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AUGUST 2024

SOMALIA

SOMALI POLICE SEIZE HUNDREDS OF VEILS AMID SECURITY FEARS

5 AUGUST 2024

WOMEN ARE BANNED FROM WEARING THE FACE VEIL IN SOMALIA'S KISMAYO CITY

Security forces in Somalia's southern city of Kismayo have seized hundreds of Islamic face veils from female residents, the city's police chief says. Warsame Ahmed Gelle told state TV that authorities have been conducting operations to "fight" the veils, also known as niqabs.

The crackdown was sparked by concerns that jihadists could conceal their identity and carry out attacks, Mr Warsame said. Large parts of southern and central Somalia are controlled by al-Shabab, which is affiliated to al-Qaeda and has waged a brutal insurgency for nearly 20 years against the UN-backed government in Somalia.

On Friday dozens were killed in an attack at a popular beachfront location in Mogadishu, the capital. Officers in Kismayo have been confiscating the veils by stopping women in the streets and forcing them to remove the garment. The operation began last Wednesday, Mr Wasame said. Women caught wearing the niqab, which covers the whole face except for the eyes, also face jail or a fine. Because al-Shabab controls much of southern Somalia,

Source: www.bbc.com

Kismayo and its surrounding areas are the only places in the state of Jubaland where authorities can enforce the ban.

The state initially introduced the niqab ban in 2013, citing security risks, but it was rarely enforced. Niqabs are seen as a sign of modesty in Islam - a religion which, according to government statistics, is practised by 99% of Somalia's population. Many women there wear the niqab and Mr Wasame said the garment had increased in popularity recently.

However most Somali women still opt for the hijab, which covers a woman's hair but not her face. The police said at least 37 people were killed during Friday's beachfront attack and several more were wounded. Al-Shabab, who claimed responsibility for the attack, said the death toll and injuries are much higher than figures released by the police. The Somali military recently killed dozens of jihadist fighters in Jubaland so reprisal attacks are a possibility.

AT LEAST 32 PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN A SUICIDE ATTACK CARRIED OUT BY AL-SHABAB MILITANTS AT A POPULAR BEACHFRONT LOCATION IN THE SOMALI CAPITAL, A POLICE SPOKESMAN SAID ON SATURDAY.

Abdifatah Adan Hassan said around 63 people were also wounded, some of them critically. Video footage showed a number of bodies and wounded people in Mogadishu's Abdiaziz district. Al-Shabab controls large parts of southern and central Somalia. The group is affiliated to al-Qaeda and has waged a brutal insurgency for nearly 20 years against the UN-backed government in Somalia.

In a statement claiming the attack, al-Shabab said "politicians, [security] forces and employees from various ministries and offices" were among those killed.

The group says the death toll and injuries are much higher than figures released by the police. One eyewitness told AFP news agency people were in a state of panic, as "it was hard to know what was happening because shooting started soon after the blast".

Abdilatif Ali said some people attempted to take cover on Lido beach, while others tried to flee the location.

"I saw wounded people at the beachside. People were screaming in panic and it was hard to notice who was dead and who was still alive," he added. At least five people were responsible for the attack, as Mr Hasan said one attacker blew himself up while three others were killed. One attacker was captured alive, the police spokesman told reporters in Mogadishu. Moussa Faki Mahamat, chair of the African Union Commission, described the attack as "horrific". The Somali Disaster Management Agency urged people to donate blood to support injured victims.

Source: www.bbc.com

ETHIOPIA

NO FACE-TO-FACE MEETING AS SOMALIA, ETHIOPIA HOLD INDIRECT TALKS IN TURKEY

AUGUST 12, 2024 6:21 PM

By [Harun Maruf](#)

Ethiopian and Somali officials are holding indirect talks in Ankara, Turkey as the two sides attempt to end the diplomatic dispute over Ethiopia's deal with the breakaway region of Somaliland that has been simmering between the two countries since the beginning of this year.

Diplomatic sources told the VOA Horn of Africa Service that delegations from the two countries have not had face-to-face meetings. Instead, Turkey has been playing the intermediary role between the two countries. Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan separately met his counterparts from Somalia, Ahmed Moallim Fiqi, and Ethiopia's Teye Atske Selassie.

