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Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes in Africa



MEDIA MONITORING

14 May 2015

Elections du nouveau président de la BAD: 8 candidats se disputent le poste

Source: Agence d'Information d'Afrique centrale

Le mandat du président de la Banque africaine de développement (BAD), Donald Kaberuka prend fin en septembre. Pour choisir celui qui prendra les destinées de l'organisation, une élection sera organisée cinq mois avant, notamment le 28 mai. Elle aura lieu au siège de l'institution à Abidjan en Côte d'Ivoire.

En effet, huit représentants de différents pays africains prétendent succéder au Rwandais Donald Kaberuka. Ces candidats sont repartis en deux zones: la zone des pays francophones qui comprend cinquante-quatre pays africains et celle des bailleurs de fonds. En ce qui concerne le secteur des pays ayant la langue française en partage et qui sont en compétition pour briguer ce poste on peut citer, le Tchad qui sera représenté par Bedoumra Kordje, le Malien Birima Boubacar Sidibé qui pourrait fédérer derrière lui les 15 Etats membres de la Communauté économique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (Cedeao), le Tunisien Jalloul Ayed qui est pour le compte du Maghreb et Cristina Duarte qui représente le Cap-Vert.

Les pays francophones souhaitent l'alternance dans ce vote

S'appuyant sur les textes qui réglementent l'institution, certains pays membres de l'organisation, exigent que ce vote respecte l'application et l'usage du principe d'alternance. Ainsi selon, eux un président francophone devrait prendre cette fois-ci, le pouvoir pour orienter les destinées de l'institution après le mandat de l'anglophone, Donald Kaberuka. D'après les sondages et les estimations des pays membres de la BAD, ce vote sera rude, car certains candidats seront d'office écartés de la course, il

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s'agirait de l'éthiopien Ato Sufian Ahmed, du Zimbabwéen Zondo Thomas Sakala, du Sierra-Léonais Samura Kamara et du Nigérien Akinwumi Adesina qui serait soutenu par le président, Goodluck Jonathan.

Notons que la Banque africaine de développement fonctionne sous la direction du président qui est le représentant légal de la banque, du président du conseil d'administration et le chef du personnel. Élu par le conseil des gouverneurs pour un mandat de 5 ans, renouvelable une fois, il gère les affaires courantes de la banque, sous la direction du conseil d'administration.

D.R. CONGO

Kabila approche l'opposition pour un "dialogue national"

Source: 7sur7

Le président congolais Joseph Kabila a entamé de nouvelles manoeuvres d'approche en direction de l'opposition politique en République démocratique du Congo (RDC) en lui proposant un "dialogue national" aux contours peu clairs mais clairement lié à la tenue des prochaines élections, rapporte abondamment la presse kinoise depuis plusieurs jours.

13 Mai 2015 - M. Kabila, qui arrivera fin 2016 au terme de son second mandat, a dépêché la semaine dernière un émissaire, le chef de l'Agence nationale de Renseignements (ANR), Kalev Mutond, auprès des principaux partis d'opposition: l'Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès social (UDPS), le Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) et l'Union pour la Nation congolaise (UNC), ainsi que le groupe parlementaire des Libéraux démocrates et socialistes pour évoquer l'organisation d'un tel dialogue.

Ce qui pourrait se traduire par une rencontre entre M. Kabila et les opposants "avant la fin de cette semaine", affirmait mardi le site d'information CNEWS, citant des sources proches de la présidence.

Les différentes tendances de l'opposition ont généralement bien accueilli l'idée d'organiser un dialogue inclusif, recommandé par l'"Accord global" d'Addis-Abeba - signé en janvier 2013 par onze pays de la région pour tenter de stabiliser l'est congolais. Mais l'opposition insiste sur le respect de la Constitution, qui prévoit la fin du second mandat de M. Kabila en décembre 2016.

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Dans des mémorandums remis à M. Mutond, l'UDPS, l'UNC et le MLC soutiennent notamment la tenue préalable d'un dialogue national inclusif de petit format, de courte durée et à piloter par un modérateur neutre, issu de la communauté internationale.

