

HORN OF AFRICA

The Monthly Review

This update covers the period December 1998 - January 1999

REGIONAL ISSUES

Update on the Ethiopian-Eritrean Conflict.

The following is an abbreviated chronology of the major diplomatic and other developments concerning the Ethiopia - Eritrea border dispute during the month of January 1999:

January 5

In a statement given to invited diplomats in Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin called for more international pressure on Eritrea to accept the OAU Framework Agreement, claiming the country's response to date had been "devoid of any seriousness". Seyoum went on to say that the crisis had reached a critical turning point, with diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation peacefully "stymied by Eritrean obduracy and intransigence". The Ethiopian Government, on the other hand, had kept its promise to exhaust all opportunities for resolving the crisis peacefully, but had found no partner for peace-making.

January 8

The Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on the Ethiopian Foreign Minister's January 5 briefing. Addressing a number of contentious issues, the statement said that: (1) the right to seek clarifications from the OAU was not a prerogative reserved for Ethiopia alone; (2) Eritrea had not rejected the Framework Agreement and, like Ethiopia, had accepted most of the recommendations while seeking a reformulation of a few others; and, (3) the claim that the OAU Ambassadorial Committee had "proven Eritrean aggression without a shadow of doubt" was, the statement said, "an outright lie".

January 14

U.S. special envoy Anthony Lake arrived in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa to resume a bid to settle the border dispute with Eritrea. He arrived with a delegation including officials from the U.S. State and Defense departments.

January 15

In expressing his "deep concern" about the escalating tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced a decision to send his special envoy Mohammed Sahnoun to the region at a date to be fixed following consultations with the parties concerned.

January 17

U.S. special envoy Anthony Lake flew to Asmara for talks with Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki and other senior officials. No statement was issued concerning the progress of the discussions.

January 18

Italy issued a statement giving its full backing to the OAU Framework Agreement. The statement said Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini had written to his Eritrean and Ethiopian counterparts to try to promote a solution to the conflict. "The message underlined the need for the peace plan to be launched in accordance with the proposals for a framework agreement outlined by the OAU the full acceptance of which by Eritrea, after that of Ethiopia, should be encouraged."

January 19

Anthony Lake left the Eritrean capital of Asmara, returning directly to the United States. No U.S. statement or comment was issued regarding the outcome of the visit. "It is not the first chance of peace, it is not the last chance of peace - the process continues," a senior Eritrean government official told the Reuters news agency.

In a written response to a question in the House of Commons, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Tony Lloyd, urged the Eritrean government to respond positively to the OAU peace proposals. Lloyd said his government has bilaterally and in cooperation with its EU partners encouraged the Asmara government to accept the OAU Framework Agreement.

January 22

In a statement issued from the White House, U.S. President Bill Clinton publicly backed the peace efforts of the OAU and urged both Eritrea and Ethiopia to cooperate fully with the process. "The United States urges both parties to accept the OAU's Framework Agreement and its agreed implementation in order to achieve a peaceful resolution of the dispute," the statement said. "The United States remains deeply concerned ... about the continuing military build-up along the common border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and about the implications of this build-up for renewed hostilities."

The U.N. Security Council issued a statement expressing concern over the continuing military build-up along the Ethiopia-Eritrea border and the threat this posed for renewed hostilities between the two countries. The statement welcomed Ethiopia's acceptance of the OAU Framework Agreement, as well as the OAU's efforts to respond fully to requests by Eritrea for clarifications and Eritrea's engagement with the OAU process. "Council Members call upon both sides to exercise reason and restraint and to maintain their commitment to a peaceful resolution."

January 23

A second round of ecumenical talks between religious leaders from Ethiopia and Eritrea got underway in Frankfurt, Germany. The two day conference followed a similar meeting that took place in Oslo in November 1998 and was intended to strengthen the peace talks that started in Oslo. The Ethiopian delegation to the Frankfurt conference was led by the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, Abune Paulos.

January 25

A joint statement was released in Asmara on the occasion of the visit of President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya to Eritrea where he met with President Isaias Afewerki. The statement said the two reviewed in depth the Ethiopia-Eritrea border conflict and the current situation on the disputed border. President Afewerki expressed his appreciation and welcomed President Moi's initiative to broker a peaceful settlement to the dispute. He affirmed continued commitment to a peaceful settlement of the dispute and expressed Eritrea's continued desire to negotiate at any level for a peaceful settlement. According to the statement, Afewerki informed President Moi that Eritrea regards positively the OAU proposals for peaceful settlement as a framework for negotiations to lead to an agreement. Afewerki reiterated Eritrea's commitment to avert an outbreak of hostilities and renewed its call for a cessation of hostilities.

In a statement released in Ottawa, Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy backed the OAU plan to end the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Axworthy called upon the two countries to find a peaceful solution to the nine-month conflict, urging them "to cooperate fully with the OAU." The statement went on to say, "The continued troop concentration along the common border could risk an escalation of hostilities."

President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea left for Brussels for an official visit to the country. During the visit, Afewerki had talks with Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, the president of the European Union, Jacques Santer, and European parliamentarians.

January 26

In a statement, the Ethiopian government announced that all schools in the northern border area were being closed as a precautionary measure. "The government has learned from reliable sources that Eritrea was preparing to launch military attacks on Ethiopia's northern region bordering Eritrea," said Selome Tadesse, the Ethiopian spokesperson.

According to OAU spokesman Ibrahim Dagash, clarifications sought by Eritrea regarding the OAU Framework Agreement are formally submitted to the Eritrean government.

January 27

In a briefing given to members of the African diplomatic corps, the OAU secretariat and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said that he expects Africans to fully understand and defend Ethiopia's right to self-defense. Meles also called on African nations to exert all possible pressure directly or indirectly on Eritrea to ensure a speedy implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement. Zenawi commended the OAU for its efforts to find a peaceful settlement to the dispute but condemned Eritrea for the "contempt" shown for the peace process. In answer to a question from the floor, Zenawi described the deportation of Eritreans from the country as "regrettable but necessary". He said that a clandestine network had been created that threatened national security and this had to be dismantled.

January 28

Following his earlier visit to the capital of Eritrea, Kenya's President Daniel arap Moi flew to Addis Ababa to meet with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and other senior government officials to discuss the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. A joint communiqué at the end of the six-hour visit, quoted Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi as saying "the only guarantee for avoiding further hostilities and to reach a peaceful solution hinges on the full and urgent implementation of the OAU proposals." On his side, Moi conveyed to Meles "the assurances and willingness of the government of Eritrea to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the border dispute."

January 29

The UN Security Council met and issued a new resolution [1226] pressing Ethiopia and Eritrea to end their border dispute, and repeating its backing for the OAU-led peace process which it called the "best hope for peace." The resolution welcomed the acceptance by Ethiopia of the OAU Framework Agreement and "strongly urges" Eritrea to do likewise. In the resolution, the 15-member Council also threw its support behind a mission to the Horn of Africa by the U.N. Secretary-General's special envoy Mohamed Sahnoun. The United Nations later announced that Sahnoun would visit Eritrea and Ethiopia from February 1-6.

