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War Crimes Prosecution Watch is a bi-weekly e-newsletter that compiles official documents and articles from major news sources detailing and analyzing salient issues pertaining to the investigation and prosecution of war crimes throughout the world. To subscribe, please email warcrimewatch@pilpg.org and type "subscribe" in the subject line.

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AFRICA

NORTH AFRICA

Libya

UN: Libya is not a safe port of disembarkation (Newsbook) By Jurgen Balzan
May 2, 2023

Libya is not a safe port of disembarkation, the United Nations secretary-general António Guterres said in the latest report on the UN's Support Mission in Libya

published in April.

However, despite repeated warnings and an ongoing case at the International Criminal Court, Malta continues to defy this by coordinating pushbacks of asylum seekers at sea to ensure that they are intercepted and returned to Libya.

Despite the Labour government's rhetoric that Malta does not have the capacity to receive asylum seekers on its shores, so far this year only 92 people – including an unaccompanied child – were brought to Malta after being rescued at sea.

Most of the asylum seekers brought to Malta – 60 – were brought to Malta last month, which took place amid increasing criticism from Italy on Malta's apparent failure to assist people in distress within its search-and-rescue area – criticism which echoes assertions long made by civil society.

While noting that violations against refugees and migrants in Libya continue unabated, including in detention centres, Guterres reiterated that Libya is not a safe country for asylum seekers.

“Any refugees and migrants intercepted along the central Mediterranean route should be assigned a safe port of disembarkation, in accordance with the law of the sea, international maritime law, international human rights law and refugee law,” the UN secretary-general said.

Guterres also called for rights-based alternatives to detention, including by establishing legal and policy frameworks to manage migration in line with international law.

This confirms that the repatriation and push backs of asylum seekers at sea coordinated by Malta and other EU countries in conjunction with the so-called Libyan coastguard defy international law.

Although Malta and Italy deny this, UN refugee agency officials and human rights organisations have long denounced the conditions of detention centers for migrants in Libya, citing practices of beatings, rape and other forms of torture and insufficient food.

Migrants endure weeks and months of those conditions, awaiting passage in unseaworthy rubber dinghies or rickety fishing boats arranged by human traffickers.

Malta's prime minister Robert Abela and his predecessor Joseph Muscat have been reported to the International Criminal Court (ICC) which was asked to investigate their involvement in “crimes against humanity against migrants and refugees who have been intercepted at sea and systematically returned to and detained in Libya.”

This came as last year, a group of international organisations accused Libyan militias of committing war crimes against migrants in detention centres and included Malta and Italy in their complaint for their support to Tripoli's coastguard.

In a case initiated at the International Criminal Court (ICC) Malta and Italy were accused of acting in a coordinated manner with the Libyan coastguard in the recovery of migrants to ensure that they were intercepted and returned to Libya.

The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) said that despite knowledge of these crimes, EU officials together with political leaders in Italy and Malta have strengthened their collaboration with Libya to prevent refugees and migrants from fleeing Libya by sea.

Moreover, Pope Francis often highlights the conditions of what he describes as “concentration camps while urging European countries not to pushback asylum seekers to Libya and other unsafe countries where they suffer “inhumane violence.”

On arrival in the North African country, many asylum seekers are often kidnapped and kept captive by militias or other armed groups, or used by traffickers and smugglers as currency for months on end while awaiting passage in unseaworthy rubber dinghies or rickety fishing boats arranged by human traffickers.

Several international reports, as well as thousands of accounts by survivors, have documented the heinous treatment meted out to migrants and refugees in Libya. In November 2021, the UN fact-finding mission in Libya found these violations to be crimes against humanity.

In February 2017, the Italian government signed an EU-sponsored agreement with the Libyan government, which was renewed for a further three years last year.

Under this agreement, Italy and the EU have been helping the Libyan Coastguard – often accused of cooperating with smugglers while pushing back migrants at sea with the cooperation of Malta and Italy – to enhance their maritime surveillance capacity.

Since 2017, Italy has set aside €32.6 million for international missions to support the Libyan Coastguard, with €10.5 million allocated in 2021.

NGO Medecins Sans Frontieres recently said that “this help comes at the expense of migrants and refugees’ human rights, as virtually everyone intercepted at sea by the Libyan Coastguard ends up in a Libyan detention centre. The agreement between Italy and Libya supports the system of exploitation, extortion and abuse in which so many migrants find themselves trapped.”

A Council of Europe (CoE) report published in March 2021 said that Libya is not a place of safety for disembarkation, owing to the serious human rights violations committed against refugees and migrants, and the ongoing conflict in the country.

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CENTRAL AFRICA

Central African Republic

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Cases: Central African Republic**

New Sudan clashes despite truce, UN warns country at 'breaking point' (Yahoo News)

May 1, 2023

**Black smoke rises over Khartoum in this image from AFPTV video on April 28, 2023
Fierce fighting broke out again Monday between Sudan's army and paramilitaries despite the formal extension of a truce, after the United Nations warned the humanitarian situation reached "breaking point".**

More than 500 people have been killed since battles erupted on April 15 between Sudan's de facto leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who leads the regular army, and his ex-deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Millions of Sudanese around the capital have since hidden in their homes with dwindling food, water, and electricity as warplanes on bombing raids have drawn heavy fire from anti-aircraft guns.

"Warplanes are flying over southern Khartoum and anti-aircraft guns are firing at it," said one resident, while another witness told AFP he was also hearing "loud gunfire" in the area.

Burhan and Daglo have agreed multiple, poorly observed ceasefires, and extended the latest formal truce on Sunday by 72 hours, with each side repeatedly blaming the other for the frequent violations.

Millions of Sudanese are trapped in the country, where aid workers are among the dead, humanitarian facilities have been looted, and foreign aid groups have been forced to essentially halt all aid operations.

Top UN humanitarian official Martin Griffiths said Sunday he was heading to the region to help "bring immediate relief to the millions of people whose lives have turned upside down overnight".

"The humanitarian situation is reaching breaking point," he said. "Goods essential for people's survival are becoming scarce in the hardest-hit urban centres, especially Khartoum."

"The cost of transportation out of worst-hit areas has risen exponentially, leaving the most vulnerable unable to locate to safer areas."

- 50,000 flee overland -

Some 50,000 people have fled the raging conflict, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries including Chad, Egypt, and the

Central African Republic, said the UN refugee agency.

The fighting has also triggered a mass exodus of foreigners and international staff, with countries the world over launching frantic evacuations by land, sea, and air.

Daglo's RSF is descended from the Janjaweed unleashed by former strongman Omar al-Bashir in Sudan's Darfur region, leading to war crimes charges against Bashir and others.

Further complicating the battlefield, Central Reserve Police were being deployed across Khartoum to "protect citizens' properties" from looting, the Sudanese police said, confirming an army statement.

The RSF had warned police against joining the fight.

The US Treasury Department last year sanctioned the Central Reserve for "serious human rights abuses" related to its use of "excessive force" against pro-democracy protests after the October 2021 coup that brought Burhan and Daglo to power.

- UN facilities looted -

At least 528 people have been killed and almost 4,600 people wounded in the violence, according to Sudan's health ministry, but the death toll is feared to be far higher.

Fighting has also spread across Sudan, especially in the long-troubled Darfur region, where witnesses reported intense conflict and looting.

At least 96 people were reported killed in El Geneina, West Darfur, the UN said.

The UN World Food Programme has warned the unrest could plunge millions more into hunger in a country where 15 million people already needed aid to stave off famine.

Only 16 percent of health facilities are functioning in Khartoum, according to the World Health Organisation, with many facilities shelled.

On Sunday, a first Red Cross plane brought eight tonnes of humanitarian aid from Jordan to Port Sudan, which is so far untouched by the fighting and has served as an evacuation hub.

The aid included surgical material and medical kits to stabilise 1,500 patients.

Regional powers have joined negotiations to help end the violence.

An envoy of Burhan's met on Sunday in Riyadh with the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, who called for the restoration of calm in Sudan, his ministry said.

Egypt has called an Arab League meeting of its permanent delegates Monday to discuss the "situation in Sudan".

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Sudan & South Sudan

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in Darfur, Sudan**

'Men with no mercy': The vicious history of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (Telegraph) Harriet Barber
April 25, 2023

This morning, Britain began a "large-scale" operation to rescue up to 4,000 Britons trapped in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum.

It's high stakes, not least because many of the roads to the airport – where evacuees must get themselves – are controlled by the country's feared Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The RSF evolved over more than four decades from one of the most notorious militias in Africa; the Janjaweed.

They are no ordinary fighting force. Here's why they stoke such fear.

Where did the Janjaweed come from?

Originally herders, the Janjaweed militias trace their roots to armed nomadic groups in western Sudan.

They were first armed and formed into a fighting force in the early 1980s as the government competed to strengthen its influence in neighbouring Chad, which was embroiled in a long-running civil war.

The Janjaweed – who called themselves the horsemen – began raiding villages and wreaking havoc, but first attracted international attention after a terrible genocide in 2003.

How did the genocide unfold?

The genocide – known as the first in the 21st century – happened in Darfur, a region in western Sudan.

In 2003, peasant workers rebelled against what they believed was unfair treatment by the government. In turn, the then president Omar al-Bashir rallied the Janjaweed to suppress the rebellion and slaughter followed.

The Sudanese army used jets and helicopters to bomb the population, the Janjaweed went village to village.

Men were mutilated and murdered, women raped, and children kidnapped. Fields and houses were destroyed, wells poisoned, and valuable goods seized.

The Janjaweed were accused of conducting ethnic cleansing of the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa peoples.

In total, an estimated 2.5 million people were displaced and 300,000 killed. In a 2015 report, Human Rights Watch described the Janjaweed as “men with no mercy”.

Why have they been allowed to thrive?

Political expediency. Sudan is an unstable country with many competing factions. The Janjaweed provides muscle and power.

Al-Bashir organised the Janjaweed into the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) as a separate unit in 2013, initially to fight rebels in the Nuba Mountains. And in 2017, a law legitimised the group as an independent security force.

Among other things, they were used to clamp down on illegal migration from surrounding countries – Sudan shares borders with seven nations, including Libya and Chad.

Again the militia committed war crimes.

Human Rights Watch quoted one civilian, whose village was attacked, as saying: “They confiscated our belongings. They took our livestock. They beat the men. And then they raped us. They raped us in a group. Some women were raped by 8 or 10 men. Seventeen women were raped together. All of us were raped. Even the underage girls were raped.”

Just last year, the Janjaweed were accused of killing at least 200 people in the city of Kreinik, in Darfur.

“They have removed the town from the Earth – more than 90 per cent of the houses have been burned out,” one man told the Guardian. “They even killed the animals that people brought [with] them around the hospital to protect them.”

What now for the Janjaweed?

It's unknown but experts fear the worst.

The RSF is commanded by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, who has fallen out with the head of the army Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

The rival generals together ousted president al-Bashir during pro-democracy protests against his 30-year rule in 2019, and entered into a power-sharing agreement. It was supposed to pave the way for democratic elections, but in 2021 the RSF and army staged another coup, which halted the transition to a democratically elected government.