Mais pour l'opposant Mwenze Kongolo, qui préside le parti Patriote kabiliste, ce "dialogue national" entre l'opposition et la Majorité présidentielle (MP, qui soutient l'action de M. Kabila) doit aboutir à la tenue d'une table ronde au format réduit pour ne discuter "que du calendrier électoral global".

"Si nous allons parler avec le pouvoir, nous devons parler du calendrier. Tel qu'il est, il n'est pas réaliste. Nous avons fait une contre-proposition et c'est cette contre-proposition que nous voulons discuter", a affirmé M. Kongolo au cours d'une conférence de presse organisée dimanche à Lubumbashi, au Katanga (sud-est de la RDC).

Une partie de l'opposition congolaise suggère depuis des mois un autre calendrier électoral que celui présenté en février par la Commission électorale nationale indépendante (Céni) et souhaite privilégier les scrutins législatif et présidentiel fixés au 26 novembre 2016 en reportant les élections locales, municipales et urbaines prévues entre-temps à après 2016.

Mais l'opposition continue à soupçonner la MP de mener une démarche qui tendrait à maintenir M. Kabila au pouvoir au-delà de 2016 en envisageant une (nouvelle) transition qui entraînerait un glissement de la présidentielle pour prolonger le mandat de l'actuel chef de l'Etat.

Dans un communiqué signé par son président Etienne Tshisekedi, en convalescence en Belgique depuis neuf mois, l'UDPS "exhorte le représentant du secrétaire général (de l'ONU en RDC, le diplomate allemand Martin Kobler) et le collègue des envoyés spéciaux (de la communauté internationale) pour la région des Grands Lacs de jouer pleinement leur rôle diplomatique de médiation en prenant de toute urgence les contacts nécessaires avec les parties congolaises afin de définir le cadre d'organisation effective du dialogue dans un délai court".

RDC: manifestations de colère à Beni après un nouveau massacre

Source: MaliActu

12 Mai 2015 - Des centaines de personnes vivant à Beni, dans l'est de la République démocratique du Congo, ont manifesté leur colère mardi après un énième massacre de civils, en accusant les plus hautes autorités du pays de ne rien faire pour protéger la population.

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Depuis octobre, la ville et ses environs ont été endeuillés par une succession de massacres attribués aux rebelles ougandais musulmans des Forces démocratiques alliées (ADF) ayant fait plus de 300 morts.

Excédés, les habitants de Beni sont descendus mardi dans les rues en formant plusieurs cortèges dans cette ville du nord de la province du Nord-Kivu, selon un journaliste de l'AFP et des témoins.

Selon une source militaire, un véhicule de l'armée a été caillassé par des manifestants scandant des slogans hostiles à l'armée.

« Le gouvernement a échoué dans sa mission de protéger la population », a déclaré à l'AFP un défenseur des droits de l'Homme sous couvert d'anonymat, notant que les manifestants reprenaient des slogans hostiles non seulement à l'armée mais aussi au président congolais Joseph Kabila et au gouvernement.

Cinq personnes, selon une source officielle, ont été tuées à l'arme blanche lundi soir à Mavivi, à 5 km au nord-est de la ville, comme tant d'autres avant elles, alors qu'elles revenaient des champs.

Près de l'hôtel de ville, la police a tenté de disperser en fin de matinée les manifestants en tirant des balles en l'air, selon le journaliste de l'AFP. Des policiers ont ensuite tiré des grenades lacrymogènes contre un autre rassemblement, ont affirmé des témoins. Le calme est revenu dans l'après-midi sans qu'aucun blessé soit signalé.

En début de soirée, le ministre de l'Intérieur, Évariste Boshab, et le gouverneur du Nord-Kivu, Julien Paluku, sont arrivés à Beni par avion, selon un membre de leur délégation. Ils doivent rester pour une durée indéterminée en ville, où plusieurs dizaines de personnes déplacées en provenance de Mavivi étaient signalées en fin d'après-midi.

Située à 250 km au nord de Goma, Beni est une place commerciale importante et le fief des Nande, communauté dont les principaux dirigeants s'étaient ralliés massivement à une milice soutenue par l'Ouganda pendant la deuxième guerre du Congo (1998-2003).