January 30

The Vice-Minister of Transport and Communications of Ethiopia made a statement urging a visiting technical committee from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) to take appropriate action against Eritrea for the misappropriation of Ethiopian cargo held at the Red Sea ports of Massawa and Assab. According to the statement, the Eritrean government had detained and misappropriated 137,000 tons of cargo destined for Ethiopia worth an estimated US \$127.3 million.

January 31

In an interview with Eritrean TV, President Isaias Afewerki said that as long as the OAU peace initiative on the border conflict with Ethiopia is leading towards genuine peace, the government of Eritrea will continue to participate in the effort. Regarding pressure from the UN Security Council and the U.S. government to accept the OAU proposal, Isaias said that the question of the [disputed] land should not be part of a "take-it-or-leave-it" offer. He went on to say that the Eritrean government would not be swayed [by Ethiopian mass media diplomacy] and would adhere to its position and the principles it had upheld for so long, adding that Eritrea would not fire the first shot in any resumption of hostilities.

ETHIOPIA

Lack of information hampers effective family planning: According to a recent study completed by the Ministry of Health, family planning is an important aspect of the health sector that has not been given sufficient attention in Ethiopia, especially in rural areas. The low level of education and poorly developed infrastructure in rural areas, coupled with conservative cultural attitudes, are among the reasons why organisations working in this field, including a number of NGOs, tend to focus their activities in the urban centres. With 86 percent of the population living in rural areas, more needs to be done to support the greater dissemination of family planning information and extension of services throughout the country. In the world as a whole, over half a million women die as a result of complications associated with pregnancy and child-birth each year. According to the report, creating favourable conditions for those with low incomes to become radio users, encouraging private radio stations to broadcast appropriate advice, allocating more budgetary resources for maternal health services, providing appropriate training to health professionals and improving rural communications and infrastructure are some of the ways in which the issue can be addressed in Ethiopia. (*The Monitor, December 1*)

New road helps integration of Southern People's Region: The newly opened road linking the southern towns of Soddo and Chida is an important step towards improving the economic and political integration of the Southern People's Regional State. Previously, there was no direct communication by road between the regional capital Awassa and the Bench Maji zone to the west near the Sudanese border. Travelers were required to travel via Addis Ababa and Jimma, a journey of more than 800 kilometers. The new road, which is 166 kilometers long and includes an 80 metre Bailey bridge across the Omo river and five other bridges, has been under construction since 1994 has cost 255 million Birr (US \$35 million). The distance between Awassa and the zonal capital of Mizan is now only 400 kilometers. (*Ethiopian Herald, December 1*)

Second round immunisation campaign completed: In the second round of the national immunisation campaign over 8 million children under the age of five were vaccinated for Polio and Measles over a three-day period in early December. The campaign is part of the national five-year programme for health which gives priority to the immunisation of children and is supported by the World Health Organisation, UNICEF and Rotary International. Assistance provided by UNICEF includes the provision of logistic support, training of health workers and programme managers, and social mobilisation – support that will continue, according to the UNICEF Deputy Country Representative, Rodney Phillips, "...until Polio is eradicated and Vitamin A deficiency and measles no longer threaten children's lives in Ethiopia". (*Ethiopian Herald, December 4*)

Immigration chief arrested: The head of Ethiopia's Immigration and Nationalities Department and two subordinates have been arrested on charges of corruption. According to reports, he was "caught red-handed while receiving bribes from Ethiopian nationals with Swedish passports. He was said to have threatened to revoke the investment permits of such persons and have them deported. The investment code entitles people of Ethiopian origin who have acquired another nationality to the same rights as Ethiopian nationals. (*The Reporter, December 7; AFP, December 9*)

Primary school enrolment to double: Education Minister Guenet Zewde has announced that Ethiopia plans to raise primary school enrolment from 3.1 million to seven million in the next five years and to increase school attendance by girls. Girls currently make up 36 percent of primary school students but as part of the five-year US \$1.8 billion education investment programme the aim is to raise this to 45 percent by the year 2001 through the construction of new schools in rural areas and training more teachers. Ethiopia's present school age population is estimated to be 12.9 million. (*Reuters, December 16*)

Norway signs fertiliser aid package: The Norwegian Government has signed an agreement providing Ethiopia with a US \$4.29 million grant for fertiliser procurement. Meanwhile, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation has obtained funds amounting to approximately US \$1.8 million from the Government of Italy for a programme intended to improve food security in Ethiopia. (*Ethiopian Herald, December 18*)

Italy to finance obelisk's return: The Italian Senate has voted to spend a billion Lira (more than US \$600,000) to send back to Ethiopia an obelisk brought to Rome to mark the victory of Mussolini's troops over the country in 1935. The fascist dictator ordered the 160 ton Axum obelisk to be put up in front of the then Ministry for African Colonies (now headquarters of the FAO) building in the centre of Rome in 1937. Italy will transport the 24-metre obelisk in pieces back to its original site at Axum in the northern Ethiopian highlands. Ethiopia has offered a piece of modern sculpture to take the place of the monument in Rome. (*AP, December 19*)

International human rights day celebrated: The 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was marked in Addis Ababa with a number of public events. UNESCO helped organise a mural painting by street children, a parade, an exhibition and a workshop - all intended to help familiarise Ethiopians with the rights contained in the Declaration which was adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948. Ethiopia was among the first nations to sign the declaration. As well as these activities, there was a special session of Parliament was convened with the UN Resident Coordinator in attendance, the UN provided support for the translation of the Declaration into Amharic and held a series of discussions at the UN Conference Centre in Addis Ababa on the themes of "Freedom of expression in the face of hate speech and transitional justice and law in the case of crimes against humanity." (*The Monitor, December 3*)

Amnesty accused of "double-standards": Complaining of "double standards" Ethiopian spokeswoman Selome Tadesse told the Associated Press that a report by the London-based human rights watchdog, Amnesty International, which accused Ethiopia of rounding up civilians of Eritrean origin and deporting them to Eritrea, was biased. "Amnesty is discrediting itself as a credible human rights organisation by the personal biases of its representatives who are distorting its reports," the spokeswoman said. The Amnesty report, issued on January 29, said Ethiopia had expelled upwards of 52,000 people of Eritrean origin in the past seven months. Amnesty said it found no evidence to support Ethiopia's allegations that 40,000 of its citizens have been seriously ill-treated and forcibly deported from Eritrea. (*AI, January 29; AP, January 30*)

New figures on investment: According to the Economist Intelligence Unit as part of its campaign to promote investment opportunities in the country, the Ethiopian Investment Authority (EIA) has issued updated figures on overall investment project approvals and implementation rates. Since 1992, there have been significant lags between authorisation and implementation. In the six years to April 1998, the EIA registered a total of 4,237 individual new investment projects with a total projected capital of about US \$5 billion. However, only 588 of these projects are actually operational, with total capital employed put at US \$670 million, giving an implementation rate of 14 percent. The further liberalisation of the investment code promised last December has now been completed, but prospective foreign investors are unlikely to commit new funds until the current difficulties with Eritrea are resolved. Meanwhile, the financial reforms are expected to resolve disagreements between Ethiopia's economic policymakers and the IMF, as well as resolve differences in policy attitudes between the IMF and other major donors towards Ethiopia's economic reform programme. With new loans announced amounting to US \$700 million, Ethiopia became the World Bank's largest Sub-Saharan African client during 1998. (*Economist Intelligence Unit, December 22 & 23*)

