

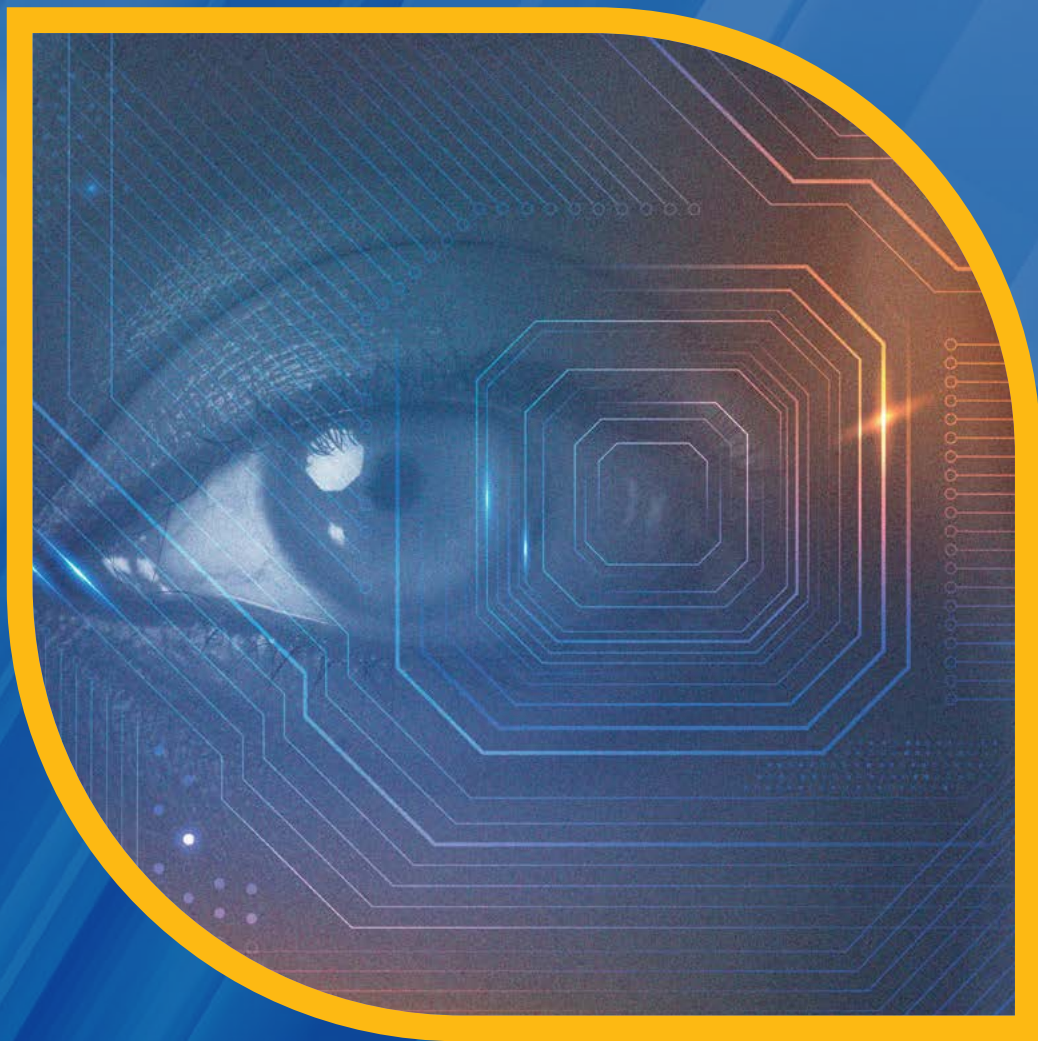


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JANUARY 2024

ETHIOPIA

EGYPT'S EL-SISI SAYS CAIRO WILL NOT ALLOW ANY THREAT TO SOMALIA

EL-SISI'S COMMENTS COME AMID DISPUTE BETWEEN SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA OVER THE LATTER'S DEAL WITH SOMALILAND.

21 JAN 2024

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has said Cairo stands shoulder to shoulder with Somalia and has slammed Ethiopia's agreement with Somaliland to obtain access to the sea and establish a marine force base.

"Egypt will not allow anyone to threaten Somalia or affect its security," el-Sisi said, speaking at a news conference with visiting Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

"Do not try Egypt, or try to threaten its brothers especially if they ask it to intervene," he said.

Somaliland, a region strategically located by the Gulf of Aden, broke away from Somalia in 1991 as the country collapsed into a civil conflict. The region has maintained its own government despite a lack of international recognition.

On January 1, in a memorandum, Ethiopia said it would consider recognizing Somaliland's independence in return for the port access. It would lease 20km (12 miles) of coastland around the port of Berbera, on the Gulf of Aden, for 50 years for military and commercial purposes.

Ethiopia's current main port for maritime exports is in the neighboring country of Djibouti.

Sheikh Mohamud, the president of Somalia, rejected the deal as a violation of international law and said: "We will not stand idly by and watch our sovereignty being compromised."

He arrived in Egypt over the weekend to rally support for his government. Besides meeting President el-Sisi, he met with Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit and Al-Azhar Mosque's Grand Imam, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb.

