KENYA

National Flag and Emblem

Locator Map

TEXT HIGHLIGHTS: Diaries updates, key events, brief analysis and relating news articles in timeline

Overview & Diary Refreshes

Kenya became a British protectorate in 1895 and a colony in 1920. White settlement was encouraged and by the 1940s European settlers had achieved considerable prosperity. African population growth resulted in increasing pressure for land. Jomo Kenyatta whos known for his quotation “When the Missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the Missionaries had the Bible. They taught how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible” formed the first national organisation in 1944.

On his return to Africa in 1952, he organized a number of independent measures for Africans which enraged the white settlers, But when the Mau Mau rebellion erupted in 1952, a state of emergency was declared, parties were banned and Kenyatta was tried and sent to prison. and the same year he was charged with being the head of the violent terrorist group
known as the Mau Mau who were murdering many whites. He was sentenced to seven years hard labor but always professed his innocence.

Eventually he led Kenya to independence in 1963. African members were elected to the legislative council in 1957 and the state of emergency was lifted in 1960. Political parties were legalised and Africans formed a majority on the legislative council. Two parties emerged: the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). KANU won a general election in 1961 but refused to form an administration until the release of Kenyatta. At independence in 1963, Kenyatta became Prime Minister. The following year KADU dissolved itself and Kenya became a republic with Kenyatta as its first President. A new opposition party was banned in 1969 and Kenya remained a de facto one-party state for the remainder of Kenyatta’s rule. On his death in 1978 Daniel Toirotich Arap Moi becomes president and later turned Kenya into a de jure one-party state. In 1991, under pressure from Kenyan activists and the international community, this was reversed. With multi-partyism restored, several opposition parties emerged: FORD Kenya, FORD Asili, Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, National Development Party of Kenya and other smaller parties. However, KANU retained control, winning contentious elections in 1992 and 1997 against a divided opposition and amidst allegations of election abuse. The Kenyan political environment remained turbulent throughout the 1990s.

Former name: British East Africa:

Kenya was formerly a British colony and gained its independence on 12th December, 1963 with a constitution that provided for devolved governance in Kenya via a bicameral legislature and regional assemblies.

Kenya was a de-facto one party state, since the ruling Kenya African Nationalist Union (KANU) made itself the sole legal party in Kenya, during and after independence.

Headship since independence; Instrumental self-administration

In August, 1978 Jomo Kenyata commonly known as "Mzee", meaning for "elderman" dies in office. He ruled Kenya from 1964 until his sudden death at age of 82, under his leadership, Kenya developed into one of Africa's most stable and prosperous nations. At the same month, President Jomo Kenyatta (Mzee) was succeeded by his VP Mr. Daniel Toirotich Arap Moi, who tookover the presidency as constitutionally required successor. Daniel Toirotich Arap Moi makes Mwai Kibaki his vice president while he keeps the Finance portfolio.

In August, 1982, there were allegations of conspiracies to overthrow the government of president Daniel Toirotich Arap Moi, the attempted coup by the Kenyan Air Force, was put-down by forces loyal to the president, at least 120 people died and there was widespread looting in towns, 12 ringleaders were subsequently sentenced to death and some 900 others
received jail sentences, and the entire Kenyan Air Force was disbanded and replaced by a new unit.

In 1988 Mwai Kibaki is dropped by President Daniel Arap Moi as VP and demoted to the Ministry of Health.

In 1991, political rival ex-VP Mwai Kibaki resigns from the ruling KANU and helps from the Democratic Party, running for president in the following year when newly multi-party election system introduced.

1992, Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi made a political liberalization allowing the country’s first-multi party elections in three decades, the balloting was marred by violence and fraud, political turmoil occurred over the following years.

In December, 2002, Mwai Kibaki’s Democratic Party forms a strategic alliance with other opposition parties to form the National Rainbow Coalition. NARC wins the elections with landslide victory, president Daniel Toirotich Arap Moi graciously accepted defeat showing great maturity and statesmanship, and got retired. This election has proved so far that the foundation of Kenyan democracy is rock-solid.

In 9th January, 2003 following the fair and peaceful multi-party elections, Mr. Mwai Kibaki is wheelchaired to Parliament (Bunghe) to be sworn in as 3rd Kenyan president.

In 2005, President Mwai Kibaki holds a Constitutional Referendum that the electorate rejects. And Kibaki dismisses his cabinet.

In December, 2007 national elections were held, the results of which are bitterly contested and widespread political violence breaks out. National Accord agreed and Grand Coalition is formed.

On the 27th of August, 2011 President Mwai Kibaki formally ushered in a modern, brand new constitution for Kenya at a colourful public cremony in Nairobi, his promulgation of the new basic law effectively ended the independence era "Lancaster house constitution", giving birth to what proudful Kenyans are dubbing the Second Republic. The veteran politician Mwai Kibaki is known for his abolishing school fees for poor children and in return a million extra children showed up at schools in Kenya.

**Origins of name**: Kenya is named after a mountain of the same name.

**Kenya At A Glance**

Situated on the equator on Africa's east coast, Kenya has been described as "the cradle of humanity".

In the Great Rift Valley palaeontologists have discovered some of the earliest evidence of man's ancestors.

In the present day, Kenya's ethnic diversity has produced a vibrant culture but is also a source of conflict.
After independence from Britain in 1963, politics was dominated by the charismatic Jomo Kenyatta. He was succeeded in 1978 by Daniel arap Moi, who remained in power for 24 years. The ruling Kenya African National Union, Kanu, was the only legal political party for much of the 1980s.

Violent unrest - and international pressure - led to the restoration of multi-party politics in the early 1990s. But it was to be another decade before opposition candidate Mwai Kibaki ended nearly 40 years of Kanu rule with his landslide victory in 2002's general election.

Despite President Kibaki's pledge to tackle corruption, some donors estimated that up to $1bn had been lost to graft between 2002 and 2005. Other pressing challenges include high unemployment, crime and poverty; most Kenyans live below the poverty level of $1 a day. Droughts frequently put millions of people at risk.

With its scenic beauty and abundant wildlife, Kenya is one of Africa's major safari destinations.

Kenya was shaken by inter-ethnic violence which followed disputed elections in 2007. Several prominent Kenyans stand accused of crimes against humanity for allegedly inciting the violence, and the authorities are increasingly sensitive to any attempts to stir up communal tension.

Kenya's military entered Somalia in October 2011 to curb the threat of the Islamist militant al-Shabab movement, which it accused of the kidnap and killing of tourists and aid workers. Kenyan troops are now largely integrated into the overall Amiscom African Union forces in Somalia. There have been some reprisal attacks in Kenya itself.

Kenya Weather: Kenya is a country about as large as France and situated in East Africa between 5°N and 5°S. It has a very diverse relief with a low coastal plain on the Indian Ocean shore, extensive inland plateaux regions between 915 m/3,000 ft and 1,500 m/5,000 ft and several mountain ranges and isolated peaks such as Mount Kirinyaga, which rises to 5,200 m/17,000 ft and has a permanent snow-cap.

Although Kenya lies athwart the equator, annual rainfall over most of the country is surprisingly low and rather variable from year to year. This is because the intertropical belt of cloud and rain passes rather quickly across Kenya in April and October and because the predominant seasonal winds, the north and south monsoons as they are called in East Africa, have a track parallel to the coast and have already passed over large areas of land before reaching Kenya. Because of the reduction of temperature with altitude, temperatures over much of Kenya are subtropical or temperate, similar to those in California, and summer in France or southern Britain rather than those elsewhere in equatorial Africa. Only the coastal lowlands experience the constant high temperatures and humidity associated with equatorial latitudes. Even here they are less oppressive than one might expect, because of the regular daytime sea breezes and longer hours of sunshine. It is not surprising that
with such a favourable climate - sunny, only moderately wet, and not too hot - and a great variety of scenery, wild life, game parks, and good communications, Kenya has many attractions for the tourist. The variety of relief and the range of altitude in Kenya produce a considerable number of distinctive local climates and local weather too numerous to be detailed here. The country can be divided broadly into four climatic regions, each with certain features of equatorial climates. There is a double rainy season between March and May and between November and December, with two intervening dry seasons. There is a small difference of temperature from month to month through the year. Both these features can be seen in the three tables for Kenya included here. The four climatic regions are:

The Coastal Region: Including (with towns and cities in parentheses) part of Coast province (Mombasa, Lamu). The average annual rainfall is over 1,000 mm/40 in, except in the north where it is rather less. The wettest season is in April and May as the intertropical rain-belt moves north. The second rainy season in October and November, sometimes called the 'little rains' in Kenya, is less conspicuous. Some rain, often in the form of night or early morning showers, occurs in all months. Temperatures remain quite high around the year as does humidity; but the weather is less oppressive than might be thought because of the regular and strong onshore winds in the daytime and the greater number of sunshine hours which average seven to eight a day in all months. The weather, however, can feel sultry, particularly at night. The table for Mombasa is representative of this region.

The Northern Frontier Districts and the Lower Inland Plateaus: Including (with towns and cities in parentheses) Northeastern province (Garissa, Wajir) and the northern parts of Eastern (Marsabit) and Rift Valley provinces. Much of this region has a very low annual rainfall for an equatorial region. Rainfall is generally below 500 mm/20 in and in the far north is often below 250 mm/10 in. In the lower districts temperatures are high round the year, there is much sunshine, and the region is typical of hot desert areas like the adjoining southern parts of Somalia and Ethiopia. Humidity is low and, apart from occasional excessive heat, it is a healthy climate.

The Kenya Highlands: Most of this region lies between 1,220 m/4,000 ft and 2,150 m/7,000 ft and occupies the centre and west of the country on either side of the eastern Great Rift Valley, extending to the Ugandan border. It is the most densely populated part of the country and contains the most productive agricultural land. There is a double rainy season but rainfall is moderate and only exceeds 1,250 mm/50 in a year on the higher parts. Over most of the region the sunniest time of the year is from December to March. The cloudiest period is from June to September when there is much drizzle but little heavy rain. This period is often called 'winter' in the Kenya Highlands and the evenings may feel chilly compared with the sunnier months. The table for Nairobi is representative of much of the region. The table for Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria, which is
virtually an inland sea, shows that there is rather more rainfall in each month here. This is a consequence of the greater humidity picked up by winds crossing the lake and a liability for thunderstorms to break out during the night.

The Higher Mountain Regions: These are the small regions above 2,500 m/8,000 ft and isolated higher mountains such as Mount Elgon (on the Ugandan border) and Mount Kirinyaga. Here temperatures fall low enough for frost to occur and at higher levels some precipitation may be snow. Mount Kirinyaga has permanent snowfields.

A Republic in East Africa on the Indian Ocean.

Deemed the "Cradle of Mankind" as some of the remnants of the earliest man have been found here. The Kikuyu people who lived around present day Mt. Kenya referred to it as Kirinyaga or Kerinyaga, meaning "mountain of whiteness" because of its snow capped peak. Kenya is famous for its abundance and variety of wildlife in the world. It's in central Kenya during the state of Britain emergency b/n 1952 and 1960, within the aim of getting-back ancestral farmlands seized by British colonial masters. Historians say, the Mau-Mau movement was directed against the European colonialism, when the British colonial government's brutal repression of the Kenyan independence struggle climaxed, spearheaded by what came to be known as the Mau-Mau movement. The Mau Mau fighters were being amassed in remote concentration camps in Kenya beyond the fact, that the Mau Mau uprising was considered and presented by western news agencies as being led by murderous tribalists.

As example in both Kenya and Algeria this time, there were large populations of white people, or settlers, originally from Britain and France, who did not intend to go back to Britain or France. The Kenyan population there had therefore resorted to violence to try and kick the white settlers out. Anyway many agree the movement helped Kenya achieve it's independence, while some others say, their actions have also been blamed for crimes against white-farmers and bloody clashes with British forces throughout the decade. The Mau-Mau movement consisted mainly of the ethnic-Kikuyu tribesmen. The rebellion came to an end in 1956, with the defeat of the movement, the death toll stood at more than 30,000. The Mau-Mau guerillas, civilians and troops with an additional 30,000 ethnic-Kikuyu rebels had been thrown into detention camps where many of them died there. The end of the Mau-Mau rebellion marked the beginning of the process of change that would bring Kenya onto independence.

Many Kenyans men and women aged in their 70s and 80s are the lead claimants in the reparations case against the British government. The veterans say they suffered barbaric treatment, including torture, as the British colonial forces suppressed the Mau-Mau rebellion. Some human rights groups has said 90,000 Kenyans were executed, tortured or maimed during the crackdown, and 160, 000 were detained in appalling
They want the UK government to officially acknowledge responsibility for atrocities committed by local guards in detention camps administered by the British in pre-independence era. "European colonizers came with the Holy-Bible in their hands and while Africans were praying looking towards heaven, the colonizers were busy surveying African land to own it eventually" quoted the late Jomo Kenyatta, a non-member of the Mau-Mau movement during the Kenyan liberation struggles.

Before independence, one of the two leading parties in the coutry, the Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU), had fought for for the devolution of state power to the regions because KADU fearing domination of the smaller ethnic-groups by the larger ones. Though the KADU's concerns were seen by the Kenya African National Union (KANU) which that formed the first post-independence administration, as largely driven by the interests of white settlers of British origin who wanted to further their anti-nationalist agenda. The Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU) wrapped its devolution of state power struggle in African garbs, calling it "Majimbo", but the party's demands were tainted by an underlying racist desire to restrain the hand of the incoming government from the affairs of the "White Highlands", owned exclusively by white settlers. Nevertheless, the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) and it's white backers got their way at the independence talks at "Lancaster House" in London in 1961, and Kenya gained independence in December, 1963 with a constitution that provided for devolved governance in Kenya via a bicameral legislature and regional assemblies. But within one year of Kenyan independence, the KADU itself was no more, and it's heavy weight members crossed to join the KANU, and thus effectively dissolved the party and it's Majimbo agenda. That gave Jomo Kenyatta a free hand to introduce sweeping constitutional changes in 1965 that among other things, abolished KADU's Majimbo plan and transfered much of the taxation and service delivery powers of the regional assemblies to the central government.

Jomo Kenyatta as it's head, began to argue strongly for change, then the two Kenyan parties namely, Kenyan African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), formed a coalition government in 1962, which Mr. Jomo Kenyatta assumed as first prime minister of Kenya independent nation, a year later, in May 1963 legislative elections were made, which the KANU won it. In 12th December, 1963 independence officially declared and Mr. Jomo Kenyatta sworn into office as president of Kenya independent nation, and a republic have founded a year later. In 1964, Kenya became a one-party state following the voluntary dissolution of the rival opposition KADU party, some elite-opposition politicians who opposed Jomo Kenyatta, however found themselves arrested and held in custody for long periods often without trials among them were Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Tom Mboya, Ronald Ngala and John Kariuki. "Mzee", meaning for "elderman" ruled Kenya from 1964 until his sudden death in August 1978, at age of 82, under his
leadership, Kenya developed into one of Africa's most stable and prosperous nations. And Kenyatta was succeeded by his vice president Mr. Daniel Toirotich Arap Moi, who took over the presidency in a constitutional way. Kenya was a de-facto one party state, since the ruling Kenya African Nationalist Union (KANU) made itself the sole legal party in Kenya, since independence. There were allegations of conspiracies to overthrow the government of president D.T Arap Moi, the attempted coup by the Kenyan Air Force in August, 1982, was put down by forces loyal to the president, at least 120 people died and there was widespread looting in towns, 12 ringleaders were subsequently sentenced to death and some 900 others received jail sentences, and the entire Kenyan Air Force was disbanded and replaced by a new unit. In 1992, the Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi made a political liberalization allowing the country's first multi party elections in three decades, the balloting was marred by violence and fraud, political turmoil occurred over the following years. In the multi-party elections of December, 2002, president Daniel Toirotich Arap Moi admitted defeat, stepped down following fair and peaceful elections then got retired.

A one time vice President under President Daniel Arap Moi, who makes Mwai Kibaki his vice president, Kibaki also keeps the Finance portfolio, running as the candidate of the multi-ethnic, united opposition group, National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), defeated KANU sole candidate Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta and assumed presidency ending one party Kenya African Nationalist Union (KANU) entrenched rule. Having been elected the third president of Kenya, he is wheeled to Parliament (Bunghe) to be sworn in on the 9th of January, 2003. Mr. Muwai Kibaki's re-election in the Kenyan national elections of December, 2007, brought charges of vote rigging from the opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) candidate Mr. Raila Odinga and unleashed two months of violence in which as many as 2000 people died.

The country is now under Government of National Unity (GNU) followed by a UN sponsored talks in late February produced a power-sharing accord bringing the opposition leader Mr. Raila Amollo Sodinga into the government in the restored position of prime minister since 2008, to end months of violence after his supporters claimed he had been cheated of victory by allies of president Mwai Kibaki. The 28th of February, marked couple of years since Kenya signed a UN sponsored power-sharing deal that ended two terrifying months of post-election violence that Kenya saw over 2,000 people dead and 500, 000 families internally displaced.

The unwillingness of the ex-ruling-Kenya African National Union (KANU) to seriously the colonial fundamental issues that had been so effective against African interests meant that regional inequalities in development and resources mis-management continued to fuel the demand for devolution throughout Kenya's half-century of independence. Therefore it came as no surprise when in August, 2010 devolution became one of the most divisive issues in the run-up to the constitutional referendum on 4th
August, 2010 where the vote were finally tallied 66% to 34% in favour of ratifying the new constitution. A referendum on constitutional reform is intended to limit the powers of the president and set up a commission to settle land disputes that fuelled past violations in Kenya, the vote on new constitutional reform was part of a deal that ended deadly clashes after a disputed election of December, 2007. The vote on new constitution also provides an opportunity to re-shape the country's political landscape, among the measures which will now go ahead are the introduction of a bill of rights, land reform and new curbs on the president's power, and for Kenya's security forces to show that they are capable of carrying out their professional duties in line with international standards and norms. Kenya has adopted a new constitution, more than three weeks after it was overwhelmingly approved in a national referendum, in a resounding "Yes" vote on the 4th of August, 2010. The new constitution will bring a more decentralised political system, which will limit the president's powers and replace corrupt provincial governments with local counties. It is also hoped that the changes will help bring an end to the tribal differences that have brought violence to the country in the past. On the 27th of August, President Mwai Kibaki formally ushered in a modern, brand new constitution for Kenya at a colourful public ceremony in Nairobi, his promulgation of the new basic law effectively ended the independence era "Lancaster house constitution", giving birth to what proudful Kenyans are dubbing the Second Republic.

What, in fact, carried the day were the guarantees on devolution entrenched in Chapter 11 of the constitution, which provided for the following: That there shall be a country government for each of the country's 47 counties, to be headed by governor. That, the county governments shall have reliable sources of reliable revenues (15% from central government, and anymore they can raise themselves via taxes, fees and other activities), and an Equalisation Fund that would ensure that all 47 counties will be equitably resourced financially. Generally the devolution exercise is meant to achieve eight objectives, chief among which are: To give powers of self-governance to the people; to recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs; and to enhance their participation in decisions affecting their lives. According to an expert, "it's a big leap in the democratisation process of the country. This constitution is a major transformation of this Republic". But the people of Kenya will have to wait until the next national election between August to December, 2012 at least to enjoy their newly-given constitutional powers. The first Kenyan constitution was negotiated with the British colonists in London when Kenya acceded to independence in the early 1960s. The Kenyan constitution amended as a republic about eleven times, it's to be recalled that the 2008 amendments established the coalition government and the position of premiership. Kenya has been the only peaceful country in the region continuously for decades, hence the relative growth of it's economy in the rest of the region.
The capital Nairobi has been hit by a spate of grenade attacks a week after Kenya sent air and ground troops to Somalia to pursue Al-Shabab militants following spate of cross-border kidnappings. The Al-Shabab had threatened reprisals if Kenyan troops did not leave Somalia. Several foreigners have been seized in Kenya by suspected Somali militants and reportedly taken into Somalia. The Al-Shabab denies carrying out any kidnappings.

Thousands of mourners lined the route of the procession to the state funeral of Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai in October, 2011. It took place at Uhuru National Park, Nairobi's largest open space that she fought to save from developers. The head of state during the procession praised her courage, tenacity, and "selfless service to the nation". "The best way we can honour her is to carry out on the great work she started especially in the fields of environmental conservation, social justice, human rights and democracy", President Mwai Kibaki told the crowds gathered at Freedom corner where the service took place, the site of the 60-storey office block she successfully campaigned against being built in the 1980s. Mrs. Wangari Maathai, who died in September after a battle with ovarian cancer, became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 following her nationwide campaign to plant more trees and to promote women's rights and transparent government. Her countrymen admired her as "the Woman who did simple things in a great way". Her remains were to be placed in a Bamboo-frame coffin made of papyrus reeds and water hyacinth and draped with a Kenyan flag, because she opposed in live against cutting of trees. After the funeral, she was cremated at a private ceremony. Trees have been planted in her memory and some roads in Nairobi are also set to be named after her.

Two presidential candidates and others in Kenya are to stand trial over crimes against humanity following post-election violence in 2007, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has ruled. Finance Minister Uhuru Kenyatta and former minister William Ruto will both face charges. They are among five prominent Kenyans - all of whom deny the accusations - who will stand trial. Kenya's president Mwai Kibaki has appealed for people to stay calm after the news. "Our great nation has had its share of challenging times," President Mwai Kibaki said in a statement. Mr Uhuru Kenyatta - son of Kenya's founder President Jomo Kenyatta and a man who has been ranked as one of its richest citizens - is to stand trial with cabinet secretary Francis Mutaura. The pair, both allies of President Kibaki, are accused of crimes against humanity, including murder and persecution.

**Uhuru Kenyatta**

A former Deputy Prime Minister of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta stands accused by the International Criminal Court of Crimes against Humanity following Kenya’s post-electoral violence in 2008. Uhuru Kenyatta, who recently resigned as Kenya's deputy primeminister of finance, was indicted on the
8th March, 2011 on five counts of crimes against humanity. As a supporter of the incumbent president Mwai Kibaki, Uhuru Kenyatta is alleged planned, financed, and coordinated the violence perpetrated against perceived opposition supporters during the post-election violence from 27 December, 2007 to 29 February, 2008. All the charges against Uhuru Kenyatta were confirmed by pre-trial chamber I on 23 January, 2012.

Henry Kosgey

He was indicted on 8 March, 2011 on four counts of crimes against humanity with regard to the situation in Kenya. On 23 January, 2012 the ICC pre-trial chamber decided not to confirm the charges against Kosgey, therefore ending the proceedings at the ICC.

Francis Muthaura

He was indicted on 8 March, 2011 on five counts of crimes against humanity. As the head of the public service, secretary to the cabinet, and Chairman of the National Security and Advisory Committee of president Mwai Kibaki, he is alleged to have planned, financed, and coordinated the violent response against opposition supporters during the post-election violence of 2007. All the charges against him were confirmed by pre-trial chamber II on 23 January, 2012.

William Ruto

He was indicted on 8 March, 2011 on four counts of crimes against humanity. On 1st August, 2011 the charges were reduced to three counts. Ruto, a top leader in an ad-hoc Kalenjin organization, is accused of being criminally responsible for the murder, deportation, torture, and persecution of civilians in the towns of Kapsabet, Nandi Hills, Turbo, and the greater Eldoret areas of Kenya during the 2007 post-election violence.

Joshua Arap Sang

He was indicted on 8 March, 2011 on three counts of crimes against humanity. A broadcaster for the kass FM Radio-station in Kenya, Sang is accused of inciting Kalenjin youths to target civilians of Kikuyu, Kamba, and Kissi ethnic-groups, who were perceived to be supporters of the "Party of National Unity".

On the 27th of August, President Mwai Kibaki formally ushered in a modern, brand new constitution for Kenya at a colourful public ceremony in Nairobi’ In his promulgation of the new basic law which effectively ended the independence era “Lancaster House Constitution”, giving birth to what proudful Kenyans are dubbing the Second Republic. Kenya’s attempt at devolution of state power has a long history. The new Kenyan Constitution at the promulgation ceremony what it says about general elections has raised great debates. According to the new Kenyan Constitution, when the general elections come, Kenya will have it's first taste of gubernatorial
polls. Up for grabs are 47 seats for would be county governors in the country's 47 counties. The counties are the newest administrative prefectures, created in the most radical reforms in the entire history of decentralisation in the country. The current 8 provinces including the capital Nairobi which stered by provincial commissioners appointed by the president, will effectively be phased out. As the new constitution of Kenya, 2012 is would be a transitional year. Kenya begins a transition from a centralised to a devolved government, starts the journey of empowering 47 county governments that will be charged with managing the affairs of the people at the grassroots level. The 47 governors will be elected directly by the people. They will be "mini presidents" with powers of control over county resources, finances and administrative functions. "Just as the president, who is a politician, runs a government through the cabinet and civil service, the governor of county also will run the county using using the county executive and the county civil service" said a constitutional expert. Already county governors' seats have attracted numerous political veterans greenhorns alike. Seasoned business managers, Civil service technocrats, and plethora of other opinion-shapers have expressed interest in the new gubernatorial seats.

Kenya's police say an explosion which injured 33 in the capital, Nairobi, may have been caused by a bomb, after initially blaming an electrical fault’ The blast tore apart a shopping complex on Moi Avenue at lunchtime. A witness has said a bag was abandoned next to her just before the explosion. Prime Minister Raila Odinga has said the blast had a terrorist link. Militant group Al-Shaabab has repeatedly threatened to stage revenge attacks after Kenya sent troops to Somalia. There has been a string of grenade and bomb blasts across Kenya in recent months, killing several people. Five of those injured are said to be in a critical condition. Police spokesman Eric Kiraithe told the BBC he no longer believed an electrical fault had caused the blast, as police commissioner Mathew Iteere had initially suggested me 28 people are said to have been injured by the blast. In a statement, Mr Kiraithe said the cause of the explosion had not been established. "The investigating team is exploring the possibility that the blast was caused by criminals using an improvised explosive device," he said. "Initial examination of the scene indicates that the possibility of a conventional bomb is remote." Mr. Raila Odinga told reporters at the site of the blast: "This is terrorism... this is a heinous act, we are under threat, but we will not be cowed." Kenya Power, the country’s sole electricity distributor, has also ruled out any electrical malfunction as the cause of the blast. The BBC's Kevin Mwachiro says glass and shoes and clothes from the small shops inside the building were scattered across the street. TV pictures have shown people pouring into the streets from nearby buildings to get away from the scene of the fire, the AP news agency reports. Moi Avenue is a major road which would have been busy during the lunch hour, AP says. According to an eyewitness, there was a huge blast and debris flew in different directions injuring people in the vicinity, the Nation newspaper reports.
Kenya Has Banned Its Citizens From Going To The Middle East For Domestic Work Due To Growing Concerns About Abuse’ The east African nation became another country in a long list to ban their citizens from arranging domestic work in the Middle East. Maids working in countries like Saudi Arabia, usually coming from Africa, the Sub-Continent and South-East Asia, have continuously been the targets of abhorrent mistreatment: from sexual abuse to intense mental abuse and even murder. The horror stories that foreign domestic workers bring back from the Middle East have become notorious. One woman returned with 24 nails and needles in her body. Another woman came back with a broken wrist. Some walked out of the plane completely wrapped in bandages. A few even needed to be carried out on stretchers. Earlier this year, the Philippines said they would not lift the ban on their maids getting work in Jordan until the country addressed cases of abuse and purged the recruitment process of ‘undesirables’. Lebanon has a name from itself too, a few months ago even the UN urged the country to look into a case where an Ethiopian maid, who later killed herself, was filmed being beaten in the street outside the Ethiopian consulate; it’s also only a year since the Madagascan government chartered a plane to help 86 Madagascan maids escape Lebanon, some of whom had been working as ‘Slave Maids’ for as long as 15 years. These are not isolated incidents, they are becoming so numerous that they can now be seen as cold statistics for the systematic and unheeded racism and elitism that is rife across the Middle East. It seems that people from the areas are seen less as people and simply labour. Over the last few years the UAE, and Dubai especially, have come under increasing pressure to protect construction workers: men, usually from the Sub-Continent, who, like the maids, had been recruited in their home countries by promises of good salaries and good treatment, who had arrived in the country to immediately have their passports and documents taken from them, be paid an amount barely enough to sustain themselves, let alone families back home, and to live in cramped inhuman conditions, sleeping in construction huts with upwards of 15 other men. One of the latest construction plans in the oil-rich country was for a new Guggenheim gallery to be built, though this has been put on hold, rumours say because of the treatment of workers. This is hopefully a sign for the future. The international community is often scared to condemn actions in the Gulf countries for fear of hurting economic interests, though maybe people might start to see that its time to stop worrying about selfish interests and worry more about the human situations and costs that a lack of action can cause.