Tensions have been high for the ensuing two years, but conflict broke out on April 15 when the RSF refused to integrate into

the regular army. Fighting between the armies – which both number over 100,000 – has now overwhelmed the country.

Yesterday a 72-hour ceasefire was negotiated. All major powers are evacuating their diplomats and people from Sudan this week. The fear is the country is about to descend into civil war.

Beyond that, say experts, nothing is clear.

The United Nations has warned the conflict “risks a catastrophic conflagration within Sudan that could engulf the whole region and beyond”.

Antonio Guterres, secretary general, said: “We must all do everything within our power to pull Sudan back from the edge of the abyss.”

Bashir and allies out of jail as Sudan fighting flares (Shepparton News)

April 26, 2023

With the conflict between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) showing no sign of easing, the army said former president Omar al-Bashir had been transferred to a military hospital before hostilities started on April 15.

It said Bashir was moved from prison with 30 former members of his regime, including Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein, who along with the former president is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes for atrocities during an earlier conflict in the Darfur region.

The whereabouts of Bashir came into question after a former minister in his government, Ali Haroun, announced on Tuesday he had left Kober prison in Khartoum with other former officials.

Haroun is also wanted by the ICC on dozens of war crimes charges.

Thousands of convicted criminals, including some sentenced to death, were held in the vast prison, along with senior and lower-ranking officials from the Bashir regime, which was toppled four years ago.

Sudanese authorities and the RSF traded accusations over the release of inmates, with the police saying paramilitary gunmen had stormed into five prisons at the weekend, killing several guards and opening the gates.

The RSF blamed authorities for letting Haroun and others out.

The release of convicted criminals added to a growing sense of lawlessness in Khartoum, where residents have reported worsening insecurity, with widespread looting and gangs roaming the streets.

"This war, which is ignited by the ousted regime, will lead the country to collapse," said Sudan's Forces of Freedom and Change, a political grouping leading an internationally backed plan to transfer to civilian rule derailed by the eruption of fighting.

Bashir came to power in a 1989 military coup and was ousted in a popular uprising in 2019.

Two years later, the army led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, with support from the RSF, took over in a coup.

The present conflict between the army and RSF leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo broke out in part over disagreements about how quickly to integrate the RSF into the army under the planned transition to civilian rule.

The ICC in The Hague has accused Bashir of genocide, and Haroun of organising militias to attack civilians in Darfur in 2003 and 2004.

The ICC declined to comment on Bashir, Haroun and Hussein's prison transfers.

The renewed battles were in Omdurman, one of Khartoum's twin cities, where the army was fighting reinforcements to the RSF brought in from other regions of Sudan, a Reuters reporter said.

The army has accused the RSF of using a three-day truce to reinforce itself with men and weapons.

The truce was due to end on Thursday evening. Thanks to the ceasefire, fighting between army soldiers the RSF was more subdued in the centre of Khartoum.

The fighting has turned residential areas into battlefields.

Air strikes and artillery have killed at least 459 people, wounded more than 4000, destroyed hospitals and limited food distribution in a nation where a third of its 46 million people rely on humanitarian aid.

United Nations special envoy on Sudan Volker Perthes told the UN Security Council on Tuesday the ceasefire "seems to be holding in some parts so far".

But he said neither party showed readiness to "seriously negotiate, suggesting that both think that securing a military victory over the other is possible".

Foreign powers have evacuated thousands of diplomats and private citizens in recent days, including 1674 from 54 countries helped out by Saudi Arabia.

Sudanese along with citizens of neighbouring countries have also been leaving en masse.

More than 10,000 people crossed into Egypt from Sudan in the past five days, authorities in Cairo said, adding to an estimated 20,000 who have entered Chad.

Others have fled to South Sudan and Ethiopia, despite difficult conditions there.

Sudan crisis: War crimes suspect free amid chaos (BBC News) James Gregory and James Copnall
April 26, 2023

A former Sudanese politician wanted for alleged crimes against humanity has said that he and other former officials are no longer in jail - following reports of a break-out.

Ahmed Haroun was among those being held in Kober prison in the capital Khartoum who are facing charges by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

A ceasefire between fighting military factions largely appears to be holding.

But there are doubts about both sides' commitment to a lasting peace.

The conflict - which began on 15 April - arose from a bitter power struggle between the leaders of Sudan's regular army and a rival paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Reports emerged this week of a prison break at Kober - where Ahmed Haroun was serving a sentence alongside Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's former president.

On Tuesday, Haroun confirmed in a statement aired on Sudan's Tayba TV that he and other Bashir loyalists who served under him had left the jail - but said he would be ready to appear before the judiciary whenever it was functioning.

In an audio message circulating on social media, Haroun claimed the group had been aided in their escape by prison guards and the armed forces.

"We made a decision to protect ourselves due to lack of security, water, food and treatment, as well as the death of many prisoners in Kober," Haroun told al-Sudani, a daily newspaper with ties to Bashir.

Haroun was a key player in the Sudanese government's brutal response to two long-running and still unresolved civil wars - in Darfur (from 2003) and South Kordofan (from 2011).

He was indicted by the ICC in 2007 for his alleged role in the atrocities in Darfur - described as the first genocide of the 21st Century - when he was the country's interior minister.

He faces 20 counts of crimes against humanity and 22 counts of war crimes, with charges including murder, rape, persecution and torture. He denies the charges.

Mukesh Kapila, a former UN coordinator for Sudan, described Haroun as "extremely dangerous" and "unreliable", adding he had "many followers who have been lurking for the last two decades".

"This, plus other armed groups now coming out of the woodwork, really changes the dynamics in ways that are difficult to predict at the moment - but it's really bad news," he told the BBC World Service's Newsday programme.

Haroun was arrested in 2019, after veteran leader Bashir was ousted by the military amid mass protests. The country has experienced frequent unrest and several other coup attempts since then. Bashir - who is 79 - had been serving a jail sentence for corruption. He is at a military hospital in police custody - having been moved there before the latest hostilities broke out,

according to Sudan's army.

He is also accused by the ICC of leading a campaign of mass killing and rape in Sudan's Darfur region, which he denies.

Sudan's interior ministry has accused the RSF of breaking into five prisons in the past few days - including Kober, which Bashir had already left.

Police said the raid led to the killing of two prison warders, and that the RSF released all who were being held there.

The RSF has denied the allegations, claiming instead that the military "forcibly evacuated" the facility as part of a plan to restore Bashir to power.

An army spokesman denied any army involvement, saying the military "does not have any supervision over prisons". He said the military was coordinating with police to return inmates to prisons.

But plenty of Sudanese will believe this is just the latest example of Gen Burhan, leader of Sudan's armed forces, trying to restore Bashir's Islamist lieutenants to the forefront of Sudanese politics.

The ceasefire in Sudan has allowed several countries to evacuate their nationals from the country. Several evacuation flights carrying UK nationals from Sudan have landed in Cyprus, while a boat evacuating more than 1,600 people from dozens of countries has now arrived in Saudi Arabia.

Both Germany and France say all their citizens have now left the country.

Volker Perthes, who is the UN special envoy to Sudan and is currently in the country, said on Tuesday that the 72-hour pause in fighting still appeared to be holding together.

But gunfire and explosions continued to be reported in Khartoum and the nearby city of Omdurman.

"There is yet no unequivocal sign that either [side] is ready to seriously negotiate, suggesting that both think that securing a military victory over the other is possible," said Mr Perthes.

Mr Perthes said that many homes, hospitals and other public facilities have been damaged or destroyed in residential areas near the army headquarters and airport in the capital Khartoum.

The ceasefire, which began at midnight local time (22:00 GMT) on Monday, is the latest attempt to bring stability to the country after fighting broke out nearly two weeks ago.

The White House said on Wednesday the ceasefire should be extended to address the humanitarian crisis, news agency Reuters reported.

National security spokesman John Kirby also confirmed a second American had died in Sudan on Tuesday.

At least 459 people have died in this conflict so far, though the actual number is thought to be much higher.

Thousands more are reported to have fled Sudan and the UN has warned that this is likely to continue. Lines of buses and other vehicles are continuing to leave Khartoum despite rocketing prices of fuel and bus tickets.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said it expects there to be "many more" deaths due to outbreaks and a lack of services.

More than 60% of health facilities in Khartoum are closed, it said.

There is also concern for those who are left behind, with an estimated 24,000 pregnant women currently in Khartoum who are expected to give birth in the coming weeks.

Sudan death toll climbs to 550 as rival factions agree to seven-day ceasefire (The Kenya Star) By [AUTHOR]
May 3, 2023

Sudan's Health Ministry on Tuesday announced that more than 550 people have been killed in the three weeks of fighting between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) as the two warring factions agreed to a 7-day ceasefire starting Thursday.

A total of "550 deaths and 4,926 injuries were recorded in all hospitals in Sudanese states," the ministry said in a statement,

adding that the situation was calm in all states except for Khartoum and Central Darfur. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the head of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), on Tuesday agreed on a seven-day ceasefire mediated by neighboring South Sudan.

Pauline Adhong Malok, the spokesperson for South Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said at a media briefing in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, that the ceasefire, which was negotiated by South Sudanese President Salva Kiir, will start Thursday to pave the way for peace talks between warring factions headed by the two generals.

"The government of the Republic of South Sudan has obtained the consent of the two parties to the current conflict in Sudan to name their representatives to peace talks to be held at any venue of their choice," Malok said.

She added that Kiir, during a telephone conversation with the two warring Sudanese generals, stressed the need for a longer ceasefire and speedy solution to the conflict that broke out in mid-April.

Kiir is the leader of a team of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Assembly of the Heads of State that is negotiating for an end to armed conflict in Sudan. Earlier, the RSF accused the SAF of violating the humanitarian truce.

In a statement on Tuesday, the RSF said it managed to shoot down a SAF military plane, but the SAF spokesman's office could not be reached to comment on the claim.

Meanwhile, the Forces of Freedom and Change Alliance (FFC), a civilian political coalition in Sudan, on Tuesday called on the Sudanese people to stage demonstrations demanding the end of the conflict.

"Today (Tuesday), the alliance called for large-scale protests at the areas which are not affected by the conflict to push for negotiations and stoppage of the war," tweeted Yassir Arman, the FFC's spokesman.

"We, in villages and cities which are not affected by the war, must come out in masses to push for negotiations and stoppage of the war," said Arman. The Sudanese police forces on Tuesday carried out widespread campaigns in Khartoum to combat crimes, blocking the roads to prevent criminals and outlaws from committing illegal activities.

"This step comes as part of the plan of the police force's command which aims to impose prestige of the state and the rule of law," the press office of the Sudanese police said in a statement.

"The campaign tends to secure markets, important commercial sites and vital facilities," it said. Currently in its third week, the conflict in Sudan, which is concentrated in the capital of Khartoum, has triggered a mass exodus of civilians to neighboring countries, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Chad, and South Sudan.

In addition, foreign countries have evacuated their citizens from Sudan even as the United Nations warns of a looming humanitarian crisis amid a lack of food, clean water, and medicine among civilians trapped in the conflict.