"My message to Ethiopia is that ... trying to seize a piece of land to control it is something no one will agree to," el-Sisi said, noting cooperation on development was a better strategy.

On Sunday, Ethiopia rejected criticism from Egypt over the deal, saying it was merely a commercial agreement aimed at securing access to the sea and not an attempt to annex land.

“It isn’t annexation or assumption of sovereignty over the territory of any state,” Redwan Hussien, national security adviser to the prime minister of Ethiopia, said in a post on X.

Relations between Egypt and Ethiopia have been tensing for years over a major dam Ethiopia has built on the Blue Nile.

For over a decade — along with Sudan — the countries have been trying to reach a negotiated agreement on the filling and operation of the \$4bn Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

The latest round of talks last month ended without a deal and Cairo and Addis Ababa traded blame for the failure.

Negotiators have said key questions remain about how much water Ethiopia will release downstream if a multiyear drought occurs, and how the countries will resolve any future disputes.

SOURCE: NEWSAGENCIES: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/21/egypts-el-sisi-says-cairo-will-not-allow-any-threat-to-somalia>.

RWANDA

RISHI SUNAK'S RWANDA MIGRATION BILL SUFFERS A BLOW IN BRITAIN'S PARLIAMENT

JANUARY 23, 2024

LONDON (AP) — The upper house of Britain's Parliament has urged the Conservative government not to ratify a migration treaty with Rwanda. It's a largely symbolic move, but signals more opposition to come for the stalled and contentious plan to send some asylum-seekers on a one-way trip to the African nation.

The House of Lords voted by 214 to 171 on Monday evening to delay the treaty that paves the way for the deportation plan. The treaty and an accompanying bill are the pillars of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's bid to overcome a block on the deportations by the U.K. Supreme Court.

Members of the Lords, who are appointed rather than elected, backed a motion saying Parliament should not ratify the pact until ministers can show Rwanda is safe.

John Kerr, a former diplomat who sits in the Lords, said the Rwanda plan was "incompatible with our responsibilities" under international human rights law

"The considerations of international law and national reputation ... convince me that it wouldn't be right to ratify this treaty at any time," he said.

The vote has little practical impact, because the House of Lords can't block an international treaty, and the government says it will not delay. However, ignoring the demand could later be used against the government in a legal challenge.

Lawmakers in the House of Commons approved the bill last week, but only after 60 members of Sunak's governing Conservatives rebelled in an effort to make the legislation tougher.

Monday's vote indicates the strength of opposition in the House of Lords. Many there want to water down the bill — and, unlike in the Commons, the governing Conservatives do not have a majority of seats.

The Lords will begin debating the bill next week. Ultimately the upper house can delay and amend legislation but can't overrule the elected Commons.

The Rwanda policy is key to Sunak's pledge to "stop the boats" bringing unauthorized migrants to the U.K. across the English Channel from France. Sunak argues that deporting unauthorized asylum-seekers will deter people from making risky journeys across the English Channel and break the business model of people-smuggling gangs.

London and Kigali made a deal almost two years ago under which migrants who reach Britain across the Channel would be sent to Rwanda, where they would stay permanently. Britain has paid Rwanda at least 240 million pounds (\$305 million) under the agreement, but no one has yet been sent to the East African country.

Human rights groups have criticized the plan as inhumane and unworkable. After it was challenged in British courts, the U.K. Supreme Court ruled in November that the policy was illegal because Rwanda isn't a safe country for refugees.

In response to the court ruling, Britain and Rwanda signed a treaty pledging to strengthen protections for migrants. Sunak's government argues the treaty allows it to pass a law declaring Rwanda a safe destination.

If approved by Parliament, the law would allow the government to "disapply" sections of U.K. human rights law when it comes to Rwanda-related asylum claims and make it harder to challenge the deportations in court.

Sources: <https://apnews.com/article/uk-rwanda-migrants-plan-house-of-lords-a0787ecb4a3d5da640c80d188d2c3f0b>.

TANZANIA

PACKED TANZANIA PROTESTS OFFER HOPE BUT REFORMS REMAIN A DISTANT DREAM

TANZANIAN OPPOSITION HAS SOUGHT CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS FOR 30 YEARS, BUT QUESTIONS REMAIN ABOUT WHETHER THEY CAN SUCCEED.

27 JAN 2024

Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania – As thousands of supporters carrying placards stating their demands marched through Dar-es-Salaam on Wednesday, opposition party Chadema deputy chairperson Tunde Lissu declared to reporters that the rallies were the beginning of a mission to get a new constitution and get the electoral commission truly independent.

Deemed the biggest public demonstrations since President Samia Suluhu Hassan lifted the ban a year ago, they served as a platform for the opposition to dispute a raft of contentious electoral reforms set to be debated in parliament next month.

“We have been asking for these constitutional reforms for 30 years, now we’ll demand them on the road,” said Lissu. “If it’s not possible to get a new constitution over dialogue, it will be obtained in the streets.”

But even as the rallies were deemed successful by onlookers, the big question in Tanzanian politics is how far the government will go to heed Chadema’s demands.