Asrat Woldeyes released: Ethiopian All-Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO) leader Professor Asrat Woldeyes has been released from jail and allowed to go to the United States for medical treatment. Asrat, 73, had been in detention since 1994, charged with inciting Amhara people in Gojjam and the Debre Birhan area to rise up and wage an armed struggle against the Ethiopian government. According to sources, he wrote a personal letter to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi appealing to be allowed to seek medical attention in the United States, as he was seriously ill. Asrat has been in intensive care at the Black Lion hospital in Addis Ababa, where for years he was professor of surgery. (*Reuters, December 27; AFP, December 27*)

UN employee abducted: While on mission to assess possible relief needs in the Somali region of Ethiopia, on January 27 an international staff member of the UN World Food Programme was abducted by unidentified gunmen. An extensive search was mounted by the UN together with the regional authorities around the town of Jijjiga where the incident took place. The staff member was later released unharmed in the central Somalia town of Galkayo. (*AFP, January 28, AP, January 30*)

Chewing Khat raises blood pressure: One of Ethiopia's leading chemists, Professor Ermias Dagne has reported that apart from the social and economic problems associated with all addictions, chewing the mildly narcotic plant, Khat may also cause hypertension. In a research paper, Professor Ermias outlined the general physiological effects of the plants active substance, katonin. Experiments carried out on rats and monkeys through the injection of katonin into their bloodstream have demonstrated that this substance may cause hypertension, heart palpitations, dilation of the pupils, high oxygen consumption and sedation. The effects on animals are similar to those of the widely known stimulant, amphetamine. (*Addis Tribune, January 4*)

Italy gives aid to war-displaced: The Italian government has made a grant of US \$450,000 to the federal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission to help people who have been displaced by the border conflict with Eritrea. The aid, destined for displaced people in the northern Tigray and northeastern Afar regions, was handed over by Ambassador Marcello Ricoveri to the head of the DPPC, Simon Mechale. Ethiopia last year received US \$470,000 worth of medical and relief aid through Italy, the World Health Organisation, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid and other donors. (*AFP, January 8*)

Ethiopia calls for lifting of livestock import ban: In a statement released to the state Walta Information Centre, the Ministry of Agriculture said it has transmitted a note to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation requesting it to issue directives to those countries [principally, Saudi Arabia] that have banned the import of livestock from Ethiopia, assuring them that Rift Valley Fever is non-existent in the country. The Ministry noted that the Ramadan period is one in which usually a large number of livestock from Ethiopia are sent to Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. A senior official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs meanwhile said the government, realising the gravity of the situation, has been making efforts through a task-force drawn from the Ministry of Trade and Industry and other bodies to have the ban lifted and stabilise the livestock market and to continue foreign trade in livestock. Meanwhile, a recent survey in the Somali region of Ethiopia has indicated that livestock prices are declining dramatically, in some areas by as much as 50 percent over the same period last year, as a result of poor rainfall in 1998 and the Saudi Arabian ban on livestock imports. (*WIC, January 16*)

Investment totals US \$8.3 billion: The Ethiopian Investment Office has announced that 152 projects with a total investment capital of around US \$8.3 billion have so far been approved in the country. The announcement was made during a meeting organised by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Chamber of Commerce aimed at capacity building and preparation of an investment guild for Ethiopia. However, the General Manager of the Ethiopian Investment Office said that the number of foreign investment approved in the country to date is still low. He added that this poor performance was despite the availability of generous incentives for private investors and the enabling investment climate created by the Ethiopian government. (*Xinhua, January 20*)

ERITREA

Foreign Relations: Eritrean President, Isaias Afeworki paid an official visit to Brussels, Belgium and held talks with Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, the European Union president and EU parliamentarians. Meanwhile, an Ethiopian newspaper 'Gazeta Reporter' reported that the Eritrean President made a secret trip Cairo either to seek Egypt's support against Ethiopia or to mediate between the two sides. (*IRIN, January 21 & 25*)

AFP journalist released: Ruth Simon, the AFP journalist detained since April 25, 1997 for reporting that President Isaias said that Eritrean rebels were fighting alongside Sudanese rebels in Sudan was released. Ruth was arrested after the foreign ministry accused her of disinformation but no formal charge was brought against her. Ruth was one of five journalists awarded an international Press Freedom Prize by the committee to Protect Journalists last in November of last year for courage and independence in news reporting. (*AP, December 29; AFP, December 29; IRIN, December 29*)

Assessment of development programmes: The Eritrean Council of Ministers concluded a three-day meeting where they assessed the progress of development programmes in the various sectors of the country and set forth plans for 1999. The council concluded that the current Ethio-Eritrean conflict did not affect the production and other development sectors due to the government's emphasis on popular participation. The council also congratulated Eritreans both inside and outside the country for their support in the development sector while at the same time defending their country and called for increased participation in national issues during 1999. (*IRIN, January 7*)

Air force plane crashes: An Eritrean air force training plane reportedly crashed killing one Eritrean and one Rwandan pilot about 50 kilometers south of Asmara. A diplomat who spoke under condition of anonymity disclosed that the plane was a Finnish Rodigo trainer. Eritrea was recently reported to have obtained 10 MIG-29 fighter jets. (*AP, December 17*)

Eritrea attends IGAD ministerial meeting: An Eritrean delegation led by Foreign Minister Haile Woldetensae attended the ministerial meeting of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held in Khartoum, Sudan. The foreign ministers at the meeting agreed that IGAD should intensify its efforts despite problems between member states. The Pan-African News Agency (PANA) and the Sudan News Agency (SUNA) conducted a joint interview with the Eritrean Foreign Minister on the sidelines. During the interview, the minister indicated that Eritrea was ready to resolve its differences with Sudan but added that the Sudanese embassy in Eritrea could not be opened until relations were normalized. When asked about Eritrea hosting opposition parties, he answered that the parties were not created by Eritrea and have existed in Sudan since independence playing various political roles. He denied that there were Eritrean forces intervening in the affairs of the Sudan. He also addressed the issue of the repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan and stated that the UNHCR would play a role in conducting the matter with Sudan. The minister declined to answer questions on relations with Ethiopia saying that the current IGAD meeting did not have that on the agenda. (*BBC, December 14; IRIN, December 14*)

Eritrea complains about bombings: The Eritrean government has filed a complaint with the United Nations Security Council accusing Sudan of shelling two border towns, Arbaate Asher and Alighider, located about 200 kilometers west of Asmara on December 5th 1998. Presidential adviser, Yemane Gebremeskel said that the Sudanese military used long range artillery shells but no one was hurt and there was no retaliation on the part of Eritrean forces. (*AP, December 9*)

U.S. envoy meets with NDA rebels: The spokesman for the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Yasir Arman disclosed that Anthony Lake met with representatives of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Asmara. The alliance consists of rebel groups from northern and southern Sudan. This was Lake's third visit to the Horn of Africa since the Ethio-Eritrean conflict broke out in the area. The U.S. had previously provided non-lethal military aid in the form of communication equipment and transport planes to Eritrea and Ethiopia as part of its policy to contain the National Islamic Front government of Khartoum. (*AP, December 10*)