According to an official close to the talks, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity surrounding them, Fidan met twice with each side Monday to narrow their differences. Key issues under deliberation are thought to include the fate of the controversial memorandum of understanding, or MOU, that Ethiopia signed with Somaliland on January 1, and Ethiopia's quest for sea access. As part of the deal, Somaliland would lease 20 kilometers (12 miles) of land along its coastline to Ethiopia to establish a marine force base. In return, Ethiopia would recognize Somaliland's independence.

Somalia denounced the MOU with the breakaway region as infringing upon its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The

official who spoke to the VOA Horn of Africa Service confirmed that the sticking points are the "language to withdraw the MOU and language of modalities to access the sea." Ahead of the talks, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan spoke to the leaders of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, to urge reconciliation. In his conversation with President Mohamud, Erdogan posted on X, formally Twitter, that he voiced his expectations of "concrete results in the second round of the negotiations."

And in his phone call with Prime Minister Ahmed, Erdogan hinted on X that he urged Ethiopia to take steps that would eliminate Somalia's concerns regarding its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Ahmed wrote on X about the importance of providing Ethiopia access to the sea in a "mutually agreeable approach." Meanwhile, Mohamud said on X that Somalia is ready to "engage in economic and development cooperation with Ethiopia" but insisted, "such partnerships must always respect Somalia's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, and adhere to international law and norms."

WHY ETHIOPIA IS SO ALARMED BY AN EGYPT-SOMALIA ALLIANCE

30 AUGUST 2024

By Ian Wafuła

AFRICA SECURITY CORRESPONDENT, BBC NEWS

Egypt and Somalia's leaders have become very close this year - causing jitters in Ethiopia. A military alliance between Somalia and Egypt is ruffling feathers in the fragile Horn of Africa, upsetting Ethiopia in particular - and there are worries the fallout could become more than a war of words. The tensions ratcheted up this week with the arrival of two Egyptian C-130 military aeroplanes in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, signalling the beginning of the deal signed earlier in August during a state visit by the Somali president to Cairo.

The plan is for up to 5,000 Egyptian soldiers to join a new-look African Union force at the end of the year, with another 5,000 reportedly to be deployed separately. Ethiopia, which has been a key ally of Somalia in its fight against al-Qaeda-linked militants and is at loggerheads with Egypt over a mega dam it built on the River Nile, said it could not "stand idle while other actors take measures to destabilise the region". Somalia's defence minister hit back, saying Ethiopia should stop "wailing" as everyone "will reap what they sowed" - a reference to their diplomatic relations that have been on a downward spiral for months.

WHY ARE ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA AT ODDS?

It all comes down to the ambitions of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who wants his landlocked country to have a port. Ethiopia lost its access to the sea when Eritrea seceded in the early 1990s. On New Year's Day, Mr Abiy signed a controversial deal with the self-declared republic of Somaliland to lease a 20km (12-mile) section of its coastline for 50 years to set up a naval base. It could also potentially lead to Ethiopia officially recognising the breakaway republic - something Somaliland is pushing hard for. Somaliland broke away from Somalia more than 30 years ago, but Mogadishu regards it very much as part of its territory - and described the deal as an act of "aggression". Somalia fears such a move might set a precedent and encourage other countries to recognise Somaliland's independence, geopolitical analyst Jonathan Fenton-Harvey told the BBC. He added that neighbouring Djibouti was also worried it could harm its own port-dependent economy, as Ethiopia has traditionally relied on Djibouti for imports.

In fact, in an attempt to deescalate tensions, Djibouti's foreign minister has told the BBC his country is ready to offer Ethiopia "100%" access to one of its ports. "It will be in the port of Tadjoura - 100km [62 miles] from the Ethiopia border," Mahmoud Ali Youssouf told BBC Focus on Africa TV. This is definitely a change of tune for as recently as last year, a senior presidential adviser said Djibouti was reluctant to offer its neighbour unfettered access to the Red Sea. Attempts so far to calm tensions - by Turkey - have failed, with Somalia insisting it will not budge until Ethiopia recognises its sovereignty over Somaliland.