Since taking office in March 2021 with the stated goal of implementing democratic reforms, Hassan has kept observers guessing on what would be her next move.

Her predecessor John Magufuli was different: nicknamed The Bulldozer for his dictatorial tendencies, he governed ruthlessly.

He muzzled the media and banned rallies and public gatherings, forcing opposition politicians like Lissu into exile and others into hiding. Between 2015 when he came into power and 2021 when he died in office, Magufuli also shunned the West and was infamously a COVID-19 denier and vaccine sceptic.

Hassan overturned the ban on rallies and public gatherings in 2023, paving the way for Lissu to return from exile. She also reinstated members of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi who had been expelled from the party. But during her tenure, there have also been accusations of stifling dissent: Chadema leader Freeman Mbowe was imprisoned for seven months on “terrorism” charges after being arrested during a night-time police raid a day before the party was to hold a forum pressing for constitutional reforms.

DISSENT AND DETERMINATION

Even on the eve of the rallies, there was uncertainty about whether they would take place at all.

Two weeks ago, when Chadema announced plans for the rallies, the Dar-es-Salaam regional commissioner declared that government officials and the army would be holding a sanitation exercise in the city streets on the same day. The official's statement was quickly interpreted as aiming to obstruct the rallies from taking place.

The police also issued a statement threatening to intervene if the rallies were not peaceful. But some analysts say Chadema was determined to go ahead, regardless of whatever challenges security agencies would pose.

"I don't think we credit them enough for putting not just their money but their bodies where their mouth is," said columnist and commentator Elsie Eyakuze. The authorities' decision to let the rallies take place is part of the healing process from the Magufuli era in which there was no room for dissent, she added.

Rights activist and political commentator Baruani Mshale agreed, saying Chadema deserves credit for being bold enough to go ahead with the rallies, and not Hassan and her government for not blocking them.

"I sensed the determination from Chadema's side that come what may, they will hold the rallies. The only surprising thing was the cooperation that the police granted them," he told Al Jazeera.

A SEASON OF DEMANDS

Thirty years ago, when Tanzania decided to move from one-party rule to a multiparty democracy, calls for amendment of the existing constitution, forged in 1977, began.

They bubbled to the surface again after Magufuli's election in 2015 as opposition supporters cried foul, saying the vote had been rigged by the machinery of state working in tandem with the governing party.

The government has proposed to change the composition of the committee that selects commissioners to the electoral body and that appointment of the chairperson and vice chairperson of the electoral commission be made by the president.

But opponents of the bill say the choices of the president, who doubles as chairperson of the governing party, ought to be vetted by an independent committee.

They also want the scope of the bill which currently focuses on presidential, parliamentary, and ward executive elections to be widened to accommodate elections for chairpersons of

streets, villages, and hamlets which are currently administered by the Ministry for Regional Administration and Local Government and not the electoral commission.

Chadema in particular has gone a step further in demanding for the bills to be drafted afresh.

“If you look at the size of weakness in these bills, you realise ... the only way to fix these bills is by withdrawing them from the parliament and be rewritten after being preceded by the amendment of the 1977 constitution,” John Mnyika, the party’s secretary-general, said after submitting an analysis to the parliamentary committee.

The party also has other demands, including the revival of a bill for a new constitution, regardless of what happens in parliament next month.

For many Tanzanians, there remains a degree of uncertainty about what grounds the government will concede before the 2026 election, especially as opposition talks with the governing party failed to yield its desired results for more than a year.

And that could see Tanzania enter into a season of sustained protests, experts say.

“The fact that most of their recommendations have been ignored shows that all these talks and well-meaning promises from Samia are meaningless,” said Thabit Jacob, a political commentator and postdoctoral researcher at Lund University, Sweden. “The rallies give them a chance to talk about the urgency of the situation as backroom talks have proved ineffective.”

Some believe the president needs more time to deliver, arguing that she represents the progressive element of the governing party and a different order from her predecessors. And there is increasing talk about the opposition needing to temper its demands, seeing as a compromise between both sides seems unlikely in the coming months.

“Let’s be politically mature,” Eyakuze said. “It’s very easy to destroy a system overnight, but building a democracy takes time. Chadema has been opposing this for three presidents now and suddenly we have one march and boom, and we are going to change the constitution. What planet?”

SOURCE: ALJAZEERA: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/1/27/packed-tanzania-protests-offer-hope-but-reforms-remain-a-distant-dream>.

COMOROS

PRESIDENT ASSOUMANI SEEKS FOURTH TERM IN JANUARY 13 ELECTION

ASSOUMANI, 65, WILL FACE FIVE COMPETITORS IN SUNDAY'S ELECTION.

JANUARY 2024

Comoros will vote in an election on Sunday that is expected to deliver a fourth term to President Azali Assoumani, a former military officer whose opponents accuse him of muzzling dissent in the Indian Ocean archipelago nation.

Nearly 340,000 people are eligible to vote in the country of fewer than one million people.

Assoumani, 65, who held the rotating chairperson role of the African Union for the past year, will face five competitors. Other opposition leaders have called for a boycott, accusing the electoral commission of favouring the ruling party.

The electoral commission has denied this and said the election will be transparent.