DJIBOUTI

Human rights: Djiboutian authorities confiscated the passport of human rights activist and leading lawyer Aref Mohamed Aref as he was leaving to attend the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that took place in Paris. (*AFP, December 8*)

Can Djibouti's port cope?: Djibouti port authorities were caught unprepared when all the port traffic from Assab and Massawa was suddenly diverted to it after the outbreak of the Ethio-Eritrea conflict. In the following three months, the port handled almost as much cargo as it did during the whole of 1997. The government has since invested tens of millions of dollars in the upgrading of the port facilities, hired over 1,000 additional workers and is working 24 hours a day to cope. However, local importers have been adversely affected because the focus has been on imports headed for Ethiopia and they now wait one to two weeks for their shipments to be cleared. Another problem is the lack of parking place for trucks outside the port and about three hundred trucks a day park inside clogging the port. This, together with the large numbers of containers in the port because of lack of storage facilities for them in Addis Ababa, has created a problem. The worry now is that there will not be enough resources to handle the 400,000 tons of fertilizer and food aid expected to arrive in the next few

months. Djibouti's port has handled increased traffic before as was the case during the Gulf War and Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, however, the traffic has always dropped off quickly once the crisis was over. The question now is whether Djibouti can retain some of the traffic once the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict comes to a close. (AP, December 14)

Economic outlook: Although the increased revenue from the port of Djibouti is a bonus for the government of Djibouti, it still remains to be seen if this will result in increased economic performance. Djibouti is experiencing an ongoing fiscal crisis with many state employees receiving their salaries several months in arrears. The government has not taken steps like cutting back jobs or reducing the extensive benefits packages of its employees to cure the situation. The railway called Chemin de fer Djibouto-Ethiopien (CDE) jointly owned by Djibouti and Ethiopia appears to have received a boost from the increase in transit trade between the two countries. Total goods expected to be carried during 1998 amount to 200,000 tons as compared with 168,000 tons a year prior to May 1998. Meanwhile, Djibouti still lags in implementing tariff reforms that the Arab Economic and Social Council (AESC) appealed for to complete the Arab duty-free zone. These reforms will affect 15 percent of Djibouti's imports from Middle Eastern countries. (The Economist Intelligence Unit, December 8)

France ready to defend Djibouti: France has started building up equipment and making its military presence felt in Djibouti in anticipation of a possible war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The anti-aircraft destroyer Cassard has been deployed to the Red Sea, and military equipment has been sent to air force base 188 where 10 Mirage F1 fighter jets have been stationed. Unconfirmed reports say that additional aircraft are coming. The French Cooperation Minister Charles Josselin who visited Djibouti confirmed the buildup of arms in Djibouti and said it was "to be ready for any eventuality and in response to the Djibouti authorities." The reason for the minister's visit was to discuss compensation to Djibouti's government for the reduction of France's military force. (AFP, January 18; IRIN, January 22)

Pro-Iraqi demonstrations: Demonstrators protested against the joint U.S.-British air strikes on Iraq by cutting up the British flag at the British consulate and protesting close to the U.S. embassy while carrying pictures of Saddam Hussein. The demonstrators were unable to get to the U.S. embassy due to the large number of police who kept them away. The demonstrators later went to the Iraqi embassy where they were thanked by the Iraqi ambassador for their support. (AFP, December 20)

President sick: The Djiboutian President Hassan Gouled Aptidon was reported hospitalized with Bronchitis and was unable to attend an official reception in celebration of Eid el-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the holy fasting season Ramadan. (AFP, January 18)

Repatriation of Ethiopian refugees: Some 700 Ethiopian refugees, many of whom have lived in Djibouti more than 20 years, returned to Ethiopia as part of a UNHCR voluntary repatriation programme. The refugees had fled from Ethiopia following the invasion of Ethiopia by Somalia in 1977. Each refugee was to receive a cash grant of US \$72 from the UNHCR and some additional money after their transport to Dire-Dawa by train to pay for transportation to their respective towns. (AFP, December 18)

SUDAN

Registration of political parties: Seven political parties including the ruling National Congress Party have applied for registration in accordance with a controversial new law called *Tewali* meaning "association", that supposedly allows for multi-party politics by requiring that all parties register and abide by strict Islamic Sharia law. The application form costs US \$5 and an additional fee of US \$1,500 is collected with the submission of the form which asks the names of the founding members, which have to number at least 100. The names are published in local papers and after 15 days are passed and if there are no objections raised, an extra US \$1,000 is collected for an operating license and the registration process is complete. The law faced an outcry from opposition parties who saw themselves as having been legal all along and said the current government was at fault for disbanding political parties in the first place. In related news, President el-Bashir warned that anyone found to be supporting any armed opposition forces would be dealt with under the law. He also warned that any mass political gatherings or activities would not be tolerated until the completion of the registration process. President Bashir had rejected a memorandum from opposition leaders

containing their call for the setting up of a transitional government, the convening of a constitutional conference and holding of general elections. Meanwhile, the National Congress Party formed a new single leadership body comprising of a 30-member Leadership Bureau with President el-Bashir as the chairman, and Hassan Abdallah al Turabi as secretary-general ahead of the implementation of the new law. Previously, the party had a 650-member Consultative Authority chaired by the president and a 110-member Leadership Council chaired by Turabi. The National Congress has also vacated its government-owned headquarters and moved into rented premises fulfilling its earlier resolution that it would no longer make use of any government properties. (AFP, December 11, 16, 29, January 12, 69; AP, January 1)

Switching sides: Commander Kerubino Kuanyen has changed alliances to rejoin the government. Earlier, he had defected from the SPLA, then abandoned his government affiliations and rejoined the rebels. The secretary for south Sudanese affairs noted that the government was considering three options in dealing with Kerubino: strip him of his post and let him live as an ordinary citizen, keep him as a political leader to persuade people in the southern state to desert the rebels, or to use him to liberate areas in the Bahr el-Ghazal state. An SPLA spokesman disclosed that Kerubino was trying to get a military escort for his journey to Bahr el Ghazal where he would be leading his militia. (AFP, January 4; The Monitor, January 7)

Eritrea massing troops: Official spokesman of the Sudanese armed forces Staff Lieutenant General Abd al-Rahman Sirr al-Khatim announced that Sudanese forces have received information that Eritrean troops are massing along the common border. Sudan and Eritrea broke diplomatic ties four years ago after Khartoum accused Eritrea and Uganda of aiding the rebel National Democratic Alliance (NDA) which is based in Asmara. Sudan and Eritrea have since signed an accord brokered by the Arab League agreeing to settle their differences by negotiation. Meanwhile, Médecins Sans Frontiers has charged that a Sudanese plane bombed a hospital in the southern town of Kajo Keji completely destroying the immunization block and causing extensive damage to the surgical and out-patient departments. Although there were no casualties, it appears that since no bombs fell in the surrounding area, the hospital was the target. The MSF head of mission in southern Sudan disclosed that the bombing would have a huge impact on the people who came to the town mainly because of the availability of medical services. (AFP, January 13 & 14; IRIN, January 13)