WHY IS ETHIOPIA SO UPSET BY SOMALIA'S REACTION?

Somalia has not only brought its Nile enemy Egypt into the mix, but also announced that Ethiopian troops would not be part of the AU force from next January. This is when the AU's third peace support operation begins - the first one was deployed in 2007 months after Ethiopian troops crossed over the border to help fight al-Shabab Islamist militants, who then controlled the Somali capital. There are at least 3,000 Ethiopian troops under the current AU mission, according to the Reuters news agency.

Last week, the Somali prime minister also said Ethiopia would have to withdraw its other 5-7,000 soldiers stationed in several regions under separate bilateral agreements - unless it withdrew from the port deal with Somaliland. Ethiopia sees this as a slap in the face for, as its foreign minister put it, "the sacrifices Ethiopian soldiers have paid" for Somalia. The withdrawal of troops would also leave Ethiopia vulnerable to jihadist attacks, Christopher Hockey, a senior researcher at the Royal United Services Institute, told the BBC. The planned deployment of Egyptian troops along its eastern border would also make Ethiopia particularly apprehensive, he added. Egypt sees Ethiopia's Nile dam - in the west of the country - as an existential threat - and has warned in the past that it will take "measures" should its security be threatened.

WHY IS THE NILE DAM SO CONTENTIOUS?

Egypt accuses Ethiopia of threatening its supply of water with the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (Gerd). This began in 2011 on the Blue Nile tributary in Ethiopia's northern-western highlands, from where 85% of the Nile's water flow. Egypt said Ethiopia pushed forward with the project in complete "disregard" of the interests and rights of downstream countries and their water security. It also argued that a 2% reduction in water from the Nile could result in the loss of around 200,000 acres (81,000 hectares) of irrigated land. For Ethiopia the dam is seen as a way of revolutionising the country by producing electricity for 60% of the population and providing a constant flow of electricity for businesses. The latest diplomatic efforts to work out how the dam should operate - and determine how much water will flow downstream to Sudan and Egypt - fell apart last December.

HOW WORRIED SHOULD WE BE?

Egypt sees its military deal with Somalia as "historic" - in the words of Egyptian President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi - and a possible chance to settle scores over the mega dam. Indeed, the Nile dispute may well play out in Somalia, warns Dr Hassan Khannenje, the director of the Horn International Institute for Strategic Studies. It could potentially lead to a "low-scale inter-state conflict" between Ethiopia and Egypt if their troops meet at the Somalia border.

Somaliland has also warned that the establishment of Egyptian military bases within Somalia could destabilise the region. Both Ethiopia and Somalia are already coping with their own internal strife - Ethiopia with low-level rebellions in several regions and Somalia, recovering from a destructive 30-year civil war, still has al-Shabab to contend with.

Experts say neither can afford further warfare - and more unrest would inevitably lead to further migration.

Dr Khannenje told the BBC that if a conflict broke out, it could further complicate the geopolitics of the Red Sea by drawing in other players and further affect global trade. At least 17,000 ships go through the Suez Canal each year, meaning that 12% of annual global trade passes through the Red Sea, amounting to \$1tn (£842bn) worth of goods, according to shipping monitor Lloyd's List. For this reason, countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Turkey have been keen to forge partnerships with African nations like Somalia that border the Red Sea.

According to Mr Harvey, Turkey and the UAE stand a better chance at mediating and finding a middle ground. The UAE has heavily invested in Somaliland's Berbera port and holds significant influence over Ethiopia because of its investments there. All eyes will be on the next diplomatic push by Turkey, which has ties with both Ethiopia and Somalia. Talks are due to start in mid-September.

Source: www.bbc.com

SUDAN

STARVATION CRISIS OF ‘HISTORIC PROPORTIONS’ IN SUDAN, AID GROUPS WARN

3RD SEPTEMBER 2024

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IS FAILING TO ADDRESS ‘THE IMMENSE HUNGER’ AMID SUDAN’S CIVIL WAR, THREE HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES SAYS.