La ville compte environ 500.000 habitants et est une plaque tournante pour le commerce et le trafic du bois dans la région des Grands Lacs.

Lundi, une ONG locale, la Société civile de Beni, avait lancé une opération « ville morte » jusqu'à nouvel ordre pour protester contre l'insécurité. Angèle Nyirabitaro, maire par intérim de Beni, a appelé mardi en vain la population à reprendre le travail.

– Promesses non tenues –

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La Société civile de Beni appelle les habitants à ne pas travailler tant que les autorités n'auront pas procédé « au changement du commandement des opérations Sukola-1 qui ont failli à leur mission » de protéger la population.

L'opération Sukola-1 a été lancée par l'armée congolaise début 2014 contre les ADF, rebelles opposés au président ougandais Yoweri Museveni installés dans l'est du Congo depuis 1995. Elle est dirigée par un proche de M. Kabila, le général Muhindo Akili « Mundos ».

Fin octobre, M. Kabila s'était rendu à Beni et avait promis à la population que l'armée allait « vaincre » les ADF. Il avait aussi annoncé un changement dans le commandement de Sukola-1 qui n'est jamais venu.

Début novembre, deux jours seulement après le départ du président de Beni, et à la suite d'un nouveau massacre, une foule en colère avait déboulonné une statue du président installée sur un rond-point de la ville.

Le Nord-Kivu est déchiré par des conflits depuis plus de vingt ans. Depuis le début du mois, la situation s'est fortement dégradée dans la région de Beni, où 14 civils et deux soldats de la Mission de l'ONU au Congo (Monusco) ont été tués dans trois attaques imputées aux ADF.

Ce nouveau regain de violences survient après l'annonce de l'arrestation du chef des ADF, Jamil Mukulu, courant avril en Tanzanie. L'armée congolaise a affirmé de son côté avoir tué fin avril le numéro trois du mouvement, Kasada Karume.

En décembre, une opération conjointe de l'armée congolaise et de la Monusco avait contribué à ramener le calme dans la zone mais les massacres de civils n'ont jamais totalement cessé.

L'offensive conjointe, elle, s'est arrêtée du fait de la brouille entre la Monusco et les autorités de Kinshasa, qui n'entretiennent pratiquement plus de coopération militaire depuis quelques mois.

Congo rebels may have committed crimes against humanity: UN

Source: Reuters Africa

13 May 2015 - A Ugandan Islamist rebel group committed human rights abuses in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo last year that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, according to a U.N. report published on Wednesday.

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The Allied Democratic Forces killed at least 237 civilians in the last quarter of 2014, including 65 women and 35 children, the U.N. human rights office said in a statement.

"In total, ADF combatants attacked 35 villages. Attackers used machetes, hammers and knives, among other weapons, to wound or execute civilians. Some had their throats slit, were shot at while trying to flee, or were burned alive in their homes."

Civil society groups in eastern Congo said the ADF had killed 13 people with machetes and hatchets in two overnight assaults over the last week.

"These violations, which were both systematic and extremely brutal, may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity," the U.N. statement said.

Dozens of armed factions are active in Congo's chaotic east, continuing to fight for control over its vast reserves of gold, diamonds and tin following a 1998-2003 war that killed millions and drew in more than a half dozen neighbouring countries.

The U.N. report said that civilians in the Beni area where the ADF attacks occurred remain extremely vulnerable to violence. This threat, it added, had spread to the Irumu region, also in the east of the vast central African state, where violations by ADF combatants have been reported this year.

The Congolese army launched a major operation against the ADF last year and says it has dramatically weakened the group.

BURUNDI

UN Security Council to meet Thursday on Burundi

Source: AFP World News

United Nations, 13 May 2015 - The UN Security Council on Thursday will hold urgent consultations on Burundi after a top general announced that the president was removed from power.

France called for the meeting which will be held immediately after talks on Iraq, the Lithuanian presidency of the council said.