New dress code: The Sudanese government has come up with a new law requiring all women visiting the country to wear the traditional veil. The decision was taken by the Public Order and Appearance Committee, which was set up to ensure that behavior conforms with Islamic law which took effect in Sudan in 1991. News reports disclosed that such veils would be readily available at the airport for purchase. (AFP, January 5; The Monitor, January 7)

Sudan holding contacts with the US: The Foreign Minister, Mustafa Osman Ismail disclosed that Sudan was holding "intensive secret" contacts with Washington to restore their relations based on a directive from U.S. President Bill Clinton to the State Department. The Foreign Minister noted that Sudan never had any intentions of cutting-off diplomatic ties with the U.S. even after the bombing of the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in August last year. Ismail said, "A relaxation in relations between the two countries will take place very soon." He also stated that Sudan was talking to the British government in pursuit of restoring diplomatic relations. Meanwhile, Sudan has repeated its complaint to the UN Security Council over the bombing of the pharmaceutical plant. Sudan wants the Security Council to denounce the bombing and to send a team to investigate Washington's claim that the plant was manufacturing precursors to chemical weapons. Sudan also denounced the air strikes carried out by the U.S. and Britain (as did the opposition Umma Party) against Iraq and called for the lifting of the eight-year-old sanctions against Baghdad. During the attacks, Parliamentary Speaker Hassan al-Turabi cautioned against the Arab world's silence against the U.S.-British air strikes on Baghdad. (AFP, December 18-20, January 2 & 13)

Sudan charges NGOs with political motivations: The Sudanese government has accused western non-government organizations (NGOs) of concealing "political purposes in their humanitarian activity, to serve the political ends of countries hostile to the Sudanese cultural (Islamic) orientation." The Sudanese Minister of State and Social Planning Major General Hassan Osman Dhahawe charged that Oxfam, Care, the Save the Children Fund as well as Médecines Sans Frontiers were producing misleading reports about the current situation in Sudan. This came after aid agencies warned that 1999 would be a "bleak" year for the more than four million Sudanese who have suffered from floods,

famine and war. The UN World Food Programme estimates that more than 2 million people will need food assistance through to October of 1999. The Al Rai al-Aam newspaper also disclosed that about 15 people were dying each day in the southern province Pibor where in the Jonglei State large numbers of people are reported to be dying through a combination of food shortages and disease. (AFP, December 22 & 28)

Sudan attends OAU Central Organ meet: Sudan's President Hassan el-Bashir attended the fourth session of the Central Organ of the African mechanism for conflict resolution organized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The Sudanese President met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on the sidelines on bilateral issues. Meanwhile, the cease-fire in the Bahr al-Ghazal and western upper-Nile regions expired January 15th but the SPLA and the government agreed to extend it for another three months to allow aid agencies to cope with the emergency situation in the country. In other news, it was reported that Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman went to Libya to meet with SPLA leader John Garang at the invitation of Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi who is seeking to mediate between the two sides. Garang also met with Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister Yussef Wali to discuss the situation in Sudan and ways of developing agriculture. The SPLA spokesman however denied that Garang had attended the Libyan meeting. (BBC, December 21; IRIN, January 4; AFP, January 15)

Pan-African conference on refugees winds up: A ministerial conference organized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that took place in Khartoum concluded on December 14th. The conference was attended by 45 African nations and 26 NGOs. A final statement issued from the conference stated that the main causes for displacement (ethnic intolerance, human rights violations, fear of persecution, and natural disasters) originate from Africa itself and that the eradication of these causes is the responsibility of the African countries with help from the international community. The conference called on African leaders to respect the rights of refugees and to bring about durable solutions that will allow repatriation to take place. Africa has between 8 and 9 million refugees and about 20 million internally displaced people. The conference had piqued the U.S. who had demanded that the OAU obtain permission from the UN to hold the conference there based on a UN resolution passed in 1996 forbidding all international and regional organizations from holding conferences in Sudan. The OAU however did not comply and as a consequence the Deputy UN High Commissioner for Refugees did not attend the conference to represent the UN Secretary-General. The sanctions on Sudan resulted from the government's unwillingness to extradite three men suspected of trying to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1995. Ethiopia still wants the three handed over for investigation and prosecution. In related news, Ethiopian troops reportedly left the Sudanese border town of Kurmuk, which is now occupied by rebel forces, in a move which was described by the Sudanese government as a "new step" in the improvement of relations. (IRIN, December 11 & 12; Reuters, December 10, 11 & 15; AFP, December 10 - 15; AP, December 10)

Poor human rights record: Opposition lawyers in Sudan disclosed that the current Sudanese government (which came to power in 1989) has the worst human rights record of all leadership in Sudan since independence in 1956. The National Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (NARD) disclosed that the violations included the arrest and torture of 51 women, 85 students, and 98 lawyers and also the banning of political parties, the closing down of the free press, and the introduction of the National Security Act under which numerous people have been placed in custody. (AFP, December 10)

Fighting still continues: The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has claimed that a week of fighting in the Nuba Mountains in the central western part of Sudan has claimed the lives of fourteen soldiers, six rebels and four civilians. The report said that the four civilians were killed as a result of looting carried out by government soldiers in civilian areas. The SPLA also reported that it killed 48 government troops in an attack carried out by the troops against SPLA strongholds in the Gammam region of Southern Blue Nile province. Meanwhile, two senior Sudanese military officials were killed in a landmine explosion in the eastern Kasala region. According to reports, the mine had been planted by the SPLA and other northern opposition forces aligned to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The explosion also injured another officer and an employee of the Sudanese television network. In related news, the NDA claimed to have ambushed and killed seven government troops and taken prisoner another two in Teluk in the eastern state of Kasala. (AFP, December 10, 26 & January 12; AP, December 11)

Disturbances in mosques: A Nile State (northern Sudan) legislator disclosed that Islamic fundamentalist sects caused unrest by disrupting worship at a mosque. Members of the Bahai sect and Takfir (anti-heresy) cult caused the disturbance in Metamma by engaging "ordinary Muslims" in disputes. Sudanese Muslims mostly consist of Sunnis but such disturbances are attributed to fanatics who do not represent the majority. (AFP, December 10)

SOMALIA

Fighting continues in Kismayo: Recent fighting between the Marjetien clan supported by Darod clan militias and Marehan militias of warlord Hussein Mohammed has continued in the southern city of Kismayo leaving 60 people dead and about a hundred wounded. Spokesman of the Somali National Front (SNF), Ibrahim Jama Egal announced that the town was out of bounds for planes and ships because of the fighting and any violation of this notice would result in the SNF firing upon any plane or ship suspected of bringing weapons to Kismayo. A plane from the recently proclaimed Puntland administration had reportedly delivered ammunition to the rival Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) earlier. Although Marjetien leader, General Said Hersi "Morgan" has called for the peaceful resolution to the conflict twice, fighting has been raging since last November between the SNF and the rival SPM of Morgan which controls Kismayo. In related news, the SNF has disclosed that it is ready to release 16 prisoners of war captured during recent fighting in Kismayo and called on the International Committee of the Red Cross to assume responsibility for them and their safe return to their homes. The SNF has a militia base in the village of Gobweyn five kilometers east of Kismayo. (AFP, January 1, 5 - 8, & 10; IRIN, December 16, January 3 & 6)