Sudan is facing “a starvation crisis of historic proportions” amid its [civil war](#), three humanitarian groups have warned. The international community is failing “to address the immense hunger”, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Danish Refugee Council, and Mercy Corps said in a joint statement on Tuesday.

SUDAN WAR MEDIATORS WELCOME NEW PLEDGES ON HUMANITARIAN ACCESS“

We cannot be clearer: Sudan is experiencing a starvation crisis of historic proportions. And yet, the silence is deafening. People are dying of hunger, every day, and yet the focus remains on semantic debates and legal definitions,” it said, referring to the debate on whether Sudan is experiencing a famine. The criteria for a famine include four of 10,000 children dying of hunger every day or more than 30 percent of the population being undernourished. This is difficult to determine in conflict situations such as in Sudan, where the work of aid organisations is hampered and not all people can be reached.

Rival generals from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group have been locked in a brutal power struggle in Sudan since April 2023. The bloody fighting has displaced more than 10 million people and killed thousands. At United States-brokered peace talks *in Switzerland last month, mediators said the warring parties had agreed to improve access to humanitarian aid, with two routes identified to ensure the flow of resources to civilians.* But the absence of the Sudanese army during the 10-day discussions hindered progress towards a ceasefire. Food production has been severely affected. Many fields have been destroyed, mined or the farmers driven away, while livestock have been killed. “More than 25 million people – more than half the population – are suffering acute food insecurity. Many families have for months been reduced to one meal a day and have been forced to eat leaves or insects,” the agencies said. They noted that while the people of Sudan “have shown immense resilience and strength” since the conflict started, they now “have nowhere left to turn”. Appeals for donations have reached less than half of what is needed. “International attention and action have amounted to too little, too late,” they said, with the humanitarian response plan currently

only 41 percent funded. "Pressure must be applied to ensure that humanitarian aid can flow in and reach those who will otherwise pay with their lives," the statement added.

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

SUDAN ARMY CHIEF CRITICISES GENEVA TALKS, VOWS TO CONTINUE FIGHTING RSF

24 AUG 2024

Sudan's de facto ruler, army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has said his government would not join peace talks in Switzerland, saying the military would "fight for 100 years" if necessary to defeat the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Burhan, who leads the governing Transitional Sovereignty Council, told reporters in Port Sudan on Saturday that the talks aim to "whitewash" the RSF and countries that support the paramilitaries.

"We will not put down our weapons as the rebellion continues. We will not co-exist with the rebels and we will not forgive them," he said. The United States opened talks in Switzerland on August 14, which concluded on Friday, aimed at easing the human suffering and achieving a lasting ceasefire. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates also acted as mediators in the talks, which aimed to secure more aid as Sudanese civilians face famine, mass displacement and disease.

While an RSF delegation showed up, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Burhan, were unhappy with the format and did not attend. But they were in telephone contact with the mediators. "Though we were in consistent communication with SAF virtually, we regret their decision not to be present, and we believe that limited our ability to make more substantial progress towards key issues, particularly a national cessation of hostilities," the mediators said in a statement on Friday. The war in Sudan, which began last year, has led to one of the world's worst humanitarian and displacement crises.

The Sudanese army and the RSF – under Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as "Hemedti" have been vying for power and control of the African country of 46 million people. Rights groups have called on both sides to avoid civilian harm and enable humanitarian access. More than 25 million people are facing acute hunger across Sudan, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a United Nations-backed body that monitors global hunger.

The war has also displaced more than 10 million people and triggered a public health disaster. Last week, the warring parties agreed to improve access for humanitarian aid, with two routes identified to ensure the flow of resources to civilians, mediators said. US Sudan envoy Tom Perriello told a press conference in Geneva on Friday: "We hope that this will be a source of momentum for much bigger steps and progress down the road." But he acknowledged that progress had been slow due to the absence of the SAF – and the results were inadequate to address the scale of the humanitarian crisis.