Burundi was thrown into turmoil when General Godefroid Niyombare, a powerful former intelligence chief, announced by radio that President Pierre Nkurunziza had been overthrown.

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Nkurunziza had left the country and was traveling to neighboring Tanzania for talks with regional leaders.

Niyombare ordered that all borders and the Bujumbura airport be closed.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon earlier made an urgent appeal for calm and restraint in Burundi.

Crowds cheer as Burundi army officer says he has deposed absent president

Source: Reuters World Service

By Njuwa Maina; Additional reporting by Goran Tomasevic in Bujumbura, Fumbuka Ng'wanakilala in Dar es Salaam, Michelle Nicholls in New York and Tom Miles in Geneva; Writing by Edmund Blair; Editing by Edith Honan and Kevin Liffey

Bujumbura, 13 May 2015 - A Burundian general said on Wednesday he had deposed President Pierre Nkurunziza for seeking an unconstitutional third term in office and was forming a transitional government, after more than two weeks of protests against the re-election bid.

But as cheering crowds streamed onto the streets of Bujumbura, sporadic gunfire was heard in the centre of the capital, and it was not immediately clear how much support Major General Godefroid Niyombare had.

With Nkurunziza having gone to Tanzania to discuss the crisis with East African leaders, the presidency dismissed the declaration by Niyombare, who had been fired as Nkurunziza's intelligence chief in February, saying on Facebook that the coup had been "foiled".

"We consider it as a joke, not as a military coup," presidential aide Willy Niyamitwe told Reuters. But late on Wednesday night, Nkurunziza's whereabouts were unclear.

A Tanzanian official said he had not attended the talks in Dar es Salaam, and had left to return to Burundi. But Niyombare said the capital's airport and all border crossings were closed.

The East African leaders condemned the bid to oust him and called for a return to "constitutional order".

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The U.S. State Department urged "all parties to immediately end the violence and exercise restraint". But spokesman Jeff Rathke said he could not confirm that a coup had taken place.

Activists say more than 20 people have been killed in weeks of protest against Nkurunziza's re-election bid, plunging Burundi into its worst crisis since an ethnically fuelled civil war ended in 2005.

70,000 REFUGEES

The United Nations said more than 70,000 Burundians had fled to neighbouring states in a region with a history of ethnic fighting.

"The region will not accept, nor will the region stand by, if violence does not stop or escalates in Burundi," Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete said after the summit.

It was hard to establish who was in control in Burundi. The state broadcaster, often a primary target in state takeovers in Africa, was surrounded by troops. An employee inside told Reuters some soldiers had tried to enter while others resisted.

That did not deter crowds from dancing and singing in the streets. Some sat on top of cars. A Reuters correspondent saw little sign of the police, hated by protesters for breaking up demonstrations by force and widely considered loyal to Nkurunziza's party.

Niyombare had made his declaration that Nkurunziza had been overthrown to reporters at a barracks in Bujumbura.

"Regarding President Nkurunziza's arrogance and defiance of the international community, which advised him to respect the constitution and Arusha peace agreement, the committee for the establishment of the national concord decide: President Nkurunziza is dismissed, his government is dismissed too," he said, surrounded by several other senior army and police officers, including a former defence minister.

It was not clear if the army was fully under Niyombare's command. In the 12-year war, the formerly Tutsi-led army fought rebel groups from the Hutu majority, including one commanded by Nkurunziza.

The military is now officially mixed, and has become a symbol of reconciliation, but the presence of rival factions creates possible faultlines.

YOUTH WING

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Many Tutsis say the Imbonerakure youth wing of Nkurunziza's ruling party has been armed and has been threatening Tutsis. The U.S. government has also voiced concern about militias being given weapons. The ruling party has denied all the allegations.

Diplomats in New York said the United Nations Security Council discussed Burundi during a monthly lunch with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday. Ban himself called on all parties to exercise calm and restraint.

Opponents say Nkurunziza's bid for another five years in office violates a two-term limit set down in the constitution and in the Arusha peace deal that ended the civil war.

A constitutional court, however, ruled that the president could run, finding that his first term, when he was picked by parliament rather than by popular vote, did not count. Critics say the court is biased.