Socio-political Pieces in the East and Horn of African jigsaw in the Kenyan perspective'

OPINION: If all goes according to plan, East Africa will be uniquely positioned to supply the economies of the Gulf and South Asia with food and energy. The resources and the labour supply are assured, but the most critical piece is the politics. Can the relative success of the East
African Community (EAC) in moving towards a single market and political cooperation survive a radical expansion? South Sudan will be the next member, and Ethiopia is not far behind. Given Ethiopia's position as the fastest-growing state in the region, with the biggest army, diplomats say a face-saving formula will be found to invite it to join the community this year. Somalia, whose civil war has drawn in armies from four East African states, also wants to join the EAC – partly because it doesn't trust the Ethiopian-dominated Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD). Almost every state in East Africa has announced that it has substantial oil and gas reserves. To Uganda's more than 2bn barrels of reserves have been added oil finds in Ethiopia's south Omo region, oil in Kenya's Turkana basin and Tanzania's spectacular gas finds in Lindi and Mtwara. Sudan and South Sudan are established – if antagonistic – oil producers and exporters, and the more adventurous exploration companies report finding substantial deposits along Somalia's coastline.

Key to the new East African project are the region's two biggest economies: Kenya and Ethiopia. The political differences between Nairobi's competitive party system and Addis Ababa's developmental authoritarianism are not insurmountable. Going back to the Cold War, pro-US Kenya cooperated with pro-Soviet Ethiopia. This time the imperative for political and economic cooperation is far stronger. After initial scepticism about Kenya's invasion of Somalia, Ethiopia now sees it as giving an important boost to the African Union (AU) force there. Kenya's troops, unlike Ethiopia's, are coming under the AU command. And Kenya's plan to take Kismayo port, the main supply point for the Al-Shabab insurrectionists, will change the dynamics. To prevent a nationalist backlash, the AU forces will have to secure a new accord with the differing clans to keep out Al-Shabaab. After the bloody aftermath of its 2006 invasion, Ethiopia has been more willing to accept Kenya's idea of a negotiated security pact across Somalia's complex clan structure. Incremental successes in Somalia this year are encouraging both sides, while American and European security experts watch closely but sceptically. Policy makers in Nairobi and Addis Ababa say they accept they are in Somalia for the long haul – even if that message is difficult to sell to their people. Another difficult message is for Addis Ababa and Nairobi to persuade Uganda and Tanzania to stay in the party. Prospects of rapid development of oil production in Kenya may obviate Uganda's plans for a refinery supplying the region from its production centre in Bunyoro. President Yoweri Museveni, who wants to be an executive president of the EAC, has little enthusiasm for Kenya's Lamu project and did not attend the commissioning ceremony with other regional leaders in April. Tanzania, a member of the Southern African Development Community, is pulled in another direction. South African companies are playing a leading role in the development of its gas and mining industries. But the East African project needs full backing from Kampala and Dar es Salaam. In all of this, Kenya's role – as a central point between Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda – will be critical. But first it has to hold a credible national election and
appoint a foreign-policy team to shape a strategy that can win support across the region.

A team led by Meave Leakey announced August 8, 2012, the discovery of a face and two jawbones belonging to Homo rudolfensis’ Homo rudolfensis was a species of the genus Homo that is known only through a handful of representative fossils, the first of which was discovered by Bernard Ngeneo, a member of a team led by anthropologist Richard Leakey and zoologist Meave Leakey in 1972, at Koobi Fora on the east side of Lake Rudolf, now Lake Turkana in northern Kenya. The scientific name Pithecanthropus rudolfensis was proposed in 1978 by V. P. Alekseyev. It was later changed to Homo rudolfensis by Bernard Wood, for the specimen Skull 1470 (KNM ER 1470).

Kenya Not to Cancel Power Purchase Deal With Ethiopia'

Kenya has dismissed calls for the cancellation of a multi-million dollar power purchase agreement with Ethiopia in protest of a massive hydropower project that water scientists say will alter the lives of residents of Turkana region in Kenya. Prime Minister Raila Odinga said despite ongoing efforts to expand electricity generation through investments in green energy initiatives, the demand for electric power in the East African nation would continue to grow, which justifies the need to import power from neighboring Ethiopia to meet the shortfalls. "We will lower the cost of energy through the importation of power from Ethiopia," Odinga said. Environmentalists say the 1.7 billion U.S. dollar hydropower project would alter the lives of half a million residents of Lake Turkana and other regions neighboring Southern Ethiopia. There are fears that the Omo River, which supplies water to the Gibe III Dam under construction, would affect water levels on Lake Victoria if its course is altered as proposed in the design of the power plant. Kenyan parliamentarian, Ekwe Ethuro, who represents Turkana, said his constituents were deeply concerned that the environmental impact of the project could far outweigh the benefits. "Any project that alters the flow and course of the Omo River will have effects," Ethuro said. Odinga said Nairobi was aware of the environmental impacts the Dam project would have on the residents of Turkana, but insisted the analysis by Kenyan scientists working on the project showed it would be temporary. "Omo River is the biggest river flowing into Lake Turkana. Our concern it (project) will undermine the flow of the river. Our scientists are working on it. It is true there will be a disruption but this is temporary. The bulk of the water will flow into the irrigation project," Odinga said, to much parliamentary opposition. Odinga said although there were possible environmental impacts, Kenya was in no position to stop Ethiopia from using the waters of Omo River as a resource. "We have engaged Ethiopia constructively. Ethiopia will sell electricity to us and we are financing this project because it will lower the cost of energy," Odinga asserted. The two governments formed a joint council to deal with matters arising as a result of the use of the Omo River waters, amid complaints from international non governmental
organizations. Kenya aims to raise its annual electricity output to 15,000 megawatts while Ethiopia's target is to raise electric power production to 37,000 MW and become the region's biggest exporter of power. The two countries signed a power purchase agreement in 2011 and agreed on the terms of constructing a regional power inter-connector to link their grids and implement the regional trade in electricity.

The Mau Mau Massacre Documents Revealed'

The fullest account yet of a massacre which took place during the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya in the 1950s, has been given in Foreign Office documents released by the National Archives. Eleven Kenyans were beaten to death by prison warders at the Hola detention camp. Dozens more were injured. There were no prosecutions after the Hola massacre. Survivor Wambugu Wa Nyingi is one of three Kenyans currently suing the UK government for alleged torture. The newly declassified documents reveal that in 1958 there were serious problems of discipline at the Hola detention camp near Garissa, eastern Kenya, where Mau Mau suspects were being held.

Poison theory: Detainees complained of being treated "like slaves" while carrying out enforced work on an irrigation scheme. Another grievance was over their diet, which they claimed was responsible for many diseases. On 3 March, 1959, 11 Kenyans died at Hola. Initial public statements suggested the men had been poisoned by contaminated water. But three days later, Kenya's governor, Evelyn Baring, wrote to the secretary of state for the colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, saying preliminary reports had been "misleading". The colonial secretary began to demand daily updates from Nairobi.

"I am sure you will understand my anxiety to have fullest possible information by morning of Tuesday March 10 at the latest. Please let me know what further publicity you propose and whether or not disciplinary proceedings or charges are likely to follow from these findings", wrote Mr Lennox-Boyd. On 9 March, Mr Baring sent this telegram to London: "The injuries are reported to be consistent with being caused by heavy sticks or batons and/or boots". In Parliament, the colonial secretary was to face awkward questions about whether the government had, in effect, had a plan authorising the unlawful use of violence against detainees in Kenya. Mr Lennox-Boyd wanted to establish how many British officers and African warders were alleged to have been implicated in the assaults on detainees at Hola. The governor replied that two European prison officers had been in charge. He said there were also 40 warders with batons, supervising the prisoners at work, and a special platoon of 51 warders as a riot squad, equipped with batons and shields.

'Flowery officialese' As an inquest got under way in Nairobi in March 1959, Mr Baring sent another cable to London about the proceedings: "Government Chemist told of examination water from cart and stomach contents. Both negative, no poisonous substances found". The hearing on
26 March saw the Hola camp commandant, Michael Sullivan, giving evidence. The telegram from Government House in Nairobi to the Secretary of State read: "Sullivan proved very bad witness. An unintelligent man with poor education. He would not directly answer questions but took refuge in rambling statements couched in flowery officialese. Magistrate not impressed". Summing up the magistrate's findings, Mr Baring told London: "Broadly, death was caused by shock and haemorrhage due to multiple bruising caused by violence". He went on: "Evidence as a whole so conflicting and unreliable that impossible to be certain of exact happenings on March 3 when things got out of control of one man"...... "Not a single witness of Hola Prison Staff, warders or detainees made any real attempt to tell truth".

In May 1959: The colonial secretary wrote again to Mr Baring: "Public opinion is extremely sensitive on Hola problem.... I am sure you will agree we should try to let this unhappy incident drop out of sight as soon as possible". Mr Wa Nyingi and his two fellow claimants won a legal case in the UK in October to make a claim against the British government. The government accepts that the colonial administration tortured detainees, but denies liability. By Peter Biles, BBC World Affairs Correspondent

Raila Odinga, president in waiting'

ION - January 20, 2013: After having come close to beating Mwai Kibaki in the December 2007 presidential election, Raila Odinga looks to be favourite to win the next one, the first round of which is set to take place in March 2013. Son of historic opposition leader Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, he joined the opposition to the Daniel arap Moi regime but later rallied to it. His early political career was marked by imprisonment and exile and he fell only just short of election to Kenya’s supreme office in the 2007 election. The result of the election was widely contested and resulted in several months of inter-communal violence. At the start of 2008, he was appointed prime minister at the head of a coalition government. He has taken up the mantle of his father and, with it, his political enmities: just like his father with the first Kenyan president, Jomo Kenyatta, Raila Odinga is engaged in a constant running battle with Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta. Although he followed in his father's footsteps in going into politics and founding his own party, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) in 2005, he is a self-made man where business is concerned. He has set up a number of companies: East African Spectre operates a factory producing gas canisters; Spectre International, which took over a decrepit state-controlled company, runs an ethanol-producing plant and Pan African Petroleum imports oil. With such prosperous companies under their control, Odinga and his wife figure among Kenya’s wealthiest citizens. Today, these businesses have become a family affair, with several members of the Odinga clan involved in running them. Mwai Kibaki, a Kikuyu, having had two terms of office, Odinga considers that it is time for a Luo like himself to take over the presidency rather than the Kikuyu Kenyatta. But political alliances are volatile in Kenya and Odinga
will not be certain of becoming the fourth president of Kenya until the very last minute, even with current vice president Kalonzo Musyoka as his running mate.

Kenya's DPM and presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta wins election by slim margin'

'NAIROBI (Reuters) - March 9, 2013: Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Kenya's founding president, won the presidential election with a slim margin of 50.03 percent of votes cast, provisional figures showed, just enough to avoid a run-off after a race that has divided the nation. Kenyatta, who faces international charges of crimes against humanity, secured victory over his main rival, Prime Minister Raila Odinga, who trailed with 43.28 percent of the vote. To secure an outright win a candidate needed more than 50 percent of the votes. Kenyatta, the deputy prime minister, achieved that but with a margin of just 4,100 of the more than 12.3 million votes cast. The first-round win, which must be officially confirmed by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, means Kenyans who waited five days for the result of the vote will not now face a second round that would have prolonged uncertainty. The winner also needs to get at least 25 percent of the votes in 24 counties out of 47. This is expected be confirmed by the electoral commission. The commission is due to announce the official result on Saturday at 11 a.m. (0800 GMT).

But such a narrow win will almost certainly prompt legal challenges from Odinga's camp, which complained about the election process throughout. Odinga also lost in a disputed vote in 2007 that led to weeks of tribal killings. John Githongo, a former senior government official-turned-whistleblower, urged the rival coalitions, Odinga's CORD and Kenyatta's Jubilee, to ensure calm. "Jubilee and CORD, what you and your supporters say now determines continued peace and stability in Kenya. We are watching you!" he said on Twitter. International observers broadly said the vote and count had been transparent so far and the electoral commission, which replaced an old, discredited body, promised a credible vote. Provisional figures displayed by the election commission showed Kenyatta won 6,173,433 votes out of a total of 12,338,667 ballots cast. Odinga secured 5,340,546 votes. The result will pose a dilemma for Kenya's big Western donors because Kenyatta is due to go on trial in The Hague on charges of crimes against humanity, accused of orchestrating the tribal violence five years ago.

REBUILDING A REPUTATION: The United States and other Western states warned before the vote that diplomatic ties would be complicated with a win by Kenyatta who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court along with his running mate, William Ruto. Western nations have given a broad range of views on how to deal with Kenya under Kenyatta and to what extent they will be ready to deal with his government. "It won't be a headache as long as he cooperates with the ICC," said one Western diplomat. "We respect the decision of the majority of the Kenyan voters."
Both Kenyatta and Ruto deny the charges and have said they would cooperate to clear their names. However, Kenyatta had to fend off jibes during the campaign by his rival Odinga that he would have to run government by Skype from The Hague while he attended hearings. Kenyans hope this vote, which has until now passed off with only pockets of unrest on voting day, would restore their nation's reputation as one of Africa's most stable democracies after mayhem last time. Cars drove through the streets honking their horns, and one taxi driver shouted "50+1, that's OK," referring to the 50 percent plus one vote threshold required by law to win the vote, as noisy pockets of people yelled on the rainy streets.

The test will be whether any challenges to the outcome are worked out in the courts, and do not spill into the streets. Odinga's camp had said even before the result that they were considering legal action, but said they would pursue it through the courts and the newly reformed judiciary. That is a change from 2007, when Odinga said he could not trust the judiciary at the time to treat the case fairly. Kenyatta's camp had also complained about delays in counting and other aspects of the process. But many Kenyans had said this race was more transparent than previous votes. Turnout reached 86 percent of the 14.3 million eligible voters, in a nation where tribal loyalties largely trump ideology at the ballot box. Uhuru Kenyatta, comes from the Kikuyu tribe, Kenya's biggest ethnic community, accounting for about a fifth of Kenya's 40 million people, and Odinga, 68, is a Luo. Their ethnic groups alone could not have secured victory, so both picked running mates from other tribes to beef up their support.

Kenya - Electoral Politics’

Updates: Kenya's Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta has been confirmed as the winner of the presidential election, and vowed to work with his rivals. He won 50.07% of the vote, officials said, narrowly avoiding a run-off. But his main challenger, Raila Odinga, alleged massive fraud and said he would challenge the results of the "tainted election" in the Supreme Court. Mr Kenyatta is set to face trial at the International Criminal Court over violence that followed the 2007 polls. He is accused of fuelling the communal violence that saw more than 1,000 people killed and 600,000 forced from their homes. 'System failures'

After the results were announced, Mr Kenyatta told cheering supporters he would serve all Kenyans "without fear or favour". Speaking at the Catholic University in Nairobi, he called on Mr Odinga and other leaders to "join us in moving our nation forward." Earlier, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) said the latest elections had been complex, but also credible and transparent. It said the turnout, at 86%, was the largest ever. IEBC chairman Issack Hassan praised the candidates who had already conceded victory and urged others to follow suit. However, Mr Odinga, the current prime minister, said the electoral
commission had "failed Kenyans" and that democracy itself was "on trial". But after announcing his Supreme Court challenge, he also appealed for calm, saying: "Any violence could destroy this nation forever." This was the tightest of races with the narrowest of margins. He says that how Mr. Odinga now handles his supporters will determine whether his dispute stays in the courts or spills out on the streets.

Court process: Mr Kenyatta's Jubilee Coalition party said it was "proud and honoured for the trust" bestowed on it, adding that it had taken a message to the people and that "we are grateful to the people of Kenya for accepting this message". Early on Saturday, small groups of Kenyatta supporters celebrated in Nairobi, hooting car horns and singing. But the newly confirmed president could face difficult relations with Western countries. In July, he is due to go on trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague for alleged crimes against humanity. Mr Kenyatta's running mate, William Ruto, also faces similar charges. Both men deny the accusations. In his victory speech, Mr Kenyatta restated his promise to co-operate "with all nations and international institutions". The ICC has agreed to postpone Mr Ruto's trial by a month until May after his lawyers complained of not having enough time to prepare his defence.

Countries including the US and UK have hinted that Mr Kenyatta's election as president would have consequences for their relations with Kenya. The comments have been dismissed in Nairobi as foreign interference. A new electronic system for transmitting vote results was designed to eliminate the risk of fraud, and thus avoid a repeat of the post-poll violence of 2007. But the count has been plagued with technical glitches, including a programming error that led to the number of rejected votes being multiplied by a factor of eight. Mr Odinga's Cord alliance had earlier complained that votes from 11 constituencies were missing, in effect leaving him more than 250,000 votes short.

Votes cast: 12,330,028
Uhuru Kenyatta: 6,173,433 (50.07%)
Raila Odinga: 5,340,546 (43.31%)
Turnout: 86%

Kenya Election At The Scene:
Politics: Presidential elections in 2007 led to widespread unrest, denting the country's reputation for stability. A power-sharing government was eventually formed. A referendum on a new constitution in August 2010 produced a resounding "yes" vote

Economy: The economy has been recovering over recent years.

International: Kenya's military entered Somalia at the end of 2011 to fight al-Shabab Islamist militants, but has seen some violence spill back over its borders
Kibera slum is not normally considered friendly turf for Uhuru Kenyatta. Yet residents remained calm after the election of Kenya's richest man as their next leader. People are placing their faith in the new constitution and recent judicial reforms. Raila Odinga is challenging the results in the Supreme Court and people say they will wait for the legal process to run its course. Some point to the reforms as a reason for the relative calm compared with five years ago, when Kibera was a flashpoint. "Our behaviour is being shaped by the new constitution," said Steve, a Kibera resident. But there are worries about the future. Many hope Mr Kenyatta will uphold the new constitution and continue to co-operate with the International Criminal Court, where he is fighting charges of crimes against humanity. While the mantra across Kenya is "amani" (peace), some campaigners are warning against a "peace coma" - a failure to address past injustices which would prevent Kenya from moving on.

**Uhuru Kenyatta**

Aged 51

Son of founding President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta

Heir to one of the largest fortunes in Kenya, according to Forbes magazine

Entered politics in 1990s, groomed by former President Daniel Arap Moi to be his successor

Known as "njamba" ("hero") in his Kikuyu language

Indicted by ICC on charges of crimes against humanity for 2007 post-election violence - which he denies

Married father of three.

March 16, 2013: Raila Odinga files Kenya election appeal

Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga has filed a Supreme Court appeal against Uhuru Kenyatta's narrow victory in the presidential election's first round. Mr Kenyatta beat Mr Odinga comfortably by 50.07% to 43.28% on 4 March, avoiding a run-off by only 8,100 votes. But Mr Odinga has accused the electoral authorities of manipulating the result. Police fired tear gas to disperse about 100 supporters of his Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (Cord) who had gathered outside the Supreme Court. The police had warned them that they would not be allowed to do so. Some of the crowd were wearing t-shirts bearing slogans including "I support the petition" and "Democracy on trial". The presidential, legislative and municipal elections held 12 days ago were the first since the 2007 poll which set off ethnic and political violence in which more than 1,200 people were killed. Mr Kenyatta and his running mate, William Ruto, are facing trial on charges of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for allegedly fuelling the unrest. They deny the charges.
'Strong case' Lawyers for Mr Odinga said their petition to the Supreme Court included allegations of vote manipulation, as well as problems with the registration of voters and an electronic vote counting mechanism. "I have no hesitation whatsoever in lawfully challenging the election outcome," Mr Odinga told reporters outside his offices in Nairobi. "These failures dwarf anything Kenyans have ever witnessed in any previous election," he added. However, the prime minister urged his supporters not to resort to violence. "We cannot begin what is supposed to be a new era under a new constitution in the same old ways," he added, referring to the charter adopted in 2010. The Minister of Lands, James Orengo, a senior Cord official, said the party had a constitutional right to file the petition and a "strong case". "Expect a new election, and this time around no monkey-business. I think we're going to win and win in the first round," he told KTN TV. "I can assure you that we have the evidence, and we have the will and the preparedness to prosecute the petition," he added.

Mr Orengo nevertheless promised that Cord would respect the Supreme Court's ruling if it went against the party, and urged Mr Kenyatta and his supporters to declare that they would do likewise. In his acceptance speech last Saturday, Mr Kenyatta described the election as "free and fair" and a "triumph of democracy". The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has also insisted that the vote was credible and that it is ready for any legal scrutiny. International observers said the election was largely free, fair and credible, and that the electoral commission had conducted its business in an open and transparent manner. Mr Odinga was the runner-up to Mwai Kibaki in the 2007 presidential election, which he also said was stolen.

March 29, 2013: The Impact Of Kenya's Polls On The Region'

The Star Opinion: Kenya hosts the third largest UN complex outside the US and Europe. For decades now, Kenya has been the landing pad for many operations – military, humanitarian and rescue missions – in the Horn of Africa and the larger Great Lakes Region, South Sudan, Ethiopia and to some extent Uganda during the civil war in the early 1970s. The Port of Mombasa has been the lifeline of many countries in East Africa and the Great Lakes Region. Beneficiaries of this gateway to the Indian Ocean have included Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, the DRC, Northern Tanzania and at one time served Zambia before the Tazara Railway line was built to connect Zambia to the port of Dar es Salaam. The unique position that Kenya commands in East Africa is the reason why the elections early this month became the business of every organisation and government with interest in the development of the region. The international community has invested heavily in the country and continues to do so in the hope that all will be well. If Kenya falls apart, many things can go wrong. Many organisations, governments, humanitarian agencies, individuals and the thousands of refugees will suffer irreparable damage.
We have a new constitution which will be three years old this August. The recent elections were the first to be held under the new dispensation. Kenyans had very high hopes that it would go well and catapult the country to new levels of economic development. The Kenyan voters thoroughly scrutinised the campaign manifestos of the main political parties which focused on infrastructure, regional trade, regional integration and freedom of movement of people, goods and services and peace within the EAC. President Kibaki is in office on borrowed time. He will vacate the office as soon as a new President is confirmed by the Supreme Court of Kenya. If the Supreme Court nullifies the results, Kenyans will go back to the polls in 60 days with another possible rerun if none of the candidates garners more than 50 per cent of the votes cast. If this happens, Kenya may not get a new President for the next four or five months, if one factors in three weeks following completion of elections before a new President is sworn in.

Mwai Kibaki’s departure will have a direct impact on the region’s economic development. Together with President Museveni, they have toyed with the idea of having a more efficient railway line running from Mombasa through Malaba and Busia to Kampala and a possible extension to Kigali and Bujumbura in the foreseeable future. It remains to be seen whether the new regime will pursue such ventures with vigor and whether the new President will find chemistry with Museveni. Five months before Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia passed away, the three leaders of the region – Zenawi, Salva Kiir of South Sudan and Kibaki performed a groundbreaking ceremony in Lamu to launch a multibillion dollar infrastructure project that would connect South Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia and facilitate the export of South Sudan oil through the new Lamu Port. The road, rail and oil pipeline will open up trade and human traffic between the peoples of Eastern Africa. The pace and completion of this massive project will very much depend on the new Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and whether he, Salva Kiir and the new Kenyan President will appreciate the need for this project. Or will the ongoing talks between Salva Kiir and Omar El Bashir stall the project should South Sudan choose to deal with the old foe?

As Kenya puts its political house in order, it may be necessary for other member states of the East African Community to play their part and move some common projects forward. One such project is the Lake Victoria Basin Commission launched in 2006 with its headquarters in Kisumu. This is the greatest natural asset that belongs to all the member states of the East African Community. The lake needs to be restored to its former glory by carrying out massive environmental clean up, removal of the hyacinth that has become a menace choking fish and denying the region’s fishing community their time honoured livelihood. The lake has an idle dry dock at the Port of Kisumu which used to be the conveyor belt for goods and passengers ferried from Mombasa and Dar es Salaam to Northern Tanzania’s Mwanza and Musoma and Uganda’s Entebbe and Jinja during
the days of the East African Railways and Harbours under the then East African Common Services. With stable governments in the Great Lakes region, water transport around the lake should be revived to reactivate trade among the states sharing the waters of Lake Victoria. Investments in tourism ventures including luxury yatches should freely ply the ports in Kisumu, Entebbe, Mwanza and Jinja. If transport across the lake is revived, pressure on our roads will be greatly reduced as bulk commercial products including oil can be transported across the lake to Northern Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and DRC. As Kenya awaits the outcome of the Supreme Court verdict this weekend, the rest of Africa must wish Kenya well during these trying moments. Jerry Okungu is a Media Consultant

March 30, 2013: Kenya Supreme Court Rejects Raila Odinga's Election Petition

The Supreme Court of Kenya has this evening rejected the election petition by Hon. Raila Odinga. The election petition filed by the Cord presidential candidate and Kenya’s Prime Minister challenged the declaration of Jubilee’s Uhuru Kenyatta as winner of the March 4 presidential election. The issues included in the petition were whether Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto were validly elected and declared President-elect and Deputy President-elect respectively. The petition also sought determination on whether the presidential election was conducted in a free, fair, transparent and credible manner and whether the rejected votes ought to have been included in determining the final tallies of votes. The Supreme Court, a six-judge panel, has ruled that Kenyatta and Ruto were validly elected and declared President and Deputy-President respectively and that the election was free and fair. “The decision was unanimous,” Chief Justice Willy Mutunga said while reading the ruling. The panel, however, ruled that the rejected votes should not have been included in the final tally of votes. Raila joins a long line of election petitions denied in Kenya’s history.

KENYA - More from the BBC:

Kenya's Supreme Court has upheld Uhuru Kenyatta's presidential election victory, rejecting several petitions challenging the vote.