Moqdishu's joint police force: The Moqdishu joint administration run by warlords Ali Mahdi, Hussein Mohamed Aidid, and Mohammed Qanyare Afrah have deployed the new 2,000 strong joint police force around the city. However, the police force is facing serious challenges from the outset. Clan based Islamic courts in Moqdishu have refused to be ruled by the police force and claim that they will establish their own higher commands to oversee security. Clan gunmen and militia elders who had donated the battle wagons that the police force is using have demanded "ridiculous" amounts for their use or threatened to switch sides to rival warlords. Private security forces hired by other warlords to safeguard the city's main Bakara market have refused to relinquish their posts. The force is also plagued by financial problems, as the administration has not set up a revenue collection system. Meanwhile, the police administration is expected to impose a night to dawn curfew from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. and ban all unauthorized guns from the streets. The police can detain any suspects found on the streets after the curfew hours for three months or ten months for those found with weapons or those who commit violent acts. Ali Mahdi, co-chairman of the administration disclosed that the police would use force to disarm any opposition and conduct searches in suspected areas and hideouts of "bandits and saboteurs". Osman Hassan Ali "Ato", the chairman of the United Somali Congress - Somali National Alliance (USC-SNA) has issued a warning to the Moqdishu administration regarding the curfew which he said would imprison the residents of the city and disclosed that he and his allies were going to form their own administration for the city. Seventy percent of the police force consists of former militiamen of the various factions and the rest are former Moqdishu policemen and women. In related news, warlord Ali Ato announced that the air and seaports of Moqdishu would not be operational as previously announced by the city's deputy regional governor Ahmed Dahir Abdulkarim unless all factions came to an agreement on the matter. The two facilities have been closed since 1995 because of disagreements on the sharing of revenue among the different factions. (AFP, December 10, 15, 29, January 3 - 5 & 10; IRIN, January 6)

Fighting in other areas: Fighting between Mohamed Aidid's militia and rival warlord Musa Sudi Yalahow's men erupted in southwest Moqdishu. Yalahow together with Hussein Haji Bod and Osman Hassan Ali Ato stand against the joint administration and the joint police force. Meanwhile, Aidid's men have freed 36 prisoners, men and women of the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) after RRA spokesman Mohamed Aden Qalinle appealed to the international community for the release of 80 prisoners. The prisoners were captured in fighting that took place in late November and according to the RRA were not fighters at all. Meanwhile, the RRA was involved in a rocket attack on a bus traveling between Baidoa and Moqdishu where 28 were reported killed and 10 wounded. The newspaper *Xogogal* reported that the passengers were civilians while the RRA claims that the bus was carrying militiamen loyal to Aidid who were transporting small arms and other logistical supplies. The RRA claimed that the bus had repeatedly violated warnings that the road was off limits to

vehicles. In related news, there have been reports that 5,000 Somalis, mostly women and children displaced by the fighting between Aidid's men and the RRA, have been arriving in the Somali-Kenyan border town of Bulo Hawa and are in need of food aid. Médecins Sans Frontières which had planned to cease operations in the district by December has extended its mandate by three months to deal with the situation. Meanwhile, 21 were killed and 27 wounded in renewed fighting between the Moalin-Weyne and Galadle clansmen in the town of Sakow in southern Somalia. The two sub-clans had declared a cease-fire on December 3 after five weeks of clashes, but the fighting restarted after four mediators were ambushed and killed as they were travelling from Moqdishu to Sakow by unidentified gunmen. Two months of fighting has seen 89 people killed and more than 180 wounded. (AFP, December 20, 22, 25, 30 & 31, January 4; IRIN, January 2 & 3)

Emergency appeal launched: The United Nations has launched an appeal for US \$65.7 million for vulnerable groups in Somalia. Of the 1,000,000 people said to be facing a food crisis in central and southern Somalia, 300,000 are considered to be at very high risk. Surveys conducted in June and July indicated a maize harvest of only 22,000 tons compared with 110,000 tons in 1997 and a sorghum harvest of 22,000 tons compared with 108,000 tons the previous year. In addition, the one-year old livestock import ban by Saudi Arabia, which fears the spread of Rift Valley Fever has affected the incomes and food security of a large number of pastoralists and other livestock producers. FAO predicts that Somalia will need 125,000 tons of food aid in the 1998/99 marketing year (August-July). The 1999 appeal plans to increase food security and ensure a basic standard of health, nutrition, water, and sanitation services as well as facilitate the return and reintegration of refugees. Donor response has been good so far with the European Union donating 10,899 tons of food aid in support of emergency feeding programmes in southern Somalia.

Refugees go home: More than half of the 1,000 Somali refugees stranded at the Kenyan port of Mombasa have been taken to the southern town of Kismayo by sea after the closure of the Jomvu refugee camp. The refugees were stranded for more than three days due to engine problems with the vessels that were to take them home, which were provided by Muslim businessmen in Mombasa. The refugees claim that UNHCR forced them to renounce their refugee status before abandoning them. UNHCR on the other hand, disclosed that the refugees had refused to be resettled to the Dadaab or Kakuma camps in northern Kenya after the closure of the Jomvu camp. UNHCR has so far closed 10 refugee camps at the request of the Kenyan government one of which, was the Jomvu Refugee Camp, which at one point hosted more than 100,000 Somali refugees. Kenya still hosts 188,000 refugees in the northeastern Dadaab and northwestern Kakuma camps. (IRIN, December 15 & 14; AFP, December 15 & 22, January 11; The Monitor, December 24; The Economist Intelligence Unit, December 28)

Human rights abuses: The Doctor Ismail Human Rights Organization (DIHRO) has called on faction leaders in Somalia to abide by the International Declaration of Human Rights. The organization stressed the need for factions to resolve their disputes peacefully without killing civilians in the crossfire, their responsibility to induce an atmosphere whereby the international community can deliver aid to the people, and the international community's role in providing humanitarian aid. The organization also noted the fact that Moqdishu's Islamic courts do not abide by a law that is compatible with international law. (AFP, December 11)

Rifles for education: One hundred fifty former militiamen have given up their automatic weapons in return for education in a demobilization center funded by the European Union (EU) and operated by a local women's NGO in the coastal town of Merca, 100 kilometers southwest of Moqdishu. The men, ranging in age from 18-40 are learning mathematics, crop management, animal husbandry, the mechanics of farm machinery, and English. The center is run like a boarding school and has classrooms, dormitories, a dining hall, workshops and a small mosque. The small beach port in the town is currently being used by the UN World Food Programme and other humanitarian agencies to ship food aid to the areas with food crisis. (AFP, December 16)

National reconciliation meeting: The Official Libyan JANA news agency reported that Somali warlord Hussein Aidid announced in Tripoli that the various factions in conflict in Somalia were reconciled and would be shortly be announcing a government of national union. The meeting, hosted by Libyan leader Moamer Gadhafi, put together Ali Mahdi Mohamed who was accompanied by over 30 other faction leaders, his rival Hussein Aidid of the Moqdishu joint administration, and Colonel Abdullahi Yousuf Ahmed of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), leader of the newly proclaimed Puntland administration. The reconciliation meeting came as a follow-up to an agreement

made in Cairo a year ago by Ali Mahdi, Aidid and several dozen other warlords and militia leaders to work for national reconciliation and to set up a single administration for Moqdishu. (AP, December 17; AFP, December 17, 21 & 27, January 13 & 14; IRIN, December 13 & 23)