Niyombare, also a former ambassador to Kenya, said he was working with civil society groups, religious leaders and politicians on forming a transitional government.

Western donors, including the United States and the European Union, have criticised Nkurunziza's decision to stand again.

The European Union and Burundi's former colonial ruler, Belgium, had said they were suspending some aid, particularly support for the elections, due to the violence.

White House calls on factions in Burundi to 'lay down arms'

Source: AFP World News

Washington, 13 May 2015 - The White House called on Burundians to lay down arms Wednesday, after an attempted coup prompted by President Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial bid for a third term.

"The United States is following with concern the news coming out of Bujumbura," said White House spokesman Josh Earnest.

"We call on all sides to lay down arms, end the violence and show restraint."

The call came after former spy boss General Godefroid Niyombare used the president's trip to neighboring Tanzania to announce the overthrow of his government.

Niyombare also ordered the closure of Bujumbura airport, complicating the Burundian leader's return.

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But pro-Nkurunziza troops still control key institutions, including the presidential palace and state broadcaster, creating what observers warn is a dangerous standoff.

The White House warned that "Burundian authorities have a responsibility to restore the necessary conditions to hold credible elections."

The White House said it still recognized Nkurunziza as the country's leader, but Washington has pressed him not to defy the constitution and 2000 peace accords by seeking a third term.

The Obama administration has not ruled out "targeted measures" against individuals responsible for violence, including US visa bans.

Landlocked and poor, Burundi has limited trade with the United States, which imported only \$4 million worth of Burundian goods in 2013.

Burundi coup general claims support of high-ranking police, army officials

Source: AFP World News

Bujumbura, 13 May 2015 - A top Burundian general who on Wednesday announced a coup against President Pierre Nkurunziza said he had the support of "many" high-ranking army and police officials.

"We are with many army generals and police commissioners," General Godefroid Niyombare told private radio station Insaganiro, accusing the president of pursuing a third term in office "in defiance of the Burundian people".

Burundi's loyalist troops, coup leaders begin talks in capital, Bujumbura

Source: BBC Newsfile/ Radio France Internationale website

13 May 2015 - Radio France International, RFI, on 13 May at 16:41 gmt carried the following development in its breaking news segment: "In Burundi, talks between loyalist troops and coup leaders have begun in Bujumbura, according to the military".

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Burundi: UN chief urges calm amid country's political crisis

Source: UN News Center

13 May 2015 - Amid reports of political upheaval in Burundi, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called urgently today on all parties in the country to exercise calm and restraint, and reminded the country's leaders of the need to preserve peace and stability.

"We are following from here with great concern developments on the ground in Burundi," UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told reporters at the start of the regular daily briefing at the world body's New York Headquarters, adding that the Secretary-General urgently calls on all parties to exercise calm and restraint.

"He reminds all Burundian leaders of the need to preserve peace and stability in a country that has suffered so grievously from previous bouts of violence," said Mr. Dujarric, emphasizing that the UN is evaluating developments amid a "very fluid" situation.

The Spokesperson said that Headquarters is in contact with UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Said Djinnit who is currently in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania for the Summit of the East African Community.

A Flash Update released today by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that a coup d'état had reportedly taken place in the Burundian capital after President Pierre Nkurunziza left for the Summit, which was intended to try to resolve the crisis, although OCHA's update added that the situation is "rapidly evolving and confused," with many reports emerging that are difficult to confirm.

Tensions have been simmering in Burundi for weeks ahead of planned elections. Popular protest erupted after the country's ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party nominated on 26 April Mr. Nkurunziza as its presidential candidate for a third term.

The Flash Update said there were no significant new humanitarian developments since yesterday and noted official figures reported yesterday of 20 deaths and 200 wounded. It added that refugee numbers had risen above 70,000.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) figures, 25,455 people had crossed into Rwanda as of 11 May, with 8,750 in Democratic Republic of the Congo as of 12 May, and 37,474 as of 13 May in Tanzania, comprising 15,452 new arrivals in Nyarungusu Camp. A further 20,000 were reported to be waiting in Kagunga village, and 2,022 on

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the way to Nyarangusu Camp. Several hundred people were reported to be in hard-to-reach areas with limited support.