Regional observer missions, including from the African Union, said the last election in 2019 was riddled with irregularities and lacked credibility.

The earlier vote followed constitutional reforms that removed a requirement that the presidency rotate among the country's three main islands every five years, and thus allowed Assoumani to seek re-election. The changes sparked months of sometimes violent protests.

The Comoros Islands – Anjouan, Grande Comore, and Moheli – have endured years of grinding poverty and political turmoil, including about 20 coups or attempted coups, since independence from France in 1975. The country is a major source of irregular migration to the nearby French island of Mayotte, which was historically part of the Comoros.

Under the new system, Assoumani, who first took power in a 1999 coup before stepping down in 2002 and then winning election 14 years later, would be required to step down in 2029.

Since 2019, Assoumani's government has cracked down on dissent, critics say. Former President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, who was in office between 2006 and 2011, was sentenced to life in prison in November 2022 for high treason related to corruption allegations. At the time of his sentencing, he had already spent four years in detention.

Political protests have been repeatedly banned for security reasons.

“Democracy only exists in the lying discourses of Azali,” said the main opposition leader, Mohamed Ali Soilihi, who lives in exile in France and has called for an election boycott.

Assoumani denies that anyone is prosecuted for political reasons and has vowed the election will go ahead successfully despite the boycott calls.

“Those who don’t want the elections to take place have two options: stay at home or leave the country,” he told reporters this week.

On the campaign trail, he has touted the construction of roads, hospitals, and other infrastructure during his tenure.

SOURCE: NEWSAGENCIES: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/11/comoros-president-assoumani-seeks-fourth-term-in-january-13-election>.

SUDAN

‘CAN’T TRUST THE JANJAWEED’: SUDAN’S CAPITAL RAVAGED BY RSF RULE

AFTER NINE MONTHS OF WAR, KHARTOUM UNDER RSF CONTROL HAS TURNED INTO A LAWLESS AND VIOLENT CAPITAL.

20 JAN 2024

Nine months of civil war between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese army have turned Sudan’s capital Khartoum into a plundered, lawless and bloodied shell of its historic self, according to current and former residents.

For months now, the RSF has controlled most of the city, looting markets, homes, warehouses and vehicles. It has also set up hundreds of checkpoints and contributed to reducing entire neighborhoods to rubble by embedding its fighters in residential areas, which are then indiscriminately shelled and bombed by the army. “[The checkpoints] have led to a general state of fear and most people are afraid to leave their houses. There’s also a curfew that starts right after sunset,” said Mabrooka Fatma*, a Sudanese activist in the city.

In the weeks after a bitter political dispute between the RSF and the army erupted into war in April 2023, hundreds of thousands of people fled the capital to nearby cities under the latter’s control, but not everybody followed. Some were too poor to leave, while others feared that the RSF would confiscate and loot their homes if they fled. Dozens of activists also stayed behind to help communities affected by the war.

Most people later deemed it too dangerous to leave, even if they wanted to.

The RSF had banned civilians from driving vehicles, forcing them to walk or rely on donkey carts to transport daily needs. Khartoum, once vibrant and safe, became a lawless city.

“The treatment [towards civilians] is different from one fighter to another,” Fatma told Al Jazeera. “But the new recruits who come to loot are the scariest. They like to harass people.”

‘It’s revenge’

Most RSF fighters come from nomadic tribes from Darfur and Kordofan, two provinces historically neglected and exploited by political and security elites in Khartoum and surrounding cities.

Many of these tribes fought counterinsurgencies on behalf of the central government to crush mostly “non-Arab” armed groups, who were rebelling against their political and economic marginalization.

During the first Darfur war in 2003, government-backed “Arab” militias – which were more commonly known as the “Janjaweed” and later repackaged as the RSF – displaced “non-Arabs” from their lands, looted and burned markets and hospitals, and subjected women and girls to sexual violence, according to Human Rights Watch.

THE RSF ARE NOW COMMITTING THE SAME ATROCITIES IN KHARTOUM.

“They came from the far west of the country where there is little electricity and few hospitals ... and where they begin to carry guns as children. They don’t have any [political] goal here,” said Nidal Asma, * a young woman still living in Khartoum.

“They love to attack, loot and destroy. It’s revenge,” she told Al Jazeera.

The RSF’s conquest of Khartoum has seen fighters move their families into houses that they evicted or occupied after the owners fled. Fatma told Al Jazeera that four new families moved into her area and introduced themselves to the community. Civilians welcomed them out of fear.

“We all know some fighters. It’s very normalized now because everyone has to deal with them. Otherwise, you’re deemed their enemy and they can pose a danger to you,” Fatma said.

ARSONISTS POSING AS FIREFIGHTERS

Civilians living under the RSF rule fear they could be killed or arrested at any moment. On social media, daily stories are reported of RSF fighters committing terrible and senseless acts of violence such as shooting at street children and committing sexual violence.

To distract from their egregious violations, the RSF has deployed “military police” in the streets. Civilians told Al Jazeera that the RSF encourages civilians to report crime in the city, even though their own men are usually the perpetrators.