Chief Justice Willy Mutunga announced the decision, which was unanimous, saying the poll was free and fair.

Main challenger PM Raila Odinga, who lodged the appeal, said he would fully respect the verdict. Official results said Mr Kenyatta beat Mr Odinga by 50.07% to 43.28%, avoiding a run-off by just 8,100 votes.

There was tight security at the Supreme Court as the judgement was read out. Violence after a disputed election in 2007 left more than 1,200 people dead.
The presidential, legislative and municipal elections held on 4th March were the first since the 2007 poll. Mr Kenyatta and his running mate, William Ruto, are expected to be sworn in as president and vice-president on 9th April. But they are facing trial on charges of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for allegedly fuelling unrest after that election. They deny the charges. Plea for calm.

Chief Justice Mutunga said the court's decisions had been unanimous on all the issues they were asked to rule on.

He said that Mr Kenyatta and Mr Ruto had been "validly elected" in a poll carried out in a "free, fair, transparent and credible" manner.

"It is the decision of the court that the said elections were indeed conducted in compliance with the constitution and the law," he said.

"At this historical moment in our country, the Supreme Court has discharged its constitutional duty in conformity with the solemn oath each one of us took," he added.

"It is now for the Kenyan people, their leaders, civil society, the private sector and the media to discharge theirs, to ensure that the unity, peace, sovereignty and prosperity of the nation is preserved. God bless Kenya."

Supporters of Mr Kenyatta took to the streets of central Nairobi, tooting their horns, blowing on vuvuzelas and chanting.

Outside the courthouse, police used tear gas to chase away people protesting against the ruling but the area is now quiet.

There were also reports of tear gas being fired at stone-throwing youths in the western city of Kisumu, a stronghold of Mr Raila Odinga.

And there was an angry mood in the Nairobi slum of Kibera, our correspondent says, with people chanting "no Raila no peace".

Outgoing President Mwai Kibaki has urged people to stay calm and accept the result, but much will depend on Kenyans' faith in their newly reformed judiciary, our correspondent says. Petitions had been filed to the court by Mr Odinga and by civil society groups, who claimed irregularities had affected the election result and called for fresh elections.

Mr Odinga expressed "dismay" at the conduct of the election and said that he did not regret making the challenge. But he said that he fully respected the decision and wished Mr Kenyatta and his team well.

"Although we may not agree with some of [the court's] findings, our belief in constitutionalism remains supreme," he said at a news conference after the verdict.

"We must soldier on in our resolve to reform our politics and our institutions."
'Triumph of democracy'

UK Prime Minister David Cameron congratulated Mr Kenyatta on his election victory.

"The prime minister urged the Kenyan people to be proud of the strong signal they have sent to the world about their determination to exercise their democratic right peacefully," Mr Cameron's office said in a statement.

A European Union statement said: "Kenyans can be proud that the political reform process of their country is bearing fruit.

"With continued efforts to implement the new constitution, Kenyans can build the globally competitive and prosperous nation they aspire to be." Mr Kenyatta has called the election, which was largely conducted peacefully, a "triumph of democracy".

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has insisted that the vote was credible, despite technical failures with an electronic voter ID system and the vote counting mechanism.

International observers said the poll was largely free, fair and credible, and that the electoral commission had conducted its business in an open and transparent manner.

Note: Go to read Kenya – Timeline Diaries below

April 2, 2013: Kenyan Body to Monitor Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Project'

Addis Ababa — The Kenyan government has setup an independent body to monitor the implementation of a massive regional infrastructure development project known as the Lamu Port - Southern Sudan - Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET). The 11-member body which comprises five high ranking government officials and other private sector representatives was established by outgoing Kenyan president, Mwai Kibaki The monitoring body will be tasked to control and follow developments of constructions to the different components of the $24bn three-nation-run project on behalf of the Kenyan government. "The headquarters of the authority shall be in Nairobi with field offices in Lamu, Isiolo, Lokichoggio, Marsabit and Moyale," Kibaki told Kenyan media outlets.

Construction of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor will eventually link Kenya, South Sudan and Ethiopia by an advanced transport network, which it is hoped will boost cross-border trade. It will also create multiple business opportunities in the sectors of tourism and agriculture. It will further enhance social ties and friendship between peoples of the three East African neighbors. The Lamu project will further enable to connect the three countries to other central and western costs of
Africa providing services to an estimated population of 160 million. Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan will share the cost of Africa's biggest infrastructure project which is expected to be accomplished in 2016. The African Development Bank (AfDB) will finance part of the project, particularly road section of the Lamu port project. The bank has already funded $12mn for the design work of the road component.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS:

Although the project will bring socio-economic benefits, some rights groups and environmentalist however argue that the project has potential negative impacts particularly against tens of thousands of Indigenous communities living along the LAPSSET transport corridor. Gezai Zeru, a Geologist and environmentalist told Sudan Tribune that the massive project will primarily force the indigenous peoples to lose their ancestral land and territories. "They will also lose resources and the lacks of natural resources will eventually lead to tribal conflicts which could have a potential of spilling cross borders" he said. The indigenous peoples of Awer, Sanye, Wardei, Orma, Samburi, Borana and Turkana pastoralists could in the long term be forced to change their traditional livelihood practices. "As a result of forced eviction their cultures and traditions could also fade" Gezai added. Source: Sudan Tribune

April 4, 2013: Kenya Declares Public Holiday to Allow for Swearing in of the New President'

The government has disclosed that Tuesday next week will be a public holiday to pave way for the swearing-in ceremony of President-elect Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto. Head of Public Service and chairman of the Committee to the Assumption to the Office of President, Francis Kimemia on Thursday gazetted April 9 as a public holiday. "In pursuant to section 12 of the Assumption of the Office of the President ACT, 2012, Tuesday 9, April, 2013, the day the President-elect shall be sworn in at Moi International Sports Centre, Kasarani from 10 am to 2 pm shall be a public holiday," said Kimemia in a gazette notice. The outgoing head of state, President Kibaki will share this last official public holiday function with his successor. The day is expected to witness the tripartite presence of Kenya’s second President, retired Mzee Daniel Moi who took over from Uhuru’s father Mzee Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, as well as the outgoing and incoming Presidents. Kimemia said the move will give Kenyans time to also observe the handover. According to the programme, Uhuru must arrive at the stadium before the incumbent President. There will be some entertainment in between the arrivals. According to the law guiding the change of guard, Uhuru will, during the swearing in ceremony, take and subscribe to oath or affirmation of allegiance and the oath or affirmation for the execution of the functions of the President. The oaths will be administered by the Chief Registrar of the Judiciary Mrs Gladys Boss Shollei and witnessed by Chief Justice Dr Willy Mutunga. The Assumption of the Office of President Act states that in the absence of the
Chief Justice, the Deputy Chief Justice would undertake the task. However, deputy CJ-designate Justice Kalpana Rawal is yet to be cleared by Parliament, and can’t take part in the event. Source: Standard Digital

April 9, 2013: Uhuru Kenyatta sworn in as Kenyan 4th president

BBC News: Uhuru Kenyatta has been sworn in as Kenya's new president, following his victory in March against Raila Odinga. Dignitaries and tens of thousands of people witnessed the inauguration at a stadium in the capital, Nairobi. Mr Odinga did not attend the ceremony after his attempt to overturn Mr Kenyatta's victory in court failed. Mr Kenyatta and his deputy, William Ruto, face charges at the International Criminal Court relating to post-election violence five years ago. They were on opposite sides at the time and both deny the accusations. Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who faces an ICC arrest warrant over the conflict in Darfur, was not in Nairobi for the inauguration. Mr Kenyatta is the son of Kenya’s founding father, Jomo Kenyatta, and is heir to one of the largest fortunes in Kenya.

Laptops promise: He served as deputy prime minister, minister for trade, and finance minister under outgoing President Mwai Kibaki. The crowd, waving Kenyan flags, burst into rapturous welcome as the 51 year old took the oath of office, becoming Kenya's youngest president. In his inaugural address, Mr Kenyatta said he would govern for all Kenyans. "We will leave no community behind... Where there's disillusionment, we'll restore hope," he said. The new government would abolish maternity fees in its first 100 days and children starting school next year would be given laptops, he added. In an apparent reference to the ICC case against him, he said: "I assure you again that under my leadership, Kenya will strive to uphold our international obligations, so long as these are founded on the well-established principles of mutual respect and reciprocity." The crowd, waving Kenyan flags, burst into rapturous welcome as the 51 year old took the oath of office, becoming Kenya's youngest president. In his inaugural address, Mr Kenyatta said he would govern for all Kenyans. "We will leave no community behind... Where there's disillusionment, we'll restore hope," he said. The new government would abolish maternity fees in its first 100 days and children starting school next year would be given laptops, he added. In an apparent reference to the ICC case against him, he said: "I assure you again that under my leadership, Kenya will strive to uphold our international obligations, so long as these are founded on the well-established principles of mutual respect and reciprocity." US and European diplomats attended the inauguration, despite warning before the election that they would have limited contact with Mr Kenyatta if he is voted into office.

Blackmail: Among the African leaders present for the inauguration were South Africa's Jacob Zuma, Nigeria's Goodluck Jonathan and Uganda's Yoweri Museveni. Mr Museveni told the cheering crowd that he wanted to applaud Kenyans for rejecting the "blackmail" of the ICC. He supported
the ICC when it was formed, but it was now being used by "arrogant actors" who were trying to "install leaders of their choice in Africa and eliminate those they don't like", he said. Mr Odinga - the outgoing prime minister - did not attend the ceremony, choosing to be on holiday in South Africa instead. Other senior members of his Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (Cord) party have also stayed away to signal their opposition to Mr Kenyatta's presidency, correspondents say.

According to official results, Mr Kenyatta beat Mr Odinga by 50.07% to 43.28% in March, avoiding a run-off by just 8,100 votes. Mr Odinga challenged the result, but said he would respect the Kenyan Supreme Court's ruling in Mr Kenyatta's favour. The election was Kenya's first after a disputed poll in 2007, which led to violence that left more than 1,200 people dead. Mr Kenyatta is due to appear at the ICC for his trial in The Hague later this year, accused of crimes against humanity. He denies the charges. Kenya is a party to the Rome Statute, the treaty which established the ICC in 2002. But like most African countries, it has refused to enforce the ICC warrant for Mr Bashir's arrest. Earlier, Kenyan government spokesman Muthui Kariuki told the BBC that Mr Bashir had been invited and would not be arrested if he accepted the invitation. After Mr Bashir visited Kenya in 2010, a Kenyan court ruled that the government must arrest him if he returned, in line with its international obligations under the Rome Statute. The government is appealing against the ruling.

April 10, 2013: President Designate Pledges Free Laptops for School Children During Swearing in Ceremony’ News updates: President designate Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, son of Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's founding president and International Criminal Court suspect, is now officially the fourth president of Kenya. Kenyatta was sworn in at a ceremony held at the Moi International Sports Center, Kasarani, in Nairobi, on Tuesday afternoon, closing the chapter on the tense and vigorous electoral process that left the country more divided than ever before in spite of the absence of violence. Amid the pomp and ceremony, Kenyatta promised to work closely with all Kenyans, including those who did not vote for him to take Kenya forward socially, politically and economically. "Our nation has now successfully navigated the most complex general election in our history. Our journey began three years ago, with the promulgation of a new constitution, and ended 11 days ago, with a landmark Supreme Court decision. Ours has been an unusual story. An unconventional path. We have been praised and criticised in turn – depending on who was telling our story," Kenyatta said.

Tempered Hope: "Yet while some watched the unfolding national events with skepticism, resigned to what they believed was the inevitability of chaos, others, the vast majority, looked upon our nation with a tempered hope; cheering us on not only because they believed in us but because they knew that if Kenya succeeded they too would succeed. For all that has been said of our nation, the records of history will attest to a number
of undeniable facts." he added. He thanked Kenyans for exercising restraint and good judgement in times of tumultuous moments in government. "Where the system failed, Kenyans did not. Where decisions were delayed and ambiguity prevailed, Kenyans were patient-seeking and waiting for clarity. Where contentious issues rose up to stir up dissent, Kenyans exercised restraint, peacefully sought redress and submitted themselves again to the constitution and the rule of law - united in the belief that God's judgement would guide that of men," he said. He has promised free maternity health care to all women within 100 days of taking office and free lap tops to school-going children, beginning next year. Kenyatta becomes the first Kenyan president under the devolved system of government that was introduced by the new constitution to trim the powers of the president. He was born in 1961, just two years before Kenya attained independence under his father, Jomo Kenyatta as President, and his competitor, Raila Odinga's father, as vice-president.

Propped up by a Former President: He was named Uhuru, Kiswahili for independence, in anticipation of the freedom the country was to receive after years of colonisation from the British government. A graduate of political science from Amherst College in the US, Kenyatta first ventured into politics as a presidential candidate in 2002, when former Kenyan dictator, Daniel Arap Moi, propped him up as his preferred successor. However, Mwai Kibaki the outgoing president won the election. In the 2007 election, Kenyatta teamed up with Kibaki against outgoing prime minister Raila Odinga. The election ended in a stalemate and Kibaki was sworn in at night, leading to outrage and massive violence, during which more than 1,000 people were killed and about 350,000 displaced. A coalition government was formed with Kibaki as president, sharing power with Odinga, who became the prime minister bringing the unrest to an end. Kenyatta was appointed Odinga's deputy and minister for trade, and later finance minister. He was named alongside his deputy, William Ruto, journalist Joshua Sang, former head of public service, Francis Muthaura, former police commissioner, Hussein Ali and former industrialisation minister, Henry Kosgey, as the key perpetrators of the infamous 2008 post-election violence. Henry Kosgey and Hussein Ali have since been exonerated by the ICC while accusations against Muthaura were dropped for lack of enough evidence, after key witnesses said to have recanted their statements.

Divided: Opinions on the suitability of Kenyatta's presidency are divided. Although his supporters maintain that the charges against him are framed by his enemies and that he won fair and square, some feel that he should have not sought any elective post until cleared by the ICC, and that the election was illegitimate. "It has tainted the image of our country to have an international suspect reign over a developing country like Kenya. It will negatively impact on our country. He should have waited until set free by the courts," said Carolyne Anywera, a student at the University of Nairobi. Businessman Jim Ambuka said: "To me, he is a president of his
supporters, not majority of Kenyans. I am not convinced by the supreme court’s verdict. I see an individual who wants to use power to protect himself against ICC rather than to lead the nation to prosperity.” His supporters think otherwise. "Uhuru Kenyatta is our hero. He means good for the country. We know very well the international community wanted to serve their own interest in the country,” said Paul Kamau, a hawker in Nairobi. "Uhuru Kenyatta means well for Kenya, and that is manifested in his speech today and before. He has always said he will remain cooperative to the ICC. I therefore see no fuss about the future of Kenya," added Eric Ngugi. Now that Uhuru holds the mantle of leadership, all will be watching how he will juggle between ICC case and service to his country. Will he pull a trick on the ICC similar to that of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir? Source: The Guardian

April 24, 2013: Kenya, Ethiopia to help rebuild Somalia'

NAIROBI, Kenya – Kenya and Ethiopia have reaffirmed their commitment to continue working together with Somalia to help its government towards reconstruction. Speaking after holding bilateral talks with the Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in Nairobi, President Uhuru Kenyatta said that conflict in Somalia had affected its neighbours. The Head of State said: “On IGAD and regional peace and development, we focused on our efforts to contribute to sustainable peace, reconstruction and development in Somalia.” “Kenya and Ethiopia remains strategic partners especially within the IGAD framework in the search for peace and political stability of Somalia. Kenya and Ethiopia continue to bear a disproportionate burden occasioned by the long standing crisis which afflicted that neighbourly state more than 20 years ago,” the president added, saying that they also touched on efforts towards the positive developments on the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan. The president reaffirmed his government’s commitment to enhancing the relations with Ethiopia while opening opportunities that benefit people in the two countries. The Head of State said the bilateral relations between the two countries were not only hinged on a long tradition of friendship but also on a Special Status Agreement. Within the framework of co-operation for mutual benefit, the two Heads of State also conferred on the modalities of actualising the Lamu Port-Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) project as part of the common destiny, as neighbours and a region. President Kenyatta and the Prime Minister also spoke on matters relating to the African Union, of which Desalegn is the current chairman. With regard to the AU which is commemorating 50 years since its launch, the president assured that Kenya would remain a strong supporter of the pursuit of Africa’s unity and vision of a common development agenda. Source: Capital FM News

May 27, 2013: African leaders urge ICC to transfer charges against President Uhuru Kenyatta — Associated Press - ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA — African leaders asked the International Criminal Court to transfer charges against Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta to the Kenyan
legal system. The African Union summit, which ended on Monday in Addis Ababa, agreed to press the United Nations to move the charges against Kenyatta and his deputy, William Ruto, to Kenya. African leaders believe that the ICC prosecutions “have degenerated into some kind of race hunt” of Africans, African Union chairman Hailemariam Desalegn said. Kenyatta and Ruto both face trials later this year at the ICC in The Hague on charges of crimes against humanity over allegations they helped orchestrate the tribal attacks that followed Kenya’s 2007 election, in which more than 1,000 people died. Africa’s leaders, who are in the Ethiopian capital for a three-day summit to mark the 50th year anniversary of the founding of the continent-wide organization, voted to endorse Kenya’s proposal that the ICC charges against Kenyatta and Ruto should instead be handled domestically in Kenya.

Last week the executive council of the AU, composed of African foreign ministers, approved the same proposal. The Ethiopian prime minister charged that 99 percent of those indicted by the ICC are from Africa and he alleged that the ICC’s prosecutors intentionally target African leaders. “The African leaders have to come to a consensus that the process the ICC is conducting in Africa has a flaw,” Hailemariam said. “The intention was to avoid any kind of impunity . but now the process has degenerated into some kind of race hunting. We object to that.” The African Union leaders’ decision was criticized by Human Rights Watch. “Five years after the post-election violence, Kenya’s authorities have repeatedly failed to live up to promises to hold those responsible to account in national trials,” said Elizabeth Evenson, senior international justice counsel at Human Rights Watch in Brussels, Belgium. “The African Union’s call to have the Kenya cases handled nationally should fool no one as to the prospects for meaningful justice in Kenya. Recent events at the Security Council and African Union underscore the need for the international community to redouble efforts to press Kenya to put politics aside and let the ICC’s cases run their independent judicial course.”

Ramtane Lamamra, head of the AU peace and security council, late Monday defended the AU leaders’ decision. “This does not mean that Africa is for impunity . in this particular case you have the need to balance the overwhelming and overarching need for justice with equally important needs of democracy and respecting the freely expressed will of the people,” said Lamamra. He said the U.N. Security Council should help end what he called the unfair and targeted prosecution of African leaders. Lamamra said African leaders during the summit also endorsed proposals to immediately establish a standby military force to respond to crises in the continent. He said that 50 years after independence; it is regrettable that Africa’s security relies on foreign countries’ interventions, such as France’s current operations in Mali. The force and its financing will be made from voluntary contributions of African countries, added Lamamra. Already South Africa, Uganda and Ethiopia pledged to contribute to the force, according to the official.
June 6, 2013: Mau Mau torture victims to receive compensation - Minister William Hague

Kenyans tortured by British colonial forces during the Mau Mau uprising will receive payouts totalling £20m, Foreign Secretary William Hague has announced. He said the UK government recognised Kenyans were tortured and it "sincerely regrets" the abuses that took place. A lawyer for the victims said they "at last have the recognition and justice they have sought for many years". Thousands of people were killed during the Mau Mau revolt against British rule in Kenya in the 1950s. Mr Hague also announced plans to support the construction of a permanent memorial to the victims in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

"I would like to like to make clear now, and for the first time, on behalf of Her Majesty's government, that we understand the pain and grievance felt by those who were involved in the events of the emergency in Kenya," he told the Commons. "The British government recognises that Kenyans were subject to torture, and other forms of ill-treatment at the hands of the colonial administration. "The British government sincerely regrets that these abuses took place and that they marred Kenya's progress towards independence." Mr Hague said 5,228 victims would receive payments totalling £19.9m following an agreement with lawyers acting for the victims, who have been fighting for compensation for a number of years. The compensation amounts to about £3,000 per victim and applies only to the living survivors of the abuses that took place. Mr Hague said Britain still did not accept it was legally liable for the actions of what was a colonial administration in Kenya. The British High Commissioner in Nairobi also made a public statement on the settlement to members of the Mau Mau War Veterans' Association in Kenya. BBC east Africa correspondent Gabriel Gatehouse said the reaction there was "muted".

'Big milestone'

He said it may have been because the announcement had been expected or because it was marred by the UK government continuing to deny liability for some of the abuses. That said, it was a "big milestone" for the Mau Mau veterans, said our correspondent. In a statement, Martyn Day, of law firm Leigh Day, said it took "courage to publically acknowledge for the first time the terrible nature of Britain’s past in Kenya". "The elderly victims of torture now at last have the recognition and justice they have sought for many years. For them the significance of this moment cannot be over-emphasised," he said. Archbishop Desmond Tutu - who backed the case and last year wrote to Prime Minister David Cameron accusing Britain of trying to evade its legal responsibility to the victims - said the settlement was a "balm" for both the victims and perpetrators. "It sends a signal to the world that no matter how badly human beings behave towards one another, goodness ultimately prevails," said the South African Nobel Peace Prize laureate.
But Bryan Cox, of Tandem Law, said there were "thousands" of further claims that remain unresolved and "the matter was far from over". He said the law firm was working with more than 8,000 Kenyans who were still awaiting an agreement with the UK government. The UK has argued that all liabilities for the torture by colonial authorities was transferred to the Kenyan Republic upon independence in 1963 and that it could not be held liable now. But in 2011, the High Court in London ruled that four claimants did have "arguable cases in law". Their lawyers allege Paulo Muoka Nzili was castrated, Wambuga Wa Nyingi was severely beaten and Jane Muthoni Mara was subjected to appalling sexual abuse in detention camps during the rebellion. A fourth claimant, Ndiku Mutwiwa Mutua, died last year.

Violent campaign:

After the ruling, the case went back to the High Court to consider a claim by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) that the actions had been brought outside the legal time limit. The FCO said it had faced "irredeemable difficulties" in relation to the availability of witnesses and documents. But in October last year, the court ruled the victims had established a proper case and allowed their claims to proceed to trial despite the time elapsed. At the time, victims' lawyer Mr Day said he would be pressing for a trial "as quickly as possible" but would also be pushing for the government to reach an out-of-court settlement. The Mau Mau, a guerrilla group, began a violent campaign against white settlers in 1952, but the uprising was eventually put down by the British colonial government. The Kenya Human Rights Commission says 90,000 Kenyans were executed, tortured or maimed, and 160,000 people were detained in appalling conditions, although a number of historians believe the figure is lower.

Background

The Mau Mau, a guerrilla group, began as a violent campaign against white settlers in 1952

The uprising was eventually put down by the British colonial government

The Kenya Human Rights Commission says 90,000 Kenyans were executed, tortured or maimed, and 160,000 people were detained in appalling conditions

It says 160,000 people were detained in appalling conditions

Kenya gained independence in 1963

Accession to power of Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta – March, 2013 through national election.

Tentative Election calendar, February/March

**Kenya – Timeline Diaries updates, and related key notes:**
Evidence of some of the earliest human settlements has been found in Kenya, suggesting that it was the cradle of humanity from which descendants moved out to populate the world.

600 - Arabs begin settling coastal areas, over the centuries developing trading stations which facilitated contact with the Arab world, Persia and India.

16th Century - Portuguese try to establish foothold on Kenyan coast but are driven off by Swahili states and Omani Arabs by late 17th century.

1830s - Omani Arabs consolidate control of coast.

1895 - Formation of British East African Protectorate.

Early 1900s - White settlers move into highlands, railway built from Mombasa to Lake Victoria.

1920 - East African Protectorate becomes crown colony of Kenya - administered by a British governor.


1947 - Jomo Kenyatta becomes Kenyan African Union (KAU) leader.


1953 – Jomo Kenyatta charged with management of Mau Mau and jailed. KAU banned.

1956 – The Mau Mau rebellion put down after thousands killed - mainly Africans.

1959 – Jomo Kenyatta released from jail but under house arrest.


1961 - Kenyatta freed and assumes presidency of Kenya African National Union (KANU)

1963 - Kenya gains independence, with Kenyatta as prime minister.


1966 – Karamogi Odinja Odinga, a Luo, leaves KANU after ideological split, forms rival Kenya People's Union (KPU).

1969 - Assassination of government minister Tom Mboya sparks ethnic unrest. KPU banned and Odinga arrested. KANU only party to contest elections.
1974 – Jomo Kenyatta re-elected.

1978 – President Jomo Kenyatta dies in office, succeeded by Vice-President Daniel Torotich Arap Moi.

June 1982 - Kenya officially declared a one-party KANU state by National Assembly.

August 1982 - Army suppresses air force coup attempt. Private Hezekiah Ochuka rules Kenya for about six hours.


1989 – Kenyan political prisoners freed.

1990 - Death of the foreign minister, Robert Ouko, in suspicious circumstances leads to increased dissent against government.


December 1991 - Special conference of KANU agrees to introduce a multi-party political system.

1992 - Approximately 2,000 people killed in tribal conflict in the west of the country.

August 1992 - FORD splits into two factions - Ford-Asili (led by ex-government minister Kenneth Matiba) and Ford-Kenya (led by Odinga).


1997 - Demonstrations calling for democratic reform. World Bank withholds disbursement of $5bn in structural adjustment credit.

December 1997 – Daniel Arap Moi wins further term in widely-criticised elections. His main opponents are former vice-president Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, son of Oginga Odinga.

August 1998 - Al-Qaeda operatives bomb the US embassy in Nairobi, killing 224 people and injuring thousands.

1999 – Daniel Arap Moi appoints Richard Leakey to head government drive against corruption.
April 2001 – Richard Leakey appears in court to face charges of abuse of power and perverting the course of justice.

June 2001 – Kenyan Parliament passes a law allowing the import and manufacture of cheap copies of anti-Aids drugs.

2001 - Ethnic tensions culminate in several violent clashes. In December thousands flee and several people are killed in rent battles involving Nubian and Luo communities in Nairobi's Kibera slum district.

July 2002 - Some 200 Maasai and Samburu tribespeople accept more than $7m in compensation from the British Ministry of Defence. The tribespeople had been bereaved or maimed by British Army explosives left on their land over the last 50 years.


December 2002 - Elections. Mwai Kibaki wins a landslide victory, ending Daniel arap Moi’s 24-year rule and Kanu's four decades in power.


November 2003 - International Monetary Fund (IMF) resumes lending after three-year gap, citing anti-corruption measures.

December 2003 - Government decides to grant former president Daniel arap Moi immunity from prosecution on corruption charges.

March-July 2004 Long-awaited draft of new constitution completed. Document requires parliament's approval and proposes curbing president's powers and creating post of prime minister. But deadline for enactment is missed.

July-August 2004 - Food crisis, caused by crop failures and drought, dubbed "national disaster" by President Kibaki. UN launches aid appeal for vulnerable rural Kenyans.

