

HORN OF AFRICA - THE MONTHLY REVIEW

The following is the ninth in a series of updates prepared by the UNDP Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia (UNDP/EUE) on the general situation in the countries of the Horn of Africa. Updates cover events in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda.

Information in this update has been obtained from UN, NGOs and media reports; reference is made to the sources as appropriate. No claims are made by the EUE as to the accuracy of these reports.

Regional Issues

15 December 1996 - 20 January 1997

Relations between Sudan and neighbours Eritrea and Ethiopia have rapidly deteriorated over the past month, amid claims by Khartoum that its neighbours are backing the increasingly active rebels and are being manipulated by the United States. Since the end of December, the eastern side of Sudan, bordering Ethiopia and Eritrea, has been wracked by clashes between government forces and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which brings together south Sudanese rebels and Sudanese opposition from the north.

The situation remains tense, although on 15 January Ethiopia denied that its forces had aided the Sudanese opposition in an cross-border offensive against the Islamic leadership in Khartoum. At the same time a letter was addressed to the UN Security Council by the Ethiopia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, warning Sudan that Ethiopia would remain vigilant to exercise its "right to self-defence against a regime which the Security Council knew had become a menace to the peace and stability of the whole region." Ethiopia further accused Sudan of destabilising its neighbours, and has condemned a call by the Sudanese envoy in Mogadishu Ali Hassan Ali urging Somalis to wage a "jihad" against Ethiopia.

Khartoum in turn has accused both Ethiopia and Eritrea of sending troops into Sudan to aid the rebel offensive. On 16 January the Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir said a "decisive battle" could take place with Ethiopia as convoys of lorries carrying Sudanese government reinforcements and supplies headed off to the border, adding his voice to the government's campaign for "jihad" against Ethiopia. This statement follows an earlier, contradictory announcement by Al Bashir that "Sudan is keen to improve ties with Ethiopia", and does not support groups opposed to the Ethiopian government. Although ties between the two countries have not yet been broken off, they have been seriously fractured since Ethiopia accused Sudan of backing an attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's life in June 1995 in Addis Ababa. The Eritrean government, which has already broken relations with Sudan, has also denied any involvement in the fighting.

(Agence France Presse, Addis Ababa & Nairobi, 15-17 January & The Monitor, Addis Ababa, 16 January)

The Government of Sudan confirmed, at the end of December, that the main rebel group, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army and other armed opposition forces had been attacking the north-eastern parts of the country since the first week of December. A report by BBC report quoted the Prime Minister Minister Al Turabi as acceding to the fact that fighting has been going on in the Kassala region near the Eritrean border for some time. This statement comes shortly after the announcement by rebel representatives in Asmara that their operations have been extended and cover five fronts in Sudan.

(The Monitor, Addis Ababa, 31 December & Agence France Press, Asmara, 13 January)

In mid-January, an alliance of Sudanese rebels said their forces were fast advancing on the southern Blue Nile city of Damazin where a hydro-electric station supplies the Sudanese capital Khartoum with most of its power. The rebels soon after announced their take over of two border towns south-east of Damazin as well as an army garrison near the eastern town of Kassala. At the same time, in Cairo the opposition National Democratic Alliance called for a popular uprising and army mutiny to overthrow the Islamist government that took power through a military coup in 1989.

The rebels claim to have already seized the two of towns Kurmuk and Qeissan, about 600 km (370 miles) southeast of Khartoum on the border with Ethiopia. The conflict has also caused more than 5,000 Sudanese (comprised of Udux and other clans from the southern regions) to flee into western Ethiopia over the past two months, seeking refuge and assistance. Although the influx is slowly decreasing, a steady move of about 70 people a day has continued in the third week of January.

(Reuter, Cairo & Asmara, 15 January)

Khartoum University was closed on 14 January so that students can join the forces and go to eastern Sudan to counter what Sudan claimed were Ethiopian attacks at the border. The state radio quoted a university official as saying classes had been suspended "to allow students to join popular defence forces on their way to eastern Sudan to fight the Ethiopian aggression." The statement does not stipulate how many students have joined, although sources say that some members of the public have responded to the government call to mobilise.

(Reuter, Khartoum, 14 January & The Monitor, Addis Ababa, 16 January)

Exiled Sudanese opposition leaders, former Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi, and Mohamed Osman Al Mirghani, met in Cairo on 2 January to discuss the current situation in their country. Sadeq Al Mahdi fled Sudan in mid-December and has since travelled to the Ethiopian capital before moving onto Egypt for talks with both Egyptian officials and other Sudanese opposition leaders.