“The RSF are trying to appear concerned about the security of civilians in order to limit the negative image that they have,” said Mohamad Ahmad*, an activist in southern Khartoum with the local Emergency Response Room, a makeshift clinic that provides first aid to war victims. Ahmed added that the RSF is usually responsible for randomly detaining young men, ostensibly on suspicion of being army spies. Some are released after their relatives or friends visit RSF police offices, but many are still missing.

Al Jazeera sent written messages to Yousif Ezat, the RSF’s spokesperson, asking him to comment on reports that the paramilitary is terrorizing residents in Khartoum but no response was received before publication.

Mustafa Yousif*, an activist who recently fled Khartoum to a city under army control, believes that the RSF is pretending to help civilians to advance its propaganda.

He recalled how the group reacted after the army dropped a bomb on a market in south Khartoum in September, killing 40 people.

“The RSF arrested two victims from the market massacre ... because they prevented the fighters from filming and using the death of civilians as propaganda for the war,” Yousif told Al Jazeera.

DESPERATE TO SURVIVE

The RSF’s plunder of Khartoum has prompted a major humanitarian crisis, according to aid agencies. In December, the World Food Programme said that the capital risks suffering from “catastrophic hunger” if no assistance reaches civilians.

The army, which controls most aid shipments from its de facto administrative capital in Port Sudan, has exacerbated the hunger crisis by blocking or severely restricting the entry of food and medical aid into areas under the RSF’s control, say activists.

That has caused desperate civilians, who lost everything to RSF fighters, to now rely on the paramilitary for piecemeal handouts.

“[The RSF] now distributes things directly to people and in the streets, such as food and medicine,” Fatma, the activist, told Al Jazeera.

She added that poverty and the constant threat of sexual violence have led to many early marriages. In some cases, parents give up their daughters to RSF fighters out of the belief that rape is less stigmatizing under marriage.

Other parents have married their daughters off to have one less mouth to feed, in a society where married women are considered the responsibility of their husbands.

Fatma added that most women and girls stay indoors out of fear that they could be the RSF’s next victims.

“We received many cases [of gang rape] by RSF soldiers,” she told Al Jazeera. “The threat of sexual violence is present all the time.

“We can’t trust the Janjaweed.”

*Names changed to protect the identity of civilians who face the risk of violence in Khartoum

Note to Readers: The terms “Arab” and “non-Arab” are slippery labels in many regions in Sudan. Both communities are Black and Muslim and have inter-married for centuries. The labels mostly denote communal ways of life. “Arabs” are traditionally pastoralists and camel herders, while “non-Arabs” are sedentary farmers.

Sources: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/1/20/we-cannot-trust-the-janjaweed-sudans-capital-ravaged-by-rsf-rule>.

UGANDA

PRESIDENT MUSEVENI PAYS TRIBUTE TO LATE CECILIA OGWAL, HAILS FALLEN LEGISLATOR FOR BEING PATRIOTIC AND INCORRUPTIBLE

JANUARY 23, 2024

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni in company of the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Maama Janet Museveni on Monday, 22nd January 2024 paid tribute to the Late Hon. Cecilia Atim Ogwal, the Woman Member of Parliament for Dokolo District.

Hon. Ogwal, 77, who has been a Member of Parliament since 1996, breathed her last on 18th January 2024 in India after a short illness.

Attending a vigil to honour the fallen legislator at Parliament, President Museveni said he is saddened not to have fully worked together with Hon. Ogwal because of “politics of fragmentation”.

“I feel sad because of the politics of fragmentation. We couldn’t work together fully although we had similar qualities,” the President said.

“I have not worked optimally with Cecilia Ogwal, but I can tell you when I eventually met her I could see that she is a patriot.”

He advised Members of Parliament to always work together whenever there is an opportunity, especially on matters of national importance.

“Take this as a lesson, don’t miss opportunities to work together if there is an opportunity because now some of you are regretting why you didn’t work with her,” President Museveni emphasized.

He further recounted their encounter with Hon. Ogwal in the North while fighting the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) where one rebel- Vincent Otti rang the MP threatening to kill her if she did not support the rebels and reject the National Resistance Movement. He disclosed that Hon. Ogwal stood her ground and rejected the war.

“She will be remembered for her patriotism by refusing to succumb to the pressure of joining Vincent Otti and other rebels in their fight against us.”

The President also informed the MPs that during the processes of the Constituent Assembly, the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC) was telling its followers to reject the activities but Hon. Ogwal was able to advise them that what they were doing was wrong, saying that all people must participate irrespective of their political affiliations.

“That was the second time I noticed that she played an independent and positive role saying no! we may not be NRM but the people of Lango must participate, and they participated. The third one when she was elected to the African Parliament, if you went there to the African Parliament in South Africa, you wouldn’t know that she was not NRM. Outside there she was a big defender of Uganda; she was very patriotic.”

He noted that Hon. Ogwal was a good leader whose contribution was suppressed by the bad atmosphere created by the politics of hatred.

“I want to thank all the leaders who are isolating that politics of hatred. Cecilia Ogwal was very much in that process of rejecting that politics of hatred. Akena, Betty Amongi of UPC, Mao of DP have rejected that. Those who are still in the politics of hatred are very few and we know them. You can imagine they even tried to sabotage this NAM,” President Museveni affirmed.