October 2004 - Kenyan ecologist Wangari Maathai wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

Controversy over jail conditions amid intense media coverage of inmate deaths at Meru jail in the east.

January 2005 - Clashes over land and water rights leave more than 40 people dead.

February 2005 - Corruption takes centre stage when it is claimed that graft has cost Kenya $1bn under Kibaki. Leading anti-graft official John Githongo resigns. International donors voice unease.
July 2005 - Parliament approves a draft constitution after days of violent protests in Nairobi over aspects of the draft which demonstrators say give too much power to in the president's hands.

November-December 2005 - Voters reject a proposed new constitution in what is seen as a protest against President Kibaki. The president replaces his cabinet; some nominees reject their appointments.

January 2006 - Government says four million people in the north need food aid because of a drought which the president calls a "national disaster".

January-February 2006 - Government ministers are linked to a corruption scandal involving contracts for a phantom company, Anglo Leasing. One of them, Finance Minister David Mwiraria, resigns and says allegations against him are false.

March 2006 - Armed police, acting on government orders, raid the offices and presses of the Standard group, one of Kenya's leading media companies.

April 2006 - Three days of national mourning are declared after an aircraft carrying several prominent politicians crashes in the north.

April 2006 - Visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao signs a contract allowing China to prospect for oil off the Kenyan coast. His African tour has focused on trying to satisfy China's hunger for energy and raw materials.

October 2006 - UN says some 35,000 Somalis escaping drought, Islamist rule and looming conflict have arrived in Kenyan camps since early 2006.

November – December 2006 - Regional flooding renders thousands homeless. Some 100,000 Somali refugees cut off by floodwaters in the north-east are supplied by air drops.

May – 2007 A Kenya Airways plane crashes in Cameroon, killing all 114 on board. An official investigation finds pilot error was to blame.

December 2007 - Disputed presidential elections lead to violence in which more than 1,500 die.

The government and opposition come to a power-sharing agreement in February and a cabinet is agreed in April.

October 2008 - Report into post-election clashes calls for international tribunal to try those implicated in violence. Many political leaders are reluctant to implement the commission of inquiry's recommendations, with some arguing that prosecutions could trigger further clashes between communities.

December 2008 - Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) accuses seven current and former MPs of taking illegal allowances worth $250,000.
August 2009 - Visiting US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton criticises Kenya for failing to investigate the deadly violence after the 2007 election.

Kenya says that at least 10 million people, or one third of the population, are in need of food aid. The government mobilises the military to distribute food, water and medicines to areas hit hardest by drought.

October 2009 - The government says it will co-operate with the International Criminal Court (ICC) to try key suspects in post-election violence.

January 2010 - The US suspends $7m of funding for free primary schools in Kenya until fraud allegations are investigated.

February 2010 - President Kibaki overturns a decision by Prime Minister Raila Odinga to suspend the country's agriculture and education ministers over alleged corruption. The row threatens the coalition government.

July 2010 - Kenya joins its neighbours in forming a new East African Common Market, intended to integrate the region's economy.

August 2010 - New constitution designed to limit the powers of the president and devolve power to the regions approved in referendum.

Controversy over release of national census figures that include tribal affiliations.

December 2010 - A grenade explosion kills three people on a Kampala-bound bus in Nairobi.

March 2011 - Governments of Kenya, DR Congo agree to investigate illegal gold trade, in which Kenyan allegedly plays a key role.

April 2011 - Truth commission begins public probe into 3,000 killings at Wagalla airstrip during a 1984 crackdown on ethnic Somalis, a hushed-up chapter in Kenya's history.

Six politicians appear before the International Criminal Court in The Hague, accused of links to 2007-8 post-election violence.

June-September 2011 - East Africa hit by worst drought in 60 years.

August-September 2011 - Suspected Somali militants raid Kenyan coastal resorts and a refugee camp, targeting foreigners.

October 2011 - Kenyan troops enter Somalia to attack rebels they accuse of being behind several kidnappings of foreigners on Kenyan soil.

Kenya suffers several apparent reprisal attacks.

October 13, 2011: Two Spanish doctors, working for a foreign aid group, were kidnapped from a Kenyan refugee camp and taken back to Somalia, apparently to be held for ransom.

In Mogadishu, a roadside bomb went off, wounding a member of the TNG.
Many foreign aid organizations cut back their work in Kenyan refugee camps until better security is provided. The kidnapping of two Spanish doctors yesterday was just the latest in many attacks by Somali raiders. There have been three such attacks in the last month.

October 14, 2011: Kenya vowed to punish al Shabaab, and other criminal groups in southern Somalia, who have been increasingly attacking Kenyans, foreign tourists and refugee camps full of Somalis.

October 16, 2011: Several thousand Kenyan troops crossed into Somalia, taking with them artillery and armored vehicles. The target is the port of Kismayo, some 200 kilometers to the east.

October 17, 2011: Al Qaeda released photos showing al Qaeda representatives dispensing food, cash and other aid in Somalia. Few details were given, but this was apparently an attempt to counter the negative publicity their ally al Shabaab had gotten by preventing foreign aid to reach millions of Somalis.

Kenyan police, after being alerted by their counterparts in Britain, arrested two British teenagers near the Somali border. The two boys, aged 17 and 18, were the children of Somalis who had fled to Britain and become citizens there. But al Shabaab uses the Internet to urge young ethnic Somalis to return to Somalia and help establish a religious dictatorship there.

France announced that a wheelchair-bound Frenchwoman kidnapped by Somalis from a beach resort in northern Kenya on October 1st, did not long survive her captivity and apparently died within a week of being taken. The victim was quite ill and required medication several times a day. The kidnappers could not provide the medication.

In Mogadishu, a car bomb went off near a government building, killing six. Al Shabaab was believed responsible.

Along the Kenyan border, Kenyan warplanes bombed al Shabaab positions in Somalia. Several thousand Kenyan troops are advancing on the port of Kismayo, which serves as the "capital" for al Shabaab. This is where al Shabaab is believed to be holding the two Spanish doctors they recently kidnapped from Kenya.

October 18, 2011: In the northern statelet of Puntland, government troops disarmed local militiamen in areas where there had been anti-government violence.

October 19, 2011: Kenyan and TNG officials met in Mogadishu to work out details of how they will coordinate their actions against al Shabaab fighters along the Kenyan border. Kenyan troops entered Somalia three days ago, to find two kidnapped aid workers, and to discourage al Shabaab from crossing the border to plunder and kidnap.
While more Somali pirates are active this year, they are having a more difficult time against better defended ships. Last year, 28 percent of attacks were successful and 35 ships were taken by October. This year, only 12 percent of attacks were successful and only 24 ships were taken in the same period.

In Mogadishu, small groups of al Shabaab fighters continue battling TNG (Transitional National Government) troops and AU peacekeepers. The TNG is seeking to clear out all al Shabaab forces from the city, as even a small number of them can carry out terrorist attacks.

Kenya has said it wants to clear al Shabaab out of the border area and then help TNG gunmen keep al Shabaab out of this zone, and out of Kenya.

In the past, the Kenyan tribes were not as organized or powerful as the Ethiopians (who have been a local superpower for over a thousand years.) But in this post-colonial world, the Kenyans have a modern trained and equipped military. While the Somalis are still fiercer, they are not bulletproof. The Kenyans have lots of guns and bullets and know how to shoot. To al Shabaab's dismay, the Kenyans keep coming and keep killing. The Somalis will fight back, and the Kenyan troops will suffer casualties, but they won't be run out of Somalia. The Kenyans will make their point, and leave. And, like with the Ethiopians, the border will quiet down. Somalis are not happy about this. For centuries, the Ethiopians were regarded as worthy opponents, while the Kenyan tribes were seen as perennial victims. Now the Kenyans are acting like Ethiopians, and that's a change many Somalis are not happy with.

The Ethiopians, like so many others in the region, and the world, are fed up with the political/economic/social mess inside Somalia. So in early 2009, the Ethiopians pulled their troops back to bases just across the border in their Ogaden province, and continued to send in raiding parties when (not if) Somali factions come raiding. This kept the Somali raiders out; as the Somalis were now assured that the better armed (and quite deadly) Ethiopians would come after the raiders in Somalia. The Ethiopians and Somalis have been at it in this way for centuries.

Ethiopia had a similar situation five years ago, with Islamic radical Somali troops increasingly active inside Ethiopia (which borders Somalia). So Ethiopia invaded, which it has often done in the past when Somali raiders became a problem. Ethiopia sent some of these troops to Mogadishu, at the behest of the United States, to drive out Islamic radicals (the Islamic Courts Union). The Ethiopians were told that the UN and AU (African Union) would organize a force of 8,000 peacekeepers to relieve the Ethiopian troops. But that went slowly, and after two years, only 3,400 of the peacekeepers have arrived, and they have not done much peacekeeping.
October 20, 2011: Kenya says its troops have killed at least 75 al Shabaab fighters so far and are over a hundred kilometers inside Somalia. Al Shabaab threatens massive retribution for this invasion, but based on past experience this is unlikely. Ethiopia has frequently invaded Somalia when Somali raiders became a nuisance, and that solved the problem.

Al Shabaab declared the Red Crescent, along with the Red Cross, were now banned from al Shabaab controlled territory. This puts several million Somalis at risk of starvation. Al Shabaab accused the aid agencies of bringing in food that was past its use-by date and that the free food aid was lowering prices in markets thus hurting local farmers.

November 23, 2011: Kenya has apparently let loose some of their secretive paratroop commandoes in Somalia. Kenyan troops moved into Somalia last month, and the target of this attack, the Somali al Shabaab Islamic terrorist organization, promised swift retaliation. The terrorist attack never came, or at least not yet. While al Shabaab has a fearsome reputation, they have not done well against professional troops. While most of the Kenyan Army has a reputation for lackadaisical performance, there are exceptions. For example, the 20th Parachute Regiment has long been considered an elite, highly selective and well trained unit. The 20th even has its own "best of the best"; D Company. This last outfit is considered on a par with Western commando organizations and has trained with, and been trained by, them.

January 31, 2012: In the central Somali town of Galkayo, an al Shabaab suicide bomber failed in his attempt to kill a pro-government militia leader. The bomb went off, killing two security guards.

February 2, 2012: Kenyan troops captured the port town of Badhadhe, which is near the Kenyan border and 180 kilometers south of the al Shabaab held port of Kismayo. During the operation, Kenyan helicopter gunships attacked a large group of al Shabaab (over 200 men and at least 20 vehicles). Kenya claimed to have killed a hundred al Shabaab and destroyed at least ten vehicles.

February 3, 2012: In Mogadishu, a small American UAV, apparently a 2 kg (4.4 pound) Raven, crashed into a hut in a refugee camp. A similar incident took place last year in Mogadishu. Four Ravens were supplied to the AU peacekeepers and these UAVs operate up to ten kilometers from the operator. The U.S. operates larger UAVs from Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti and in Ethiopia. Camp Lemonnier has existed since 2003 and currently holds 3,500 personnel. The base has a lease that lasts until 2020.

February 4, 2012: Kenya publicized its amnesty program for Kenyan Somalis who have joined al Shabaab. Recent victories by Kenyan troops over al Shabaab made Kenyan Somalis more likely to accept amnesty, as happened during similar situations in the past.
Kenyan jets attacked several ground targets near the coastal town of Badhadhe. At least ten al Shabaab members were killed.

February 5, 2012: Al Shabaab attacked the town of Beledweyn in central Somalia. The key town was captured by Ethiopian troops two months ago, and this night assault was expected. The al Shabaab forces were repulsed.

February 6, 2012: The famine in Somalia is officially over as a large harvest matures and food is plentiful. But only for a few months and over a million people are still in refugee camps inside Somalia as well as Ethiopia and Kenya. These people need foreign food aid to survive, as do many more who live harvest-to-harvest. In the last eight months, over 100,000 famine refugees had fled to Kenya and Ethiopia. Many refuse to return to Somalia because of the continued fighting between al Shabaab and various opponents. These include Somali troops and militias as well as AU (African Union) peacekeepers and Ethiopian soldiers.

March 2, 2012: Britain has given the Kenyan Air Force an MX-15 stabilized reconnaissance turret and assisted in mounting the equipment in a Kenyan Y-12 aircraft. The 45 kg (100 pound) MX-15 can spot and identify ships and boats 20 kilometers away. The MX-15 can operate at night and its zoom feature enables the operator to see if men in a boat are armed with weapons (like AK-47s and RPGs). The Kenyans will use their MX-15 equipped Y-12 to more effectively patrol their coast, especially near the Somali border.

The 5.3 ton Chinese Y-12 is a twin turbo-prop aircraft that has a crew of two and carries up to 17 passengers or 1.5 tons of cargo. Cruising speed is 250 kilometers an hour and normal endurance is about five hours.

April 30, 2012: Apparently Eritrea supplied ammo and guns to the South Sudan Democratic Movement (SSDM) rebel group in South Sudan. Ammunition taken from the SSDM by South Sudanese security forces allegedly came from the same lots as ammo Eritrea gave the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). The ONLF opposes the Ethiopian government.

May 1, 2012: Ethiopia reported that its two main refugee camps for people fleeing Sudan’s Blue Nile state now house 29,494 refugees. The camps are located at Tongo and Sherkole.

May 3, 2012: Ethiopian security forces arrested ten Merille tribal militia fighters who are accused of murdering three Kenyan policemen. The men participated in a raid on a Kenyan police camp in April. The Merille people have been fighting with the Turkana people. Both tribes are pastoralists. The tribes have clashed over water rights. Both tribes conduct cattle raids (mass theft of cattle herds). The Kenyan and Ethiopian government are trying to end the violence. Kenya recently arrested two Kenyan men for smuggling weapons to the Turkana.
May 4, 2012: Ethiopia will be one of four African countries attending the G8 summit later this month. The Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, and the leaders of Ghana, Tanzania, and Benin will discuss food security issues with the G8 leaders.

May 5, 2012: 300 Djiboutian peacekeepers have deployed near Beledweyne (central Somalia). The Djibouti contingent will secure an area north of the town. Ethiopian and pro-Somali government forces attack and clear an area of Al Shabaab fighters. African Union peacekeeping units then deploy into the liberated zone.

May 6, 2012: A senior Ethiopian opposition political leader said that Ethiopia must end tribal politics. The opposition leader said Ethiopia has only two tribes: the rich and the poor.

May 7, 2012: The government of Ethiopia denied reports that Ethiopian tribesmen were fleeing into South Sudan. A recent UN report asserted that Anuak tribal civilians had fled fighting between Ethiopian security forces and Anuak rebels in Ethiopia’s Gambella region (western Ethiopia, bordering on South Sudan’s Jonglei state).

May 10, 2012: Ethiopian troops and pro-Somali government forces killed 17 al Shabaab fighters. The Al Shabaab fighters had been operating road blocks in the Bakool region. The official statement did not specify where the Ethiopian-led attacks occurred, but an Al Shabaab spokesman said that its fighters had engaged Ethiopian forces near the town of Hudur.

May 12, 2012: The Ethiopian commander of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) confirmed that South Sudan had pulled all of its forces out of the region. Abyei is claimed by both Sudan and South Sudan. Ethiopia has now deployed 3,716 soldiers with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) on the Sudan-South Sudan border. Another 83 Ethiopian military observers are also serving with the force. UNISFA has an authorized maximum force of 4,200 military personnel.

An armed incident occurred in Beledweyne. An Ethiopian military vehicle hit a land mine inside the city. Several soldiers were wounded by the mine blast. Subsequent fire from the Ethiopian convoy killed two people in Beledweyne.

May 14, 2012: Al Shabaab fighters attacked a Kenyan position near Badade (Lower Jubba area, southern Somalia, near the Kenyan border). Six died in the resulting firefight.

May 15, 2012: Ethiopian police charged ten people with belonging to al Qaeda. Nine of those charged were Ethiopian citizens. The other accused terrorist has Kenyan citizenship. Investigators claimed the ten people were planning to conduct terror attacks in Ethiopia and that the group had links to militant Islamist terror cells in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Kenya, and the Philippines.
May 16, 2012: In Mombasa, Kenya attackers threw grenades outside a local nightclub. A security guard was killed and five people were wounded. One of the attackers was wounded and captured. The attackers may belong to an al Qaeda-affiliated Islamist terror organization.

A TNG victory will be more durable (and Kenya’s military effort in Somalia more effective) if the southern clans are prepared to assume a positive security role in their region. The peace would be even more durable if the clans participate in Al Shabaab’s final defeat. The Ethiopians, however, may argue that the time to pursue nice-nice politics will come after Kismayo falls. (Austin Bay)

The KDF has shown that it is willing to use force to protect Kenya. It is also demonstrating that it is willing to use force to protect Kenya’s friends. The KDF has been training militiamen from Ras Kamboni (sometimes referred to as the Ras Kamboni fighters). Arming, training, and supplying these militiamen serve immediate security purposes. Paying them creates political goodwill. These militiamen could play a role in an attack on Kismayo. They could also play a role in politically stabilizing the city and the region. Arming, training, supplying, and paying Ras Kamboni fighters certainly demonstrates that good relations with Kenya has its rewards.

Kenya was the impartial mediator in Sudan. Not so in Somalia. In the Kismayo region Kenyans are heavily armed outsiders with a definite, self-serving political-security agenda. The KDF wants the people of the Kismayo region to treat Al Shabaab as their occupier and the KDF as their ally. That may seem like a long shot goal but day by day Al Shabaab is losing territory to the AU and TNG, and the southerners are aware of that. The Kismayo region political-military (pol-mil) effort posited in this scenario utilizes political skills employed in the southern Sudan peacemaking mission. Both have very detailed intelligence requirements. Detailed really means detailed, which is one reason the process takes time. For example, the personal ambitions and histories of individual local leaders always affect the process. Talks can end (or never start) and agreements can unravel because Clan Leader X just despises Clan Leader Y. (Why does X despise Y? Negotiators need to know. They might need to seek an agreement between Clan Y and Clan Z first because Clan Leader X trusts Clan Leader Z.)

Several of Kenya’s international allies (the U.S., Ethiopia, Britain, and Australia) have special forces personnel trained to facilitate these tricky political discussions and security operations. The Kenyans have their own cadre of personnel with a track record for conducting successful multi-tribal and inter-clan negotiations in neighboring nations. Kenyans helped resolve several violent Dinka-Nuer tribal disputes in southern Sudan, prior to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended Sudan’s north-south civil war.
But to dismiss out of hand the methodical approach the KDF leaders claim they are pursuing is a mistake. So here’s a scenario: the Kenyans have re-considered their operations in southern Somalia in light of their strategic goal of securing territorial integrity. Real security requires a stable, peaceful political relationship with the people of southern Somalia. So the KDF wants to begin building that political relationship on the ground in Somalia.

The Ethiopians would likely add a substantial armored punch to an assault on Kismayo, and from a Kenyan military and political perspective that would be worth waiting for. The Ethiopians might accuse the Kenyans of failing to meet their commitment or, worse, letting Ethiopians do the bleeding. That could lead to political friction between two nations that increasingly see themselves as allies and economic partners.

Cynics suggested that the Kenyans were delaying an assault on Kismayo until Ethiopian forces could participate in the attack. The cynics have a case. A senior Ethiopian officer serving in Somalia was quoted this week as saying that Ethiopian forces had fulfilled their mission in Somalia and that Ethiopian forces might help liberate Kismayo. He also told the press he wondered why Kenyan forces had not yet taken Kismayo and indicated that they were supposed to attack it when Ethiopian forces were attacking Baidoa in February. This is another public signal that Kenya and Ethiopia are coordinating their military campaigns. Kenya certainly had the ground and air combat power to attack Kismayo then and still has the power.

Earlier this year Kenyan military officials suggested that the KDF was being methodical, not reluctant. A direct attack on Kismayo runs the risk of degenerating into a huge and bloody urban street battle. To avoid that the KDF said it sought political dialog with various Somali clans in the Kismayo area. Last month a statement attributed to senior government officials (no names) indicated that Kenyan Army officers were in fact working with several clans and clan militias (yes, they often have different agendas as well as rivalries) to reach a consensus on policing the Kismayo region.

Critics also point to Kismayo. Last fall the Kenyan military made it clear that the Somali seaport of Kismayo was a key objective. Al Shabaab used it as a communications and supply link to Yemen and Eritrea. It is also a pirate haven, which is no surprise, since Al Shabaab maintains close ties with Somali pirates. When Kenyan forces took Ras Kamboni in October 2011, the government said that Kismayo would be next. A mission accomplished moment? It is now late May 2012, and Al Shabaab still controls Kismayo. Incursion critics ask why Kismayo remains in Al Shabaab’s hands. Failure to seize Kismayo has become a political problem. Is the KDF reluctant or incompetent?

Kenyan forces in Somalia are supposed to eventually become part of the AU peacekeeping force. Though that strikes many as a good political move (East African nations support it, the AU supports it), some analysts are
wondering if re-hatting Kenyan forces will commit Kenya to an even longer military presence in Somalia. See the emerging political problem? If Kenyan forces provide their own backfill and an insurgency erupts critics (and then the political opposition) will scream quagmire. And they already are.

Ethiopia (seeking to avoid another extended stay in Somalia) has said it will withdraw most of its forces, as AU peacekeepers assume the area protection and security mission. AU peacekeeping forces have begun backfilling in the areas from which Ethiopian/pro-TNG forces have driven Al Shabaab Islamist fighters. So far, no AU peacekeepers have backfilled behind the KDF.

Eventually we will learn just how closely specific Kenyan combat operations in the south were coordinated with the Ethiopian/pro-TNG coalition combat operations in central and south-central Somalia. There is no doubt that coordination has occurred at the campaign level.

As the KDF entered the fray in the Somalia’s south, Ethiopia launched its own Somalia incursion in November 2011. Pro-Somali government militia fighters (ie, supporters of the Somalia Transitional National Government, TNG, also called the Transitional Federal Government) were soon operating with Ethiopian forces. Al Shabaab, already battling African Union forces in the Mogadishu region, now faced two new axes of attack. Various militant Islamist groups (Islamic Courts Union then Al Shabaab) had been fencing with Ethiopian forces in central and south-central Somalia since the official Ethiopian military withdrawal in January 2009 (what supposedly ended the 2006 war). However, the Kenyan operation was threatening what had been an Al Shabaab rear area (and certainly a comparatively safe area).

At the moment, the majority of the Kenyan people still seem to agree that their government had to do something about the cross-border attacks by Al Shabaab terrorists in 2011, and militant Islamist trouble-making in Kenya (three examples: kidnapping tourists, harassing aid organs, and trying to get Kenyan Muslims to launch a revolt). In October 2011, the government did do something, in a major way. Kenyan military and paramilitary police units have crossed international borders before, in either hot pursuit operations (usually pursuing cattle raiders) or raiding base camps (usually of tribal raiders). The Somali incursion was not a raid but a full-fledged, extended offensive military operation by the Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF, Kenyan Army). Kenya supported its ground forces with air and naval forces. Moreover, it was the first such offensive operation by Kenyan military forces since the country became independent. The government insisted that defending Kenya’s territorial integrity was the strategic objective of Operation Linda Nchi (Swahili for Operation Protect the Nation). To achieve that strategic objective the KDF had two military operational objectives: drive Al Shabaab away from the Kenya-Somalia border region and, in the process, significantly damage (if
not destroy) the militant Islamist organization’s military capabilities in southern Somalia. The real strategic triumph would be to translate Al Shabaab’s loss of territory and military damage into a fatal political defeat for Al Shabaab.

May 20, 2012: As the Kenyan military incursion continues in Somalia, many Kenyans have begun asking the government to tell them how long the conflict will last. The questions echo similar ones Ethiopians asked as the Ethiopian invasion in 2006, led to a prolonged three-year struggle with Somali militant Islamist militias.

June 8, 2012: The U.S. government announced that it is offering $33 million in rewards for information that leads to the capture of senior Al Shabaab leaders. The US is offering seven million dollars for Al Shabaab’s founder, Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mohamed Nom de guerre is Godane.

June 10, 2012: An Ogaden rebel website accused an Ethiopian paramilitary police unit of burning down the center of the town of Degah bour on June 8.

Local Somalis report that some Al Shabaab fighters have returned to the town of El Bur after Ethiopian forces pulled out on June 10.

June 12, 2012: The Kenyan military intends to launch a final assault on the Al Shabaab-held seaport of Kismayo sometime in August and Kenya wants international participation in the operation. That means several things. Kenya has asked the U.S. to provide funding assistance. Ethiopia has suggested that it may send troops south to help the Kenyans attack Kismayo. Kenyan forces are now flagged as members of the AMISOM peacekeeping operation in Somalia so conceivably other AMISOM peacekeepers (form Uganda, Burundi, possibly Djibouti) could participate. Kenya has also approached the European Union and asked for naval support.

June 15, 2012: The Kenyan government denied that it is letting the U.S. use Kenyan territory or airspace to conduct aerial surveillance missions. The Kenyan denial, however, was very carefully worded. Kenya basically said that it does not know about any U.S. use of Kenyan airspace but Kenya does share intelligence information with the US.

June 15, 2012: Armed guards on British merchant ships now have permission to fire first when approached by pirates. Armed guards have to comply with laws applicable to the country of the owner of the ship they are on. Some European nations have very restrictive rules about the use of firearms and the pirates were taking advantage of this to get close before opening fire.

The United States declassified some of its military activity in Somalia, admitting that it was American guided missiles, often launched from UAVs that caused the deaths of numerous al Qaeda and al Shabaab leaders.
June 16, 2012: Kenyan media reported that the Kenyan military has lost 12 people in operations in Somalia. Five died in combat and seven in accidents. The figures are unconfirmed.

June 16, 2012: A suicide car bomber attacked troops outside Mogadishu (Afgoye), killing himself and two soldiers. Al Shabaab took credit.

June 17, 2012: In Mogadishu a car bomb went off in a market, wounding three people. Al Shabaab took credit.

June 18, 2012: UN officials accused Eritrea of torturing political prisoners and conducting summary executions of political prisoners. Human rights violations by the Eritrean government include forced labor.

Kenyan authorities arrested several men, including two Iranian nationals, who were allegedly planning terrorist attacks in Nairobi and Mombasa. The group is connected to the Somalia’s Al Shabaab. The group had stored chemicals used in making explosives at a golf club near Mombasa.

Ethiopia arrested 14 gunmen who were involved in the April murder of 19 people in the Gambella region (western Ethiopia). The group ambushed a passenger bus. The same group of gunmen had been involved in a skirmish with South Sudanese security forces.

June 18, 2012: In the port of Hobyo, which is halfway down the east coast of Somalia, two groups of pirates fought each other. There were several casualties, and the fighting was apparently the result of one pirate group trying to steal from the other. Hobyo has long served as a base for pirates.

Somali pirates are having a bad year. For the first half of 2011, they captured 28 ships. For the same period this year, only five have been taken. Pirate mother ships are under constant attack and most large ships operating near the Somali coast now have armed guards. The loss of mother ships makes it difficult for the pirates to go long distances to find unguarded ships. The seafaring nations are hoping that the defeat of al Shabaab on land will enable Somali security forces to shut down the pirate operations.