Some people were reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to have returned to southern Burundi after initially fleeing to Tanzania, citing worsening humanitarian conditions, particularly around Kagunga village.

Le général Nyombare a annoncé, sur une radio privée, la destitution du président burundais Pierre Nkurunziza. Une tentative de coup d'Etat que la présidence dément. Le président a quitté la Tanzanie où il s'était rendu à un sommet sur la crise traversée par son pays. Il est attendu dans la capitale où des manifestants ont exprimé leur joie dans les rues.

Source: TV5 Monde

13 mai 2015 - L'ancien chef du service de renseignement burundais, le général Godefroid Nyombare a annoncé, ce mercredi 13 mai 2015, la destitution du président burundais Pierre Nkurunziza qui se trouvait en déplacement à Dar Es Salaam en Tanzanie.

Il s'y déroule précisément un sommet extraordinaire des chefs d'Etat de la Communauté Est-africaine, consacré à la crise ouverte au Burundi, depuis l'annonce de la candidature de Nkurunziza à un troisième mandat.

Ce Sommet a depuis été suspendu et le président burundais serait sur le chemin du retour vers la capitale. Mais le général putschiste a ordonné en fin d'après-midi la fermeture des frontières et de l'aéroport de Bujumbura.

"Le président Pierre Nkurunziza est destitué de ses fonctions, et le gouvernement est dissous" a précisé le général Nyombare au micro de la radio privée Insaganiro.

Il a également déclaré qu'il voulait "une reprise du processus électoral" au coeur de la crise que traverse le pays.

Le général a également annoncé l'établissement d' "un comité pour le rétablissement de la concorde nationale, temporaire et ayant pour mission entre autres le rétablissement de l'unité nationale" dont il a indiqué qu'il prenait la tête, sans en préciser ses membres.

"Il est demandé à toute la population de respecter la vie et les biens d'autrui", a poursuivi le général Nyombare.

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Qui est ce général ?

Après la guerre civile (1993-2006), Godefroid Nyombare était devenu chef d'état-major adjoint, puis chef d'état-major de l'armée burundaise. Nommé en décembre 2014 à la tête du Service national de renseignements (SNR), il avait été limogé moins de trois mois plus tard par le président. Il avait déconseillé à ce dernier de briguer un troisième mandat, que l'opposition juge inconstitutionnel.

La présidence du Burundi dément

Rapidement, dans l'après-midi, la présidence burundaise dément sur son compte Twitter en affirmant que le coup d'Etat "a échoué" et que la situation est "maîtrisée" dans la pays. Mais aucune déclaration n'a été faite du président Pierre Nkurunziza depuis la Tanzanie.

Un communiqué a également été publié par le service de communication de la présidence dans lequel on peut lire "Un groupe de militaires s'est mutiné ce matin et a fait une déclaration fantaisiste de coup d'Etat (...) Cette tentative de coup d'Etat a été déjouée."

Joie des civils dans les rues

A l'annonce de cette tentative de coup d'Etat, de nombreux civils ont commencé à marcher vers la radio-télé nationale protégée apparemment par des soldats loyalistes.

Soldats loyalistes

Devant les locaux de la radio-télévision nationale, des soldats fidèles au président tiraient en l'air en milieu d'après-midi afin de disperser des centaines de civils rassemblés pacifiquement devant les locaux. "Ne tirez pas sur les gens. Tirez en l'air. Il faut tirer sur les objectifs militaires, pas sur les civils. Il faut protéger la radio-télévision nationale", a lancé, selon l'AFP, un officier à ses hommes.

Tractations entre soldats loyalistes et putschistes

Depuis l'annonce de cette tentative de coup d'Etat par le général Nyombare, des tractations sont en cours entre les militaires putschistes et ceux restés fidèles au président sortant Pierre Nkurunziza. Elles doivent permettre de "trouver une solution qui préserve les intérêts nationaux", a confié un haut gradé loyaliste à l'AFP.