“Hon. Ogwal was a leader of development and definitely not corrupt. Even when she was in the parliamentary commission, you couldn’t hear any dirt on her. We celebrate her contribution towards the country, and we also celebrate her achievements like raising a big family, looking after her husband and educating her children,” he added.

President Museveni also lauded the fallen MP for her exceptional role in pacifying the Northern region which had been affected by the LRA insurgency and politics of hatred.

On her part, the Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. Anita Among thanked the President for granting the late an official burial which will include a gun salute.

“That means a lot for the people of Lango, for the people of Uganda, especially for a lady who always worked for this country,” she said.

She informed President Museveni that Parliament has lost a uniting factor in Hon. Ogwal.

“Whenever there was an issue in the house, the only uniting factor we had was Hon. Cecilia Ogwal. She was a nationalist and a mother to everybody. She put Uganda first before any political party. We thank God for her life,” the Speaker said.

At the time of her death, she was a member of the Committees on Physical Infrastructure and Budget.

She also served as Uganda’s representative to the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and a Parliamentary Commissioner in the 10th Parliament.

The vigil was attended by among others, His Lordship the Chief Justice, Alfonse Owiny-Dollo, Rt. Hon. Robinah Nabbanja the Prime Minister, ministers and Members of Parliament.

Sources: <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/media/president-museveni-pays-tribute-late-cecilia-ogwal-hails-fallen-legislator-being-patriotic-and>.

BOTSWANA PLEDGES SUPPORT TO UGANDA IN DEVELOPING FOOT AND MOUTH VACCINE

JANUARY 22, 2024

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni has today met his Botswana counterpart, H.E. Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi.

During a sideline meeting at the G-77+ China summit at Speke Resort, Munyonyo, President Masisi pledged unwavering support to Uganda's farmers in combating the foot and mouth disease by developing a vaccine.

“Your Excellency, we met some cattle farmers yesterday, they told us that they would want our assistance and I did promise them that we are dealing with the foot and mouth problem and we are producing the best vaccine in Botswana and what makes it unique is not just the efficacy of the vaccine that we produce but we produce for purpose. We would like to come and look at the blood samples of your herds in Uganda and we create the vaccine,” he said.

Proposing a bilateral program for comprehensive collaboration, President Masisi envisioned a government-to-government partnership to address the foot and mouth challenge.

He further assured President Museveni that their needs and potential, with Uganda's remarkable 16 million cows, align perfectly with Botswana's expertise in drug therapeutics.

President Masisi also expressed Botswana's keen interest in exploring the value chain and expanding collaboration in the dairy industry.

He noted that potential export of milk from Uganda to Botswana is on the agenda, aiming to address Botswana's feed shortage and enhance Uganda's dairy sector.

On his part, President Museveni expressed gratitude for Botswana's willingness to support Uganda in developing the vaccine.

He emphasized the importance of familiarity and collaboration, paving the way for a fruitful partnership.

President Museveni further highlighted the historical challenges faced by the Ugandan cattle industry, tracing back to the colonial era. Despite adversity, he showcased Uganda's remarkable progress, particularly in the dairy sector, where milk production has surged from 200 million to 5.5 billion liters annually.

“From 1989, I started the big efforts of joining the money economy and that meant producing for the market. Of course, due to the improved veterinary services, we now have 16 million cows.”

President Museveni also encouraged Botswana to establish a feed manufacturing company in Uganda, leveraging locally produced resources like soya beans, sunflower cake, molasses, and cotton seed.

Sources: <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/media/botswana-pledges-support-uganda-developing-foot-and-mouth-vaccine>.

KENYA

KENYA: AL-SHABAAB, PASTORALIST MILITIAS, AND THE M23

AL-SHABAAB, PASTORALIST MILITIAS, AND THE M23

19 JANUARY 2024

In Kenya, low-scale violence continued to sweep across several counties, amid reports of continued activity by al-Shabaab in the regions bordering Somalia and sporadic violence by armed pastoralists. The government announced expanding operations against pastoralist militias in the North Rift region into Marsabit, Isiolo, and Meru counties. In the northeast, operations against al-Shabaab continue, parallel to international intervention on the Somalia side.

Regionally, tensions between the Kenyan government and the Democratic Republic of Congo escalated after the launch of the Congo River Alliance (ACF) in Nairobi, Kenya. ACF aims to topple the newly re-elected Congolese president Félix Tshisekedi by joining forces with other armed groups operating in eastern DRC.

MILITANTS REMAIN ACTIVE IN BORDER COUNTIES

Violence involving al-Shabaab in the reporting period was largely concentrated in the border counties of Mandera, Wajir, and especially Garissa (*see graph below*). Over the last four weeks, ACLED records seven events involving al-Shabaab in Kenya. In December 2023, ACLED records al-Shabaab engagement in 11 political violence events, slightly above average for the year, though well below spikes of 18 events recorded both in June and October.