Foreign relations: Warlord Hussein Aidid paid a visit to Saudi Arabia and met with the political adviser of the Saudi King. He briefed the adviser on the Moqdishu administration and asked for financial assistance. In related news, Aidid has accused Ethiopia of encouraging rival warlords to fight each other in southern Somalia. In an interview in Tripoli, Libya, Aidid disclosed that his long absence since August from Somalia while on a tour to raise funds and support for the Moqdishu administration has contributed to the continuation of hostilities in the Bay and Bakol regions. Meanwhile, Colonel Abdullahi Yousuf of the Puntland administration met with the Arab League Secretary-General General Esmat Abdel Meguid, and the Egyptian foreign minister, Amr Musa. The discussions centered on problems facing Somalia in general and the formation of the Puntland administration, which the two promised to assist where possible. They also touched on the need to establish a central federal government with the full participation of all factions. General Esmat called on Saudi Arabia to lift its ban on the import of livestock from the Horn of Africa which has created severe difficulties for the Somali economy. Meanwhile, Ethiopia has appointed a special envoy to the Puntland regional administration. The diplomat, Hirale Haile was warmly welcomed by Hassan Abshir Farah and other Puntland ministers. (IRIN, December 13 & 15, January 3; AFP, December 27)

Illegal fishing: Somali gunmen have captured illegal fishermen in their waters and are dealing with them on their own terms. Thirty-three fishermen (mostly Kenyans) allegedly found fishing off the coast of Puntland were convicted and fined US \$500,000 in a self-styled court. Those convicted face long jail terms if they are unable to pay the fine. In a similar case, four Ukrainians were also captured by gunmen who handed them over to the Puntland administration for further legal action. Somali gunmen have captured many fishing vessels along the coast since 1991 and always demand large sums of money for their release. Meanwhile, dead fish have been seen floating in the coastal waters near Moqdishu and neighboring towns. The Moqdishu administration has called on international environmental organizations to help in an investigation while rival warlord Ali Ato alleges that the administration is dumping chemical and nuclear waste into the waters in accordance with a secret deal made with foreign companies. (AFP, December 8, 23, 26 & 28; IRIN, January 10)

Kenyan aid worker killed: Unidentified gunmen killed a Kenyan expatriate working for the Italian aid agency Terra Nuova. Manmohan Singh Bhogal was gunned down near Garbeharey district of Gedo region in Southern Somalia. Terra Nuova, which specialises in providing veterinary services, has been working mainly in Southern Somalia's Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba regions. The Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB) later met and recommended the immediate suspension of humanitarian agencies' activities in the Gedo region. "After two weeks, the SACB will review the situation in the light of additional information clarifying the circumstances of the murder as well as action taken by the local authorities," a SACB statement released in Nairobi said. (AFP, January 27 & February 2)

KENYA

Tensions with Ethiopia: Kenya has lodged a formal complaint with Ethiopia saying that Ethiopian troops made an illegal crossing of the common border in pursuit of rebels of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). According to the top administrator in the northern Kenyan region, fourteen Ethiopian soldiers and four Oromo militiamen were killed while four Kenyans including policemen were injured in the fighting that ensued. The rebels claimed that they had launched a surprise attack on two Ethiopian garrisons near the border towns of Sololo and Fanchana killing more than 60 and capturing and wounding hundreds. It was also reported that three Kenyans have been captured by Ethiopian forces. The Ethiopian embassy in Nairobi refused to confirm or deny the rebels' claims. Last year, OLF militiamen together with Boranas were suspected of killing more than 142 Kenyan Somalis in the Bangala area. Kenyan troops have started patrolling the border zone to prevent another such crossing. Meanwhile, tensions have risen in the Kenyan side of the border town of Moyale after an Imam was shot dead. The residents of the town, which is located on the Ethiopian border, held demonstrations condemning the action which they attributed to Ethiopian security men who believed he was a sympathizer with the OLF. Attempts by both governments to reduce tension have so far stalled with the Kenyans accusing the Ethiopians of illegally entering Kenya to cause mayhem and the

Ethiopians accusing the Kenyans of harboring the OLF and allowing the organization to build bases in its territory. (AFP, January 18; PANA, January 19; IPS, January 20; AFP, January 26)

Moi wants to stop double tickets for politicians: President Arap Moi said that a bill to stop the registration of parties associated with sitting members of parliament would be tabled in parliament. This came as a result of the actions of some MPs who quit the ruling Kenyan African National Union (KANU) and other political parties to form a new political party called United Democratic Movement (UDM). The President said that the MPs should first resign and seek a new mandate from the electorate. The MPs however criticized the President and called his action "emasculatation of freedom of association, beliefs and thoughts enshrined in the constitution." (The Monitor, January 19)

IMF delays resumption of lending: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has delayed its lending to the Kenyan government since the government has not set up a promised new anti-corruption authority. Last year, the Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority (KACA) director John Harun Mwau was suspended for charging senior Treasury officials with corruption and it was later ruled that he was not suited for the job by a government-appointed tribunal but no public investigation conducted into the accusation. (The Monitor, January 16)

Closing the Somali-Kenyan border: The Provincial Commissioner of Kenya's northeastern province, Maurice Makhano threatened to close the border between the two countries and later impound all Somali registered vehicles if Somali militiamen refuse to release Kenyan-registered vehicles which they had hijacked. The commissioner also threatened to stop planes flying the narcotic plant, *Khat* to the southeastern town of Kismayo. The commissioner made this threat to a visiting delegation of 12 Somali elders from Kismayo who had come to seek peaceful means of co-existence between the two people. The Somali militiamen had demanded a ransom and an official letter from the government to release the three vehicles and one tractor. Meanwhile, the area between Lamu Island, Coastal Province, and the Somali border has been highlighted by the U.S. State Department as an area to exercise caution in when visiting as American citizens have been targeted as specific targets for armed bandit attacks. (IRIN, December 15; The Monitor, January 5)

Debt situation: Kenya's domestic debt has risen to 483 billion shillings, 68 percent of the gross domestic product, according to a Central Bank of Kenya report. The 6.5 billion rise in public debt came from a 1.9 billion net decline in foreign debt - following repayment of 6.9 billion shillings to foreign creditors and 5 billion in disbursements - and 8.3 billion increase in domestic debt. The report indicated that foreign debt, at 330 billion shillings represented 62.8 percent of the debt. Meanwhile, participants of a conference for women parliamentarians in the Horn of Africa discussed the accumulation of debt in Kenya. The discussion included the possibility of such accumulation overburdening future generations and the government's lack of consultation with the people before acquiring external loans. (The Monitor, December 24; IRIN, January 21)