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Democratic Republic of the Congo

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WEST AFRICA

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Lake Chad Region – Chad, Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon

Nigerian military kills 54 terrorists, rescues over 400 victims – DHQ (Premium Times) By [AUTHOR]
April 20, 2023

The Defence Headquarters says troops of the armed forces have in the last two weeks rescued 468 kidnapped victims and eliminated 54 terrorists in various operations across the North-east, North-central and North-west regions.

The Director, Defence Media Operations, Musa Danmadami, said this on Thursday in Abuja at the bi-weekly news conference on the operations of the armed forces.

Mr Danmadami, a major general, said the troops also apprehended no fewer than 122 terrorists, bandits, their collaborators and other criminals across the zones within the period.

He added that 30 of the rescued victims who were injured have been hospitalised while the remaining were reunited with their families.

In the North-east, Mr Danmadami said troops of Operation Hadin Kai conducted operational activities at identified Boko Haram and Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorist camps and enclaves at high grounds, villages and forests within the zone.

He said the troops neutralised 24 terrorists, arrested 40 logistics suppliers including one female, four terrorists informants, and rescued 206 civilians.

According to him, a total of 501 Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists and their families comprising 60 male adults, 176 female adults and 266 children surrendered to troops at different locations within the theatre of operation.

“Troops also recovered 14 AK47 rifles, two AK49 rifles, one AK56 rifle, one GPMG, one RPG tube, one PK MG and two RPG bombs.

“Also recovered were 732 rounds of 7.62mm NATO, 77 rounds of 7.62mm special, 19 rounds of 7.62mm by 29mm special and 16 rounds of 7.62mm ball metal links ammo.

“Also, 1,000 rounds of 7.62mm NATO (belted), 243 round of 7.62mm x 54mm special ammo, 89 rounds of 5.56mm by 45mm special, 16 AK47 magazines, seven dane guns and the sum of N103,505 only, as well as other sundry items, were recovered.

“All recovered items, arrested Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorists, terrorists logistics suppliers, were handed over to the relevant authority for further action.

“While the surrendered Boko Haram/Islamic State of West Africa Province terrorists and members of their families were profiled for further action.

“The rescued civilians were given medical attention before being handed over to relevant authorities for further action,” he said.

In North-central, the defence spokesperson said the troops of Operations Safe Haven and Whirl Stoke apprehended 44 suspected criminals and rescued 252 civilians during the period.

He said the troops also recovered a cache of arms, 18 mobile phones, 38 railway sleepers amongst other sundry items.

In the North-west, Danmadami said the troops of Operation Hadarin Daji neutralised 30 terrorists, arrested 33 others and

rescued 10 kidnapped civilians.

He said that the troops recovered 13 AK47 rifles, 16 AK47 magazines, 1,531 rounds of 7.62mm special, 886 rounds of 7.62mm NATO (belted) ammo, 139 rounds of 7.62mm special (tracer) ammo, and 30 rounds of empty cases of 7.62mm special.

“Other items recovered include 87 Detonators, 33 rolls of detonator cables, 11 safety fuses, 43 main explosive chargers, 25 motorcycles, 21 mobile phones, boafeng radios, 887 rustled cattle, seven trucks and the sum of N230,900.

“All recovered items, apprehended suspects and rescued civilians have been handed over to the appropriate authority for further action,” he said.

Troops kill '35 terrorists', destroy Boko Haram camps in Borno (The Cable) By Wasilat Azeez
April 23, 2023

Troops of Operation Hadin Kai and 199 special forces battalion in collaboration with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have reportedly killed 35 Boko Haram insurgents in Sambisa Forest.

The Sambisa Forest in Borno state has been the target of major security operations, as it is said to provide a major cover for terrorists.

Intelligence sources told Zagazola Makama, a counter-insurgency publication, focused on the Lake Chad region, that the troops made the unprecedented incursions into Boko Haram hideouts, in line with efforts to completely eliminate the insurgents operating along the fringes of the forest.

The sources said the “clearance operation” began from Awulari on April 17 and progressed further into other identified insurgents’ camps around Garno and Alafa.

The sources added that the troops overwhelmed the insurgents with superior firepower and killed 18 of them.

However, a member of CJTF was said to have died during the gun duel.

The troops further “stormed and cleared Izzah and Farisu on April 19”, where they “ferociously engaged dozens of the resisting terrorists in a heavy gunbattle”.

“The troops overpowered the terrorists after about 30 minutes of gun battle, killing 18 of them and recovered several motorcycles, AK 47 rifles and an anti-aircraft gun.”

Zagazola said the troops further moved to Farisu where they eliminated an additional eight terrorists.

The publication further said three terrorists were killed by the troops in Alafa including one commander simply identified as “Salafi”, while two motorcycles were recovered.

“On April 20, in Ukuba, the ground troops made contact with another set of the insurgents, killing seven, while others escaped with bullet wounds. The troops recovered one truck and two 122 artillery guns.

“The gallant troops moved further to clear Garin Glucose where they neutralised additional two terrorists while other terrorists hastily withdrew and avoided making contact with the approaching troops.”

ISWAP fighters 'forced to flee' as troops repel attack in Borno town (The Cable) By Samad Uthman
April 24, 2023

Nigerian troops have reportedly repelled an attack on the outskirts of Borno by fighters of the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP).

According to Zagazola Makama, a counter-insurgency publication, the terrorists attacked the town around 2am on Monday from the Sambisa forest axis through Yarimari Gana.

The publication said troops of the 21 brigade “were swiftly deployed to the scene where they engaged the terrorists at the back of the Bama IDPs camp forcing them to flee”.

The troops and members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) are said to have killed 35 terrorists in Bama LGA between April 17 and 20.

TheCable had reported how the troops of Sector 3 Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) repelled a similar attack by ISWAP fighters in Monguno, a northern Borno town.

Before then, the troops had also repelled a series of attacks launched against its bases in Mafa and Biu LGAs of the state.

On March 27, the troops of Operation Hadin Kai repelled an attack by ISWAP fighters on a military base in Kunnari, a village near Buratai town.

Two days later, the troops repelled another ISWAP attack targeted at a military asset in Ajiri, Mafa LGA of Borno.

Zagazola Makama said the failed attack was in retaliation to the killing of 41 ISWAP fighters – including a commander.

ISWAP abducts 3 humanitarian workers, security guards in Borno (The Cable) By Samad Uthman
April 26, 2023

The Islamic State of the West African Province (ISWAP) has reportedly abducted three humanitarian workers and two security guards of the Family Health International (FHI360) in Borno.

FHI 360 is a US-based nonprofit human development and non-governmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to improving the health and well-being of people

According to Zagazola Makama, a counter-insurgency publication focused on the Lake Chad region, ISWAP fighters in their numbers stormed the guest house of the NGO “in a silent operation at about 4 a.m on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, and whisked them away to an unknown destination”.

The publication said there was no official statement from the organisation since the news of the abduction broke out.

In 2022, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said many aid workers have either died, been injured, or been kidnapped in north-east Nigeria.

While marking the 2022 World Humanitarian Day, the UN said the challenges have not deterred humanitarian workers from ensuring that aid gets to people who need them.

In a video message, António Guterres, UN secretary-general, said the aid workers who dedicate their lives to assist people represent “the best in humanity”.

Guterres added that “against incredible odds, often at great personal risk, they ease suffering in some of the most dangerous circumstances imaginable”.

Three Nigerian Soldiers Killed, 10 Injured, Armed Personnel Carrier Destroyed In ISWAP Ambush In Borno (Sahara Reporters)
April 26, 2023

Three Nigerian soldiers have been killed and others injured by an improvised explosive device planted by militants from the Islamic State-backed faction of Boko Haram, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), formerly known as Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād in Borno State.

SaharaReporters gathered that the ambush took place along Damasak/ San San highway.

The incident, which occurred at about 8:00am on Monday, is one amongst the many traps the terrorists have used against the military.

According to security sources, an Armed Personnel Carrier, several weapons and ammunition were destroyed by the terrorists during the attack.

A military signal exclusively obtained by SaharaReporters also confirmed the incident.

The signal revealed that flames from the burnt APC also affected houses in San San village.

According to the military report, the injured and dead soldiers have reportedly been evacuated by the Nigerian Army helicopter, NAF 581, to Maiduguri for further expert management.

The signal read, "On Operation Desert/Lake Sanity. Special situation report. Please be informed that the troops were conducting routine patrol along Damasak and San San and Laye villages to deter suspected terrorists from attacking commuters. At about 0830hrs on April 23, while on halt at San San village, the Armoured Personnel Carrier with Chassis no: 82/3039 stepped on IED resulting in the total destruction of the equipment.

"Our own EOD team carefully cordoned and searched the general area. It was confirmed that the terrorists used the pressure type of IED. Casualty records indicate that three soldiers were killed in action and 10 soldiers were wounded.

"The APC was damaged and the GPMG gun mounted on the APC with Reg. No. 121975 was damaged. Six 47-rifles were damaged, and seven AK-47 rifles belonging to the wounded and killed soldiers were also recovered.

"The total rifles 13 AK-47 rifles and GPMG are in own custody, while efforts are on to recover the burnt down APC. Following the incident, the fragments/flames from the burnt APC affected some thatch houses in the village but the fire was put off by the combined efforts of own troops and CJTF. The troops' morale and fighting efficiency is satisfactory."

Nigeria: Islamic jihadists massacre 134 Christians, mostly women and children (News Bharati)
April 28, 2023

In a horrifying development, Islamic extremists have killed a pastor and 134 Christians in the first week of April, according to reports.

"The Rev. Yakubu Shuaibu of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) was killed in Borno state by terrorists from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) who on the night of April 4 broke into his house in Madlau, Biu County", said EYN leader Salamatu Billi.

ISWAP also attacked predominantly Christian Njimtilo, Pulka and Ajiri Mafa villages at the same time the pastor was slain, said area resident Josephine Joseph. "During the attacks, the terrorists destroyed houses of Christians and looted their homes of food items," Joseph said.

In Benue state, in Nigeria's middle belt, Fulani herdsmen killed 134 Christians from April 2 to April 10, said Benue Gov. Samuel Ortom in a press statement. "Within one week, 134 Christians have been killed by herdsmen," he said. "This apart from the fact that of the 23 local government areas of the state, 18 of them have been ravaged by herdsmen attacks, and most Christians in these council areas displaced."

The herdsmen attacked the local government areas of Makurdi, Guma, Otukpo, Apa and Logo, area residents told Morning Star News in text messages. They also attacked Kwande County, said area resident Dominic Anza, president of the Universal Reformed Christian Church (NKST).

A thousand Christians in Nigeria are being murdered since January 2023. The slaughter continues, with over three million people displaced. Christian persecution is largely ignored in the West by media, as is the ongoing jihad. To call it out renders one "Islamophobic."

The routinely-used word "herdsmen" in articles about the jihad in Nigeria refers to jihadists. The word "herdsmen" conceals and downplays the motives and goals of these jihadists, as well as their barbarism. They want to establish a caliphate in West Africa, and ultimately a global caliphate.