The Somali government is offering amnesty and jobs in the armed forces for al Shabaab members. The government wants to prevent, as much as possible, al Shabaab men from becoming Islamic terrorists. Many current al Shabaab are just young guys looking for a job. Al Shabaab offered one, which seemed like a good deal when al Shabaab controlled most of southern Somalia. For the last year that job has become too dangerous for most Somalis. Those who have not been killed or captured have often deserted or accepted amnesty. For many Somalis, who you carry a gun for is just business.

Kenya wants Somalia declared pacified so it can shut down the Dadaab refugee camp near the Somali border and force the 450,000 refugees back into Somalia. The camp has become a major problem for Kenya,
becoming the base for a growing number of Somali criminal gangs and terrorizing a growing number of Kenyans living near the camp. While foreign aid groups protest this plan, many of these same foreign aid groups will not allow their foreign employees to work in the camp. Kidnapping foreigners for ransom is becoming popular and robbery has always been in fashion.

Even with al Shabaab completely gone (not likely to happen soon), Somalia still has a major problem with the fact that it is the most unruly region on the planet. Sometimes described as a "failed state," that itself is optimistic. For most of the last thousand years, Somalia has been described as an unruly region, not a unified state. Turning the place into a functioning nation is going against the nature of Somalia, which is normally a collection of tribes and warlords. Central government is not highly respected, feared, or easily obeyed.

The core al Shabaab members are preparing to shift to being terrorists. That means trying to blend in or go hide in a thinly populated area. This is particularly unpleasant for Kenya, which has suffered from Islamic terrorism for decades. But it's a step up from al Shabaab launching raids across the border and providing logistical support for terrorists in Kenya. The demise of al Shabaab will put an end to all that. The Islamic terrorists are handled like another criminal gang in Kenya, one that specializes in mass murder rather than stealing. In Somalia the final blow to al Shabaab will be the capture of Kismayo, which is now surrounded by the Kenyan armed forces (the army on the land side, the navy off shore). Without Kismayo al Shabaab cannot afford to pay a lot of gunmen or buy weapons and equipment. They go back to being a bunch of Islamic fanatics with a dream.

June 21, 2012: Al Shabaab has lost its fearsome reputation and that has proved to be a very costly defeat. More local militias are forming to drive out al Shabaab gunmen. With so many al Shabaab gangs destroyed (by combat and desertions), the remainder have fewer allies to call on if they run into local opposition. Many local al Shabaab groups had turned into gangsters, living off extortion and theft. Word has gotten around about the many defeats al Shabaab has suffered this year and encouraged more opposition to the Islamic radical group.

June 22, 2012: Ethiopia announced that it will keep troops in Somalia until Somalia passes a national constitution and has a military that is able to protect the country. This is a major change from what Ethiopia said it would do earlier this year. At one time Ethiopia indicated that its forces would leave Somalia this fall.

An Ethiopian criminal court convicted a UN security guard of communicating with a terrorist group, sentencing him to seven years in jail. The government said that the guard had used his job to gather information for the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), an Ethiopian rebel group.
June 23, 2012: Djibouti opened its new Djibouti Naval Operations Center. The U.S. and France helped Djibouti build and equip the center, which will be used to track ship movements in Djiboutian territorial waters, the Red Sea area, and very likely the Gulf of Aden. One of its missions is counter-piracy. The European Union’s EU NAVFOR squadron will also be involved with the center.

The government of South Sudan said that Ethiopian forces had captured a Jonglei tribal spiritual leader who had fled South Sudan. The spiritual leader opposes South Sudan’s tribal disarmament policy in Jonglei state. Ethiopia has indicated that it will send the spiritual leader back to South Sudan. Ethiopian forces also captured some of the leader’s supporters who were accompanying him.

June 26, 2012: An Al Shabaab claimed its fighters ambushed a Kenyan Army convoy near the town of Haluqua (inside Kenya, near the Somali border), killing 23 Kenyan soldiers and wounding nine. The claim is unsubstantiated and Kenya did not report an incident. Both Kenya and Al Shabaab, however, acknowledge that there is a fight going on in the Somali town of Badhaadhe. Kenya reported that it killed five Al Shabaab fighters. Three Somalia Transitional National Government (TNG) soldiers were killed in the firefight which occurred when Al Shabaab fighters attacked a Kenyan and TNG base in the town.

June 27, 2012: Twenty-three Ethiopians involved in opposition politics were convicted of terrorism. An Ethiopian journalist was also convicted on terrorism charges. They all face life imprisonment now. The defendants argued that they were prisoners of conscience and were not engaged in terrorism but legitimate democratic political action.

In the central Somali town of Baladweyne an al Shabaab roadside bomb struck an Ethiopian Army convoy. There were no casualty reports. Ethiopia still occupies Baladweyne.

June 29, 2012: Gunmen attacked a convoy and seized four foreign aid workers near the Dadaab refugee camp. Their Kenyan driver was killed in the attack.

June 30, 2012: Kenyan authorities are looking for a group of gunmen who kidnapped four aid workers at the Dadaab refugee camp (about 100 kilometers from the Somali border). The Kenya deployed helicopters, search aircraft, and ground troops to find and rescue the captives.

In neighboring Kenya gunmen attacked a church in the town of Garissa. The attackers killed two policemen, stole their rifles, and then killed 15 and wounded 40 inside the church. The policemen had been assigned to guard the church because of rising violence in the region. Attackers also struck a second church in Garissa using grenades. Three people were wounded by grenade fragments. Garissa is not far from the Kenya-Somali border and militant Somali Islamists have been threatening to launch more attacks on Kenyan Christians. The Kenyan government has pointed
out that Kenyan Muslims also feel threatened by the Islamist attacks. Several Kenyan tribes have both Muslim and Christian members. The attack on a worshipping congregation is similar to attacks launched by the Nigeria militant Islamist organization, Boko Haram. Al Qaeda and the Somalia Islamist group Al Shabaab have claimed that they are organizing militant Islamists throughout Africa.

July 1, 2012: Every so often Ethiopia calls attention to the Eritrean refugees living in refugee camps inside Ethiopia. The refugees are always good for horror stories about food shortages, arbitrary arrests, and corruption in Eritrea. Between 60,000 and 70,000 refugees live in the camps. Others gather in Ethiopia’s capital, Addis Ababa. However, last year more and more Eritrean draft dodgers began crossing the border. The complaint is broader than avoiding military conscription; many of the draft dodgers are in fact draftees who have deserted after serving far longer than what they regard as a reasonable tour of duty. According to the conscripts who have deserted, a draftee’s initial service, at least for those lacking political connections, can last for several years. These refugees have told reporters that sometimes draftees serve for a decade, not just in the military but in various government jobs or even businesses owned by the ruling party. Eritrea began mass military conscription in the mid-1990s, as a means of building up its military in the face of what its government called the threat from Ethiopia. The strategic concept was the creation of an armed people. If the far larger and stronger Ethiopia attacked, the Ethiopian Army would ultimately have to fight everyone in Eritrea. At least that was the idea. Initial military training and service lasted 18 months. Sometimes draftees worked on road and military-related construction projects. Now it appears the definition of military-related construction has changed. The continual influx of draftees who have deserted has to have some deleterious effect on Eritrea’s armed forces, but how large an effect is open to speculation. It is clearly an indication of declining morale. One recent report quoted refugees who claimed that some Eritrean Army units (ie, the ones of which they had direct knowledge) had only 25 percent of their assigned personnel. How much a given conscript actually knows about his unit’s authorized level of personnel is a fair question to ask because he might be assigned to a reserve unit. However, many of the refugees interviewed indicated that units throughout the army are under-strength. Eritrea could carry these under-strength units on its order of battle as full-strength units in order to inflate the size of its army and thereby deter Ethiopia, but that wouldn’t fool Ethiopian military intelligence analysts for very long.

July 3, 2012: Ethiopia has emerged as East Africa’s political powerhouse, despite being landlocked. Eritrea controls what used to be Ethiopia’s seaports, before Eritrea became a separate nation in 1991. Since then Ethiopia has relied upon Djibouti and the Somaliland Republic for port access. Last year Ethiopia and Djibouti discussed constructing a new railroad line between the two countries. Recently Ethiopia announced that
it had reached a deal with two major construction companies to extend and improve its railroad network. One company is Turkish and the other is Chinese. The project is long term, but by 2020 Ethiopia plans to have an additional 5,000 kilometers of railroad track. The project is designed to improve transportation within Ethiopia but the strategically critical link is a new rail link from northern Ethiopia to Djibouti's Port Tadjourah.

The 20 Para is sometimes confused with GSU (General Service Unit), the commando unit of the national police. GSU has been around for over half a century, and is regarded as the final defense for any attempt to overthrow the government. Both GSU and 20 Para have been heavily involved in counter-terror operations, as well as suppressing the tribal wars along the borders with Uganda, Somalia and Ethiopia. These tribal feuds have gotten a lot nastier during the last two decades, as the area was flooded with cheap, Cold War surplus weapons (mainly AK-47s and RPGs.) This has given 20 Para and GSU plenty of combat experience, and a reputation for ruthlessness.

While 20 Para is technically an airborne infantry battalion (called a "regiment"), they rarely are used like that. Instead, they are regarded as the most reliable and effective unit in the army of 63,000 troops. There are believed to be only a few hundred troops in 20 Para, and when not training, they are often used for intelligence collection (usually in civilian clothes) inside Kenya. The fight against Islamic terrorism inside Kenya has used 20 Para a lot, and the "Kenyan recon patrols in Somalia" that are sometimes mentioned in the news, are probably 20 Para as well.

July 6, 2012: Kenyan Defense Forces soldiers fighting in Somalia formally joined the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping force. The KDF expeditionary force in Somalia will now operate as part of AMISOM.

July 10, 2012: Ethiopian Army soldiers serving with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) reported that they had ended a riot in Abyei that involved members of the Dinka Ngok tribe. The Dinka Ngok were celebrating South Sudan's first year of independence. The tribesmen encountered two members of the Misseriya tribe (a pro-Sudan, predominantly Moslem tribe).

July 12, 2012: The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) claimed that an Oromo militia force killed five Ethiopian federal police officers in the Gidda Ayana area. The OLF statement suggested a battle erupted when the police officers tried to disarm the local militia.

July 15, 2012: Egypt's new president, Mohammed Morsi, visited Ethiopia to discuss political relations. Egypt and Ethiopia remain at odds over use of Nile River water. Egyptian officials continue to argue that Ethiopia's new Grand Renaissance Dam will sharply reduce the amount of water flowing downstream.
July 18, 2012: Djibouti acknowledged that political opponents who argue that the French and U.S. bases in Djibouti make the country a terrorist target have a case. However, the government said that the terror threat is limited and can be dealt with. The Djiboutian government has said that its relationships with France and the U.S. actually provide long-term stability.

July 25, 2012: An Ethiopian opposition party announced that it had formed an alliance with three rebel groups. The Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD) said it will pursue peaceful political change but the rebel groups will continue to fight. The new alliance includes the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and the Sidama Liberation Front (SLF). The Sidama region is located in southern Ethiopia near the Kenyan border.

July 26, 2012: The Kenyan government said that it will appeal a Kenyan High Court ruling that ended the government’s ban on the Mombasa Republic Council (MRC), a separatist group advocating the independence of the Mombasa region. The government regards the MRC as an outlaw organization.

August 1, 2012: Kenyan forces killed 30 Al Shabaab fighters in a battle in the Somali town of Harbole. Two Kenyan soldiers were wounded. The KDF reported that it also destroyed three Al Shabaab technical vehicles (pick-up trucks mounting machine guns). Harbole is located near the town of Afmadhow (south of Kismayo).

August 3, 2012: One person was killed and six were wounded in a bomb attack in Nairobi, Kenya. The attack occurred outside the Moi Air Base, where the headquarters of Kenya’s air force is located. Police indicated that the real target may have been a supermarket located near the air base and that the suicide bomber accidentally detonated the device early. The attack is still under investigation.

August 6, 2012: Ethiopian and Somali Transitional National Government (TNG) forces are operating near the towns of Buurhakaba and Diinsoor. Buurhakaba is about 60 kilometers southeast of Baidoa. The composite group is attacking Al Shabaab positions near the town. TNG troops backed by other Ethiopian Army units are also nearing the town of Diinsoor. Diinsoor is 100 kilometers west of Baidoa. The TNG-Ethiopian Army force reportedly engaged an Al Shabaab militia force near Diinnsoor on August 4.

August 7, 2012: Kenyan military forces will participate in a disaster response field training exercise to be held in Rwanda in October. Some 1,800 troops from East African nations will participate in the exercise.

August 8, 2012: Kenyan jet fighter-bombers attacked an Al Shabaab position in the village of Birta-Dheer north of Kismayo.

August 14, 2012: Kenyan forces have been moving closer to Kismayo. Kenya and Ethiopia have both said that they intend to attack the Somali
seaport in August. It is August. Kenyan naval and air forces reportedly attacked Kismayo on August 12 and August 13. Al Shabaab claimed that five civilians died in the naval gunfire attack of August 12.

August 15, 2012: Kenyan paramilitary police killed three suspected al-Shabaab infiltrators along the Kenya-Somalia border (Lamu East district). Four infiltrators were wounded but escaped. The police also recovered three AK-47 automatic rifles.

August 16, 2012: The Kenyan military (Kenyan Defense Forces, KDF) reported that its soldiers killed 73 Al Shabaab rebels in a battle in Somalia's Fafadun region. Two Kenyan soldiers died and three were wounded in the battle. The KDF also captured 40 automatic rifles.

August 17, 2012: The Ethiopian government confirmed that Ethiopian security forces attacked a South Sudanese rebel group operating inside Ethiopia (Gambela region) on August 13. At least 18 rebels were killed in the attack while three Ethiopian soldiers were wounded. The rebel group fled from South Sudan in June after its former leader, George Athor, was killed.

August 19, 2012: The Kenyan government acknowledged that talks with southern Somali clans continue. The East African Inter-Governmental Agency for Development (IGAD) is sponsoring the talks. Ethiopia agreed to a peace deal with the Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM) rebel group. The government said that it hoped the agreement would end an insurgency that has lasted over 17 years. The BPLM maintained base camps inside Sudan across the border from Ethiopia’s Benishangul Gumuz state. Ethiopia claimed that the Sudanese government supported the BPLM. The government and the BPLM reached a peace agreement in 2005 but that deal fell apart in 2006.

August 20, 2012: Five people were killed and three wounded when gunmen raided a village in Kenya’s Mandera West District (Kenya-Ethiopia border), while 17 people were also kidnapped and at least 70 head of cattle were stolen. The area attacked is predominantly Moslem. Many of its inhabitants are ethnic Somalis. The Mandera region (East, Central, and West) sits in the angle formed by Kenya’s borders with Somalia and Ethiopia, and both the Ethiopian and Kenyan governments regard the area as being subject to attacks by Al Shabaab. However, one report indicated that the clash may involve a feud between two clans.

August 21, 2012: Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi died in Belgium at the age of 57. Meles had been ill for almost a year and was in Belgium receiving treatment for his illness. The government has yet to reveal what the illness was, though one obituary indicated he was suffering from an infection associated with the illness. Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn was quickly sworn in as acting prime minister. Hailemariam is Meles designated successor. Meles had led Ethiopia since 1991 (first as president then as prime minister), and was in charge during
the war with Eritrea (1998-2000). He emphasized economic development. According to the World Bank, Ethiopia’s GDP growth from 2000 to 2010 averaged around 8.5 percent a year – solid growth for any nation anywhere but superb for the chaotic Horn of Africa. However, he was also a tough autocrat who jailed, physically intimidated, and systematically repressed his domestic political opponents. He was regarded as a staunch enemy of Islamist militants and a reliable ally of the U.S. Ethiopian government officials emphasized that there would be no change in Ethiopian policy despite Meles’ death. However, when strong men do die, the possibility of a power vacuum and subsequent power struggle is very real.

August 22, 2012: Kenya reported that 52 people died in tribal fighting in the Tana River district (Coast province, southeastern Kenya). Members of the Orma and Pokomo ethnic groups fought over cattle grazing rights. Most of the slain died from machete wounds, though several people were burned alive when their huts were set on fire. In 2001, around 130 people died in tribal fighting between the Orma and Pokomo.

August 27, 2012: One person was killed in the Kenyan port of Mombasa as rioting Moslems fought with police in the wake of Moslem cleric Sheik Aboud Rogo being murdered in Mtwapa (a suburb of Mombasa) when the van he was traveling in was ambushed and sprayed with automatic weapons fire. Rogo had been accused of recruiting fighters for Somalia’s Al Shabaab Islamist group and Kenyan courts had charged Rogo with terrorism. Kenyan officials reported that Moslem rioters had attacked four churches in the Mombasa area.

August 28, 2012: Kenyan forces in Somalia still say they intend to launch an assault on the port of Kismayo. August, however, is almost over and August was supposed to be the month of the big attack on the Al Shabaab-held seaport. Kenyan naval forces have launched several gunfire attacks over the last three weeks. The attacks appear to be little more than raids intended to rattle the militiamen defending the port. One attack, however, allegedly killed several civilians. This past spring Kenyan government officials and military commanders began meeting with clan leaders in southern Somalia with the intent of getting the clans help to hammer out a political agreement for governing Kismayo and southern Somalia after Al Shabaab is evicted from the area. Kenya doesn’t want Blackhawk Down Mogadishu type chaos in Kismayo and southern Somalia after the big attack. The code phrase for chaos the Kenyans are using is an administrative vacuum. Some of the talks have taken place in Nairobi, Kenya’s capital. At least three major clans were involved in the discussions in Nairobi: the Marhan, Ogden, and Harti. If a power-sharing arrangement with the southern Somali clans has been made, no one is talking about it. In July Ethiopian officers indicated that Ethiopian Army units would participate in the assault on Kismayo. The speculation then was that Ethiopian armor would be valuable in the assault. There is another column marching toward Kismayo from the north, however,
official reports do not mention Ethiopian forces as being part of the column, only Ugandan and Burundian military forces. A composite force consisting of African Union peacekeeping troops and Somalia Transitional National Government (TNG) troops took the fishing town of Merca on August 27. Merca is about 70 kilometers north of Kismayo.

August 29, 2012: AMISOM killed 42 Al Shabaab rebels in the Aglibah area (southern Somalia).

August 30, 2012: It's generally agreed that Eritrea is the worst country in Africa when it comes to protecting journalists. Three Eritrean journalists who were arrested in 2001 have died in prison.

August 31, 2012: Sudan’s governing political party, the National Congress Party (NCP), reported that Eritrea has agreed to act as a mediator between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) rebel group. The SPLM-N operates in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states.

September 2, 2012: Ethiopia conducted public funeral services for its deceased prime minister, Meles Zenawi who was in power for 21 years.

September 3, 2012: Kenya charged a Kenyan Muslim cleric with inciting violent protests in Kenya’s main port city, Mombasa. The accused, Abubaker Ahmed, denied the charges. Riots broke out in Mombasa after gunmen killed Aboud Rogo Mohammed, a senior Muslim cleric. Kenya and the U.S. claimed that both clerics have ties to Al Shabaab.

Spanish police recently seized 22,272 pistols which were being smuggled to Djibouti. Customs inspectors found the weapons in a container which was supposedly carrying textiles from Turkey to the port of Djibouti.

Kenya claimed that their airstrikes in Somalia killed 31 Al Shabaab fighters, along with some civilians.

September 4, 2012: Kenyan warships shelled the Kismayo port area twice and airfield three times. Locals also say Al Shabaab fighters were test firing weapons mounted on their technical vehicles (armed trucks and SUVs).

September 5, 2012: Kenya confirmed that AMISOM forces are preparing for an attack on the Somali port of Kismayo. Kenya now has 5,000 troops in Somalia, all of them deployed in southern Somalia.

September 6, 2012: Djibouti’s Group d’Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale (GIGN) is participating in a four-week long training exercise with U.S. forces. The GIGN is Djibouti’s elite crisis response unit and is manned by both military and police personnel. The course includes training in combat emergency medical techniques and close quarters combat.
Kenyan police found at least 150 bomb detonators in a house in a suburb of Nairobi. The police believe the detonators may link to the Al Shabaab terrorist organization.

September 7, 2012: The Kenyan government reported that 12 people died in a new series of clashes in the Tana River area. One of the most serious took place near the town of Tarasaa. The Pokomos said that a group of Orma tribesmen attacked their village.

September 10, 2012: The Ethiopian government announced that it will pardon and free two Swedish journalists who were accused of providing aid to rebel groups.

September 11, 2012: Kenyan forces, along with Somali government troops, took the town of Harbolle. The AMISOM forces claimed that 50 Al Shabaab fighters died in fighting in and around the town.

September 12, 2012: The Ethiopian government confirmed that it will continue to pursue peace negotiations with the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) rebel group. Ethiopian and ONLF representatives met in Nairobi, Kenya on September 7 and 8, and conducted preliminary discussions. The ONLF operates in the Ogaden desert region, which borders on Somalia. The Ethiopian announcement comes two days after an ONLF website claimed that Ethiopian security forces had massacred 14 civilians in the Wardher region on September 6.

Egypt and Ethiopia have agreed to continue discussions about water rights in the Nile River basin. Egypt now has a population of around 83 million and its Ministry of Water Resources wants to increase Egypt’s allotment. Ethiopia points out that it has 85 million people and that the various treaties governing Nile water allotments ignore the rights of upstream states (like Ethiopia). Ethiopia has begun work on the Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile which will eventually create a lake with an estimated 65 billion cubic meters of water --- water that is obviously not heading downstream to Egypt.

There are also the usual logistical problems that crop up when multinational forces conduct, or at least try to conduct, coordinated operations. Some of the national contingents have radios that are incompatible with one another. There are also allegations of political in-fighting among some of the national contingents. Kenya and Uganda reportedly disagree over pending assignments within AMISOM. Peacekeepers get paid in hard currency and the billets are considered to be good jobs, especially compared to a soldier’s work back home. Uganda has also accused Kenya of using its diplomatic clout to get choice AMISOM assignments for its senior officers. (Austin Bay)

September 14, 2012: Kenyan and Somali troops, along with fighters from the pro-Somali government Raskamboni militia attacked Al Shabaab positions in the Bibi area (60 kilometers northwest, along the road to Afmadow, from the Al Shabaab-held port of Kismayo). Despite the news of
the victory at Bibi, the big attack on the Al Shabaab-held Somali port of Kismayo appears to be delayed – again. AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) peacekeeping forces have deployed in a loose cordon about 60 kilometers from the port (like the new position at Bibi). Kenyan naval vessels occasionally conduct gun and missile attacks on the port. So what are the problems? The major problem is with which anti-al Shabaab clans (who have been aiding the Kenyans) will control what in a liberated Kismayo. AMISOM is also concerned about civilian refugees. They also want to limit civilian casualties. AMISOM would like to empty the port of some 180,000 civilians but does not want Al Shabaab to take advantage of an evacuation operation by having its fighters slip out of the city along with the evacuees. This tracks with previous statements from AMISOM but from Kenya in particular. Kenya does not want to leave a political vacuum in southern Somalia after Al Shabaab is evicted and it wants Somali clans to play a positive role in maintaining security. The fewer civilian casualties there are, the higher the likelihood that the clans will cooperate.

September 15, 2012: Ethiopia’s governing party, the EPDRF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front), announced that acting Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn will become prime minister. Hailemariam succeeds the recently deceased prime minister Meles Zenawi. The EPDRF has been in power for over two decades and wants to keep it that way. The ruling party is actually a multi-ethnic coalition (mainly Amharas, Oromos, and Tigrayans) that negotiates disputes rather than risking civil wars.

September 17, 2012: Tribal cross-border raids remain a problem for Ethiopian and Kenyan security forces. Both governments are trying to improve surveillance and security along their mutual border. The Kenyan government is trying to address long-simmering tribal conflicts in other areas as well, especially in its north-eastern region which borders Somalia. In August and again earlier this month an outbreak of serious inter-tribal fighting occurred in Kenya’s Coast province. The fighting between the Orma tribe (herders) and the Pokomo tribe (farmers) led the Kenyan parliament (on September 12) to pass a resolution authorizing the Kenyan military to intervene in the fighting. The Kenyan government knows that the Somali Islamist group Al Shabaab wants to exploit ethnic, religious, and political divisions inside Kenya.

October 1, 2012: Kenyan naval vessels shelled Al Shabaab coastal positions in the Kismayo area as sporadic fighting continued in the area.

October 2, 2012: AMISOM units extended their control over the Somali port of Kismayo. Al Shabaab fighters claimed they set off a bomb in the port. They also said they would launch further attacks on AMISOM soldiers. The Somali government estimated the Al Shabaab still has between 4,000 and 5,000 fighters in southern Somalia.

Ethiopia released 75 Eritreans captured in March during a cross border raid on a military camp. The prisoners were Eritrean soldiers and Ethiopia
held them as prisoners of war. Seven of the released Eritrean applied for political asylum in Ethiopia.


October 11, 2012: Ethiopian troops in armored vehicle and trucks are reportedly massed in the Somali border town of Luq. A Somali National Army (SNA) commander reported that the Ethiopian soldiers are preparing for a major offensive on Al Shabaab controlled territory.

October 12, 2012: Al Shabaab has threatened Kenya with further retribution for its involvement in Somalia. An Al Shabaab spokesman vowed to wage war on Kenyan soil.

October 14, 2012: Kenya held ceremonies commemorating Kenya Defense Forces Day. This is also the first anniversary of Kenya’s intervention in Somalia.

October 15, 2012: A Kenyan municipal leader was hacked to death in the Coast province town of Kwale. Police called the man’s murder a revenge slaying for the arrest of Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) leader Omar Mwanbyadzi. A gunfight broke out when police arrested Mwanbyadzi and two people died in the firefight.

Kenya charged Sheik Mohammed Dor with inciting violence in the country. Dor is a member of parliament and represents a Muslim area. Dor denied the charges. He is also accused of supporting the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC). The MRC is a separatist organization which favors secession for the Coast province.

October 16, 2012: Somali government and Kenyan military forces said that they are confronting a security vacuum in the city of Kismayo. Somali forces have arrested several dozen suspected Al Shabaab fighters in the port city.

October 17, 2012: A grenade attack in Coast state wounded ten Kenyan policemen. The policemen were searching a house and had found a weapons cache. Police attributed the grenade attack to the Somali Al Shabaab. Kenyan authorities believe Al Shabaab is responsible for several grenade attacks and shootings in Coast state that have occurred this year.

October 18, 2012: Peace negotiations between Ethiopia and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) have broken down again. Kenya was serving as the mediator in the newest round of talks. The ONLF said that Ethiopia had demanded that the rebel group recognize the authority of the Ethiopian constitution as a pre-condition for talks. The ONLF said that the condition was unacceptable because the talks were supposed to begin without pre-conditions. There is a Kismayo connection to the talks. Many ethnic Ogaden Somalis live in Kismayo and surrounding areas. Kenya had hoped that positive negotiations between the ONLF and Ethiopia would
help improve political cooperation among Ogaden clans in southern Somalia.