UGANDA

Corruption: The Ugandan state minister in charge of privatization, Matthew Rukikaire has resigned from his post because of poor handling of the government's divestiture of its interest in the Sheraton Hotel and the Ugandan Commercial Bank (UCB). Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni felt that the minister failed to follow up on a complaint made by one of the companies bidding for Sheraton that bribery was playing a part in the selection of who would acquire the hotel. The President also held that Rukikaire failed to consider the ability of Westmont, a Malaysian company, to pay for 49% of the UCB in light of the Asian financial crisis. The President's brother, Salim Saleh was found guilty in the same deal involving the UCB and resigned his post as presidential security adviser. (AFP, December 18)

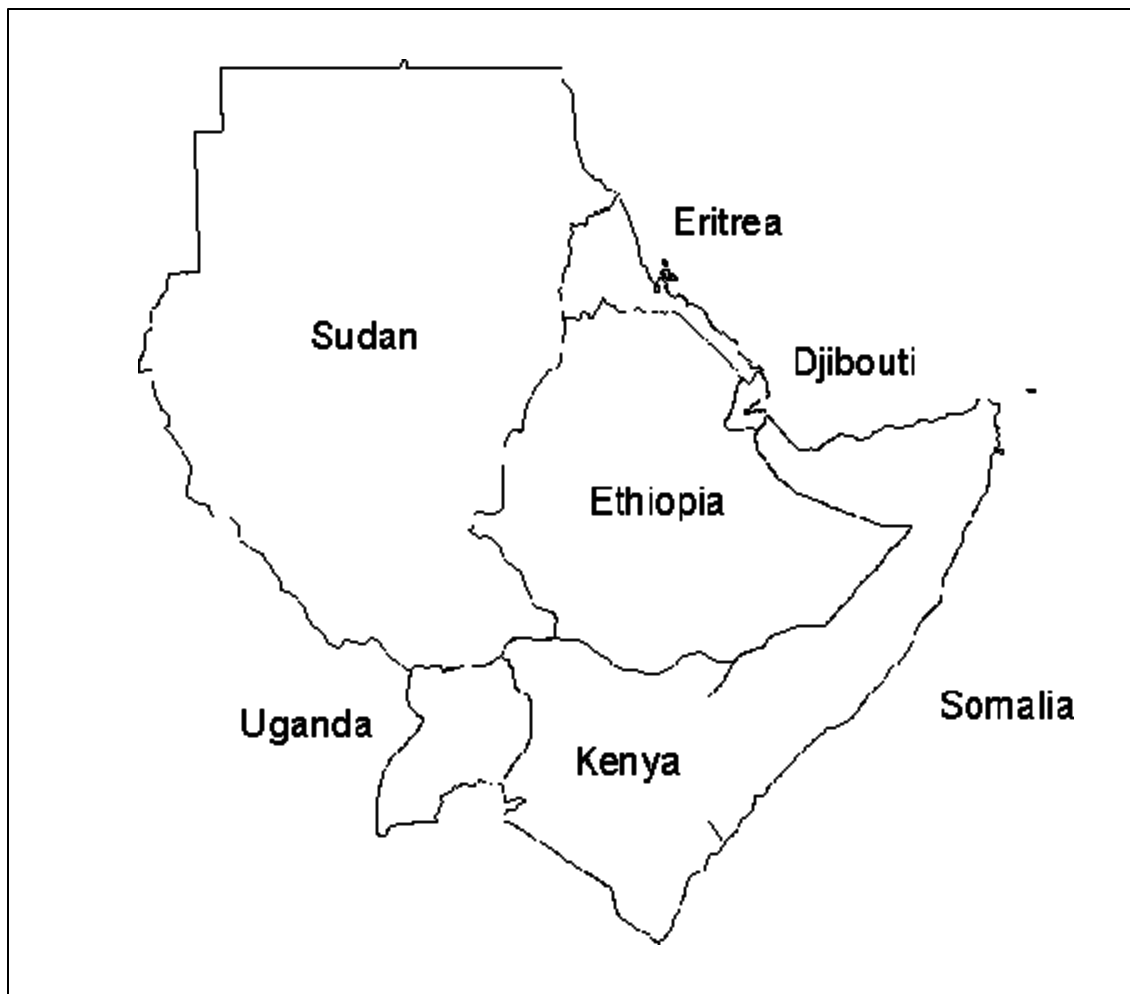
Sedition charges: Ugandan police have arrested the leader of the National Democratic Forum (NDF), an opposition party, on sedition charges after a local paper, the Crusader, reported that he called the President a "thief". Chapaa Karuhanga allegedly said this at a public rally but his lawyer maintains that Karuhanga had written a letter to the paper asking them to correct the article because he was misquoted. The editor of the paper and the reporter were also arrested and interrogated about the story. Both the editor and Karuhanga were released on bail after their appearance in court and told to return the following month. Meanwhile, the editor of the Crusader, George Lugalambi, faced charges of his own concerning an opinion column that appeared in his paper on plans to arm the

Hima ethnic group. The police said that the column was aimed at stirring public disfavor towards the Bahima ethnic group, an ethnic group closely related to the Tutsis, the President's tribe. The Ugandan government is sensitive to the issues of corruption and tribalism. (AFP, December 18)

Rebel activities: The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was reported to have attacked a displaced persons camp in northern Uganda's Gulu district by the independent Monitor newspaper. The paper reported that the LRA abducted 50 people including children from the town of Anaka, the site of a previous LRA abduction, which took place in December and involved 18 people. The same LRA contingent is suspected to be the one that attacked a bus earlier in December along the Karuma Pakwach road killing seven people. Due to this heightened insecurity, convoys have been reinstated on almost all the roads in the surrounding districts. Another LRA group led by Joseph Kony is believed to be positioned 20 kilometers north of the Ugandan border, in Sudan, and has been unsuccessful in trying to penetrate into Uganda because of heavy deployment of Ugandan troops in the area. Kony allegedly ordered the scattering of leaflets in Kitgum and Gulu with the message that LRA rebels do not want to harm civilians but has since ordered the stepping up of abductions in the area. Last month, 500 rebels entered Uganda from their bases in southern Sudan where they split up into small groups and dispersed into the Gulu and Kitgum districts. The UN Children's Fund, UNICEF estimates that up to 10,000 children have been abducted and taken to camps in southern Sudan in the past four years to be recruited as soldiers or made into concubines by the LRA. The LRA has been fighting to destabilize the Ugandan government for ten years under the leadership of Joseph Kony. Meanwhile, the World Vision country director in Kampala, Kofi Hagan, disclosed that 80 abductees freed from the LRA by government forces have been transferred to rehabilitation agencies in the Gulu district. Hagan said that the children were in poor shape, some with bullet wounds and the girls suffering from sexually transmitted diseases. The abductees will receive psychological, nutritional and medical help before being reintegrated into their communities. (AFP, December 14; IRIN, December 15 & 18)

Meningitis outbreak: Ugandan authorities have issued a warning to Ugandans living along the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) about a meningitis outbreak that has killed 157 people in Burundi and the DRC. According to the health ministry official Kihumuro Apuuli, the outbreak poses a major threat to Ugandans in the area. The health ministry has expressed its readiness to deal with the situation should the outbreak occur in Uganda. (AFP, December 15)

THE HORN OF AFRICA



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SOURCES:

Information in this update has been obtained from official and private media reports, U.N. agencies and NGO sources. No claims are made by the UNDP-EUE as to the accuracy of these reports.

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