'Six anti-aircraft guns recovered' as troops raid Boko Haram hideouts in Borno (The Cable) By Ayodele Oluwafemi
April 30, 2023

Troops of the Nigerian Army have reportedly raided some hideouts of Boko Haram insurgents in Borno state.

According to Zagazola Makama, a counter-insurgency publication focused on the Lake Chad region, the troops of Operation Hadin Kai recovered weapons, including six anti-aircraft guns, during the operation at the Ukuba axis of the Sambisa forest, Borno state, on Saturday.

The publication said the soldiers successfully cleared the terrorists' hideouts in Garno, Alafa, Alafa D, Garin Doctor, Njumia, Izzah, Farisu, Somalia, Ukuba, Garin Glucose, Garin Ba'aba, Bula Abu Amir, communities in Bama LGA in Borno state.

The operation was reported to have led to a heavy gun battle between the insurgents and the troops, forcing the insurgents to abandon their vehicles and other weapons.

The publication noted that the troops recovered six anti-aircraft guns, four Ak-47 rifles, several quantities of improvised

explosive devices (IEDs), a cache of magazines, and a Hilux vehicle mounted with an anti-aircraft gun.

Earlier, TheCable had reported that troops of 51 task force battalion Banki, Operation Hadin Kai, reportedly killed many Boko Haram fighters in Borno.

Two humanitarian workers who were abducted from Monguno in 2022 were said to have been rescued during the gun duel.

The troops invaded the hideouts of the terrorists in Gargash, Bama LGA of Borno state.

Again, 135 Boko Haram members surrendered to troops in North East (Vanguard) By Ndahi Marama
April 30, 2023

A total of 135 more Boko Haram terrorists and their family members have surrendered in the Bama Local Government area following the weeklong sustained offensive by the troops of Operation Hadin Kai in Sambisa Forest.

Before this huge successes, this paper had reported that over 800,000 repentant Boko Haram members are camped and well taken care of at their designated camp within Maiduguri metropolis since last year.

This is even as troops of 151 Task Force Battalion Banki, Operation Hadin Kai, have nutrialised unspecified numbers of Boko Haram terrorists and rescued two humanitarian workers in Sambisa Forest, (names withheld).

Reliable Sources have said, which was also confirmed by an Intelligence Zagazola Makama, a Counter-Insurgency Expert and Security Analyst in the Lake Chad region on Sunday morning.

“The terrorists laid down their arms fews days after the troops of 21-Armored Brigade, Bama, Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK) and 199 Special Forces Battalion in collaboration with Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), stormed 12 hideouts of the terrorists and killed 35 Boko Haram terrorists.” Said a military officer who pleaded not to be mentioned in print, as he was not authorized to talk to the press.

It was gathered that the terrorists and their family members, 3 males, 6 females and 13 children, from Ngurusoye, and Kelani village surrendered to troops of 202 Battalion in Bama.

In the same vein, one male, 5 females and 6 children, from Kauri, Siraja and Lene Hassana villages surrendered to troops of 151 Battalion in Banki Junction.

Sources told our Reporter that additional 113 insurgents from Balangaje, Bula -Waziri, Bula – Kurma and Sabil – Huda villages surrendered to the troops of 192 Battalion in Yamteke community.

“The subjects were handed over to the authorities for profiling.”

Maj. Gen. AE Abubakar, The General Officer Commanding(GOC) 7 Division and Commander Sect 1 Joint Task Force North East Operation Hadin Kai, while addressing the troops of 21 Armored Brigade Bama, charged them to defeat remnant terrorists and ensure return of total peace to the North East.

In another development, troops of 151 Task Force Battalion Banki, Operation Hadin Kai, have nutrialised unspecified numbers of Boko Haram terrorists and rescued two humanitarian workers in Sambisa Forest.

It was gathered that the insurgents were killed after the troops in collaboration with the Civilian Joint Task Force and Hybrid forces, stormed the Hideouts of terrorists in Gargash in the axis of Bama Local Government Area of Borno State.

The sources said that in the cause of the engagement, two humanitarian workers abducted from Monguno in 2022 were rescued.

The troops also recovered three hilux vehicles with one of them mounted with Anti Aircraft guns.

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Mali Interim President's Chief of Staff and Three Others Killed in Ambush – Govt (U.S. News) By

Tiemoko Diallo, by Sofia Christensen, and Estelle Shirbon

April 20, 2023

The chief of staff of Mali's interim president, Oumar Traore, and three others have been killed in an ambush, the government said on Thursday.

The chief of staff of Mali's interim president, Oumar Traore, and three others have been killed in an ambush, the government said on Thursday.

The ambush took place in the rural area of Nara in Mali's southwestern Koulikoro region, the statement said, without providing further detail on when the attack occurred or who was responsible for it.

One other person, a driver who was traveling with the delegation, is missing, it added.

Mali is one of several West African countries battling a violent Islamist insurgency that has spread from its arid north over the past decade.

Militants linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State have seized swathes of territory across the region, killed thousands and displaced millions.

Frustrations against the authorities' failure to quell the violence have spurred two military takeovers in Mali since 2020.

Burkina Faso Attack Near Malian Border Kills 60 People (Democracy Now!)

April 24, 2023

Burkina Faso's military government is blaming fighters affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State for an attack on Thursday that killed 60 civilians near the border with Mali. Survivors said more than 100 people on motorcycles and pickup trucks arrived in their village dressed in military uniforms before targeting dozens of men and young people. Conflict in Burkina Faso has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced about 2 million since 2015.

Western countries pile pressure on Mali over Wagner Group role (Reuters) By Emma Farge

May 2, 2023

Western countries on Tuesday raised concerns over Russian private military contractor Wagner Group's activities in Mali, including allegations of its role in the killings of civilians, at a U.N. human rights meeting in Geneva.

The United States, Canada, Great Britain and Ukraine were among countries that raised the alleged role of Wagner contractors in supporting Mali's armed forces.

Mali, whose leaders seized power in a 2021 coup, and Russia have previously maintained that Russian forces there are not mercenaries but trainers helping local troops with equipment bought from Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Mali has the right to work with private Russian firms.

"We are particularly concerned by the presence and actions of the Wagner group," Canada's envoy Patricia Lyn McCullagh told the Human Rights Council during a review of Mali's rights record - a process which all U.N. member states are subject to.

Several countries asked Mali to conduct an independent investigation into an incident in March 2022 in Moura, central Mali, where local troops and suspected Russian fighters allegedly killed hundreds of civilians.

The U.N. has said its investigators were denied access to the site.

Russia has denied civilians were killed in Moura. Wagner did not immediately respond to an e-mailed request for comment.

"We recommend that Mali conduct a credible investigation into human rights violations and abuses committed during security operations conducted with Kremlin-backed Wagner forces in Moura in March 2022 as promised at the U.N. Security Council and hold those responsible to account," said U.S. ambassador to the council Michele Taylor.

Mali's director of military justice Colonel Boubacar Maiga said that an investigation was already underway.

"The government of Mali is determined to bring (the investigation) to a successful conclusion in respect for human rights and in a spirit of full independence," he said, adding access was difficult as Mali is "at war".

Russia's envoy Maria Molodtsova said "those killed (in Moura) were militants from terrorist groups that had oppressed the population for years". The military operation "contributed to peace and tranquility in Moura," she said.

Mali is overrun with militants linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State who have waged a decade-long insurgency that has killed hundreds. French forces intervened in 2013, initially forcing the insurgents to retreat, but they have since rebounded and control much of the centre and north.

French forces left last year amid a diplomatic spat with Mali's military junta just as Wagner Group moved in.

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Liberia

Liberia: Calls for War and Economic Crimes Court Intensify (Daily OBSERVER) By David A. Yates and Claudius T. Greene Jr.

April 24, 2023

The campaign to end impunity and give justice to war victims and survivors of Liberia's civil war has now received a significant boost with the signing of a resolution.

The resolution, among other things, calls on the government of Liberia to immediately take all necessary steps to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report released in 2009 and request assistance from the international community, including the UN, US, EU, AU, and ECOWAS, for the establishment of the Extraordinary Criminal Court for Liberia.

It also calls on the US Government, through its Embassy and the Office of Global Criminal Justice, to take action to stand with victims by supporting the establishment of a war crimes court for Liberia, through assistance to conduct a needs assessment for setting up a court that can conduct fair, credible trials of civil war-era crimes.

Held under the theme, "We are not surprised: We knew this day would come!" With support from Center for Justice and Accountability, the National Convening of Justice Campaigners, Civil Society, War Victims, and the Human Rights Community on Friday, April 21, concluded a two-day national conference with the signing of a major national resolution on the establishment of the war and economic crimes court in Liberia.

Reading the resolution after a two-day interactive conference, Lead Justice Campaigner Adama K. Dempster called on the international community, including the United Nations and the US Government, to follow up on the policy statement made by President George Weah at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2019, that his government was ready to start discussion on the time, venue, and funding support leading to the establishment of a court for Liberia.

Dempster, through the National Strategic Document, encourages a consultative process with the victims and survivors of these crimes and delivers an unequivocal message in support of a war crimes court for Liberia.

He added, "That all efforts be made to emulate actions taken in the region such as the recent trial for the 2009 stadium massacre in Guinea, prosecutions for atrocity crimes in Sierra Leone before the hybrid Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic, and the Extraordinary African Chambers in Senegal to deliver justice against crimes and atrocities including sexual violence, recruitment of child soldiers, torture, summary executions, and massacres of civilians committed over the course of the civil war era that continued to go unpunished."

The Lead Justice Campaigner further wants human rights defenders and civil society organizations to operate without fear of threats and intimidation and that their efforts be welcomed and supported by the Liberian government and the international community.

Josephine Nkrumah, ECOWAS Representative, said despite the dark days in Liberia as a result of the civil unrest, brighter

days are ahead for war victims and survivors, making reference to healing.

She said the wheel of justice is slow; it takes time, but that does not mean that there is no justice.

Nkrumah stressed that for justice to prevail, justice campaigners should continue to remain resolute in their desire, focus, and consistency and not give up.

According to her, extending love to war victims and survivors is also critical because it helps in the healing process of national dialogue. She added that the healing process is one of the key steps to the consolidation of peace.

"So, ECOWAS will continue to stand with you and to encourage you to be unwavering in your commitment and in your quest for that peace, not to give up. It is now time Liberia finds its path to healing and reconciliation," Nkrumah pointed out.

Also speaking, John H.T. Stewart, former TRC Commissioner, said the main focus of Liberians has been on the question of prosecution because it affects people who are in power and people who are currently out of power, and together they have invested in the idea that there will be no accountability.

"So the TRC report has been long overdue; over fourteen years have passed, but people are still calling for accountability because there is no guarantee that what happened in the past cannot happen again," he said.

Stewart further added that until they (citizens) can deal with the portion of impunity, Liberia will not be able to go forward in peace because anything can happen; anybody can feel like disagreeing to the point where it will result in violence as a means of setting scores.