"On est tous d'accord pour qu'il n'y ait pas de troisième mandat", a assuré cet officier supérieur qui ajoute "reste à déterminer la manière de faire."

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Un conseiller de Nkurunziza a déclaré de son côté que les putschistes seront traduits en justice.

RWANDA

Rwanda Sees Increasing Risk of Burundi Violence from Rebels

Source: Bloomberg Business

13 May 2015 - Rwandan rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo are slipping across the border into Burundi, raising concerns that violence will escalate in the run-up to national elections, Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo said.

“We have information that some FDLR elements have crossed into Burundi from the Congo and might even get involved directly in the continued unrest in the country,” Mushikiwabo said, referring to the Hutu-dominated Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, known by the French acronym FDLR.

The FDLR has been active in Congo since fleeing from Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, in which as many as 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered over 100 days. Burundi has an ethnic Hutu majority and Tutsi minority, similar to Rwanda.

“We have appealed to Burundian counterparts and we are assured they will take necessary actions in not allowing FDLR to set up base in Burundi,” Mushikiwabo told a local broadcaster.

Opponents of Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza, a Hutu, have been demonstrating in the capital, Bujumbura, since he was nominated last month as the ruling party’s presidential candidate, saying he’ll flout a two-term limit. The president’s supporters argue that he’s only been popularly elected once because his first term was an appointment by parliament.

The Constitutional Court last week ruled Nkurunziza can legally run for a third and final mandate in the June 26 vote. The vice president of the court fled to Rwanda shortly before the ruling.

17 Dead

The flare-up has disrupted years of relative calm since a peace accord in 2005 ended 12 years of ethnic conflict that left 300,000 people dead in the country.

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In recent weeks, at least 17 people have died as protesters clashed with security personnel and 200 more have been wounded. More than 52,000 others have fled to neighboring countries, scared off by the rising violence, according to the United Nations humanitarian agency. Opposition activists last year accused the ruling party's youth militia, known as the Imbonerakure, of receiving paramilitary training in Congo.

The U.S., European Union and African Union have called for the elections to be postponed until order can be restored.

Burundi's Catholic Bishops Conference on Wednesday urged the government to ensure that independent media can broadcast in the country to ensure free and fair elections.

"Only government and pro-government media are working properly," the group said in a statement. "Other radios are closed or partially closed. In these conditions, it is difficult to endorse the results of elections which take place."

Leaders from the five-nation East African Community -- which includes Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi -- and South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa are meeting in Tanzania on Wednesday to try ease tensions and find a solution the crisis.

UGANDA

Uganda's opposition to protest against electoral reforms

Source: (<http://news.videonews.us/ugandas-opposition-protest-electoral-reforms-1314234.html>)

13 May 2015 - Uganda's seven opposition political parties and several civil society organizations called on Wednesday for demonstrations against the electoral reforms bill the government recently tabled before parliament.

"We will embark on holding a series of public rallies to rally citizens to demand for comprehensive electoral reforms which our country deserves," said Patricia Munabi, the executive director of the Forum for Women in Democracy, reading from a joint statement.

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Munabi urged fellow Ugandans to join the “Free and Fair Elections Campaign Marathon,” scheduled to take place on May 24 in capital Kampala and in selected major towns across the country.

In late April, the Ugandan government sent the Constitutional Amendment Bill to parliament.

The bill seeks to change the name of the country’s Electoral Commission to the “Independent Electoral Commission,” restructure the electoral body, and set the procedures governing the removal of commission members.

According to the bill, the commission shall consist of a chairperson, deputy chairperson and such other members as parliament shall prescribe by law, all of whom shall be appointed by the president with the approval of parliament.

The bill stipulates that the removal of a member of the electoral body shall be referred to a tribunal appointed by the president, who may remove the member if the tribunal so recommends.

It also allows the president to suspend the member in question from performing the functions of his or her office pending the recommendation of the tribunal.

The bill further seeks to raise the retirement age for justices and judges; provide for the Judicial Service Commission to appoint certain judicial staff; provide corporate status for the Inspectorate of Government; and provide for a Salaries and Remuneration Board, among other related matters.