October 20, 2012: The African Union peacekeeping operation Somalia (AMISOM) is touting the seizure of the Somali port of Kismayo as a victory but one that does not signal the defeat of the Somali Al Shabaab Islamist militia. The Kenyan military performed extremely well in the latter phases of the attack on the port and Kenyans are proud of the Kenya Defense Force’s (KDF) achievements. However, diplomats in the Horn of Africa know the real victor in Somalia is Ethiopia. The Kenyans were more acceptable military interveners than the Ethiopians because so many Somalis regard the Ethiopians as invaders, even if a large majority of Somalis oppose Al Shabaab. Ethiopia is the geographic nexus of the horn. It borders on Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. It is also the region’s economic powerhouse. Ethiopia’s alliance with Kenya gives it a reliable security partner in the Horn. Trouble with Islamist Sudan (northern Sudan) brought Kenya and Ethiopia together. Tribal disturbances along the Kenya-Ethiopia border forced their governments to work together on bi-lateral security issues. The Somali experience, however, has sealed that alliance. (Austin Bay)

October 23, 2012: Ethiopia continues to congratulate itself on the peaceful (so far) transition of power following the death of Meles Zenawi in August’ Meles Zenawi ruled Ethiopia for 21 years. Ethiopia has also had a history of very violent power transitions. The new prime minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, was Meles hand picked successor, so he arrived with the mantle of authority. Meles made Hailemariam his second-in-command in 2010, and, in retrospect, it appears Meles had a power transfer plan in mind. Ethiopia has new national elections in 2015.

November 14, 2012: Kenyan Military To Hunt Killers Of Police'

Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki has ordered Kenyan security forces to hunt down suspected cattle rustlers believe to have killed more than 32 police officers. Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki has ordered security forces to hunt down suspected cattle rustlers believe to have killed more than 32 police officers. There has been blunt warning to the culprits from the military. Kenya's military have issued a warning to cattle raiders as they prepared to go to northwest Kenya to crack down on an armed group which killed more than 32 police officers in an ambush. The military said cattle raiders should be prepared "to die because it is easy for the government to compensate their loss of life." The Kenyan Human Rights Commission, Samuel Tororei, condemned these remarks saying warnings of this sort were not prudent. "The police should have issued a warning, urging the rustlers to stop their criminal acts, but threatening them with death is against human rights principles." The killings came as the government was trying to media between the Turkana community, which reportedly stole cattle from the Samburus tribe, and accusation followed counter-accusation.
Cattle raiding is rife in Samburu partly because the area borders on countries with a history of civil wars and conflicts, such as South Sudan and Ethiopia, in which small arms are readily available. Such weapons are easily smuggled into Samburu. But the scale of deployment by the Kenyan military had yet to be decided. Military spokesman Major Emmanuel Chirchir said they were waiting for our formal instructions and directions from the National Security Council before "we make any decisions about the size and scale of any deployment." Force or coercion used to obtain information. Meanwhile, hundreds of civilians are fleeing the area, fearing their lives will be in danger when security forces start their hunt for the attackers who killed police officers. President Mwai Kibaki and other government official said they were committed to bringing peace to the area. "No part of this country can be safe haven for bandits," said the president said in a statement. The crackdown will also involve the disarming the pastoral communities, which analysts fear will be a challenging excise for the Kenyan security forces. "We have witnessed a number of cases in which Kenyan security operators are reported to have used force or coercion in order to secure information and get groups disarmed," Emmanuel Kisiangani, Kenya expert at the International Crisis Group told DW's Africalink show.

Although clashes over cattle, land and water are frequent among tribes in Kenya, Samburu's violence and the kind of weapons used in Samburu has shocked many. Those weapons include rocket-propelled grenades. "I think it is time to equip the police with armoured vehicles so that they are better protected," said Police Commissioner Mathew Iteere said. Pressure to improve the force is mounting as Kenya heada to the polls in March next year. Elections in 2007 left 1, 200 people dead and displaced around 300,000 in ethnic related violence.

November 16, 2012: East Africa: Cassava Virus on Verge of Epidemic in Region'

Revealation: NAIROBI — A new variant of a cassava disease is affecting large parts of East Africa, especially in the area's Great Lakes Region, putting a crucial source of food and income at risk, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. FAO experts say Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) is on the verge of becoming an epidemic, and have called for an urgent increase in funding, research, training, surveillance and other measures to help farmers and breeders. The appearance of the disease in previously unaffected areas, and the lack of continued funding for research and development work to address CBSD in the region, have added to the threat already presented by Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD). In Rwanda, a surveillance analysis conducted by the National Agricultural Research Institute in 2010 showed a 15.7 percent rate of infection on local varieties and 36.9 percent in improved varieties. "None of the cassava varieties currently being distributed to farmers seem to be tolerant to the effects of CBSD. We urgently need to get information on the extent and severity of the outbreak, and to support investments to identify disease-
tolerant varieties and coping strategies for farmers," said Jan Helsen, leader of FAO's European Union-funded Regional Cassava Initiative in Eastern and Central Africa.

Hidden signs: One of the challenges facing those who are trying to stem the spread of CBSD is timely detection of the disease. "The disease manifests itself in different ways depending on local conditions. In some cases it shows symptoms only on the roots. An apparently healthy plant may be found to have spoiled roots only when harvested, with obvious consequences for food security," Helsen explained. Cassava can account for as much as a third of the total calorie intake for people in countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda or DRC. "Thanks to the foresight of, and the scientific support from, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), efforts are underway to understand the epidemiology of the disease, but more support will be needed for this work, and to select and bring on CBSD-tolerant varieties," Helsen added.

Key staple: Short-term measures needed to tackle CBSD include stepping up disease surveillance and conducting regular inspections; increasing the sensitization of communities to the threat of CBSD; and using hands-on training for farmers, like FAO's farmer field schools, to introduce community-based practices to prevent the introduction or spread of the disease, such as the removal of infected plants. Recommended measures also include banning the distribution of infected plants between districts and zones, and, in the event of infection, using coping strategies such as the early harvest of cassava, before symptoms appear and significant damage can be done.

Building resilience: Since around 2006, FAO and the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) have implemented two regional cassava projects, funded respectively by the European Union and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to support vulnerable farmers affected first by CMD and now by CBSD. The projects have provided access to clean, or virus-free, planting material. The projects aim to develop capacity in disease preparedness and strengthen the resilience of farmers to outbreaks of both diseases. "Fortunately, there are now eight varieties under development by IITA and its national partners in the region which are resistant to Cassava Mosaic Disease and which show some level of tolerance to CBSD. Under existing programme arrangements, these varieties could be made widely available in the next 18-24 months, assuming that resources can be identified to support multiplication and distribution activities," said Helsen. Helsen says National Cassava Steering Committees have been set up to manage the response to the disease, but they need more time and funds to ensure that some of the CBSD-tolerant varieties in the pipeline can be multiplied and made available across the region.

Next steps: More extensive surveillance will be carried out in Rwanda again this year, along with Burundi and the DRC, which will give a more
complete picture of the occurrence and spread of the disease. To help raise awareness of the impact of the disease, FAO and CRS are currently undertaking a rapid survey on the impact of CBSD on household food security across the region. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (Rome)

November 16, 2012: East Africa: Urgent Action Needed to Stem Cassava Virus Threatening Region - UN Agency's Updates: The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is urging swift action to tackle a cassava virus that is affecting large parts of East Africa and threatening a staple food crop for much of the region. The Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD), a new variant that is particularly affecting countries in the Great Lakes region, is on the verge of becoming an epidemic, according to a news release issued today by the Rome-based FAO. The agency has called for an urgent increase in funding, research, training, surveillance and other measures to help farmers and breeders. "The appearance of the disease in previously unaffected areas, and the lack of continued funding for research and development work to address CBSD in the region, have added to the threat already presented by Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD)," stated the agency. Cassava can account for as much as a third of the total calorie intake for people in countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Surveillance conducted by Rwanda's National Agricultural Research Institute in 2010 showed a 15.7 per cent rate of infection on local varieties and 36.9 per cent in improved varieties. "None of the cassava varieties currently being distributed to farmers seem to be tolerant to the effects of CBSD," said Jan Helsen, leader of FAO's European Union-funded Regional Cassava Initiative in Eastern and Central Africa. "We urgently need to get information on the extent and severity of the outbreak, and to support investments to identify disease-tolerant varieties and coping strategies for farmers." FAO noted that timely detection of the disease has been a challenge because it manifests itself in different ways depending on local conditions. An apparently healthy plant may be found to have spoiled roots only when harvested. The agency is calling for short-term measures such as stepping up disease surveillance and conducting regular inspections increasing the sensitization of communities to the threat of CBSD and using hands-on training for farmers. It is also recommending a ban on the distribution of infected plants between districts and zones, and, in the event of infection, using coping strategies such as the early harvest of cassava, before symptoms appear and significant damage can be done.

January 24, 2013: Kenya civil society group urged government to end abuse of refugees'

A number of civil society groups, including the Jesuit Refugee Service, strongly urged the Kenyan government on Tuesday to end police harassment and abuse of refugees and protect the basic human rights of all refugees and Kenyan citizens. "Since the Kenyan government announced in December that all refugees and asylum-seekers in Nairobi
should move to Dadaab and Kakuma camps, we have seen a dramatic increase in attacks on refugees and Kenyans of ethnic Somali origin", said Lucy Kiama, Executive Director of the Refugee Consortium of Kenya speaking on behalf of the Urban Refugee Protection Network (URPN), an umbrella organization of agencies promoting human rights of refugees in Kenyan cities. "Worryingly, the harassment and abuse are perpetrated not only by criminal gangs but also by the very law enforcement officials who are supposed to protect everyone in this country", Lucy Kiama added.

"We have also seen an increase in police-round ups, arbitrary arrests and harassment of refugees and persons of specific ethnicities by security officers in Nairobi. The URPN has documented reports of extortion, physical abuse and loss of property". URPN said these incidents were sparked by the government's 18 December order for all Somali refugees and asylum seekers to move to Dadaab Refugee Camp northeastern Kenya, and for all other refugees and asylum seekers in the country to move to Kakuma refugee camp in the northwest of the country. The groups also voiced concerns about media coverage which they said links refugees to insecurity without producing evidence. "This has aggravated xenophobic attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers who are law-abiding people seeking protection from persecution and conflict in their home countries", said Solomon Wasia, Programme Coordinator on Forced Migration, Kituo Cha Sheria.

"Refugees and asylum seekers are not a threat to national security". At the same time, URPN said it condemned all acts of terrorism and that it remains committed to helping the Kenyan government to build a strong asylum system – which would exclude criminals from refugee status, as is the practice in international law. The group also raised concerns over the instruction from the Ministry of Provincial Administration and Internal Security to the Ministry of Special Programmes to offer humanitarian assistance during the relocation as this sort of activity is not an emergency but a deliberate action and holding refugees at Thika Municipal Stadium amounts to arbitrary detention.

The URPN calls on all security officers to respect fundamental human rights and for all members of the general public to be tolerant of all persons regardless of nationality as we strive to work towards efforts for collective security and protection of human rights for all. The Urban Refugee Protection Network (URPN) is a coordination forum comprising of agencies working on protection and the promotion of human rights and welfare of refugees in urban areas in Kenya. Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), Kituo Cha Sheria (KCS), Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), Heshima Kenya, Centre for Domestic Training and Development (CDTD), HIAS Refugee Trust of Kenya (HIAS), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), International Rescue Committee, RefugePoint, Katiba Institute.

Notes to editors: The Jesuit Refugee Service focuses on the issue of urban refugees through global advocacy campaigns, as well as with educational
and livelihoods programmes for refugees living in urban areas. Specifically in Eastern Africa, JRS works to assist refugees in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Nairobi, Kenya; and Kampala, Uganda. JRS is a member of the Urban Refugee Protection Network (URPN).

February 11, 2013: Two playful lions at Nairobi streets stop traffic

Nairobi - Kenya: Two lions brought rush-hour traffic to a standstill in Nairobi, Kenya when they decided to have a lie down in the middle the street. It was during the morning commute on the the edge of the Nairobi National Park that two young males appeared on the side of the road and strolled out in front of cars and trucks for a roll-around. The African lions' antics caused tail backs as they found the busy road the perfect place to rub themselves in buffalo faeces, Amateur South African snapper Gareth Jones was one of the drivers stuck in the traffic jam last month and decided to get out and photograph the unique scene at 6.40am.

February 12, 2013: Kenya Presidential Debate-2013 - The historic Electoral debate took place’

Candidates and their political party: Mohammed Abduba Dida, ARC, Raila Odinga, CORD Coalition, Uhuru Kenyatta, Jubilee Alliance, Musalia Mudavadi, Amani Coalition Martha Karua, MP, NARC-Kenya, Peter Kenneth, MP, Eagle Alliance, James ole Kiyiapi, RBK, Paul Muite, Safina

February 20, 2013: Landlocked Neighbours Worried By Possible Kenya Poll Violence'

Kenya's landlocked neighbours are stocking up on fuel and food to prevent the kind of disruption they suffered after being cut off from the port of Mombasa by angry rioters following a disputed election five years ago. About 200 million people in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and eastern Congo could be affected if Kenya goes through a fresh bout of fighting when it holds presidential and parliamentary elections on March 4. The port of Mombasa serves its wide hinterland with imports that include oil, clinker which is used to make cement, steel, bitumen for road construction and second-hand cars, while the main exports include tea, coffee, and horticultural products.

Some 95 percent of all the cargo coming in through the port is trucked by road. Truck drivers at a weigh bridge in the small town of Athi River on the fringes of the capital Nairobi said there were already fears of violence. "Everybody is scared about the elections, especially the foreign truck drivers. Last time some of us were attacked and goods were lost," said Charles Mburu, 36, who has driven trucks for the last eight years. "Our employers are not just insuring the goods and trucks, but also the drivers. You have to be certain that they will compensate you in case of an attack." Supporters of Prime Minister Raila Odinga, the opposition leader at the last vote, claimed he lost his bid for the Kenyan presidency after President Mwai Kibaki rigged the vote, setting off a bloodbath in which more than 1,200 people were killed and 300,000 displaced. After the
December 2007 election, machete-wielding youths blocked roads and looted trucks they had hijacked. They burnt tyres to cut the road from the port and uprooted railway lines, strangling trade to Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi for weeks. Odinga is back in the race for the presidency, and has a narrow lead over Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta, according to opinion polls, raising the spectre of a close vote and a possible dispute over the result. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania all suffered inflationary pressures in 2008 due to the impact of the post-election crisis that damaged regional growth. This pushed Uganda's headline inflation rate to over 10 percent in January 2008, while the country's revenue body reported daily revenue losses of up to $600,000. Burundi's top hard currency earners coffee and tea were also hit hard - the tiny landlocked country transports over 80 percent of its produce through Kenya. "Our tea stocks in Bujumbura expired for consumption because we could not export or send it to Mombasa," said Jacques Bigirimana, commercial director at state-run tea board.

PLAN B: Banks and importers have been taking defensive positions by buying dollars in Kenya and Uganda, traders said. The Uganda shilling hit a 14-month low against the dollar on Jan. 4 due to aid cuts by at least five western countries, including Uganda's biggest bilateral donor Britain, after officials in the prime minister's office were accused of embezzlement, and jitters over election violence in Kenya. The Kenyan shilling has also taken a knock from the cautious importers stockpiling dollars, and is down 1.7 percent so far this year, despite the central bank selling dollars to shore up the local currency. "If chaos breaks out in Kenya again, both the currencies will come under serious pressure due to investor flight," said Ignatius Chicha, head of markets at Citibank in Nairobi. To mitigate against disruption of the supply of goods, the company operating Kenya's railway system has bolted down the railway track to prevent any chance that it may be damaged.

Opposition supporters in Nairobi's Kibera slums, one of Africa's largest urban settlements, manually uprooted miles of railway tracks in protest at what they said was a stolen vote, preventing the cargo from reaching Uganda. "There is a learning curve from what happen in 2008," said Karim Sadek, the managing director of Egypt's Citadel Capital, owner of a Kenyan company that manages its railway line. "God forbid, if anything happens, we will of course have contingencies. I won't be sitting here, saying it won't affect the business, it will affect the business, seriously," he said. "In the flash areas where violence happened last time, we've welded the rail. So 10 km of rail is a heavy proposition to lift," he said. Companies with a regional presence also said they would take steps to prevent being caught unawares again. The Ugandan unit of Shell is building large reservoirs of fuel as a back up at Jinja, east on the capital Kampala on the shore of Lake Victoria. "... We're building up some reserves on our own and some other oil companies are doing the same,
and that collective effort gives a good back up," Ivan Kyayonka, Shell Uganda's country manager said.

Abid Alam, managing director of one of Uganda's biggest constructions firms, the Alam Group, said his firm had bought huge stocks of raw materials to prepare for any disruptions. Alam said last time around his company suffered badly, with fuel and other supplies disrupted. "This time there's a lot of uncertainty surrounding the forthcoming elections and it is scary to use the Mombasa-Uganda-Rwanda transport corridor," Alam said. "Mombasa must not be looked at as a Kenyan port but a regional port that must be secured from any internal political strife." Kenya's Bidco Oil Refineries, one of the largest consumer goods maker with exports across the region, said it has already moved stocks to neighbouring countries to avoid disruption. "We've taken measures to ensure that all our clients are well stocked both in Kenya and outside," said Vimal Shah, its chief executive officer.

'NOT A SINGLE DROP': Worsening security in Kenya would also mean aid groups could be unable to reach millions of people displaced in fighting in eastern Congo who may be going hungry, a spokeswoman for the World Food Programme (WFP) said. The United Nations agency, which distributes more than 400,000 tonnes of food to nearly seven million people in east, central and southern Africa annually, has also made plans for supplies to be moved through Kenya to Uganda. The agency also plans to have its ships dock in the port of Dar es Salaam in Kenya's neighbour Tanzania, and Djibouti. "We have moved most of the food stocks we will need downstream to Eldoret and Tororo," Challiss McDonough, WFP's spokeswoman in the region, said, referring to the north-western town of Eldoret near the border with Uganda, and Tororo, just inside the landlocked country. The stocks could last for two months, she added. The Mombasa port handled 22 million tonnes of cargo last year, up from 20 million tonnes in 2011, with about two-thirds of the total traffic of cargo destined to its neighbours, meaning they almost totally depend on its smooth operation.


Analysis: Kenya is preparing for the first general election since the disputed contest in 2007, and the weight of expectation - both domestic and international - is huge. The country's international reputation as a safe, stable democracy with a burgeoning economy and good international ties built on commerce and tourism was ripped away by the violence that followed the 2007 election. Over 1,000 Kenyans died in inter-communal clashes, and almost 700,000 were displaced. The election on 4 March will be the most complex that Kenya has ever faced. This is the first election since the new constitution was introduced in 2010 as part of a process of reform aimed at addressing some of the grievances that contributed to 2007’s violence. Since independence in 1963, political power in Kenya was
becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of an ever-narrowing group of elites close to the presidency.

To address this, the 2010 constitution initiated a process of devolution and Kenyans will now vote for six representatives on polling day. However, the process of educating voters about their new civic rights and the counting of votes has not been tested on a national scale. At a recent Chatham House event, speakers expressed concern that preparation by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) was insufficient, undermining voters' confidence that the elections will be conducted in a free and fair fashion. There are not only practical challenges to the election. In January 2012, the International Criminal Court (ICC) confirmed charges against four prominent Kenyan political figures for their alleged role in organizing the violence which blighted the last elections. Those accused of committing crimes against humanity include the presidential candidate and current Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta, and his running mate, the leading politician William Ruto.

Debate about the ICC's indictment rages on in Kenya and has become something of a political football. During a recent televised presidential debate, current Prime Minister and presidential candidate Raila Odinga quipped that Kenyatta would find it difficult to run Kenya's government via Skype from The Hague. While some Kenyans see the ICC's involvement as illegitimate and ill-informed international meddling, it is undeniable that the Court's involvement has had a bearing on the electoral campaign. The clearest sign of this is the uniting of Kenyatta and Ruto on a Jubilee Alliance ticket. These political figures, and the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities which they respectively represent, were on opposing sides at the last election, and their collaboration lessens the chance of ethnic violence between the communities they represent.

Many of Kenya's international partners have had to tread a delicate line between supporting the ICC process as the best means for finding justice for the post-election violence in 2007, and not appearing to favour any presidential candidate. The dedication of technical assistance to the IEBC by 23 High Commissioners and ambassadors may prove to be the sort of international involvement that is welcomed by the majority of Kenyans. Kenya's importance in East Africa will also be thrown into relief if the election is badly-run or met by violence. The port at Mombasa is an economic lifeline for land-locked countries in the region, and so reports that Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan are stocking up on fuel and food in case election violence disrupts the flow of goods from Mombasa, do not come as a surprise. Prolific discussion of the elections in Kenya's active media outlets and on social media demonstrate how significant the March elections are for Kenya. Open debate plays a significant positive balance to the potential pitfalls of the process. The smooth running of these elections would go some way to restore the international reputation of the country, but far more important would be what it signifies for Kenyans - that the process of improving political representation and dismantling a
February 22, 2013: Kenya-Ethiopia Power Project Bids Finalised

The tender for the construction of the 1000-km long Kenya-Ethiopia power line will be advertised next week with construction scheduled to begin before the end of the year, the Kenya Electricity Transmission Company said yesterday. Apart from the transmission line, converter stations will be erected at Wolayta-Sodo (Ethiopia) and Suswa (Kenya), with a power transfer capacity of up to 2,000MW. The contractors for the converter stations have already been shortlisted, according to Ketraco managing director Joel Kiilu. The project, that will link Kenya and Ethiopia’s power grids, has received all the required fundings and will take an estimated 36 months and should be operational by 2017. Ethiopia has a more stable power output and its power is also cheaper than Kenya’s. Kenya hopes the project will lead to lower energy costs and attract more investors. A government study on the least-cost power development plan by the ministry of energy has recognised that power imports from neighbouring countries are cost effective. The integration of the power systems is hoped will create a "power pool" plugging into Ethiopia’s massive hydro-power resources, enabling Ethiopia to sell its surplus electricity to Kenya. The $1.26 billion (Sh107.1 billion) cross-border power line will be co-financed by the two governments, World Bank, AfDB and the French Agency for Development. Plans are also afoot to put up a new 127 km line between Lesos and Tororo at a cost of Sh4.9 billion to link the power grids of Kenya and Uganda. Work on this project is expected to kick off in April this year. Ketraco has however raised concern over the high compensation amount for the affected communities. The company, that was formed in 2008, said it has so far paid out Sh3 billion as compensation. Source: The Star

March 2, 2013: Kenya 2013: Somaliland for Raila Odinga

Electoral Campaign: Could Raila Odinga finally be that neighbour with sugar? The Republic of Kenya will be electing a new President for the first time since the 2007 Presidential election that was marred by violence and corruption. The world will be closely watching the outcome of the election with hopes of Kenya redeeming itself from the past election.

Their neighbors are also paying considerable attention towards the election. The people of Somaliland are keeping a keen eye on the Presidential election to see who will lead their neighboring country. At a time where the Horn of Africa has recently seen a change of leadership, the government of Somaliland remains hopeful of achieving statehood. Ethiopia’s former strongman Meles Zenawi passed away last summer and was replaced by youthful Deputy PM & Foreign Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. Somalia moved on from its transitional period and selected rookie politician Hassan Sheik Mohamud as their new President. President Mohamud has picked up where the transitional government left off by
preparing to continue the talks between Somaliland and Somalia. Prime Minister Hailemariam has picked up exactly where Zenawi has left off, maintaining Ethiopia’s close – but not close enough – relations with Somaliland. Kenya’s outgoing President, Mwai Kibaki, hasn’t acknowledged or reached out to Somaliland during his two terms as President and just as Kenyans are eager see him go, Somalilanders are ready for change as well.

The presumed front runner, Raila Odinga, is no stranger to Somaliland. During his tenure as PM, he’s gone to unexpected heights by inviting and welcoming delegations from Somaliland. He met with several ministers including the Foreign Minister of Somaliland, Mohamed Abdullahi Omar. Odinga is the only high-ranking politician in Africa to do so. His fellow party members have also made headlines declaring their support for the Republic of Somaliland. Richard Onyonka, Kenya’s Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and ODM party member, announced in May 2011 that his government supports the independence of Somaliland and that he would advocate for its recognition. This time around, if Odinga is elected, the international attention that we’ve tirelessly been yearning for will fall in to place. That doesn’t mean we will achieve recognition right away. In 2011, the world welcomed South Sudan as a new country and it enlightened the people of Somaliland. We prematurely assumed that we would be granted recognition and follow their steps to statehood. A year and a half later, South Sudan hasn’t made any effort to explore the idea that we’ve dreamed of. This is an example why it is imperative that we keep in mind that a new relationship with Kenya – if Odinga is elected- will be built slowly and carefully.

We will likely see an Odinga government that will start focusing on enhancing Kenya’s current diplomatic relations with Somaliland. There will be a primary focus on battling Al-Shabaab. After Kenya was devastated by terrorist attacks within the past year, an Odinga government will be looking for support to achieve this. The current Somaliland government’s strong attitude towards national security and its efforts of countering Al-Shabaab is exactly what Odinga will be after and it will beyond any doubt strengthen our relations. Raila Odinga has reached out to Somaliland when our calls have been ignored. From his years as an opposition politician to PM of Kenya, His sincerity and loyalty towards Somaliland hasn’t been seen before by any African politician. As he rose through the ranks, he hasn’t forgotten us. And as he seeks the highest office in Kenya, we wish him nothing but the best. Indepth Africa by Robleh M. Lafcanbe

March 4, 2013: Kenya votes in tight elections after deadly attacks'

Agence-France Presse: Long lines of Kenyans queued from way before dawn to vote Monday in the first election since the violence-wrecked polls five years ago, with a deadly police ambush hours before polling started marring the key ballot. The tense elections are seen as a crucial test for Kenya, with leaders vowing to avoid a repeat of the bloody 2007-8 post-
poll violence in which over 1,100 people were killed and observers repeatedly warning of the risk of renewed conflict. Voters standing for hours in snaking lines several hundreds of metres (yards) long -- and several people thick -- crowded peacefully outside polling stations to take part in one of the most complex elections Kenya has ever held. People began lining up outside polling stations from as early as 4:00 am (0100 GMT) to cast their votes, two hours ahead of the official opening of the polls. In middle-class areas of Nairobi, parked cars blocked the streets around polling stations, with progress slow in some centres as malfunctioning electronic registration equipment caused delays. Ahmed Issack Hassan, Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) chairman, said he was "aware of the challenges faced in various parts of the country" and were addressing them, appealing for voters to "be patient".

