of the population of Sudan – face acute hunger, including more than 755,000 people on the brink of famine, according to latest analysis.
- After more than a year of the war, an estimated 10.7 million people (2.1 million families) are now internally displaced in Sudan.
- Recent clashes in Sennar State displace more than 151,750 people uprooted from their homes.
- Amid a challenging operating environment and limited funding, 128 humanitarian partners reach about 7.1 million people across the country with some form of humanitarian assistance.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

About 25.6 million people – over half of the population of Sudan – face Crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between June and September 2024, coinciding with the lean season, according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Acute Food Insecurity Snapshot. This is an increase of 45 per cent – up from 17.7 million – since the last IPC update in December 2023. Of these, 8.5 million are experiencing emergency levels of hunger and about 755,000 people on the brink of famine – during the same period in ten states, including Greater Darfur (all five states), South and North Kordofan, Blue Nile, Al Jazirah, and Khartoum.

Latest analysis shows that the risk of famine is high in 14 areas in Greater Darfur, Greater Kordofan, Al Jazirah states and some hotspots in Khartoum, if the conflict escalates, humanitarian access is restricted, and families are unable to engage in farming and other economic activities. The situation is worsened by the highly dysfunctional healthcare services, water contamination, and poor sanitation and hygiene conditions driving a deadly combination of hunger, malnutrition, and disease. To address these urgent needs and to stave off famine more funding is required now. To scale up in time, humanitarians need urgent additional resources for the response. Despite the urgency of the situation, the 2024 Sudan Response Plan is just a third-funded by the end of July.

SUDAN REACHES ANOTHER GRIM MILESTONE AS 10.6 MILLION PEOPLE ARE NOW INTERNALLY DISPLACED

An estimated 10.7 million people (2.1 million families) are now internally displaced in Sudan, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Mechanism (DTM) reported in its Sudan Mobility Update No 4 on 23 July. The majority of those internally displaced

– 55 per cent – are children under the age of 18 years and they have endured more than a year of separation, human rights violations, trauma, violence, and lack of access to basic services. The overall number of internally displaced people includes an estimated 7.9 million people who fled their homes since the start of the conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 15 April 2023. About 2.1 million people crossed borders into neighboring countries since 15 April 2023, including to Egypt, Chad, South Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR), Ethiopia, Libya, and Uganda. Moreover, 27 per cent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were initially displaced prior to the onset of conflict were displaced again after 15 April 2023.

The humanitarian situation in Sudan makes the country one of the world's largest displacement, food security and children's crisis. Overall, more than 20 per cent of the population in Sudan has fled their home due to the ongoing war, either internally or across borders. The country now hosts approximately 14 per cent of the global IDP caseload, that is approximately 1 in 7 IDPs worldwide are Sudanese, according to IOM DTM. Food is the highest priority among IDP families as over 97 per cent of IDPs across Sudan were hosted in localities with high levels of acute food insecurity or worse (IPC Level 3+). An estimated 89 per cent of displaced families are unable to afford their daily food requirements.

RECENT CLASHES DISPLACE 151,000 PEOPLE IN SENNAR STATE

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RECENT CLASHES DISPLACE 151,000 PEOPLE IN SENNAR STATE

Escalation of conflict in Sennar State displaced about 151,750 people (about 30,350 families) since 24 June, according to the IOM DTM reported on 11 July. The affected people were displaced to other locations in Sennar and to other states in Sudan (Gedaref, Kassala, Blue Nile, White Nile, River Nile and Red Sea), and across the border to South Sudan. Humanitarian partners in Blue Nile, Gedaref and Kassala states report that IDPs from Sennar continue to arrive seeking safety, shelter, and humanitarian assistance. Sennar, Sinja, and Ad Dinder localities were already hosting about 286,000 displaced people before the recent escalation in clashes, the majority of whom had already been displaced from Khartoum or Aj Jazirah. Therefore, people displaced from Sennar may be experiencing secondary or tertiary displacement. The displacement from Sennar is taking place at a time when the state governments in Kassala, Gedaref, and Red Sea are reopening schools and relocating IDPs from classrooms/learning rooms to other school buildings and gathering sites. It is also the start of the rainy season, and poor living and sanitation conditions at IDP sites could lead to disease outbreaks.

MSF WITHDRAWS TEAM FROM HOSPITAL IN KHARTOUM

On 10 July, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) announced it had evacuated its team from the Turkish Hospital, a medical facility in an RSF-controlled area in Khartoum, following a series of violent incidents endangering staff. The situation at the hospital has become untenable, MSF said in a statement, adding that multiple violent incidents had taken place inside and outside the premises over the past 12 months, and the lives of MSF staff had been repeatedly threatened. Most recently, on the nights of 17 and 18 June, dozens of wounded combatants were brought to the Turkish Hospital, and MSF team was aggressively woken up as Kalashnikovs were fired into their bedrooms. MSF condemned the attacks calling this type of violence is unacceptable. They also reiterated that hospitals and health facilities should be protected and respected by the warring parties as sanctuaries for the sick and wounded where health workers can safely deliver medical care. Since the start of the conflict, 73 attacks on health care facilities were recorded by the World Health Organization (WHO) Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care (SSA). These attacks resulted in 53 deaths and about 100 injuries.

WORRYING SPIKE IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) raised concerns about the escalation of cases of gender-based violence (GBV) and the decrease in access to healthcare services, especially sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in Sudan. UNFPA reports that 6.7 million people are at risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and 3.5 million women and girls of reproductive age need reproductive health care services. Kidnapping, forced marriage, intimate partner violence, conflict-related sexual violence, and harmful practices such as child marriage, continue to be reported, especially in Aj Jazirah State and the Darfur region. Meanwhile, humanitarian access is compromised in conflict zones, impacting medical care, maternal health, and the supply of menstrual hygiene products. With persistent food insecurity among displaced families, particularly female-headed households, widows, adolescent girls, and people with disabilities, the adoption of negative coping mechanisms for survival is on

the rise. In a food-insecure environment, the risk of GBV increases, with women and girls often lacking the financial resources to access sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and GBV services, prioritizing food over their health.

In its June 2024 brief on GBV in Sudan, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that numerous incidents of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by parties to the conflict, but also resulting from the escalation of inter-communal violence coupled with the collapse of law and order, continue to be reported by women and girls in Sudan and neighboring countries. Reports of sexual exploitation and abuse and trafficking in person have also increased. However, due to limited access to services as well as fear of retaliation and stigma, underreporting of GBV incidents remains high. The trend emerging from analysis shows that 56 per cent of GBV incidents reported (by Sudanese refugees or refugee returnees) in Ethiopia and South Sudan occurred prior to displacement or during their flight, according to UNHCR.

Source: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/sudan/sudan-humanitarian-update-29-july-2024>.

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