But the proposed legislative changes related to the electoral body remain the most contentious, especially as Uganda gears up for 2016 general elections.

In 2014, the opposition political leaders organized a series of public rallies across the country to consult citizens on the nature of reforms needed to improve the electoral system.

On March 2, Parliament Speaker Rebecca Kadaga received the text of 17 proposed electoral reforms agreed upon by an “Inter-Party Organization for Dialogue.”

The organization is comprised of all of the country’s political parties – including Museveni’s ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) – and the National Consultative Forum of Civil Society Organizations, which was drawn up specifically to negotiate proposed electoral reforms with the government.

Proposals include the establishment of an independent electoral commission – a recommendation all stakeholders have agreed to “The bill is completely devoid of

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substance and in all particulars ignores the will of the citizens as expressed in all those proposals,” the opposition said Wednesday.

The bill needs the support of one third of votes in the 386-member assembly, where the ruling NRM has 259 MPs.

As soon as parliament passes the bill, it becomes an Act of Parliament. It is then sent to the president, who signs it into law.

-Bad record-

Mugisha Muntu, the leader of the Forum for Democratic Change, Uganda’s largest opposition party, said the protest rallies are basically a response to what he described as the arrogance of President Museveni and the clique that is around him.

“We want to tell the country that we are 35 million people,” he said. “We should not just let one individual have his desire of hanging onto power and running this country like he is running his own home.”

The opposition leaders lamented that since independence, Uganda has never had free and fair election.

“Almost every election has been contested in some cases leading into protracted conflict, violence and consequently the suffering of our people,” they said in their joint statement.

Kiiza Besigye, a political activist who led the 2011 Walk to Walk campaign after losing to President Yoweri Museveni in two consecutive elections, said Uganda “has gone to the brink of destruction because of mismanaging elections.”

He added that Ugandans need to be reminded of how President Museveni came to power.

“He came to power on the corpses of 500,000 dead people who died in war because of rigged elections; many of our young people don’t know the gravity of rigged elections,” claimed Besigye, a retired army officer.

“There must be a clarion call for all citizens to act because unless they act, the kind of abuse of political process will continue,” he warned.

Ofwono Opondo, the government’s spokesperson, said the government does not have any problem with peaceful civic action meant to put pressure on the executive and Parliament.

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"[But] it can only push the ruling NRM caucus to meet and harden their stand on the Bill," he told Anadolu Agency.

Opondo advised the opposition, instead, to submit a written memo to the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs that is currently handling the bill.

But the opposition parties remain defiant.

"Our message to all Ugandans is that elections are commanded by our constitution and are non-negotiable," said Munabi. "We should remain unyielding in our demand that elections should be conducted after reforms."

SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan: One civilian was killed in clashes inside UN protection site

Source: APA

13 May 2015 - The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) disclosed Tuesday that one civilian was killed in communal clashes between Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) sheltered in the UN camp in the capital Juba, in violence which started on Friday and continued until Monday night.

The mission says at least 60 other persons were injured in the clashes.

A spokesperson of the UNMISS; Joe Contreras has condemned recent fighting that erupted among IDPs at its protection-of-civilians sites in Juba.

"We estimate that on Sunday over 3000 IDPs were seen being escorted out of the protection site and at least 2,500 went to Juba escorted by mainly military vehicles, another 1000 remained outside the main gate of PoC site 3" the spokesperson said in a statement.

"We have asked the South Sudanese authorities to notify us where they have been taken and to also grant us access to their location," he pointed out.

The spokesman said the fighting in the PoC site 1 was sparked off by a domestic dispute between the IDPs armed with machetes, sticks and metal bars from Mayom and Mayendit counties," he added.

The Unity State Information Minister, Peter Makuoth, has appealed to the IDPs being sheltered by the UN to settle their differences in an amicable manner.

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"My concern is that people should not try to interpret what happened inside politically. You ran there for your life and then you cannot go there and cause another war inside, because what is the use for you to go there then?" the minister asked on UN radio.

"We are really concerned and we hope that people also should develop what we call peace in their mind," he added.