(The Monitor, Addis Ababa, 2 January & The Reporter, Addis Ababa, 1 January)

The Security Council discussed a Sudanese allegation of aggression by Ethiopia during

closed-door consultations on 15 January, but took no immediate action pending further information. The Security Council is expected to again meet on 22 January to consider putting into effect the ban on external flights by Sudan Airways

(Reuters, United Nations, 15 January & Agence France Presse, 13 January)

Iran's interest in the Indian Ocean region has been confirmed with the International Conference on the Indian Ocean community, held in Teheran in mid-November 1996. The report issued at the end of the conference shows the keen interest expressed by Iran in involvement in future cooperation in this region, with the Iranian minister of post, telegraph and telephone pointing out that the "western military capacity for continued presence in the Indian Ocean has

diminished as compared with the past, mainly due to economic reasons", stressing that a "new definition of security in this region is taking place."

The Teheran Conference, which was opened by head of state, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has been followed by several comments from delegates of the Asian countries participating in the meeting, placing further emphasis on the increasing role and interest of Iran as an active participant and as "one of the driving forces in the movement towards reaching such a (Indian Ocean) community."

(Indian Ocean Newsletter, 21 December 1996)

An international peace seminar jointly organised by the Organisation of African Unity and the International Peace Academy (with support from the Government of Denmark) was held in Addis Ababa 15-20 December 1996. The seminar, attended by representatives from the OAU, United Nations, Non-governmental Organisations and the donor and diplomatic community, was convened to review the recent developments in peacekeeping and enforcement in the continent, the OAU mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and also peace activities at the sub-regional level.

(The Ethiopian Herald, Addis Ababa, 21 December)

Djibouti

The Societe de Telecommunications Internationale de Djibouti has followed up the introduction of the Internet to Djibouti in the spring of 1996 by launching a cellular network system in the country. Ethiopia has also started Internet services since early January 1997 joining Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda as the latest country in the IGAD sub-region with access to the information highway, (Indian Ocean Newsletter, 21 December 1996 and The Ethiopian Herald, 31 December)

Eritrea

A conference for the promotion of investment in Eritrea organised by the World Bank on 10 December provided the background for reassurances by the Eritrean President, Issayas Afeworki, that the privatisation programme is on track and would be completed by the end of 1997. Speaking on several sectors of the Eritrean economy including mining, oil, natural gas and energy, Afeworki was generally positive on the move of Eritrea towards a market economy and, while recognising a deficit in the energy sector (electrical energy), launched an appeal for increased private investment in the exploration of oil and natural gas and encouraged investments in geothermal and solar energy projects.

The Eritrean President has also indicated that his government is planning to authorise the creation of private financial institutions and, in the longer term, becoming a "competitive financial centre in the region."

(Indian Ocean Newsletter, 21 December)

Ethiopia

The Consultative Group meeting for Ethiopia, convened for the first time in Addis Ababa in mid-December, ended with the pledge of US\$ 2.5 billion over the next three years in support of the government's efforts for development and poverty reduction. Statements issued by the donor community were generally congratulatory, commending Ethiopia on its recent macroeconomic performance and the move towards a market economy, expressing hope that such a trend would be sustained.

The CG participants also urged the government to move more aggressively on legal and administrative reforms and underlined the crucial role of the private sector in Ethiopia's development process.

(Entrepreneur, 18 December & World Bank Press Release, December 1996)

The Ethiopian Ministry of Defence announced in late December that military forces had wounded and killed more than one hundred terrorists crossing into Ethiopia in the proximity of Dollo town (Ethiopian Somali Region). A later statement issued by Somali faction leader Ali Madi Mohamed has also condemned Al Itihad, accusing it of provocative action in Ethiopian territory and supporting measures taken by the Ethiopian Defence Force in south-western Somali Region.

(Seven Day Update, Addis Ababa, 31 December & The Ethiopian herald, Addis Ababa, 21 January)

The United States Ambassador to Ethiopia, David Shinn has expressed disappointment at the low level of American investment in Ethiopia, despite a significant growth in the number of American companies represented in the country.

(Press Digest, Addis Ababa, 2 January)

The Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) have agreed to convene a Somali National Congress with the objective of forming a unified "democratic organisation that would assume the mandate of (providing) political guidance" and work towards achieving the political, economic and social goals of the Ethiopian Somali Region. Speaking on behalf of the two organisations, Dr. Abdul Mejid Hussein, the Ethiopian Minister of Transport and Communication, said that the SNC is the culminating point to many months of work towards achievement of a democratic political forum that would "best serve the interests of the people of the Somali Region."

(The Monitor, Addis Ababa, 16 January & The Ethiopian Herald, 12 January)

Police have reported two disturbances during religious ceremonies in Addis Ababa on 5-12 January. The first incident was a serious shooting at the St. Estifanos Church in central Addis Ababa in which an Ethiopian Orthodox church member was killed while trying to deliver a petition to the Patriarch of the Church. Following the second incident on 12 January, several heads of church issued a statement condemning the incidents as attempts on the life of the Patriarch, requesting the government to investigate the incidents and their implications.