Moreover, overlapping efforts in pursuit of a ceasefire, including Saudi- and US-led talks in Jeddah, have not eased the fighting. "We do believe that the national cessation of hostilities is possible. We know that that is going to take a great deal of work," Perriello said. In an interview with Al Jazeera on Friday, Cameron Hudson, a senior fellow for the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, said that the international community has failed to exert the necessary pressure to ensure decisive action in Sudan.

"These are two armies that are caught in a pitched, existential battle. The last thing that they're interested in is respecting agreements that they don't see themselves as parties to," he said. "So I think the only thing that's going to change their outlook is if we bring real pressure to bear – if there are consequences for not showing up in Geneva."

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies

KENYA

KENYANS VOW TO ‘TAKE BACK’ THEIR COUNTRY ON AUGUST 8

By [Andrew Wasike](#)

7TH AUGUST 2024

Frustrated by systemic corruption, unemployment and rising living costs, young people in Kenya are planning more mass protests on August 8. Social media is flooded with calls to action under the hashtag #NaneNaneMarch.

DJ Raphael Omondi sits in his small Nairobi apartment, surrounded by turntables and speakers. Despite having a degree in multimedia specializing in television, the 24-year-old has never secured a job in his field. Systemic corruption and poor governance in Kenya have thwarted his career ambitions, Omondi told DW. «Every time I apply for a job, I either get no response or I'm told the position has been filled by someone with connections,» he said. «It's not just about me. It's about an entire generation that has been failed by our leaders.»

Omondi will join other Kenyans, many of them part of Generation Z, in another round of mass anti-government protests on August 8. “We will take back our country,” he said. “Our president has tried to make things right, but he just doesn't get it. So, we want him to resign so that we get a government that cares about us – a new beginning at whatever cost.” Young people, Omondi told DW, have had enough of corruption and mismanagement in Kenya. “It's time for change, I have my reasons for protesting which I just shared, but I am sure many Kenyans out there have many more reasons, which might not be similar to mine.”

Other Kenyans have called for an end to the protests. They say that they want to get on with their lives – at the moment, businesses across the East African country are shuttered every Tuesday and Thursday. Shadrack Omondi Orwa is known to many in Kenya as “Omosh One Hour” or “Jakababa,” a vocal critic of the government, both under President William Ruto and his predecessor, Uhuru Kenyatta. A prominent comedian and a supporter of the opposition, he often highlights the struggles and frustrations of average Kenyans. To the surprise of many Orwa, too, has said he is tired of the protests and wants the country to move forward.

“I understand the anger and frustration of the youth, especially Gen Z, who will be out protesting on August 8,” Orwa said. «But as Kenyans, we are not shocked by this. We support the government and we just want to move forward and work together. We no longer want violence and unrest.» Orwa believes constant protests are not a solution. “Gen Z should come up with a leader who can represent their interests effectively,” he said. “If they can't do that, then it's time for the country to move on. We need to focus on working together and creating a stable and peaceful environment for everyone.”

PROTEST IN RESPONSE TO SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION, MISMANAGEMENT

The August 8 protest has been organized by a coalition of youth groups and civil society organizations. It's a response to years of economic hardship, high unemployment and widespread corruption. The youth-led movement has gained momentum, with social media playing a crucial role in mobilizing support. Young people are tired of empty promises, said 27-year-old activist Kasmuel McOure, who has emerged as a leading voice in the protest movement.

McOure is particularly angry over the wealth accumulated by Kenyan cabinet ministers in questionable circumstances. Some of them have made 400 million shillings (€2.8 million, \$3 million) over 30 years, he told DW. "However, in less than two years, someone has made capital gains of over 200 million [shillings]. What business is this that they are doing that we do not know of?" "What stock markets are these that they are investing in that are doing so well that you can have capital gains of over 200 million [shillings] in less than two years when we are going through a recession? But no, you're telling us not to go on the streets for our rights?"

PROTESTERS UNDETERRED DESPITE WARNINGS

Then, McOure said, there are the everyday struggles that the youth face. "You can't get IDs but you're telling us not to go to the streets as a young person? You cannot get help right now. You've seen what university fees look like, but no, people should not go in the streets, right? Because you think your tribal kingpins have gotten into government, therefore, now suddenly it means that you're in government as a young person?"