Meanwhile, participants at the end of the conference reaffirmed their commitment that they will remain resolute in ensuring that peace and justice, unity, national healing and reconciliation, and the general principles of human rights and protections for women and children continue to permeate Liberian society.

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EAST AFRICA

Uganda

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in Uganda**

DRC locals, backed by police, claim three Ugandan villages in Zombo (The East African)
April 25, 2023

A border dispute between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is brewing again in the frontier town of Padea in West Nile after DRC locals backed by the country's police crossed into Uganda and laid claim to three villages.

The resolution, among other things, calls on the government of Liberia to immediately take all necessary steps to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report released in 2009 and request assistance from the international community, including the UN, US, EU, AU, and ECOWAS, for the establishment of the Extraordinary Criminal Court for Liberia.

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Kenya

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in the Republic of Kenya**

ICC Takes First Action Over Azimio's Letter on IG Koome, Northlands City Raid (Kenyans) By Brian Kimani
April 23, 2023

The International Criminal Court (ICC) based in the Hague, Netherlands, confirmed receiving Azimio la Umoja's letter, which demanded a probe into the conduct of the police during mass protests.

In particular, the opposition sought the ICC to probe police negligence on the raid of Northlands Farm in Ruiru, Kiambu County - owned by the Kenyatta family - and the destruction of property at East Africa Spectre - linked to Azimio leader Raila Odinga.

Reports indicated that ICC's lead prosecutor Karim Khan acknowledged receipt of the letter but had not decided whether to launch investigations.

Should Khan proceed with the investigations, he must conduct an independent and thorough analysis. Upon conclusion of the investigations, the ICC would press charges and issue a warrant of arrest for those found guilty.

The Azimio regime accused Inspector General Japhet Koome of orchestrating a systematic attack on their supporters during the mass action. According to the letter, nine people succumbed following the mass demonstrations while scores were injured.

The opposition claimed that the actions contravened Article 7 (1) of the Rome Statute, which states that crimes against humanity do not need to be linked to an armed conflict and can also occur in peacetime, similar to the crime of genocide.

Raila underscored the importance of the ICC intervening in the listed issues in a bid to aid to ensure justice.

In the letter dated Friday, April 14, and written by Raila's lawyer Paul Mwangi, Azimio also accused President William Ruto of contravening the Constitution and highlighted the issue of the attempted assassination during the mass action.

The lawyer alleged that ten rounds of ammunition were fired at Raila's vehicle around the Pipeline area of Embakasi South Constituency on Monday, April 3, 2023.

Invasion Reports alleged that non-locals raided the Northlands farm on March 27, 2023, and seized over 1,400 sheep whose value was pegged at over Ksh70 million.

The invasion of the Kenyatta-linked farm raised questions about the whereabouts of the police who arrived at the scene the following day.

While defending the police, Interior Cabinet Secretary Kithure Kindiki claimed that the police were preoccupied with the protestors and could not respond swiftly to the invasion.

Gachagua's Response Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, on Saturday, April 15, however, poked holes in Azimio's letter to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

According to Gachagua, Raila, and his team should instead be sent to the Hague for carrying what he argued were illegal protests that culminated in the loss of lives and destruction of property.

"In fact, the people who should be taken to ICC are those Azimio characters who have destroyed the life and property of the people of Kenya," Gachagua responded while addressing a gathering in Nyandarua County.

Kenyan pastor to face terrorism charges over cult massacre (France 24)

May 2, 2023

A Kenyan cult leader accused of inciting his followers to starve themselves to death will face terrorism charges over the deaths of more than 100 people found buried in mass graves, prosecutors said after a court hearing Tuesday.

The deeply religious Christian-majority country has been stunned by the discovery of mass graves last month near the Indian Ocean coastal town of Malindi in what has been dubbed the "Shakahola forest massacre."

Self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie, who set up the Good News International Church in 2003 and is accused of inciting followers to starve to death "to meet Jesus," appeared in the dock in Malindi.

The small courtroom was packed with relatives of victims as Mackenzie, dressed in a pink and black jacket and brown trousers, was brought in by about half a dozen police officers along with eight other defendants.

After a brief hearing, the case was moved to the high court in Kenya's second-largest city of Mombasa, where the suspects will face terrorism charges, prosecutor Vivian Kambaga told AFP.

"There is a court (in Mombasa) that is gazetted to handle cases under the prevention of terrorism act," Kambaga told a magistrate during the hearing in Malindi, asking for the case to be moved to the high court.

Ezekiel Odero, a wealthy and high-profile televangelist, also appeared at the high court in Mombasa following his arrest in Malindi on Thursday in connection with the same case.

A total of 109 people have so far been confirmed dead, most of them children.

The first autopsies from Shakahola forest were carried out Monday on nine children and one woman.

They confirmed starvation as the cause of death, though some victims were asphyxiated, the authorities said.

'Vulnerable followers' Odero is suspected of murder, aiding suicide, abduction, radicalisation, crimes against humanity, child cruelty, fraud and money laundering.

The court in Mombasa on Tuesday allowed police to detain Odero until a hearing on May 4, refusing a request by the prosecution to hold him for 30 days.

"(He) is supposed to be in court on Thursday... he will be in court at 9:00 am for him to be either released (or) be charged", Danston Omari, one of Odero's lawyers, told AFP in Mombasa.

Prosecutors say they have credible information linking the corpses exhumed at Shakahola to the deaths of several "innocent and vulnerable followers" from Odero's New Life Prayer Centre and Church.

Cliff Ombeta, another of Odero's lawyers, told reporters earlier Tuesday that there was no evidence connecting the pastor to the Shakahola discoveries.

"Evidence must be brought. It is a case where you must prove," he said.

A crowd of Odero's supporters had earlier gathered outside the court, singing and praying, while some were in tears.

In addition to the terrorism charges prosecutors plan to file, Mackenzie stands accused of murder, kidnapping, cruelty towards children among other crimes in court documents seen by AFP.

The former taxi driver turned himself in on April 14 after police acting on a tip-off first entered Shakahola forest, where some 30 mass graves have now been found.

'Radicalised messages' Prosecutors have linked Odero and Mackenzie, saying in court documents that they share a "history of business investments" including a television station used to pass "radicalised messages" to followers.

In his filing to the court, Odero said he wanted to "strongly disassociate" himself from Mackenzie and disagreed with his teachings.

Questions have been raised about how Mackenzie, a self-styled pastor with a history of extremism, managed to evade law enforcement despite his prominent profile and previous legal cases.

The horrific saga has seen President William Ruto vow to intervene in Kenya's homegrown religious movements, and thrown a spotlight on failed efforts to regulate unscrupulous churches and cults that have dabbled in criminality.

This week Ruto will set up a task force on how to govern religious activities in Kenya, home to about 4,000 churches, Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki said Monday.

"But at the same time we don't allow criminals to misuse that right to hurt, kill, torture and starve people to death."

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Rwanda (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda)

Rwanda genocide survivors appeal suspension of Kabuga's trial (The East African)

April 22, 2023

Rwandan survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi under their umbrella lobby group Ibuka, have petitioned the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) over a recent decision the court took to suspend Felicien Kabuga's trial on grounds of suffering from dementia.

The UN court temporarily suspended his trial to allow examinations of independent medical reports on the suspect's illness and fitness to stand trial, and that this would guide its decision on the future course of this trial.

By taking this path, Ibuka said the tribunal has fallen into the trap of agreeing to what Kabuga's defence has always wanted right from the beginning of the trial, and that they fear he will use it to continue his evasion of justice even after being apprehended.

"We have serious objections to the recent decision by the court to suspend Kabuga's case and how it was generally handled, his arrest came as important news for the survivors, but it ended up turning into bad news when we heard his trial has been postponed," Ibuka said in a statement.

"The grounds on which his trial was postponed are the same pitfalls his defence team has always presented since the trial started," the group added.

"The court president came to Rwanda for 29th genocide commemoration and we expressed our dissatisfaction. He understood our concerns and said they are waiting to hear from the doctors," said Ahishakiye Naphtali, the executive secretary of Ibuka.

He added that since the trial began, the court has compromised a lot on the matter to the point of reducing the time of Kabuga's hearing to two hours a day.

"They would have taken a decision to at least try him in absentia, but this wasn't considered yet it was very possible in the interest of justice given the circumstances," Naphtali added.

Kabuga, who is now 90, is accused of bankrolling the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, where it is alleged that he used his massive wealth to buy machetes that were used by Interehamwe militias to kill Tutsis.

Stockpiles of weapons found On January 11, 1994, former Canadian commander of Unamir in Rwanda Gen Romeo Dallaire received information that in one of Kabuga's warehouses in Gikondo were stockpiles of weapons.

During his trial, one of the leaders of the Interahamwe, Jean Pierre Turatsinze, said the weapons had been estimated to kill 1,000 Tutsis every 20 minutes if put in the hands of militias.

In February 1994, a representative of a British tool manufacturing company Chillington which makes machetes among other things, was reported by the Sunday Times saying that the company sold more machetes in one month than it had sold throughout 1993.

Applications for import licenses examined by Human Rights Watch between January 1993 and March 1994 show that 581 tonnes of machetes were imported to Rwanda.

Jean Damascene Bizimana, the executive secretary of the National Commission for the fight against genocide, (CNLG) at the time of Kabuga's arrest-and is now Rwanda's Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement, said those machetes were paid for by Kabuga.

In 1997, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha charged Kabuga with seven counts of genocide including complicity in genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, attempt to commit genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide and crimes against humanity.

Owned RTLM-hate radio station According to Mr Kabuga's ICTR charge sheet, he was alleged to have operated RTLM, a hate radio station he owned, in a manner to further ethnic hatred of the Tutsi through disseminating messages with a goal to commit genocide.

At an RTLM fundraising meeting in 1993, Kabuga is said to have publicly defined the purpose of the radio station, as 'defence of Hutu power'.

It is reported that immediately after the genocide, he fled to Switzerland where he unsuccessfully applied for asylum. He also lived in some European countries before settling in Kenya, where he is alleged to have received protection through the political connections he had there.

He went off the radar for years but when his wife Josephine died in 2017, Kabuga sent a message which was read at the requiem mass. This reminded the world that he was still alive.

The \$5 million bounty the US put on his head had not yielded any leads, but this funeral message alerted law enforcement who started trailing him.

French intelligence agents trailed his children, leading them to an apartment in a Paris suburb of Asnieres-Sur-Seine and ending a several-year manhunt spanning several countries.

After 26 years of evading justice, Kabuga's arrest was a big relief for survivors and a win for international justice, setting up a trial for one of the remaining genocide masterminds.

"It is unfair that the court has only been bent on giving Kabuga's defence team what it wants, the fact that he is of advanced age should instead make the court expedite the case. There are many people who are also in Kabuga's age that have been waiting for justice to be served, some have died before seeing it. We are concerned that from the pace the case is taking and with all these pitfalls, he might die before justice is served" said Ahishakiye.

Kamonyi: 10 arrested on suspicion of withholding information on Genocide victims (New Times)

By Aurore Teta Ufitiwabo

April 26, 2023

Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) have confirmed having in custody 10 suspects from two sectors in Kamonyi district who are being investigated on charges of disposing of or degrading evidence or information relating to victims of the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi.