(AddisTibune, Addis Ababa, 17 January)

Kenya

A new publication, entitled "Kenya Shadow Justice," issued by the London-based group Africa Rights has dubbed justice in Kenya as a growth industry attracting

unprecedented support and interest from the international community in 1996 but not delivering in the context of the normal citizen. The publication debates the legal reforms in the country based on the experiences of the people and their testimonies, documentary evidence and time spent in the courts. The book has attracted much attention and comments from both the media and the Kenyan Government in the past month.

A large-scale pilot programme to test the effectiveness of a new malaria treatment drug is expected to be launched in Kenya by mid-1997. Under this programme several hundred thousand Kenyans afflicted with malaria who have not responded to other forms of medication will receive free treatment with the new drug, Malarone.

(The East African, 15 December)

Somalia

A joint communique issued by Somali clan elders meeting in Sodere, Ethiopia, has declared the establishment of a National Salvation Council, outlining a five-point plan of action to expedite the peace process in the war torn country. The meeting, which took place over a number of weeks and was fully supported by the Ethiopian government, was attended by a total of 26 Somali political factions. The NSC will be co-chaired by Ali Mahdi Mohamed, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, Abdulkadir Mohamed Aden, Osman Hassan Ali "Atto" and Aden Abdullahi Nur. The Committee is expected to start work on laying the groundwork for the formation of a Transitional Central Authority or Provisional Central Government in Somalia. Another major outcome of the high level consultations is the agreement to convene a National Reconciliation Conference in Bosaso, Somalia to approve a Transitional National Charter.

Hussein Aideed, who did not attend the meeting in Sodere, has reportedly denounced the NSC and, in turn, accused Mahdi of receiving arms from Ethiopia. Also absent from the meeting was Ibrahim Egal, president of the breakaway Republic of Somaliland (North-west Somalia). Ethiopia, on the other hand, has pledged to ensure that the agreement reached on the National Salvation Council would achieve its objectives. The initiative has also won the support of both IGAD and the OAU, whose representatives also participated in the meeting.

(Seven Day Update, Addis Ababa, 13 January & The Ethiopian Herald, 11 January)

While some pessimism remains about the Somali peace talks in Ethiopia - and sporadic fighting in Mogadishu has continued in December and into early January 1997 - an initiative launched by the European Union is examining the position of the Somali state in the event that the fighting stops. The EU initiative follows earlier workshops organised in Nairobi in 1996, bringing together various Somali clan leaders. A team of British researchers has also presented different constitutional blue-prints to Somali elders, putting forth four options for debate across Somalia:

the establishment of a federation;

a confederation between Somalia and Somaliland;

a decentralised state; and

a power-sharing arrangement.

Both the EU and the British team, however, have stressed that they are not offering a solution but providing "technical information" on the form that the new state may take.

(Africa Analysis, 13 December 1996)

Following a meeting mediated by the Italian envoy, Giuseppe Cassini, rival Somali clan leaders Ali Mahdi Mohamed and Hussein Aideed have reportedly reached an agreement to abolish the "greenline" border dividing Mogadishu into North (controlled by Ali Mahdi) and South (occupied by forces loyal to Aideed) sectors.

(Agence France Presse, Mogadishu, 16 January)

According to the private Ethiopian weekly Tomar, a representative of the Al Itihad Al Islamiya in Mogadishu has called supporters to mobilise for "jihad" against Ethiopia. Al Itihad claims that over 5,000 men have already registered to join the "jihad" against Ethiopia, a move they have said is also supported by the Muslim clerics in Mogadishu.

Other sources in Mogadishu have also reported that Muslim fundamentalists have been moving around the capital since the beginning of the month, urging people to volunteer to the front in the name of Islam.

(Seven Day Update, Addis Ababa, 13 January & The Reporter, Addis Ababa, 1

January)

A recent statement issued by journalists based in Somalia has protested against the general assault and harassment of journalists based in Mogadishu. Although no faction has assumed responsibility for the assaults, which mostly occur in areas controlled by Mohamed Aideed, the attacks are undertaken by gunmen who claim to be opposing false media reports on the security situation in Somalia.

(International Freedom of Expression - RSF/IFEX, 15 January)

Sudan

President Omar Al Bashir has expressed support for the call by Sudanese Minister of Finance for the cancellation of tax and custom duty exemptions for all commercial activities of humanitarian and non-governmental organisations operating in Sudan. In this regard, a provisional order was declared by Al Bashir cancelling all exemptions pending a final decision by Parliament. Members of the Parliament, who were requested to endorse the tax exemptions with immediate effect, have, however, voted to postpone a decision for three months.