With youth unemployment at over 35% and high living costs, economics expert Samuel Karanja believes the grievances of the youth are justified. "The systemic issues of corruption and mismanagement have stifled economic growth and job creation," he told DW. "The youth have every right to demand accountability and better governance." A comprehensive overhaul of the system is needed, Karanja said. Organizers are calling for peaceful protests, while the government has warned Kenyans to refrain from demonstrating. But activist McOure and Omondi, the DJ, are undeterred.

"We are not afraid," Omondi told DW. "This is our future at stake. If we don't stand up now, things will only get worse." Omondi is mixing protest anthems. "Music brings people together. It inspires and motivates. I want my music to be the soundtrack of this revolution," he told DW.

Source: DW.com

D.R.C

FIGHTING RESUMES IN EASTERN DR CONGO

By *Rédaction Africane*ews

Fighting resumed Sunday (Aug. 25) in eastern DRC between the M23 rebels and the army. Local media report violent clashes in Lubero, a locality near the border with Uganda. Lubero is located on the axis that connects Butembo and Beni, further north, which are commercial hubs in the North-Kivu province.

In a press statement released on Monday (Aug. 26), the DRC army said the rebels launched their attack on army positions in the village of Kikubo in violation of a ceasefire. Lieutenant-Colonel Ndjike Kaiko Guillaume said that Congolese authorities will refer the matter to the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism.

The mechanism comprises of military experts from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Member States, South Africa, MONUSCO and the AU. On July 30, Angola announced a ceasefire agreement between the DRC and Rwanda. Kinshasa has long accused Kigali of backing M23 fighters who operate in its eastern North Kivu province, an accusation Rwanda denies.

Source: www.africanews.com

UN SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

EXPECTED COUNCIL ACTION

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

MONUSCO'S MANDATE EXPIRES ON 20 DECEMBER.

During her recent briefing to the Council in July, Keita described the deteriorating security situation in the eastern DRC, expressing extreme concern about the rapid expansion in North Kivu province of the **Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)**, which has captured several strategic locations. The violence in North Kivu has exacerbated the humanitarian situation there, with more than 2.5 million people internally displaced in the province, according to OCHA. Keita also noted the expansion of the conflict to South Kivu province, increasing communal tensions.

On 4 July, the US announced that a humanitarian truce had been agreed by the parties to the conflict in eastern DRC. The truce, which took effect at midnight on 5 July and continued for two weeks, until 19 July, appears to be a follow-up to the November 2023 visit by US Director of

National Intelligence Avril Haines to the DRC and Rwanda and her ensuing interaction with their presidents, Felix Tshisekedi and Paul Kagame. The truce was extended for another two weeks until 3 August with the hope that the parties would eventually agree to a durable cessation of hostilities.

While the truce was largely respected, there were allegations of violations, with the situation in North Kivu remaining volatile. According to OCHA, at least seven people were killed and eight injured in Bweremana (in the Masisi territory in North Kivu) when two bombs exploded on 15 and 16 July.

On 30 July, the DRC and Rwanda signed a ceasefire agreement in Luanda under Angola's auspices, which took effect on 4 August. Based on the agreement, the ceasefire will be monitored by the Ad-Hoc Verification Mechanism established as part of the Luanda process—a regional initiative under the leadership of Angola's President João Lourenço to ease tensions between the DRC and Rwanda. The two countries' foreign ministers met again in Luanda on August 20 and 21 to continue discussing the peace agreement proposed by Angola to find a lasting and durable solution to the long-standing conflict in eastern DRC.

The Security Council welcomed the signing of the ceasefire agreement in resolution 2746 of 6 August. The resolution authorised MONUSCO to provide operational and logistical support to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC), operating in the eastern DRC since December 2023. On 17 August, SADC held its ordinary summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, and commended Angola for its role as a mediator. However, the communiqué released after the summit did not mention the adoption of resolution 2746.