Tensions were high on the coast including in the port city of Mombasa where six policemen were killed in two separate attacks, including an ambush by some 200 youths armed with guns and bows and arrows, hours before the opening of polling stations. "Six policemen and six attackers were killed during the confrontation," Kenyan police chief David Kimaiyo told reporters, adding that 400 officers were being sent to the coastal province to beef up security. Kimaiyo said the attackers were suspected members of the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC), a group seeking the secession of the coastal region popular with tourists. Police have blamed the MRC for a string of attacks last year, and the group had threatened to boycott the polls. Despite the attack, voters packed the streets in the city. "We are not worried, we are voting," said architect Said Said, waiting to cast a ballot at a primary school. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights said the attacks "were coordinated and aimed at interrupting voting in these areas." A remote-controlled bomb was also set off in the northeastern town of Mandera -- a town on the border with war-torn Somalia where Kenyan troops are battling Al-Qaeda linked insurgents -- but resulted in no casualties, police said. Slow progress but calm queues: Polling stations were supposed to close at 5:00pm but anyone in the queue by closing time will be allowed to vote. A polling station that opened one hour late will stay open for an extra hour, electoral officials said. Neck-and-neck rivals for the presidency, Prime Minister Raila Odinga and his deputy Uhuru Kenyatta, have publicly vowed there will be no repeat of the bloodshed that followed the disputed 2007 polls. Crimes against humanity trials later this year at The Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) for Kenyatta and running mate William Ruto have raised the stakes: should they win the vote, the president and vice-president could be absent on trial for years. Both front-runners have said they are confident of winning the absolute majority needed to avoid a second round run off vote. "We can win these elections in the first round... At the end of the day we will definitely be declared the winner," Odinga said after voting in Nairobi’s Kibera shanty town, the scene of some of the worst ethnic clashes after the 2007 poll. Kenyatta, voting in his hometown
of Gatundu some 90 kilometres (55 miles) north of Nairobi, said he was "ready and prepared for whatever outcome." Kenyans chose. Kenyans are casting six ballots, voting for a new president, parliamentarians, governors, senators, councillors and special women's representatives, with some 14.3 million registered voters and more than 30,000 polling stations. Preliminary results are expected within 48 hours but could take up to seven days, officials have said. Around 100,000 police have been deployed to ensure the election is peaceful, and about 23,000 observers, including 2,600 international monitors, are watching the vote, officials say. In the western town of Kisumu - the heartland of Odinga supporters who went on the rampage in 2007-2008 after he was controversially pipped to the top job by President Mwai Kibaki -- people blew whistles and sang as they waited to vote. "We slept here last night because we want real change and we want our candidate -- Raila," said Susan Morell, 30. "We want real change but we want peace. We will accept the result as it comes out because we are sure of winning."

The 2007-2008 violence exposed widespread disenchantment with the political class, deep tribal divisions and shattered Kenya's image as a beacon of regional stability. More checks are in place this time to limit vote rigging, while a new constitution devolving powers has made the poll less of a winner-take-all race. Masai people queue to vote in Ilngarooj, Kajiado County, Maasailand, on March 4, 2013. Long lines of Kenyans queued from way before dawn to vote in the first election since the violence-wracked polls five years ago, with a deadly police ambush hours before polling started marring the key ballot. Graphic presenting the two main candidates in Kenyan presidential elections. A man casts his ballot as people queue ready to vote in Mombasa on March 4, 2013. Long lines of Kenyans queued from way before dawn to vote in the first election since the violence-wracked polls five years ago, with a deadly police ambush hours before polling started marring the key ballot. Masai tribespeople leave after voting in Ilngarooj, Maasailand, on March 4, 2013. Long lines of Kenyans queued from way before dawn to vote in the first election since the violence-wracked polls five years ago, with a deadly police ambush hours before polling started marring the key ballot.

March 5, 2013: Uhuru Kenyatta takes commanding lead after half of the votes counted

(DW) - Kenya’s deputy prime minister Uhuru Kenyatta has opened up a commanding lead as vote counting continues following the country’s presidential election. Officials though have cautioned that that the outcome of the vote remains far from clear. Preliminary results announced on Tuesday morning gave Uhuru Kenyatta a significant lead over his closest rival in the presidential race, Prime Minister Raila Odinga. With about a third of the votes counted, Kenyatta had received around 2.65 million votes to 2.05 for Odinga. This figures represented 53 and 41 percent of the counted votes respectively. Odinga appeared to remain confident about his chances, though, with a spokesman saying counting in
his strongholds had not yet been completed. The head of the electoral commission also warned against jumping to conclusions and said that Kenyans will likely have to wait a couple of more days for the final results. "The law allows the commission to declare the results within seven days. Yesterday we voted. Today is the first day after the elections, " Isaak Hassan said. "We've got six more days, that is the legal position. We hope within 48 hours we will be able to announce."

Concern over high number of spoiled ballots: His comments followed complaints from the camps of both of the frontrunners about the slow pace of the vote counting. Hassan said the commission was working to speed up the process. He also expressed concern about the number of spoiled ballots cast, describing this as "quite worrying." Figures obtained by the news agency Associated Press indicated that so far, the electoral commission had found more than 300,000 spoiled ballots. Officials estimated the turnout for Monday's election at 70 percent of the country's 14 million registered voters. If no candidate wins at least 50 percent of the presidential vote, the two top finishers will face each other in a run-off election, to be held on April 11. Although many Kenyans had to stand in line for hours to cast their ballots, election day was largely peaceful, apart from a series of attacks in the Mombasa area, which killed more than a dozen people. On Tuesday, the authorities charged three suspected members of the separatist Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) with murder in connection with the deaths of four police officers killed in the election-day attacks. The group advocates the secession of the Mombasa region from Kenya to form a separate country. Fears remain about how Kenyans may react once the results of Monday's presidential election are announced. Following the 2007 vote, when President Mwai Kibaki was quickly declared the winner, supporters of Odinga, who was also a candidate back then, took to the streets to protest. Several weeks of violence ensued in which more than 1,000 people were killed. Presidential candidate and Deputy Prime Minister Kenyatta is facing criminal charges at the International Criminal Court in The Hague stemming from the 2007 violence. (DW)

March 6, 2013: A runoff between Raila Odinga and Uhuru Kenyatta is likely'

NPR) -- Kenyans on Monday held their presidential vote. Prime Minister Raila Odinga and Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta are the top two contenders. Kenyans were growing increasingly frustrated that the announcements of public vote tallies ceased close to 48 hours after polls closed. The breakdown of the electronic vote system has meant less than half of preliminary results were released. Officials — who have been working to ensure violence doesn’t break out this election — are calling for patience. "The delay is giving rise to conspiracy theories. People are panicking about the delay in the results of the elections. But unlike last election there is a level of restraint," said Kevin Muriunge, a 25-year-old student. Referring to long voting lines during Monday's vote, Alojz Peterle,
a former president of Slovenia and the chief observer in the European Union observer mission, said that Kenyans have demonstrated they are capable of great patience. "But even more patience is called for now," he said. The election commission chairman announced late Tuesday that hundreds of thousands of ballots that were rejected for not following the rules would be counted in the overall vote total. That makes it very difficult, given the tight race, for either top candidate to reach the 50 percent mark needed to win outright. Election observers from around the world said Wednesday that Kenya carried out a credible election Monday, but the groups reserved final judgments until the election process is completed. Some observers said it appeared a runoff between Odinga and Kenyatta is likely. The partial preliminary results on Tuesday had shown an early lead for Kenyatta. Odinga's camp told supporters that the votes from his strongholds had not yet all been tallied.

The statement from Kenyatta's coalition Wednesday implied that the British high commissioner pressured the commission to make the decision on the spoiled ballots, thus ensuring a runoff. John Stremlau, an election observer with The Carter Center, the body run by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, said that it might be better for Kenyatta's coalition to use "foreign powers" as a whipping post than attacking Kenyans. "It does seem to me to be a mindset of the old colonial era that the foreign powers would be dictating to the (election commission) in any way," Stremlau said, adding later: "There are going to be accusations in every election ... and they must be backed by evidence. Show the proof and let the judges decide and we'll all be better off." Franklin Bett, an official in Odinga's party, echoed that statement. "Talk is easy. Let them come with the evidence," he said. William Ruto, Kenyatta's running mate, on Tuesday had also blamed "foreign missions" for swaying the electoral commission on its ballot decision. The decision "is meant to deny us a first-round win," Ruto was quoted as saying.

Kenya is the lynchpin of East Africa's economy and plays a vital security role in the fight against Somali militants. The U.S. Embassy in Kenya is the largest in Africa, indicating this country's importance to U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. has warned of "consequences" if Kenyatta is to win, as have several European countries. Because Kenyatta is an ICC indictee, the U.S. and Europe have said they might have to limit contact with him, even if he is president. Aisha Abdullahi, the commissioner for political affairs at the African Union, said it was good that Kenyan officials had planned for a backup system — the physical tallies of votes — given the breakdown in the electronic transmission system. He blamed the break-down on a failure of central computer servers. "Yes, we in Africa are trying to catch up with you guys with electronic things. We are not yet as proficient as Western Europe or North America," said Festus Mogae in response to a question from a European reporter. Mogae is a former president of Botswana and head of the Commonwealth observer mission. "That it's failed is no surprise to me. It often does in our countries."
March 6, 2013: Kenyans await outcome of tight presidential race'

NAIROBI (Reuters) - Kenyan authorities hope to deliver the final outcome of a presidential vote on Wednesday, after partial results gave a lead to a politician wanted in The Hague over tribal violence after the last election over five years ago. Counting since Monday's vote has been slow, and a new electronic system has been plagued by hitches, leading to complaints by political parties and anxiety among voters fearful that a flawed process could lead to another violent dispute. Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta, 51, has kept an early lead since results started trickling in after polls closed on Monday, but some strongholds for his rival Prime Minister Raila Odinga, 68, have yet to declare their results. The last election saw some 1,200 people killed in ethnic violence after outgoing president Mwai Kibaki was declared the victor over Odinga amid charges of voting fraud. This time, Monday's vote saw at least 15 people killed in pockets of violence but no repeat so far of unrest on such a large scale. But the biggest test of whether calm prevails will be whether the candidates and their supporters accept the outcome. The stakes are high for both candidates and a dispute over the fate of a sizable number of rejected ballots could rein in Kenyatta's early lead and raise the chances of an April runoff. The election commission has said it hopes to tally all the results on Wednesday, but has seven days from Monday's vote to declare the official outcome.

"We are afraid because we don't know what's going to happen next," said Charles Kabibi, 27, a gardener in the port city of Mombasa, whose concerns have risen with the wait. "It makes us nervous and it's just adding to the tension." Uhuru Kenyatta and his running mate, William Ruto, are both wanted in The Hague on charges of unleashing death squads after the last vote in 2007. Both men deny the charges. The United States and other Western states, big donors that view Kenya as vital in the regional battle with militant Islam, have already indicated that a victory by Kenyatta would complicate diplomatic relations.

CALL FOR CALM: Provisional results displayed by the election commission on Wednesday with just under 60 percent of polling stations still to report showed Kenyatta, son of Kenya's independence leader and one of Africa's richest men, leading with 53 percent, against 42 percent for veteran politician Odinga. But the numbers ignore more than 330,000 rejected votes counted so far, which the election commission says will now be included. Once factored in, Kenyatta's chances of securing more than 50 percent in the first round give him an outright win would be sharply eroded. "We want to believe that this is not an attempt to deny the Jubilee Coalition a first-round victory as is clearly now on the wall," Ruto told reporters, referring to a results screen. "We urge every Kenyan to be calm and very patient and await the official release of these results by the commission." He also suggested foreigners might have prompted the commission's change of heart, adding: "We are very concerned at the level of involvement of ambassadors and foreigners in canvassing for
various positions around this hall." Odinga's camp has also questioned parts of the election process before, during and after the vote, hinting at the potential for legal challenges. After problems with the electronic system, the electoral commission said it would rely instead on results being delivered manually to a national tallying centre overnight. "We can confirm that our returning officers are expected to bring the physical results at anytime now, which will lead to the final results. What matters here is the final result and they are coming in," Ahmed Issack Hassan, chairman of the election commission, said late on Tuesday.

TARNISHED IMAGE: Despite the glitches, he said the vote would be fair and credible. "We therefore continue to appeal for patience from the public," he said earlier in the day. "Nobody should celebrate, nobody should complain." To try to prevent a repeat of the contested outcome that sparked the violence after the December 2007 vote, the new, broadly respected election commission is using more technology to prevent fraud, speed up counting and increase transparency. But the new system has come up short of expectations. Kenyans, who waited patiently in long lines, hope the vote will restore the nation's image as one of Africa's more stable democracies, damaged by the tribal blood-letting in 2007. Election officials said turnout was more than 70 percent of the 14.3 million eligible voters. Kenya is East Africa's biggest economy and, although led by authoritarian leaders accused of corruption for most of its half century of independence, has been spared the civil wars that devastated neighbours like Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Rwanda.

It won support from the West for sending troops to Somalia to fight al-Shabaab Islamist militants. Highlighting the threat, an explosion struck a predominantly Somali neighbourhood in Nairobi late on Tuesday, injuring one person. Investors initially applauded peaceful voting and signs the result could yield a clear winner, strengthening the shilling against the dollar. But as Tuesday wore on and nerves about the wait set in, the currency gave up its gains. As in past elections in Kenya, much of the voting has been on ethnic lines, with Kenyatta enjoying strong support among his Kikuyu tribe, Kenya's largest, and Odinga backed by the Luo, the tribe which includes the family of U.S. President Barack Obama. In a country with a handful of large tribes and dozens of smaller ones, both candidates lead broader coalitions and are also relying on support from the tribes of their running mates. All the candidates have pledged to accept the outcome, and ordinary Kenyans speak passionately about their determination not to allow a repeat of the violence five years ago. Streets have been all but deserted with many businesses closed, including supermarkets and security personnel were beefed up countrywide in readiness for possible demonstrators."We are worried about violence and the businesses are not doing well," said Francis Mwangi, 25, a technician in Mombasa. "People are not working because they're waiting for results so they can start once more."

March 13, 2013: Kenya: protecting women and children in Kakuma Camp'
Kakuma – Bridging the gender gap and protecting women and children are priorities for most, if not all, NGOs and UN agencies in the camp. Year after year, campaigns are organised to raise awareness of the plight of women, and education and training courses seek to strengthen the position of women. Concerted efforts are made to ensure the many cases reported receive public attention and the perpetrators punished for their crimes. Yet despite the increasing camp population, 20 percent in 2012, reaching 110,000 and with further increases expected in 2013, available resources are being stretched to the limit, and tensions in and among refugee families and communities frequently reach breaking point. With the increase in the camp population, the need for protection for survivors and those at risk has grown substantially, particularly for children. The huge increase in the number of vulnerable girls in need of protection from forced marriage and child abduction means that more resources are needed to cater their needs away from those who condone the practices. Most of these girls end up with little or no access to education.

Small steps: With all this it is easy to become overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem. Yet there is also a quiet revolution taking place. Women are protected in the JRS Safe Haven; NGOs, like JRS, provide courses to help women find jobs and lend them resources to start businesses. Although it often seems like a drop in the ocean, many lives of women and their children are saved and situations changed for the better. Yet, for others, sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) continues to be an everyday occurrence, with hundreds of cases reported every year; the situation got so bad that in 2012 JRS dramatically increased the numbers of women-headed families in its Safe Haven facility to serve 105 survivor women and children, offering them important counselling services. Moreover, participants are also offered courses in the adult education programme, tailoring, and a pre-school for the children. The Safe Haven is a highly protected facility where SGBV survivors and persons with protection risks are admitted to heal from the trauma they may have suffered at the hands of the perpetrators. Further, during this time, durable solutions are sought to ensure that they are not exposed to the same risks again. Moreover, in 2012 JRS provided scholarships to 73 girls at risk of SGBV to pursue their education, away from the rampant violence in the camp, in Kenyan schools where they are able to study in a safer environment.

"My uncles wanted to marry me off to a very rich old man.... JRS then gave me a scholarship, protection, food and clothing. Now I know my rights and will not allow anybody to take away what belongs to me. I've taken several [vocational] courses and I know I'll get a good job when I get resettled [in another country]", said Elizabeth*, recipient of JRS protection services, vocational training courses and scholarship for vulnerable girls in Kakuma refugee camp. Some refugee women are also able to give back to others after they receive assistance. After Agnes* defied the wishes of her relatives by marrying a man from another ethnic
group, they tried to kill her husband. Aware of her right to make choices, Agnes reported the matter to the police. Afterwards, JRS sponsored her education and training, and later hired her as a community counsellor. "This has helped me to build self-awareness and develop healthy coping mechanisms, including helping others facing similar situations", she said.

But there are many women in the camp who lack a basic education, who are unable to read and write in the languages used in Kenya. Not only does this prevent women from being autonomous in everyday life, as Jane* found out it can also have other consequences. After her husband beat her for the umpteenth time and tried to prevent her from seeing her children, she tried to report him. Due to her inability to speak in English or Kiswahili, she faced serious difficulties reporting him at the police station. These problems continued right through to the court process. Although Jane was not deterred, for too many other women, these obstacles would have been too much. Eventually Jane was offered protection in the JRS Safe Haven where she enrolled in adult literacy education and tailoring classes. Now she is able to communicate effectively in both Kiswahili and English. Her case was referred to court where she raised her complaints and was granted custody of her children. "Learning wasn't easy for me but I managed", Jane said with a smile of satisfaction.

Insufficient: But small steps are not enough to protect women in Kakuma camp who are frequently put at risk of SGBV when carrying out the simplest daily activities, such as collecting firewood, going to food distribution centres, hospital, or schools. More needs to be done to address the complex cultural, economic and political causes. While international and regional laws assert refugee rights and protection, the reality is far removed from these legal concepts. Patriarchal cultural practices have obstructed gender equality and especially empowerment of women in Kakuma; the socioeconomic deprivation of protracted crisis in isolated camps where the rule of law is far from guaranteed. The legal obligations of the Kenyan state and the international community have been undermined by a lack of political will. It is only through this political will, and solid investment, which prioritises the well-being of refugees, can real strides towards the reduction of sexual violence be expected.

March 16, 2013: Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga filed a legal challenge contesting the election results. Election officials declared that Uhuru Kenyatta won a very narrow victory. Police in Nairobi used tear gas to disperse a small crowd (100 to 150) of Odinga’s supporters. One person was injured during the demonstration. Odinga’s legal complaint alleged vote fraud, fraudulent voter registration and inaccurate counting. Odinga, however, urged his supporters to continue to avoid post-election violence. So far that is the big story in Kenya. Despite the deep political divisions and accusations of vote fraud, the country has not experienced any significant violent clashes related to the election, and certainly nothing like the violence which followed the 2007 disputed election.
March 20, 2013: The International Criminal Court (ICC) announced that it will not drop the criminal charges against Kenya’s presumed next president, Uhuru Kenyatta. Kenyatta is charged with crimes against humanity, committed in the violent aftermath of the 2007 elections that left 1,200 people dead. Kenyatta allegedly helped plan the clashes and attacks on opposition political supporters.

March 28, 2013: A gun battle erupted in the Kenyan town of Malindi when 100 members of the separatist Mombasa Republic Council (MRC) tried to storm and rob a casino. The attackers killed a policeman who was part of a small detachment protecting the casino. A larger force of police officers responded to the attack and killed six of the attackers. Police described the incident as a gang attack, but a hundred fighters is a very large gang. Malindi is a resort town on the Indian Ocean in Coast Province. It is located 120 kilometers north of Kenya’s main seaport, Mombasa, about midway between Mombasa and Lamu.

March 31, 2013: The Kenyan government increased security throughout the country after the country’s Supreme Court ruled that Uhuru Kenyatta had been properly elected president. The court rejected a challenge by Kenyatta’s opponent, Raila Odinga. After the decision, a riot broke out in the town of Kisuma where two people died before police could calm things down. The government is trying to avoid a repeat of the 2007 post-election violence.

April 9, 2013: Uhuru Kenyatta was sworn in as Kenya’s president. However, he remains under indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ceremonies were peaceful.

April 19, 2013: Kenyan authorities claimed the secessionist Mombasa Republic Council (MRC) has ties to Islamist militant extremist movements in eastern Africa. The implication is that the MRC is linked to al Shabaab in Somalia. The government believes the MRC has also received help from Iran.

May 10, 2013: The Kenyan government asked the UN to terminate the International Criminal Court (ICC) crimes against humanity case against Kenya’s president, Uhuru Kenyatta, and vp William Ruto.

May 28, 2013: Kenya Plunged into Darkness in Nationwide Power Blackout'

East Africa's biggest economy, Kenya, was on Tuesday plunged into a nationwide power blackout, said the country’s sole power distributor - Kenya Power. Kenya Power has over 2 million customers connected to the national grid whom it supplies with 1,250 megawatts against a demand of 1,700 megawatts, with most of the fuel generated from hydro power stations run by KenGen. The company said the blackout was brought about by the failure of two transmission lines carrying 400 megawatts (MW) of electricity from a geothermal power source in the Rift Valley,
where KenGen is tapping vast reserves of steam energy in a geologically active region.

This set up a ripple effect, knocking out the national interconnected grid and generating system - which relies on hydro-power for the lion's share of its electricity - leading to a national power outage, the company said. Businesses in the country of 40 million people often rely on diesel generators to make up the gap between power demand and output and cite frequent localized power blackouts as one of the key barriers to economic growth. Growth is forecast to grow 6 percent this year from 4.6 percent last year and 4.4 percent in 2011. Kenya Power said it was attempting to re-start the grid "to restore power as quickly as possible", and had launched an investigating to find out why the two transmission lines failed.

May 30, 2013: A senior International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor said that the Kenyan government must prove to the ICC that Kenyan courts can genuinely prosecute President Uhuru Kenyatta for crimes against humanity. Kenyatta and his chief deputy, William Ruto, are charged with planning and inciting post-election violence in 2007 that killed over 1,200 people. The ICC has indicted the men for crimes against humanity. Kenyatta has asked that it be permitted to try the men. The ICC is stressing the word “genuine” because ICC prosecutors think Kenya will conduct a sham trial. The ICC can pass jurisdiction to a nation’s courts if the national courts can conduct credible criminal investigations and a credible court room trial.

June 6, 2013: The United Kingdom announced that it will compensate five thousand Kenyans for their suffering during the 1950s Mau Mau rebellion. The individuals compensated were held in detention camps. Many were abused and several claimed they were tortured by British colonial authorities. The British compensation offer is an attempt to settle a variety of claims, some of which have been in litigation for years. UK attorneys made the argument that the independent (since 1963) Kenyan government had taken over responsibilities for the colonial government and it should be liable for any damage claims. In November 2012, claimants produced official files that documented attempts by colonial security officials to cover up the March 1959 Hola detention camp incident. At Hola 11 prisoners were beaten to death. No prison official was ever properly investigated or held responsible for the murders. The UK decided to pay the damage claims. Each claimant will receive around $3,900. The Mau Mau rebellion was a complex insurgency. The number of people who died during the rebellion is disputed. 10,000 is a common figure. The rebellion began in 1952 and ended in 1960.

July 12, 2013: Saudi princess free on $5 million bail in California'

AMY TAXIN, Associated Press SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — A Saudi princess charged with human trafficking was freed after posting $5 million bail, but authorities imposed strict travel requirements and GPS tracking to keep
her in Southern California. Meshael Alayban, 42, who prosecutors said is one of the six wives of Saudi Prince Abdulrahman bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz al Saud, was released Thursday after posting the hefty bail amount a day after her arrest. Earlier in the day she had appeared in court wearing a dark blue jail jumpsuit to answer to one felony charge of human trafficking. She did not enter a plea. Her arraignment was postponed to July 29. Alayban was arrested after a Kenyan woman who worked for her as a maid alleged she was held against her will and forced to work. The maid led police to a condominium where Alayban's family was staying, authorities said. Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas said after court Thursday that the woman was subjected to "forced labor," and likened Alayban to a slave owner.

July 15, 2013: ICC Rejects East Africa Venue for Ruto, Sang Case

Capital FM (Nairobi) Kenya: International Criminal Court (ICC) trials against Deputy President William Ruto and Joshua arap Sang will open at The Hague on September 10, 2013. This was after ICC judges turned down a request by the two to have the opening session held in Kenya or Tanzania. "The judges of the International Criminal Court (ICC) have decided, in a plenary session, that the commencement of the trial against William Samoei Ruto and Joshua arap Sang will take place at the seat of the court in The Hague, Netherlands, rejecting the joint defence request to hold hearings in Kenya or in Tanzania," the ICC's Public Affairs Unit said. The judges made several considerations which included the high costs that the court would have to incur if the trials were not heard at Hague-based court. They also factored in the security of victims and witnesses which has been a concern raised by victims and the Office of The Prosecutor (OTP) as much as they were paying attention to the principal of bringing the trials closer home as possible. The court further considered the impression it will create if the trials (opening statements) are heard in Kenya or Tanzania.

"They reached this conclusion after taking into consideration numerous factors, such as security, the cost of holding proceedings outside The Hague, the potential impact on victims and witnesses and on proceedings in The Hague, as well as the length of the proceedings to be held away from the seat of the court and the potential impact on the perception of the court," the statement said. In the ruling, the judges also said Ruto will be required to be physically present during the opening statements of parties to the case. This decision was also pronounced when the judges allowed Ruto to skip sessions of the hearings. Even though there are some judges who were in favour of the opening session of the trials being heard in Arusha or Kenya, there was no two thirds majority required to change the seat of the court. "After carefully considering the arguments both in favour of and against holding the opening statements in the case in Nairobi or Arusha, the judges did not reach the required two-thirds majority necessary for a decision to change the seat of the court." Ruto
and Sang in January 2013 made a joint application asking the court to have their trial moved from The Hague to Kenya or Tanzania.

The same request was also made by President Uhuru Kenyatta's defence team. Defence teams in the two cases argued that having the trials in Kenya or Tanzania would bring the cases closer home and also cut down travel costs. The Victims' Legal Representative in the Ruto-Sang case, Wilfred Nderitu, also supported the idea even though over 80 percent of the victims he represented were in favour of the trials being heard in The Hague. He said having the trials heard in Kenya or Tanzania "was important to have some ownership of the process which would trickle down to more representative participation of the victims." He also said it would help build regional institutions especially improving criminal justice systems. The OTP was opposed to the trials being heard outside The Hague and raised concerns over the security of witnesses.

Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda explained; "The prosecution's concern is that the attempts to interfere with trial witnesses would increase if the trials were held in Kenya and to a lesser extent, in Arusha, Tanzania where the accused have significant influence, where the public interest in the trial is extremely high and where the court has not infrastructures in place to ensure the security of trial witnesses." The registry had suggested that trials could only be heard up to a maximum of one month at the International Court Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha. "With regards to the observations provided above, the registry respectfully submits that there are no technical obstacles to put in place the necessary requirements for any in situ case scenario in Arusha, as the existing facilities allow for a similar level of provision as provided by the ICC, except for having protected witnesses testifying in public session with voice and facial distortion," Silvana Arbia said in her application in February. The trial of President Kenyatta is scheduled for November 2013.

July 15, 2013: Kenya: ICC - Trial of Kenyan VP to Open in The Hague

Voice of America (Washington, DC)The International Criminal Court has rejected a request from Kenya's deputy president to begin his trial in Africa. The ICC said Monday that the trial of Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto will commence September 10 at the ICC's headquarters in The Hague. William Ruto and co-accused Joshua Arap Sang are facing charges of crimes against humanity, for allegedly helping to organize deadly ethnic violence that followed Kenya's 2007 presidential election. Defense lawyers had asked the ICC to hold at least parts of the trial in Kenya or neighboring Tanzania. An ICC statement said judges favored the idea in principle but decided to hold the trial at the Hague because of several factors, including security, cost considerations, and the potential impact on victims and witnesses. Monday's decision does not affect the trial of Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, who is also facing charges of crimes against humanity in connection with the Kenyan post-election violence.
Uhuru Kenyatta's trial is due to begin November 12 in the Hague. More than 1,100 people were killed and several hundred thousand displaced in riots and fighting that erupted across Kenya after the disputed 2007 election. The president, his deputy and Sang are all cooperating with the ICC and appeared before the court in April 2011. All have denied the charges against them. Despite the charges, Kenyatta won a first round victory in Kenya's March presidential election, with Ruto running as his deputy.