Levels of political violence are partly dependent on operations across the border of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). Its operations have intensified in preparation for the end of the ATMIS mandate in December 2024.¹ These operations may have driven al-Shabaab operatives into Kenya. Changes in the leadership of Kenya's state intelligence agencies in April and May are also thought to have negatively affected those agencies' counterterrorism work mid-year.²

Over the reporting period, five civilians were killed by violence involving al-Shabaab in Garissa county. One boy died in an al-Shabaab ambush on public transport on 3 January, while four health officials died in an IED incident on 15 December, in Dadaab sub-county. On 2 January, also in Dadaab sub-county, a multi-agency security team — likely consisting of Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) and National Police Service forces — conducted an operation against an al-Shabaab

explosive team. One bombmaker was arrested, while several other members of the group managed to escape with injuries. The following day, police were injured in another explosive incident in Dadaab. In late December, al-Shabaab attacked a police Quick Reaction Unit in Mandera county and destroyed a communications mast guarded by the National Police Reserve in Wajir county. In 2023, al-Shabaab conducted 37 remote violence attacks overall – with 11 targeting civilians and 26 targeting security forces. Throughout the last year, such attacks have been increasing.

PASTORALIST MILITIA VIOLENCE DECLINES, IF UNEVENLY

Cabinet Secretary for Interior and National Administration, Kithure Kindiki, announced on 28 December 2023, his intention to expand *Operation Maliza Uhalifu* into parts of Isiolo, Meru, and Marsabit counties in Kenya's northeast region.³ Following requests from local leaders, the expansion of the operation was not immediately gazetted.⁴ The operation, which brings together the KDF and the National Police Service, is aimed at tackling banditry and cattle rustling in North Rift region. Launched in February 2023, it initially covered the Baringo, Elgeyo Maraket, Laikipia, Samburu, Turkana, and West Pokot counties.⁵

The Interior Ministry was correct when it referred to the operation's "progressive successes."⁶ There was a significant spike in political violence events involving pastoralist militias in the first three months of 2023. A few months after the launch of *Operation Maliza Uhalifu* a considerable decline in events involving pastoralist militias was observed. The operation involved the gazetting of areas of concern within the concerned counties as being "disturbed and dangerous,"⁷ the deployment of the KDF, and the recruitment of people to serve in the National Police Reserve (NPR). The NPR is an auxiliary force that can be recruited locally in areas where police resources are thin. The operation has been characterized by dusk-to-dawn curfews, tracking of militias, and the seizure of stolen livestock.

Overall success in the original six targeted counties is undeniable. ACLED records the number of political violence events involving pastoralist militias as having fallen by over 50%, comparing the first and final quarters of 2023 (*see graph below*). However, while there has been progress, it has not been uniform. Baringo has seen a decline in such recorded violence by over 50%, while for Turkana, ACLED records a fall of over 90% in Turkana county. For West Pokot, on the other hand, ACLED records an increase in such events in the fourth quarter compared to the first quarter. Six of the seven events recorded in the final quarter of 2023 are attributable to Turkana ethnic militia. There was no Pokot ethnic militia activity recorded by ACLED in Turkana in the final quarter, compared to 17 such events in the first quarter of 2023.

Recent research in northern Kenya highlights that banditry and livestock rustling are fundamentally political in nature, driven by political elites. This may be through gaining access to resources for allied interest groups or even through transfer of population, or "vote shipping," a term used to describe transfer of population from one area to another for electoral gain.⁸

THE M23 MOBILIZES CONGOLESE OPPOSITION GROUPS IN NAIROBI

Bertrand Bisimwa, president of the March 23 Movement (M23), spoke at the launch of the Congo River Alliance (ACF) in Nairobi, Kenya, and announced the M23's membership in that alliance. The ACF is headed by Corneille Nangaa, former head of DRC's Independent National Electoral Commission, and is a new platform that brings together armed groups and political parties in northeast DRC looking to oust President Félix Tshisekedi from power.⁹ According to the United Nations Group of Experts, the Rwanda Defence Force is operating in DRC in support of the M23, including in Rutshuru territory.¹⁰ Rutshuru town is where Nangaa, and presumably the ACF, are now based.¹¹

DRC, Kenya, and Rwanda are all members of the East African Community (EAC). The Kenya-led East African Community Reaction Force (EACRF) withdrew from the DRC in December 2023 under pressure from President Tshisekedi. The ACF event sparked a diplomatic crisis between Kenya and DRC, illustrating the limitations faced by the EAC in addressing conflict, and Kenya's capacity to navigate complex regional relations.

In response to the launch of ACF, DRC recalled for consultations its ambassadors in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam — who represent DRC to the EAC headquarters in Tanzania — though Kenya-DRC relations have been poor for some time. The EACRF was first deployed in DRC in November 2022,¹² but by April 2023, the force commander, Maj. Gen, Jeff Nyaga, stepped down, citing security threats and DRC's lack of cooperation.¹³ In May 2023, President Tshisekedi spoke of "cohabitation" between the EACRF and the M23.¹⁴ While allowing the M23 to mobilize in Nairobi may be reckless from a foreign policy point of view, it suggests that Kenya does not see the EAC as a peacebuilding mechanism. This is pertinent beyond DRC, given Somalia's accession to the EAC last month.