RIB spokesperson Thierry Murangira said five suspects were arrested on Tuesday, April 25, from the Mugina sector, while the other five have been in custody since April 22.

The suspects were apprehended for refusing to provide information regarding remains of 12 Genocide victims discovered in Mugina and Nyamiyaga sectors. During preliminary investigations, it was discovered that the suspects from Nyamiyaga were both neighbours and relatives.

Furthermore, two of the victims, identified as Agnes Mukabarisa and Damien Ndagijimana, were killed at the home of one of the suspects during the Genocide. On the other hand, the suspects from Mugina Sector did not provide information regarding the 10 bodies that were discovered on April 21 by a person who was farming in their fields.

Of the 10 suspects, three were previously convicted and served time for genocide crimes. They are 75-year-old Stanislas Birekeraho, who completed a 13-year sentence, 75-year-old Claver Kalisa, who served eight years in prison, and 66-year-old Leonard Nzamwita, who has just completed a 28-year sentence for his role in the genocide.

The latest case has nothing to do with their previous convictions.

The suspects are currently detained at Mugina RIB station as their files are being prepared to be sent to the prosecution.

If convicted, the suspects are liable to a prison term of not less than seven years but not more than nine years and a fine of not less than Rwf500,000 but not more than Rwf1 million.

Meanwhile, RIB numbers show that the cases of genocide ideology and related crimes decreased by 5.7 percent during the week of commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi compared to 2022. The number of alleged genocide ideology and related crimes recorded by RIB in the 2023 commemoration week represents a slight drop from 53 cases reported in 2022 to 50 cases, which is the lowest number to be reported compared to the recent years.

Among the crimes, violence against a survivor of genocide was the most committed, accounting for 44.3 percent (27 cases reported), while nine cases of genocide ideology and minimization of genocide represent 14.8 percent.

Rwanda genocide suspect Kabuga loses case in freezing of assets (The Star) By Susan Muhindi

April 27, 2023

The High Court has declined to set aside orders obtained by the Attorney General to

preserve properties belonging to Rwanda genocide suspect Felicien Kabuga.

Kabuga's wife-Josephine Mukazitoni- had filed an application to have orders issued by Justice Muga Apondi on May 6, 2008, set aside.

Mukazitoni had claimed that the AG had no authority to sue on behalf of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

Apondi in 2008 froze Kabuga's assets until the conclusion of the case pending in ICTR. The assets are houses in Nairobi identified as 'Spanish Villas.'

The wife being aggrieved sought to have those orders altered saying she depended on the proceeds from the villas for her livelihood.

But Justice Esther Maina said she did not see any reason to set aside the ruling by Judge Apondi.

"I agree with Apondi ruling entirely, I see no reason to set aside that ruling. I have adopted the ruling and orders of Apondi as orders of this court and dismiss the application to set aside that ruling," Maina ruled.

Kabuga has for a long time been sought on allegations of genocide and other related crime in Rwanda.

In 2008, the then Director of Public Prosecutions Keriako Tobiko said the application to freeze certain assets of Kabuga emanated following a request to the Attorney General from the ICTR based in Arusha, Tanzania.

He said following investigations by a joint team of sleuths and investigators from ICTR, it revealed that Kabuga and his wife jointly own 'Spanish Villa' at Lenana Road.

Initially, the rents were collected by Kenya Trust Company Limited who used to deposit the same in the account of Kabuga at the Commercial Bank of Africa, Wabera Street.

Subsequently, that account was closed and the company started remitting an equivalent of Sh290,000 quarterly to an account belonging to Mukazitoni in Belgium.

Court documents indicate that the fear expressed by Tobiko then was that Kabuga may be using the proceeds to help him avoid capture and evade justice.

Arrest all Genocide masterminds - Rwanda High Commissioner to UN (Monitor) By Brian Adams Kesime
May 2, 2023

The Rwanda High Commissioner to Uganda Mr Joseph Rutabana, has asked the United Nations (UN) to hunt and arrest all the masterminds of the infamous 1994 Rwanda genocide.

According to Mr Rutabana, many masterminds of the genocide are hiding in different countries across the globe where they sought asylum.

"Many perpetrators are still hiding in different parts of the world and we want them arrested and face the law. The genocide survivors want justice and that is the only way it can be served," he said while speaking at the 29th Rwanda genocide commemoration ceremony at Lambu Landing Site in Masaka District at the weekend

More than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed by armed militias in an onslaught that started on April 7 until July 14, 1994.

The day was marked under the theme: "Remember Unite Renew to never allow it to happen again in and outside of Rwanda,"

Mr Rutabana commended the government and Ugandans for gathering and burying the bodies of the genocide victims from the shores of Lake Victoria.

Mr Rutabana said without quick intervention by Ugandans, their beloved ones couldn't have gotten a befitting sendoff.

"I want to thank the government and people of Uganda mostly those who stay near the shores of Lake Victoria who made sure our loved ones get a decent burial," he said.

According to Mr Rutabana, 10,981 genocide victims were buried in Uganda at three memorial sites. The Ggoli memorial site in

Mpigi District holds 4771 remains of genocide victims, Lambu memorial site in Masaka District (3335 remains), and Kasensero memorial site in Kyotera District (2875 remains).

Mr Rutabana said the mass graves are a permanent reminder of humanity and comfort to the survivors.

The commemoration event started with a prayer from Pastor Francis Ngoboka. Several survivors from the Humura Victoria Warakoze Survivors Association came out and shared their testimonies on how they survived the gruesome killings during the genocide and how their loved ones were thrown into River Nyabarongo which flows into Lake Victoria.

Pastor Ngoboka urged authorities in Rwanda to do everything possible to ensure that what transpired during the genocide doesn't reoccur.

Fransisca Ngabire, a genocide survivor from Rwanda testified how she survived death three times.

"On the 16th day of the genocide, we formed groups which helped some of us survive, our group included me, my father, and my cousin, we went to a school that was under construction and we hid in there, then our father decided to leave us behind and asked me to take care of my little brothers and that is how we survived," she said.

The Minister of Defense, Mr Vincent Ssempijja who was the chief guest urged all people to exercise unity, and reconciliation and ensure that what befell Rwanda doesn't happen elsewhere.

"Uganda will always keep the agreement that was made while in Kigali of keeping unity between the two brotherly countries. I call upon all the people of Rwanda to get united so that they can keep this year's theme alive," the minister said.

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Somalia

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Ethiopia

Kenya, Norway lead Ethiopia, Oromo army peace talks in Tanzania (The East African) By Tesfa-Alem Tekle

April 27, 2023

Kenya and Norway are mediating peace talks between the Ethiopian federal government and a rebel group from the country's Oromia region, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), seeking to end one of the continual clashes in the country.

The talks which began on Tuesday in Zanzibar, Tanzania, are aimed at ending a long-running silent conflict in the country's Oromia region.

OLA's Spokesperson Odaa Tarbii told the media that the meeting is only the first step intended to build trust between the two parties.

"I want to clarify these are preliminary talks meant to pave the way for comprehensive negotiations in the very near future," Odaa said.

"For now, the focus is building confidence and clarifying positions" he added.

According to the rebel official, the talks are being mediated by Norway and Kenya and will last until Thursday this week.

He also said the EU, US and a regional bloc, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (Igad), are also expected to be "part of the process" going forward if they are successful.

Through its spokesperson, Igad expressed its hope that the peace talks will lead to a political agreement.

Each party is represented by a six-member negotiating team.

Ethiopian government's negotiating team includes the country's Justice Minister Gedion Timotheos and the prime minister's national security adviser Redwan Hussein, both of whom were previously negotiating with Tigrayan forces.

Redwan on November 4, 2022 led the Ethiopian negotiating team that agreed on a permanent cease-fire with Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), with whom the nation's government had fought a two-year war from November 2020.

OLA on its side is represented by their army commander's advisor Jiregna Gudetta, a historian, Prof Muhammad Hassan, and Abdi Taha.

Peace negotiations Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Sunday announced that his government will begin peace negotiations with the outlawed OLA rebel group.

It was the first time for the Ethiopian government to officially announce via its prime minister that it would negotiate with this banned rebel group.

"The people of Ethiopia and the government eagerly need this negotiation," Abiy said.

The talks aimed to end over half-a-century-long insurgency of the Oromo rebels.

The OLA armed group has been fighting Ethiopia's government since the 1970s for self-determination of Oromia, the most populous and largest region in the Horn of Africa nation.

The rebels intensified their fighting in the last four years in a bid to topple Prime Minister Abiy's central government.

OLA was designated by Addis Ababa as a terrorist entity in May 2021.

The new agreement for peace talks comes about six months after a peace deal reached between the federal government and forces in the Tigray region, which ended a two-year bloody conflict in the country's north.

The two-year conflict in the Tigray region has claimed the lives of over 600,000 people and displaced millions of others.

Now as the Tigray peace holds, Prime Minister Abiy who was the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner, seems committed to end the long-running silent conflict in the Oromia region.

Abiy, himself from the Oromia region, is the first ever ethnic Oromo to assume power as the country's prime minister.

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EUROPE

The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, War Crimes Chamber

Official Court Website [English translation]

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International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

Official Website of the ICTY

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Special Tribunal for Lebanon

**Official Website of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon
In Focus: Special Tribunal for Lebanon (UN)**

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Afghanistan

Afghanistan: How Australia covered up alleged war crimes of SAS 'heroes' (Middle East Eye) By Soraya Lennie
April 24, 2023

Justice delayed is justice denied, so goes the saying.

In the case of alleged Australian war crimes committed in Afghanistan, it's not as simple as red tape or the oft-tepid pace of bureaucracy. Rather it is the result of a campaign of politically expedient hero-worship, of command-shirking responsibility and investigators rubber-stamping a litany of cover-ups.

In March, 41-year-old former Special Air Service (SAS) trooper, Oliver Schulz, was formally charged with the war crime of murder, a historic first in Australia. No serving or retired military veteran has faced a war crime charge - and in a civilian court no less.

It stems from the 2012 shooting of a young farmer, Dad Mohammad, in Uruzgan Province.

If convicted, Schulz faces life in prison.

That it has taken a decade for this case to reach even this point is appalling because, despite what one might assume, Mohammad wasn't secretly killed, squirrelled away in some dark, dingy basement - he was shot in broad daylight, in front of multiple witnesses.

And several of those Afghan witnesses, as well as Mohammad's family, promptly complained to the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

Collective responsibility? The ADF investigation service looked into the killing, but signed off on the SAS's version of events - that Mohammad was a Talib carrying a radio and was shot in self-defence as he was "tactically manoeuvring".

A lot has been said about troops going rogue and about individual responsibility - fair points. But what of collective responsibility?

To say the official narrative is a deviation from the truth would be a breathtaking understatement. But most disturbing is that it was initially rubber-stamped by investigators.

A different version of events only came out years later, when helmet-camera footage of the incident was leaked to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Mohammad was lying in a wheat field, "quiet and not resisting", when he was shot at point-blank range.