In June, MONUSCO concluded the withdrawal of its forces from South Kivu in accordance with the disengagement plan agreed with the Congolese government and endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2717 of 19 December 2023. The process faced some challenges, however, including a lack of adequate resources, including logistics and manpower, and the deteriorating security situation. In resolution 2746, the Council "urged MONUSCO to consolidate the handover of responsibilities to the DRC Government in South Kivu and to continue to jointly plan the next steps of the gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal of the mission before further moving forward".

HUMAN RIGHTS-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

The experts noted that between August 2023 and June 2024, at least 531 victims of conflict-related sexual violence were reported in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Tanganyika, and Maniema. They highlighted several challenges that prevent victims from reporting to authorities and UN entities, including fear of reprisals by armed groups, social stigma, inadequate tracking of abducted victims who may be trafficked, difficulties in identification, delayed referral to protection services, and widespread impunity.

The experts expressed concern that "with the MONUSCO withdrawal, key components of early warning systems for human rights violations will no longer be operational, significantly limiting human rights monitoring, reporting, and investigation". They called on the DRC government to guarantee unhindered access for human rights actors across the entire territory to ensure

the documentation and prevention of human rights violations, including those related to conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking. Experts expressed alarm at reports of widespread human trafficking, particularly sexual slavery and exploitation, as well as the increasing number of child and forced marriages resulting from conflict and displacement in the eastern Dem

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

A survey conducted in April by Epicentre—a non-profit organisation that conducts field epidemiology activities and research projects for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)—recorded alarming levels of violence, particularly sexual violence, in and around four displaced persons' camps near Goma, in eastern DRC, which together house over 200,000 people. More than ten percent of women respondents aged 20 to 44 reported having been raped in the five months before the survey, with rates exceeding 17 percent of women in this age group in some camps. The survey also showed a high incidence of sexual violence among teenage girls and women over 45.

In a 5 August press release about the survey, Camille Niel, MSF's emergency coordinator in Goma, said that these findings align with the high number of sexual violence cases treated by MSF's medical teams in displaced persons' sites around Goma. Niel added that victims and survivors of sexual violence have reported being attacked "by men, often armed, in the forests and fields where they have to go to collect firewood or the food they need to feed their families" as well as during violent incidents inside the camps. The persistence of the violence is leaving patients treated by MSF at high risk of being attacked again once they leave their clinics. In the press release, MSF urged authorities to guarantee the security of displaced persons' sites and called on aid agencies to increase food assistance and income-generating activities in the sites and to "support accommodation and shelter for victims and survivors of sexual violence in serious danger of being attacked again".

KEY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

A key issue for Council members remains the security situation in the eastern DRC and how to find a lasting solution to the conflict through diplomatic means. In September, Council members will be keen to learn about the ceasefire agreement's implementation. Council members could invite Angola to brief the Council on its ongoing mediation efforts and the implementation of the ceasefire agreement.

Also a key issue is MONUSCO's disengagement process. Council members expect to receive updates from the mission and the Congolese government on efforts being exerted to consolidate the handover of security responsibilities in South Kivu. At the July meeting, France, the co-penholder on the DRC, noted that the conditions that made the mission's withdrawal from South Kivu possible are not yet in place in North Kivu and Ituri, the two other provinces where MONUSCO operates. In this regard, France welcomed "the Congolese Government's determination to consolidate the transfer of responsibility in South Kivu before moving on to the next stages".

The logistical and operational support provided by MONUSCO to SAMIDRC will be another issue. The Council has requested the Secretary-General to report by 15 November on the support provided to the force in line with resolution 2746 and the challenges encountered.

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 July meeting, several Council members stressed the need to avoid leaving a security vacuum and called on the Congolese government to assume its security responsibilities to protect civilians.

Regarding MONUSCO's support to SAMIDRC, the A3+1 members (the African members, currently Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Guyana) emphasised the importance of resolution 2746 in facilitating cooperation between MONUSCO and SAMIDRC and in strengthening capacity, enhancing security, and reducing protection risks for civilians. While supporting the resolution, the US raised concerns about providing air assets and armoured vehicles to SAMIDRC, fearing it could escalate regional tensions. The UK also echoed these concerns.

France and Sierra Leone are the co-penholders on the DRC. Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone) chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

Source: UNSC report

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