Kenya contributes troops to the ATMIS. It also faces al-Shabaab on its side of the border. As ATMIS continues to draw down troops, the EAC has a potentially important role in brokering between states with interests in Somalia. These include Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya as well as Somalia itself. However, experience in DRC suggests that the EAC would not be the best mechanism for this. The diplomatic dispute between DRC and Kenya also suggests that Kenya's diplomatic skills will be challenged in such a complex environment. This will have real implications for Kenya's own security. Last month, al-Shabaab killed five people in Kenya, a situation that will only change if a solution is reached in Somalia.

Sources: <https://acleddata.com/2024/01/19/kenya-situation-update-january-2024-al-shabaab-pastoralist-militias-and-the-m23/>.

DRC

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC) - RECORD FLOODINGS (DG ECHO, INGO FORUM, IFRC) (ECHO DAILY FLASH OF 16 JANUARY 2024)

Exceptional rains have caused the Congo River to rise to its highest level (by 6.26 meters) since 1961. Government has declared a hydrological and ecological catastrophe.

15 out of 26 provinces are affected with at least 304,000 families impacted and 300 deaths. Floodings in Equateur impacted at least 600,000 persons. Kinshasa province is also heavily affected. According to available reports, 43,750 houses, 1,325 schools, 269 health centers, 41 public markets and 85 roads are damaged, but the toll is likely to be even higher.

In collaboration with the Congolese authorities, local and international humanitarian organizations are boosting their efforts to undertake assessments and gather harmonized data.

The dimension of the catastrophe is huge and comes on top of the already very dire humanitarian situation in Eastern DRC where over 6.5 million people are displaced due to conflict.

In neighboring Congo Republic, whose capital Brazzaville also sits on the banks across the river, at least 17 people have died in floods across eight departments including the capital, with more than 320,000 people affected.

Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-drc-record-floodings-dg-echo-ingo-forum-ifrc-echo-daily-flash-16-january-2024>.

MADAGASCAR

ACAPS THEMATIC REPORT: MADAGASCAR CYCLONE EXPOSURE AND VULNERABILITIES (19 JANUARY 2024)

Aim of the report: in Madagascar, the cyclone season runs from December–April. This report provides an overview of the country’s cyclone exposure based on historical data from 2000–2023, its cyclone vulnerabilities, and its response capacities, aiming to inform strategic planning and anticipatory action.

Methodology: this report is based on secondary sources with historical data covering previous cyclone incidents. Sources include humanitarian organizations, think tanks, academic research, government demographic data, disaster risk management plans, and local and international media.

Scope: the geographic scope of this report is at the country level. The cyclone vulnerability analysis focuses on socioeconomic vulnerability factors, infrastructure, food security, national response capacities, and access to water, sanitation, and health services.

Limitations: the limitations of this analysis include the limited availability of hazard vulnerability information at the subnational level, demographic data sourced from the 2018 census, and a lack of updated assessment reports looking into current national response capacities.

CRISIS RISK OVERVIEW

Because of its geographic location and climatic conditions, Madagascar frequently experiences natural hazards, such as droughts, tropical cyclones, and floods, and is among the most vulnerable country to the effects of climate change worldwide (UN News 20/01/2023; ND-GAIN accessed 08/12/2023). At ‘high risk’, this country ranks 27th out of 191 countries in the 2024 INFORM Risk Index, a global, open-source risk assessment tool built on a set of exposure, vulnerability, and coping capacity indicators (EC accessed 29/12/2023). High poverty rates, weak governance, and inadequate human and physical capital, combined with reliance on rain-fed agriculture and inadequate infrastructure, collectively undermine community resilience to natural hazards, triggering humanitarian needs and hampering long-term development efforts (IMF 16/11/2022; IOM Accessed 18/01/2024 accessed; WB accessed 29/12/2023).

The country is still recovering from the impact of Cyclone Freddy in February 2023 and its widespread damage to infrastructure and homes, affecting over 290,000 people as at 14 March 2023 (OCHA 14/03/2023; IFRC 13/03/2023). The cyclone also aggravated the impact of the drought the country had been experiencing since 2018. People affected in the Grand-Sud and

the Grand Sud-Est struggled to recover after the loss of their livelihoods and the effects on their ready-to-harvest crops, such as rice and fruits (IPC 22/08/2023; FSIN 05/03/2023; IFRC 13/03/2023).

In a typical year, Madagascar's long rainy season runs from January–April, while the cyclone season runs from December–April. During this period, the country experiences cyclones with strong winds, heavy rainfall, and storm surges causing flooding, landslides, displacements, and cropland and livestock destruction, leading to the loss of livelihoods (FEWS NET accessed 12/09/2023; FAO 17/03/2023; Duke Lemur Center accessed 17/09/2023).

Between 2000–2023, 47 tropical storms and cyclones hit Madagascar, severely damaging the country's infrastructure, economy, and food security and leaving more than 740,000 people homeless. During the same period, these cyclones affected more than six million people, with an average of 1.3 million people affected yearly (EM-DAT accessed 11/10/2023).

Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/madagascar/acaps-thematic-report-madagascar-cyclone-exposure-and-vulnerabilities-19-january-2024>.

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