He was not carrying the incriminating Taliban radio - he was clutching red prayer beads.

The issue here is that when witnesses and surviving family members complained - in this case, and the dozens of others now being reinvestigated - they were treated as grifters, and the dead were labelled "terrorists".

It's not just an opinion - the truth about what can only be described as systemic, racist preconceptions is right there in the ADF's own inquiry, known as the Brereton Report, which found that investigators "generally discounted local complaints as insurgent propaganda or motivated by compensation", including complaints levelled by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the AIHRC.

Reading between the lines, in most cases investigators didn't even bother speaking to the actual witnesses before dismissing their allegations.

This level of inquiry wouldn't even pass the test in a one-horse town police station, let alone in an elite branch of a professional defence force.

Media mythology Rubber stamping suited more than just the military.

Australia's mainstream media, including but not limited to Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, has whitewashed its own role in mythologising Australia's role in the Afghanistan war, as it did with the invasion of Iraq on the recent 20th anniversary.

Official narratives - the brave good guys versus the slithery bad guys - formed the basis of a national campaign to glorify the SAS as the ultimate band of Australian warriors.

Journalists on embeds never failed to invoke the much-loved ANZAC-era "diggers" tag, but like ADF investigators, failed to invoke even a modicum of scepticism about what was happening just over the wire.

The media campaign to glorify the military, intended or otherwise, was so successful that journalists shocked even themselves, as evidenced in all the handwringing and surprise that followed the Brereton Report and Schulz's murder charge.

Indeed, most Australian media reporting on war crimes has taken a defensive tone, quick to conclude alleged crimes involved just a few isolated bad apples and all but ignored questions of command responsibility, while quickly refocusing coverage on the report's effects on the soldiers themselves, rather than Afghans.

State-sanctioned This may explain, in part, why a number of SAS operators formed the belief they were untouchable. After all, who would dare bring down a national hero?

Well, certainly not successive governments that propped up the SAS as representing some imagined national ethos of "mateship", as former conservative prime minister, John Howard, never tired of invoking. In this imagining, the SAS is the embodiment of the good, morally sound and brave - not to mention muscular and chisel-jawed - common man, in the trenches, saving "civilised" society from the "uncivilised".

Indeed, invoking the SAS helped multiple governments brand Australia's continued involvement in another disastrous American escapade, even as it increasingly resembled the quagmire of the Vietnam War.

They were always ready for a photo op and to send overburdened and increasingly bewildered troops into a war with no clear objectives, no matter how damaging that was to Afghans, or to the troops themselves.

Until recently, both government and military command ignored the staggering number of veterans who have killed themselves since their participation in the Afghanistan war.

Forty-one Australian troops were killed during the conflict, with another 260 wounded. But an estimated 500 veterans have taken their own lives since the 2001 invasion. The crisis is now subject to a Royal Commission.

The Australian experience in Uruzgan is a microcosm of everything that was wrong - and that went wrong - with the Afghanistan war.

Blowback The scale of the war crimes allegations has seemingly increased since the Brereton report recommended the federal police investigate 19 soldiers over the "murder" of 39 civilians and prisoners and the cruel treatment of two others.

The Office of the Special Investigator (OSI) has told parliament it is now probing between 40 and 50 alleged SAS offences.

This is only happening because whistleblowers and a few journalists didn't buy the chest-puffing propaganda, and have been subject to threats, police raids and prosecution as a consequence.

The irony is that, although Schulz has been charged, only one Australian is actually facing trial over Afghan war crimes - David McBride, who served two tours of Afghanistan as a legal officer.

Almost a decade before Schulz faced court, McBride brought allegations of systemic failures, including possible war crimes, to superiors and, later, to the Federal Police. Both ignored him.

He then leaked documents to the ABC, which blew the lid off the military's campaign of secrets and lies.

McBride faces 50 years in prison for telling the truth.

The lack of popular outrage is further proof that very few sectors of society have learned from the collective failures of

Afghanistan.

The media has moved on to Ukraine, trumpeting the childlike concept of good wars and good guys, and Australia's role in fighting them. The government is deathly silent on why it's continuing McBride's prosecution. The military is dragging its heels reforming its own failed systems.

And most of the public is apparently happily ignoring all of it.

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Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)

Official Website of the Extraordinary Chambers [English]

Official Website of the United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials (UNAKRT)

Cambodia Tribunal Monitor

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Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal

RAB arrests Gaibandha war crimes convict Montaj, sentenced to death in 2019 (BDNews24) April 29, 2023

The Rapid Action Battalion has arrested Montaj Ali Bepari alias Momtaj, a fugitive who was sentenced to death in a 1971 war crimes case.

The elite force said in a message on Saturday that Montaj had been on the run for a long time, and the RAB-3 arrested him at Chandra of Kaliakair in Gazipur.

More details will be revealed at a press conference on Sunday, it said.

On Oct 15, 2019, the International Crimes Tribunal sentenced Montaj and four other members of Razakar, a wartime collaborating force of the Pakistan Army, to death for crimes against humanity in Gaibandha.

The charges against them included abduction, murder, torture, looting, killing and forced emigration in 1971.

According to the 176-page verdict, all four charges levelled by the prosecution against the accused were proved beyond doubt. The defendants were sentenced to death on each charge.

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War Crimes Investigation in Myanmar

Myanmar: Follow ‘long overdue’ pardons by releasing all those unjustly detained (Amnesty International) May 3, 2023

Responding to news that Myanmar’s military authorities have pardoned 2,153 prisoners jailed under a law that makes it illegal to encourage dissent against the military, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for Campaigns Ming Yu Hah said:

“This long overdue release should mark the first step towards the immediate release of all individuals who have been arbitrarily detained for exercising their basic rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly or other human rights. Amnesty International remains deeply concerned about the further thousands of individuals who are still unjustly languishing in prisons across the country where they face torture and other ill-treatment.

“Anyone imprisoned for peacefully opposing the military coup in Myanmar should never have been jailed in the first place. Upon release they should be provided with the necessary medical, psychological and social support to help them recover from their ordeal. Peaceful dissent is not a crime, it is a human right.

“Prisoners released today were charged and sentenced under a law specifically used by the military to smother dissent after the coup. However, the military warned it would detain them again if they are deemed to have committed the same ‘crime’ in the future, which effectively places a chilling effect on many people wanting to exercise their basic rights and freedoms.”

Background:

Myanmar’s military authorities on Wednesday pardoned 2,153 prisoners serving sentences under the 505(a) section of the criminal code. The law makes it illegal to promote dissent against the military and has been widely enforced since the military coup on 1 February 2021.

The military said in a statement it was pardoning the prisoners on “humanitarian” grounds to mark a Buddhist holiday, but that those who reoffended would be jailed again. It did not provide names of those released.

Myanmar’s military has arrested more than 21,000 people since the coup and more than 17,000 are still detained, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. The detainees include many senior leaders of the ousted civilian government as well as journalists, human rights defenders and medical workers.

Since the coup on 1 February 2021, Amnesty International has documented widespread human rights violations, including war crimes and possible crimes against humanity as part of the military’s crackdown on the opposition across the country.

Amnesty International’s 2022 report “15 Days Felt like 15 Years” documented the situation after the coup inside prisons and interrogation facilities. It showed that torture and other ill-treatment was routinely used to punish dissent.

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Piracy

Russian Captain, 2 Georgians Taken by Pirates off Gabon (Barrons) By Emmanuel Giroud
May 3, 2023

The Russian skipper of a US-owned bulk carrier was kidnapped along with two of his officers, both Georgian, when their vessel was attacked by pirates outside a Gabonese port, officials said Wednesday.

The 190-metre (623-feet) Grebe Bulker was attacked on Monday night as it was moored off Owendo, a port on the southern tip of the capital Libreville, a Gabonese judicial source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Gabon lies on the edge of the Gulf of Guinea, which remains a hotspot for maritime robbery and ransom kidnapping of seafarers despite a global decline in piracy.

The captain and the ship's second and third officers "were taken away by unidentified men," the source said.

The Grebe Bulker's owner is a US firm, Eagle Bulk Shipping Inc., although the vessel is flagged in the Marshall Islands.

Concurring sources said the Grebe Bulker was empty at the time, and was waiting to pick up cargo in Gabon. The West African state is a major exporter of minerals, especially manganese.

A Gabonese patrol vessel intervened, saving 17 members of the crew, but the pirates fled with the captain and the two officers, they said.

An international maritime official, who asked not to be identified due to "sensitivities," confirmed that three crew members were missing and that the Gabonese police were investigating.

The French consulate in Libreville said "three crew members" of a ship "anchored off Libreville were kidnapped on the night of May 1," describing it as an "act of piracy."

The latest attack is exceptional for Gabon, given its proximity to the capital.

Last month, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), an agency that monitors piracy, said the number of reported attacks globally in the first three months of 2023 was the lowest for the quarter since 1993.

It documented 27 incidents over the first quarter compared with 37 for the same period in 2022.

There were five attacks in the Gulf of Guinea in the first quarter of 2023, compared with eight in the same period in 2022 and 16 in 2021.

The Gulf of Guinea is a vast shipping route that stretches 5,700 kilometres (3,500 miles) from Senegal to Angola.

Many attacks in recent years have been carried out by Nigerian gangs who strike out in speed boats from coastal hideouts to raid vessels close by.

But some gangs have also captured larger fishing vessels, using them as a "mothership" enabling them to carry out raids further from their base.

Their violence and sophisticated tactics prompted pleas from shippers for a more robust foreign naval presence.

On March 25, a Danish-owned Liberian-flagged oil tanker named the Monjasa Reformer was boarded by pirates off the Republic of Congo.

The vessel was spotted five days later by a French naval drone. It had been abandoned by the pirates, who made off with six of the crew, the French defence ministry said.

Climate Change Raising Incidents of Maritime Piracy (Phys) By Rachel Grahame

April 27, 2023

Climate change is raising the risk of extreme weather, causing food shortages and threatening the existence of myriad species—and if that weren't enough, it's now prompting pirates to plague the world's oceans and seas.

New University of Maryland research published online this week in the American Meteorological Society's Weather, Climate, and Society journal by criminology and criminal justice Distinguished University Professor Gary LaFree and former graduate student Bo Jiang Ph.D. '19, an assistant professor at the University of Macau, shows that rising sea temperatures are having a complex effect on maritime crime. But instead of Jack Sparrow pursuing doubloons with a cutlass and a sextant, think of a desperate fisherman who uses an AK-47 and a GPS device.

"When we think of pirates, a guy with a peg leg and a parrot comes to mind, but modern piracy is a much more sophisticated phenomenon," LaFree explained. "Piracy is an attempt to illegally board a ship—at sea or in port—with the purpose of stealing property and taking hostages for some sort of financial gain."

Looking at 15 years of data on sea surface temperatures and piracy in the South China Sea and the waters off East Africa, LaFree and Jiang found that rising temperatures led to an increase in piracy attacks in East Africa due to decreased fish production, which caused a loss of economic opportunity. But in the South China Sea, where some commercial fish species conversely thrived in the warmer waters, increased fish production led to higher incomes for families in the fishing industry and less incentive to engage in crime.