(The Ethiopian Herald, Addis Ababa, 25 December)

Concerns over growing insecurity in northern Bahr el Ghazal and its effects on relief operation in the area were the focus of UN and NGO discussions at a meeting scheduled to take place in Nairobi in January.

(Operation Lifeline Sudan, 31 December)

Sudanese authorities have arrested 12 senior members of the opposition Umma Party in early January. Seven were arrested on January 4 and another five were

detained "after the all-out attack launched by the joint command of the National Democratic Alliance (which groups the northern opposition and southern rebels)."

Following an unexpected visit to Cairo by the Sudanese Vice President, Mohamed Saleh, and subsequent meetings with President Mubarak on the subject of rebel movements in Sudan, Egypt has announced its refusal to support Khartoum Government in attacks against rebel forces. Mubarak also seriously criticised the contradictory behaviour of the Sudanese leaders and their public position on Egypt, clearly indicating that Egypt is not ready to intervene in the internal matters of the other country. The Egyptian president has also been quoted as saying that his country is convinced that Sudan's allegations of attacks by Ethiopia and Eritrea are not true, specifically stating that Egypt is convinced "no one has entered Sudanese territory."

(The Ethiopia Herald, Addis Ababa, 21 January)

Uganda

A new round of talks between Uganda and Sudan, scheduled to take place in December, was postponed to January 1997. Meanwhile, the Ugandan government has denied reports that it is positioning troops on its northern border to prepare for an offensive on Sudan, but continues to accuse Khartoum of harbouring expansionist ambitions and using them a ploy for attacks against Uganda.

(Indian Ocean Newsletter, 21 December; Agence France Presse 16 January)

Ugandan rebels based in Zaire claim to have killed a total of 501 Ugandan soldiers since the beginning of their assaults in November 1996. A statement released by the rebels has accused the Ugandan government of inflating rebel casualty figures so far, which they place at no more than 90. Ugandan military sources have denied the rebel claims.

(Agence France Presse, 14 January)

A bulletin issued by the Ugandan government on 16 January has instructed all political and public officials to declare their official holdings by the end of the month or risk disciplinary action. The order is in response to public concern over allegations of corruption and malpractice among medium and high ranking government officials. The bulleting comes shortly after the strong statement to the press by Ugandan Speaker of Parliament, Jatham Tumwesige, that any leader who falsely declares his or her assets would be breaching the leadership Statute Code of 1992, and would be punishable by law.

(Agence France Presse, 17 January - IRIN, Nairobi, 20 January - The New Vision, 4 January)

A large number of people living in the north of Kitgum district (northern Uganda and 15 kms from the Sudan border) have been killed and thousands displaced from their homes following attacks by the Lords Resistance Army. Local authorities estimate that since mid-January over 10,000 displaced people have been living in Kitgum, and there are 10,000 more people scattered between Palabek and the area between Lokung and Padibe. In Kitgum, patients suffering severe wounds are being supported by aid agencies. Recent attacks by the LRA have initiated speculation as to whether the rebels are deliberately targeting Kitgum with the objective of gaining control over the northern parts of the district.

(IRIN, Nairobi, 20 January & UN sources in Kampala)

Senior Ugandan army officials appearing before the parliamentary Committee of Defence and Internal Affairs have accused Uganda's neighbours of supplying arms to attacking rebels and providing them sanctuary. These charges came in the face of accusations from within the Ugandan army and the continuation of the civil war perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army in the north of the country. Unofficial reports of junior officers avoiding enlistment, and the refusal of a number of NGOs to operate in the so-called "protected villages," have caused much concern among the government and resulted in accusations by the Parliament on the inability of the military to support the civilians in areas threatened by rebel forces. Meanwhile, attacks by supporters of the LRA continue in the northern areas of the country.

(The East African, 15 December)

Over 3.7 million children were immunised against polio in December 1996 at the start of the Ugandan polio eradication campaign. A statement by the Ugandan Ministry of information has already placed this coverage level as "impressively high", even in areas with insecurity.

(The New Vision, 4 January)

The Ugandan government is to set up a regulatory body for the private generation of electricity once the sector has been liberalised. The body, which will in effect be similar to the Uganda Coffee Development Authority, would regulate the activities of private investors in the electricity sector.

(The East African, 29 December)

A new rebel movement in Uganda, the Uganda May Salvation Movement - 96 (UMSM-96) has given President Museveni a one month ultimatum to end his "dictatorship" or be removed in a nation-wide uprising by the rebel group. According to a statement issued by the UMSM in mid-December 1996, the move would be "assisted by the armed forces."

(The Monitor, Kampala, 4 January)