"These results suggest that as climate change continues, its impact on violence and criminal behavior will likely be complex, with increases and decreases depending on the specific situational context and the rational choices changing sea temperatures generate," Jiang said.

To LaFree, the findings also add to our understanding of who criminals are—or can be.

"Crime is much more of a dimmer switch than an on-off switch; these fishermen drift into crime when the economy is bad and they drift out of it when they're able to," he said. "This sort of hard dichotomy between criminals and noncriminals is way more porous."

The results also demonstrate yet another serious impact of climate change on the world economy.

"A huge proportion of all the world's trade comes through these areas; in terms of total value, we're talking billions and billions of dollars," LaFree said, "so if left unchecked, piracy in especially a few of these narrow straits and bottleneck areas where pirates tend to head can have a huge economic impact."

Through a new Grand Challenges Individual Project Grant, LaFree and Jiang plan to do a deeper dive into the relationship between climate change and crime by collecting sea-surface temperature data from 109 countries with coastlines, and determining how rising temperatures impact acts of political violence, and more specifically, acts of terrorism.

"The proposed research will tell us the extent to which climate change may alter the socio-political and environmental situations where terrorist organizations can proliferate, rise and grow, as well as offer insights into the individual decisions to engage in terrorism," LaFree said.

Indian Navy Officers Imprisoned in Nigeria Acquitted by Court (East Coast Daily) April 29, 2023

According to reports by Manorama News, Nigerian court has acquitted the 16 sailors, including 3 Malayalis, who were jailed for crude oil piracy on Saturday. The sailors were on board the Norwegian vessel MT Heroic Idun, which was detained by the Guinean Navy at the behest of Nigeria in August last year. The vessel had 26 sailors, with the remaining crew hailing from Sri Lanka, Poland, and the Philippines.

The ship had anchored on the international maritime boundary of Nigeria after facing some technical issues, when it noticed an approaching boat. Suspecting that the vessel had arrived to steal oil, the Guinea Navy detained the ship and crew the next day. The sailors were taken into custody and interrogated as per the instruction of the Nigerian Navy.

The acquitted sailors had sent their last messages to their families in November 2022, after being detained for several months. V Vijith from Kollam, the brother of Vismaya, who died by suicide following dowry harassment at Sasthamkotta last June, was among the sailors. The other Malayalis were Sanu Jose and Milton Deoth from Kochi.

As reported, 'Oil piracy is rampant in the Gulf of Guinea'. The Norwegian vessel, owned by OSM Maritime Group, had arrived in Nigeria's AKPO Terminal to fill crude oil. After being informed of a delay due to technical issues, the ship moved toward the international maritime channel when it was detained by the Guinea Navy.

While the incident had led to the imprisonment of the sailors, the acquittal by the Nigerian court has come as a relief for their families and loved ones.

Piracy and Sea Robbery Conference 2023—Ways to Forge Stronger Partnerships to Ensure Safe and Secure Seas (Hellenic Shipping News) May 1, 2023

The ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC), together with the three co-organisers BIMCO, INTERTANKO and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), held an annual Piracy and Sea Robbery Conference today in conjunction with Singapore Maritime Week 2023. This year's conference featured a two-part panel discussion where panellists deliberated on the importance of "Partnership" between the shipping industry and law enforcement agencies in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships, to ensure safe and secure seas for seafarers.

Dr Heike Deggim, Director of the Maritime Safety Division at the International Maritime Organization (IMO), in her keynote address, provided an update on the global situation of piracy and armed robbery against ships. Dr Deggim expressed appreciation for the excellent work of ReCAAP ISC and the achievements of the organisation since 2006, in its mission to enhance regional cooperation through information sharing, capacity building and cooperative arrangements. She urged the ReCAAP ISC to continue to organise the Piracy and Sea robbery conference aimed at building regional capacity to counter the menace of piracy and armed robbery against ships. In addition, she shared how States in Africa are working together and strengthening their capabilities to combat maritime crime and piracy in the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of

Guinea.

Vice-Admiral (Indian Navy Retired) Pradeep Chauhan, Director of the National Maritime Foundation, India, shared how the Indian authorities work with stakeholders to combat maritime crimes.

CG Admiral Artemio M. Abu, Commandant of Philippine Coast Guard, and the Chairperson of ReCAAP ISC Governing Council, said “From January to March 2023, 25 incidents of armed robbery against ships in Asia were reported to ReCAAP ISC. This is a 9% increase over the same period last year. Given the current inflationary pressures and uncertain economic outlook, many of the factors which drive individuals to commit piracy and sea robbery may return, and may lead to higher number of incidents this year. The shipping industry must continue to adopt best practices such as timely and accurate incident reporting and close collaboration with maritime authorities, to keep our sea lanes safe and protect crew and cargo.”

In the first panel discussion, representatives from BIMCO, INTERTANKO, Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) discussed the emerging trends and modus operandi of piracy and sea robbery incidents in Asia.

Mr Ashok Srinivasan, Manager of Maritime Safety and Security, BIMCO, said “Piracy and armed robbery in any form is a threat to seafarers and shipping. In the Gulf of Guinea, we are beginning to see attacks again after a lull of 12 to 18 months. In South- East Asia, we are witnessing attacks to ships’ crew with the intention to steal cargo, stores or sometimes even the ship. Industry and authorities need to stay vigilant and not let their guard down. BIMCO will work tirelessly with relevant stakeholders to bring piracy problems under control.” Mr Elfian Harun, Regional Manager (Southeast Asia) and Environment Manager, INTERTANKO, said “Piracy and armed robbery are crimes that no seafarer should have to face. Fortunately, the armed robbery taking place in the Singapore Strait has, thus far, not resulted in injury to crew, but the situation remains a real concern due to its potential impact upon the safety of navigation. ReCAAP ISC and its partners have taken tremendous steps to eradicate these crimes and this coordinated response is an example the other regions should consider emulating.” The second panel discussion saw representatives from the Maritime Security Task Force (Republic of Singapore Navy), BAKAMLA (Indonesian Maritime Security Agency) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) share best practices which ship masters should adopt to engage littoral states and law enforcement agencies. The panellists also highlighted individual country’s initiatives and cooperative efforts undertaken to suppress piracy and sea robbery in their territorial waters.

Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, Executive Deputy Chairman of RSIS, said, “The number of incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the region continues to be a reference point to which the international community assesses the safety and security of regional waters. This conference gathers stakeholders and serves as a reminder on the importance of sustaining collective efforts and to always remain vigilant.”

The Executive Director ReCAAP ISC, Mr Krishnaswamy Natarajan, in his closing remarks, said “Combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia is not the sole responsibility of the coastal States or the shipping industry, but a common responsibility shared by all stakeholders since it is a transnational maritime crime. Building trust and confidence among stakeholders is necessary to promote cooperation, collaboration and information sharing, and to reduce piracy and armed robbery incidents against ships in Asia.”

Piracy: Improved Surveillance Capacity, Crucial to Security of Maritime Domain (News Diary Online) By Chimezie Godfrey
May 1, 2023

The Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral A.Z Gambo has said improved surveillance capacity is crucial to the security of the maritime domain in Nigeria.

Vice Admiral Gambo who was represented by Commodore Emmanuel Anakwe, made the assertion while delivering a lecture on the effect of piracy in Nigeria at the national stakeholders and civil society summit held recently in Abuja.

The Naval Chief noted that the importance of the maritime domain to mankind is no longer debatable, adding that his assertion was premised on the facts that over 70 per cent of the world’s surface is covered by sea.

He pointed out that it was also estimated that the natural resources within the maritime domain of littoral states accounts for about one trillion United States Dollars (N500 trillion) annually. Gambo therefore disclosed that the Nigeria Navy intends to continue to invest in MDA infrastructure as a force multiplier for enhanced operational efficiency.

He said, “The NN intends to continue to invest in MDA infrastructure as a force multiplier for enhanced operational efficiency. Evidently, improved surveillance capacity remains crucial to the security of the maritime domain and the completion of the ongoing Falcon Eye System as well as follow-on maintenance of the MDA systems will thus be critical lines of effort to enhance knowledge of the nation’s maritime environment for improved ocean governance. “Effort is

therefore on-going to integrate tactical and operational UAVs into the MDA systems to ensure all-round surveillance of the heavily forested back waters which are not fully covered by existing infrastructure.

“Additionally, the NN just took delivery of 4 fast interceptor boats and mobile command vehicle which are to be integrated with the Falcon Eye. The boats were acquired to further boost the NN response capability to complement the surveillance architecture of the NN.”

Gambo further said that Nigeria’s maritime environment will continue to be of strategic importance as long as oil continues to drive the economy of the world.

According to him, the environment, though rich in various mineral resources especially hydro carbons, is susceptible to piracy and other diverse contemporary threats, which portend dangers to the nation’s wellbeing and security if not curbed.

“The effect of piracy on the well being of the nation is undesirable as it negatively affects the image of the country, leads to withdrawal of foreign investment, affects maritime activities and increases maritime freight insurance premium.

“Accordingly, in a bid to engender sustainable exploitation and exploration of the nation’s Blue Economy potentials, the NN has taken proactive steps to address incidences of piracy and other maritime insecurity which has led to the eventual delisting of Nigeria from the International Maritime Bureau’s Piracy List. Some of these efforts include the conduct of anti-piracy operations, acquisition of maritime surveillance capability, arrest and prosecution of pirates and regional collaboration.

“Despite the successes recorded by the NN, the Service is poised to do more and has been repositioned for enhanced operational efficiency through the upgrade of its MDA infrastructure, consolidation on existing regional collaboration and partnerships as well as consolidation on NN fleet renewal programme.

“On this note, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your rapt attention. As we always say in the Nigerian Navy, onward together,” he said.

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WORTH READING

The Prevailing Denial of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda: Revisiting Falsities and Upholding the Universal Responsibility to Truth

Michael Butera and Nyaga Dominic

April 26, 2023

Genocide is often considered to be the worst of crimes that humanity can inflict on one another. Any country that the scourge of genocide has ever touched faces the risk of denial during and after the atrocity. For a very long time, the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi has succumbed to that denial which attempts to falsify and completely alter the truth of what ensued in Rwanda in 1994. Despite the vast documentation of the atrocities of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi 1994, some still deny its occurrence and justify their claims by coining the genocide as a civil war, double genocide and other forms of denialism, notably genocide minimisation and revisionism. By devising genocide ideologies and through denialism, the perpetrators certainly purpose to advance many different motives, such as reducing or shifting the responsibility of the true perpetrators, denial of victim status and revictimization upon survivors and others affected by the crimes of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Although these shortcomings continue to affect the rapidly growing country, Rwanda has been very successful in the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide through the adoption of several unconventional measures which have birthed solutions to the challenges the country faced. To continue steering the country forward, there is a dire need to convey and tell the truth about the genocide. This can and will only be achieved by investing heavily in efforts that counter the inconsistencies and falsities told about the genocide, thus protecting the genocide victims and Rwanda's memory and preventing future atrocities.

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