August 5, 2013: Kenya: ICC Moves Witnesses to Europe Ahead of Hague Trial'

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has relocated five top witnesses from an African country ahead of the start of hearings for the post election violence cases against President Uhuru Kenyatta, his Deputy William Ruto and journalist Joshua Arap Sang. The five were flown from a neighbouring country to another location in the region from where they will board flights to different destinations in Europe in readiness to testify in the cases. Ruto and Sang's cases come up for hearing starting September 10 at The Hague. Witnesses who have been in the neighbouring country are linked to the Kiambaa KAG Church fire where more than 30 people were killed at the height of the poll violence on January 1st 2008. The Star has established that the relocated witnesses have crucial evidence on the church incident and they have been residing at safe houses in the neighbouring country's capital city. Before they were flown out by officials from the ICC Witness Protection Unit there were fears about their security which led to the relocation on a night flight two days ago. ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda is expected to use the witnesses to testify during the hearings. "They are no longer here. They were taken to other locations for safety purposes two days ago," said a source related to one of the witnesses and who was living with them for the last two months.

Source said security agents of the neighboring nation had learnt of the existence of the witnesses in that nation leading to the security fears by ICC's protection Unit. One of the five witnesses was a worker at the home of a top politician who has a farm near the Kiambaa Church and the witness is said to have witnessed the incidents at the church. Also moved are their family members especially children. Yesterday the National Association of Human Rights Activists (NARA) released a report indicating that human rights defenders including those linked to the ICC cases were under serious threats and intimidation in the country. Speaking to Journalists in Nyeri town NARA Chairman Ken Wafula said some of the defenders who have been working with post election violence victims and witnesses had been forced to flee from the country for safety. "They are living under constant threats of death, intimidation and arbitrary arrests by agents of the state and other linked to the ICC cases," said Wafula.

Wafula said the activists have been victims of hate mails and hate speech from politicians and they have had their families unnecessarily harassed
within the last few years. The report known as "A cry for justice: The State of Human Rights Defenders in Kenya" has been handed to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Keriako Tobiko with recommendations on how to deal with the situation. It lists names of the human rights defenders who have been dealing with the ICC cases among others who face the threats. "The Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) should recall all the files bearing criminal proceedings on human rights defenders for review to determine whether sufficient evidence exist to sustain the cases," said Wafula. He said the police, prosecution and courts have knowingly or unknowingly been used as instruments to oppress, repress, suppress and subjugate human rights defenders even when most cases against them do not meet the basic prosecutorial standards. Wafula says the Witness Protection Unit in the country should be strengthened and made more independent so that it can handle crucial witnesses including those linked to high profile cases like those at the ICC.

August 7, 2013: KENYA - Major fire at Nairobi airport'

A fire has broken out at the main international airport in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. The Kenya Airports Authority (KAA) said Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) had been closed and passengers evacuated. There have been no reports of any casualties and the cause of the fire is not clear. The BBC's Emmanuel Igunza, who is at the airport, says the fire is now under control.

Nairobi airport closes as fire crews tackle blaze'

A huge fire has ravaged the main international airport in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) - a key regional hub - has been closed, passengers evacuated and incoming flights diverted. The fire is now said to have been contained but there have been reports that it took emergency services a long time to respond. Images from the scene showed flames leaping from one of the main buildings. There have been no reports of any casualties and the cause of the fire is not clear. Jomo Kenyatta International Airport is the regional hub for East Africa, with many long-distance flights landing there to connect to countries across the region. The airport is the main gateway for European tourists - and it is now the height of the tourist season - and is also crucial for the country's key flower export industry, so the fire could have a huge economic impact, says the BBC's Emmanuel Igunza at the scene.

Shares in Kenya Airways fell in early trading

Despite earlier official statements that the airport had been closed indefinitely, presidential spokesman Manoah Esipisu said domestic flights and international cargo flights would resume later on Wednesday.

Water shortage: The cabinet secretary for transport, Michael Kamau, earlier described the fire as "very severe", and although it is contained firefighters are still battling the flames. Dark smoke could be seen
billowing into the sky across much of Nairobi as the fire - which began at approximately 04:30 local time (01:30 GMT) - took hold. Passengers arriving on international flights - some still in their seats - reported hearing explosions from the terminal building. Fire engines did not begin to arrive for one to two hours after the fire broke out, witnesses told our correspondent - by which time the blaze was ravaging the cavernous and ageing arrivals hall. Kenya's police and fire units are poorly resourced and the state response was supplemented by the Red Cross and private security firms including - airport authorities said - the British multinational company G4S. One witness told AP news agency she had seen soldiers and police trying to douse the inferno using buckets of water. Witnesses said traffic jams prevented emergency vehicles getting through, leading the interior ministry to appeal to cars to get out of their way. Shocked would-be passengers stood outside the airport, bags in hand, watching the blaze.

Nairobi resident Barry Fisher - who had hoped to travel to Ethiopia on Wednesday - described the scene as chaotic. "There was no-one stopping any traffic going to the road to the airport," he told AP news agency. "A number of fire trucks and ambulances were trying to negotiate their way through the lane... They were trying to weave their way through a solid two lanes of cars." American student Emily Mosites was in the airport trying to get a flight to Kisumu when the fire broke out. "There was no emergency direction on leaving - I just stood there watching the fire. There were no officials to tell anyone what to do. "I wasn't told whether or not there were any flights departing. So I thought this was insane and decided to leave."

The government also admitted that firefighters had run "dangerously low on water" and water tankers had had to be sent to bolster supplies. Interior Minister Joseph Ole Lenku said the airport had "lost the arrival areas and a number of offices have been gutted". "We have heightened security to make sure people are safe.... We will make sure we establish the true cause of the fire," he told journalists. Cabinet secretary for transport Michael Kamau earlier said the blaze began in the immigration zone, which he said was deep inside the affected building, making it difficult for firefighters to reach. He paid tribute to the work of the emergency services. President Uhuru Kenyatta - whose father the airport was named after - has toured the burning building to see the damage. Incoming flights have been diverted to regional airports and to Mombasa, where the BBC's Odhiambo Joseph said there were chaotic scenes with hundreds of passengers stranded. Correspondents say authorities will be keen to get the airport fully operational as soon as possible - and an airport authority committee is looking at how to do so. The blaze comes two days after aircraft were delayed for several hours after the failure of a hydrant needed for refuelling planes at the airport.

August 8, 2013: KENYA - After big fire, Nairobi airport re-opens for domestic flights' AP:
NAIROBI, Kenya - A small fire that an under-resourced fire brigade reacted slowly to swelled into a raging inferno that engulfed the arrival hall at Kenya's main international airport Wednesday, an official said, shutting down East Africa's largest airport and forcing the cancellation of dozens of flights. By late Wednesday, the airport re-opened for domestic and cargo flights, an official said. The massive, early-morning fire sent billows of black smoke high into Nairobi's sky. The blaze burned for more than four hours before officials declared it contained, and flames continued to burn two more hours after that. The fire broke out on the 15th anniversary of the bombings of the U.S. Embassy buildings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, in neighbouring Tanzania, but there were no immediate signs of terrorism in the fire. Kenya's anti-terror police boss, Boniface Mwaniki, told The Associated Press that he was waiting for more information before making a judgment.

No serious injuries were reported. Two people were treated for smoke inhalation from the fire, which began a bit before 5 a.m. and turned airport banks and foreign exchange bureaus into black char. "There were enormous flames and so much smoke," said Katie Price, an American aid worker who arrived in Nairobi early Wednesday from Malawi. The fire gutted Jomo Kenyatta International Airport's arrival hall, where passengers pass through immigration and retrieve their luggage. The fire did not damage the domestic or departure terminals, which are separated from the arrivals hall by a road. "It was huge, the smoke billowing, and it didn't seem to be stopping," said Barry Fisher, who had hoped to fly to Ethiopia on Wednesday morning. Nairobi is the capital of East Africa's largest economy, but it lies in a region where public sector services like police and fire units are hobbled by small budgets, corrupt money managers and outdated or no equipment.

Nairobi's most respected paper, The Daily Nation, reported last month that Nairobi County doesn't have a single working fire engine. One engine, the paper said, was auctioned off in 2009 because the county hadn't paid a $100 repair bill. Many of the responding units to Wednesday's fire were from private security firms. An Associated Press reporter on the scene saw uniformed officers line up with buckets in hand, apparently to battle the blaze. "I would have expected more fire engines to respond faster," said a British passenger, Martyn Collbeck, who had been scheduled to fly to London on an early morning KLM flight. A top government official at the site of the fire said an initial assessment showed that a complacent response helped a small fire grow into an uncontrollable inferno. Some airport fire engines weren't filled with water and others didn't have personnel to drive them, said the official, who insisted on anonymity because he wasn't authorized to release details of an ongoing investigation.

The airport, also abbreviated as JKIA, re-opened later Wednesday for domestic and cargo flights. Plans were under way to change a domestic unit into an international terminal so those flights could resume as well.
International airlines, including South African Airways, Etihad and Emirates among others, cancelled flights to Nairobi. Qatar Air said its Nairobi flights were being rerouted to the Kilimanjaro airport in Tanzania. No U.S. carriers fly direct to Nairobi. Delta in 2009 tried to open such a route but the Transportation Security Administration nixed those plans because of security concerns. Kenya President Uhuru Kenyatta visited the scene and expressed concern over disrupted travel plans. A presidential statement said the cause of the fire is being investigated and that "there is no reason to speculate at this point."

"We reassure international and local travellers that arrangements are being put in place to restore normal operations. The airlines are working to assist stranded passengers and advise them on the measures being put in place to resume services," said Stephen Gichuki, the director of the Kenyan Airports Authority. The Nairobi airport is the busiest in East Africa, and its closure affected flights throughout the region and beyond. Michael Kamau, the cabinet secretary for transport and infrastructure, said the fire began at 5 a.m. in the immigration section of the arrivals hall. Inbound flights were diverted to the coastal city of Mombasa, he said. Kenya's Red Cross said that flights were also being diverted to Dar es Salaam, Entebbe, Uganda and the Kenyan cities of Eldoret and Kisumu.

The police and fire fighting response was slow, witnesses said. Long after the fire began it was still possible to drive into the airport complex. "There was no one stopping any traffic going to the road to the airport," Fisher said. "A number of fire trucks and ambulances were trying to negotiate their way through the lane. ... They were trying to weave their way through a solid two lanes of cars." By early afternoon, passengers began to grumble that minimal assistance was being offered. Medr Gudru, a 66-year-old German, had hoped to fly home on Wednesday but the fire stranded him with no information, he said. "This is too much. It was very nice here but this is just a mess," he said. Kenya Airways, the country's flagship carrier, diverted five flights to Mombasa and said all of its transit passengers were being moved to hotels. The airline reported that one passenger and one employee suffered from smoke inhalation. Jane Waikenda, the director of the Department of Immigration Services, sent out rapid-fire messages on Twitter in a bid to soothe frayed nerves. "I would like to reiterate that we doing what must be done to have full immigration services up," she wrote, before adding moments later: "you can never please everyone. We appreciate being held accountable as we strive to serve all Kenyans fairly." Price said that airport officials set up a makeshift terminal in the cargo area, where nearly two dozen immigration officials lined up to stamp passports.

KENYA - First international flights after Nairobi airport fire'

A plane from London was the first to land at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport at 06:30 local time (03:30 GMT), Kenyan airport authorities said. Other planes from Bangkok and Kilimanjaro also arrived. The cause of the
fire is not yet known. Kenyan authorities say no serious injuries were reported. The Nairobi airport is a regional hub serving more than 16,000 passengers daily and its closure caused widespread disruption. International flights into the city had been diverted to other airports in Eldoret and the coastal city of Mombasa. On Wednesday the interior ministry announced the resumption of domestic and cargo services. The fire took about four hours to bring under control, by which time the arrivals hall had been gutted.

'Completely destroyed'

The Kenya Airport Authority told the BBC that Kenya Airways flights were arriving and taking off "now at more or less normal operations". Other international airlines had not yet clarified their operations, it added. The fire started in the airport's international arrivals and immigration area at around 05:00 on Wednesday and spread quickly. Questions are being asked about why so few fire engines were available initially. It appears that some engines got stuck in the Kenyan capital's notorious traffic jams. Many engines at the scene also quickly ran out of water. Soldiers and police even came with buckets to help put out the fire, Sylvia Amondi, who was at the airport to pick up a relative who had been due to arrive there, told AFP news agency. "The international arrivals station has been completely destroyed, the roof has caved in and the floor is covered in debris and water," she said. A third of Europe's flower imports, and many fresh vegetables, come from Kenya and the Kenya Flower Council exporters' association described the fire as "disastrous". Shares in Kenya Airways, which uses the airport as its main hub, fell 2% after the fire. Foreign airlines which use the terminal include British Airways, Emirates, Qatar Airways, KLM, Turkish Airways, South African Airways and Ethiopian Airways. Several cancelled flights to Nairobi on Wednesday. The country's anti-terrorism chief, Boniface Mwaniki, has said he does not believe the fire - which happened on the 15th anniversary of the bombings by al-Qaeda of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania - was connected to terrorism. Correspondents say the airport is old and overcrowded.

**Jomo Kenyatta Airport**

Busiest airport in east and central Africa, and seventh busiest in Africa

Handles six million passengers a year

Hub for neighbouring countries as well as cities as far away as Lagos, Johannesburg and Cairo - as well as gateway to continent for Europe and Asia

Serves 49 destinations in 23 countries, across five continents

Key export point for Kenya's flower industry, one of the country's top foreign exchange earners - Kenyan flowers account for 35% of flowers imported into
August 9, 2013: Kenya: Government to Build 2.5 Million Capacity Air Terminal’

Capital FM (Nairobi) By Kennedy Kangethe: Nairobi — The government is set to build a new temporary terminal with a capacity of 2.5 million passengers. President Uhuru Kenyatta who visited the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) on Friday evening said the new terminal will be ready in coming weeks. "We also intend to do a full refurbishment of Terminals 1, 2 and 3 once our new temporary terminal is ready," he revealed. The president said that Terminal 4 that is currently under construction will come on stream earlier than the projected March 4, 2014. "Passengers are coming in and going out, as it ought to be. They are not as comfortable as we'd like them to be, but we are working on that," he said. To enhance passenger comfort, the President offered the use of the Presidential pavilion to boost operations of the airport. He said that Airport capacity is up to about 70 per cent while safety and security have significantly been enhanced. The President spoke JKIA after inspecting progress made towards returning the airport to normal operations. The airport resumed operations to all traffic at midnight Thursday. He said the cost of loss experienced during the incident has not been quantified. The government has also overhauled national disaster services, creating one coordinating agency to take charge during such incidences. "We have received massive support, including financial, security equipment and others, from lending institutions and friendly governments to get this important regional hub back to full operations, and we are grateful to them," he said.

September 4, 2013: Kenya/Ethiopia help dismember Somalia’

NewStatesman: - Analysis By Martin Plaut - A new deal has recognised Jubaland, a strip of land in southern Somalia and bordering on Kenya and Ethiopia, as yet another quasi-independent entity in the region. After nine days of late night meetings and plenty of arm-twisting, the fragile government of Somalia was finally forced to accept that a further slice of its territory had slipped beyond its control. The deal, signed in Addis Ababa, recognised Jubaland as yet another quasi-independent entity. This strip of land in southern Somalia and bordering on Kenya and Ethiopia, it is the illegitimate heir of both of these countries. Jubaland is of critical importance to the whole of southern Somalia. Trade through the port and airport of Kismaayo is a lifeline for the region. In theory Jubaland will be the ‘Interim Juba Administration’ and last for just two years, while Somalia re-forms itself into a Federation. In reality it is now outside Mogadishu’s control – just like those other fragments of Somalia, including Puntland, Galmadug and the self-declared independent state of Somaliland.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who was only sworn in as Somali president a year ago, was unable to resist the intense pressure of his
neighbours and agreed to the deal. The entire sorry saga was witnessed by Nicholas Kay, the UN’s Special Representative in Somalia; welcomed by Catherine Ashton for the European Union and supported by the African Union. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the South African chair of African Union described the agreement as “historic”, declaring that it was “a further illustration of the capacity of the Somalis to triumph over their differences.” It is hard to see what there was to welcome. The deal officially recognises Ahmed Mohamed Islam (known, like all Somalis by a nickname - ‘Madobe’) as the ‘leader’ of Jubaland. Yet only a month earlier Sheikh Madobe was described in a major UN report as a “spoiler” and one of the chief threats to Somali stability. The Sheikh was said to be “subverting the efforts of the Federal Government leadership and its partners to extend the reach of Government authority and stabilise the country, particularly in Kismaayo.”

What the Baroness Ashton and her colleagues have done is anoint a man who has been roundly denounced by the Monitoring Group, established by the UN Security Council. Its July report pointed out that the Sheikh had been a member of the short-lived Union of Islamic Courts, which was ousted by Ethiopia during its 2006 invasion of Somalia. What happened next is interesting. As the report puts it: “Madobe’s forces returned to Kismayo in August 2008, when Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam recaptured the city following the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia.” At this time the Sheikh Madobe was a key player in the al-Qaeda linked network. But, as is ever the case in Somalia, clan and inter-clan rivalry came into play and the Sheikh fell out with his former allies. He threw in his lot with the African peacekeepers and the Federal Government. But Sheikh Madobe did not cut his ties with al-Sabaab altogether and the UN report accuses him of continuing the export of charcoal from territory controlled by the Islamists – a trade long since outlawed by the UN because of its catastrophic impact on the Somali environment.

Under the new arrangement the Sheikh retains the port and the airport, although he is required to hand control to the Federal Government within six months. Since this would cut his income and hence his power, there seems little chance of the handover ever taking place. The outcome has been a triumph for Somalia’s neighbours, even though Kenya and Ethiopia will continue to vie for influence in this critical part of the country. The Kenyan foreign ministry has long seen the establishment of a buffer state along its northern border as vital to its security interests. Thanks to Wikileaks, we know that Kenya’s Foreign Minister, Moses Wetangula, practically begged the United States for its support when he saw Johnnie Carsons, President Obama’s most senior US Africa official, in January 2010. The Kenyans were requesting backing for an invasion of Somalia to create Jubaland, but the Americans were far from keen. As the confidential embassy telex puts it: “Carson tactfully, but categorically refused the Kenyan delegation’s attempts to enlist US Government support for their effort.” It was, said the telex, the third time Wetangula
had made the appeal, but Carsons resisted, pointing out – rightly – that “the initiative could backfire.” Critically, Carsons warned that: “if successful, a Lower Juba entity could emerge as a rival to the TFG” (Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government). This is exactly what has now come about.

Brushing these concerns aside, Kenya sent its troops into Somalia in October 2011. As predicted, they found it very heavy going and it was to take almost a year before al-Shabaab were driven from Kismaayo. For the Ethiopians, the establishment of Jubaland is a further fragmentation of Somalia, its sworn enemy since the Somalis invaded their country in 1977. It was an attack that is imprinted on Ethiopian memories, fuelling a determination to see the end of a powerful, centralised Somali state. As if the situation was not complicated enough, newly created Jubaland could be sitting on reserves of oil. Several fields have been detected in the waters along the Kenya-Somali border, but, like many African frontiers, the location of the border is a matter of dispute. The Somali government refuses to recognise oil licenses granted to multinational companies by Kenya, and has persuaded several oil-majors, including Total and the Norwegian state owned Statoil, to withdraw their claims. But, said the UN in July, the Italian firm, ENI, was still pressing ahead with its claims. As Jonnie Carsons remarked in 2010, Jubaland “raises more questions than it answers.”

September 12, 2013: Kenya finds '70 year supply' of water in desert region

By Hannah McNeish, VOA NAIROBI — Satellite technology has revealed that the drought-stricken Turkana region of northern Kenya lies atop two giant underground lakes, or aquifers. Estimates indicate the finds could solve the barren region’s water problems and provide all of Kenya with enough water for the next 70 years. The government of Kenya and the U.N. agency UNESCO on Wednesday announced huge new water finds in one of the most arid parts of the country. Kenya’s minister of environment, water and natural resources, Judi Wakhungu, said the two aquifers in Turkana -- a northern region long mired in poverty and conflict from a lack of water -- could not only transform the lives of local communities, but also the country.

“What we found in Turkana basin and Lotipiki basin is very exciting because it’s over 200 billion cubic meters of water,” she said. “This means that if we use this water sustainably we will have enough water for the next two generations.” Exploration company Radar Technologies International found the underground lakes using satellite technology. RTI’s General Manager Alain Gachet said that the huge estimates could be the tip of the iceberg. “It’s a complex model but we based our estimation only on the superficial, on the first 300 meters,” he said. "And the lake is one-and-a-half kilometers deep, maybe completely soaked with water. So I
consider we were very conservative with these reserves, as we considered only the first 300 meters.”

Gachet says the resource could turn pastoralists from beggars embroiled in cross-border water conflicts with South Sudan and Uganda into potential thriving and peaceful communities able to grow their own food. That would be welcome news to residents of Turkana, where the malnutrition rates can soar as high as 37 percent. Gachet admits that there could be some environmental damage to the area, but that people came first. "You know, when people are dying of thirst, you don’t think of the environmental impact, besides the fact that you are going to give water to these people and their cattle," he said. "The first impact is positive. So for sure, better have water than no water.”

Gretchen Kalonji, assistant director-general for natural sciences at UNESCO, which protects areas of scientific and natural interest, also stressed the human need. "It’s an area which as you know is extremely short in water and you know, it witnessed the worst drought in 60 years in 2011, where I think 12 million people ended up displaced, and a large number fo people ended up dying, so that’s important to keep in mind,” she said. Wakhungu said the find was “historic” as for the first time, the people of Turkana would have clean drinking water. She said the reserves could completely transform the lives of people there, first through agriculture and then industrial production. “If managed well, it means the notion of drought, the notion of lack of water, is now history for the Turkana people,” she said. Unlike the water in Lake Turkana, which has higher levels of alkaline, the underground water is drinkable, and Wakhungu said that local communities would be able to start drinking it within a month.

Wakhungu said the search for water will soon go nationwide in the hope that other areas suffering water shortages, such as the Kenyan coast, might soon turn from dustbowls into breadbaskets. “We are so encouraged by this technology that we are now going to roll this out and do a groundwater mapping exercise for the whole country,” she said. In a continent where the fear of “water wars” is strong, Gachet also hopes that his technology can keep the peace. His mantra is "a little water is war, a lot of water is peace, as you can share with neighbors."

September 21, 2013: Gunmen opened fire on shoppers at a Kenya mall - Upscale Mall becomes war zone in Kenya terror attack’ NAIROBI, Kenya By REUBEN KYAMA and NICHOLAS KULISH — An upscale mall popular with the Kenyan elite and the foreign diplomats and businesspeople who call Nairobi home turned into a war zone on Saturday, as gunmen opened fire on shoppers in an apparent terrorist attack, killing at least 20 people and wounding dozens more. At nightfall, the mall remained sealed off to the public as police officers and soldiers searched floor by floor for the gunmen, who were still believed to be inside with hostages. Witnesses described hearing explosions and gunfire as they fled, leaving behind
blood, broken glass and carnage in what was apparently one of the worst terrorist attacks in the country’s history. Joseph Momanyi, 26, an employee at the Nakumatt grocery store there, said that as he was running away he heard the attackers shouting that “Muslims should leave” the complex. The authorities said it was too early to identify the culprits, but suspicion immediately focused on the Shabab, the ferocious Somali militant group that has been linked to past attacks in Kenya, including a grenade and gunfire attack on two churches last year that killed 15 people.

Kenya is widely considered a beacon of stability in an often unstable region. The United Nations has a hub here, as do many nonprofit organizations and corporations. The country’s economy is heavily dependent on tourist revenue, with peaceful safaris and gentle holidays on the coast attracting people from all over the world. But Kenya has found itself ever more enmeshed in the bloody volatility of Somalia since October 2011, when Kenyan military forces invaded Somalia to help Somali forces fight the Shabab. And even before the rise of the Shabab, Kenya was a target for terrorist attacks. In 1998, Al Qaeda militants bombed the American Embassy in downtown Nairobi, killing 200 people, mostly Kenyans. Gen. Abbas Guleed, secretary general of the Kenyan Red Cross, said in a phone interview on Saturday that 20 people had been killed and more than 50 wounded. The police had not yet confirmed any fatalities. Stephen Opiyo, 25, who was working at a supermarket there, said: “We heard gunshots and started running, trying to find an escape route. I saw many people who had suffered gunshot injuries, and some have been taken away to hospital.”

Witnesses described attackers using AK-47 rifles and throwing grenades. Photographs from the scene showed a woman’s bloody body being lifted out of a car, the glass of the window shattered. Vivian Atieno, 26, who works on the first floor of the mall, described “intense shooting,” starting around 11 a.m., before she escaped through a fire exit. Haron Mwachia, 20, a cleaner at the mall, said he escaped by climbing over a wall. “I heard several gunshots and managed to run away,” he said. “It was a horrible experience to me, and I was extremely afraid,” he said. “I’ve never seen anything like it.” Military helicopters hovered overhead as the police kept bystanders away from the scene. The police said they had surrounded the mall, and they were seen clearing the shops one by one. “Our officers are on the ground carrying out an evacuation of those inside as they search for the attackers, who are said to be inside,” Inspector General David Kimaiyo of the Kenyan police told Agence France-Presse.

Agence France-Presse reported that the gunmen had taken at least seven hostages, citing police officers and security guards at the scene. The Red Cross reported around 5 p.m. on its Twitter account that the hostages were being released. Benson Kibue, the Nairobi police chief, told The Associated Press that it was a terrorist attack and that there were probably no more than 10 gunmen involved. Earlier, Mr. Kibue said the
attack had been part of an attempted robbery. Saturday’s attack ruptured the bubble of safety that surrounds the affluent districts of the Kenyan capital. The mall, called Westgate, is in many ways like an American shopping mall, with a Converse store, a tapas restaurant and a corner where children can play while their parents shop and eat.

On weekends, Westgate is bustling with shoppers, including well-to-do Kenyans and members of the city’s large contingent of expatriates. Brightly lighted, with peach-colored pillars and a marble stairway, the Westgate mall has more than 80 stores covering 350,000 square feet. Many shopping malls in Nairobi have security guards outside, checking vehicles, searching bags and using metal-detecting wands on visitors before they enter. But the guards — lightly armed, if at all — would be no match for assailants armed with automatic rifles. For years, there have been growing concerns that the Shabab would try to pull off a significant attack here in reprisal for Kenya’s deployment of troops in Somalia. The group has executed revenge attacks on other African countries that have sent troops to Somalia, including Uganda. In July 2010, the Shabab killed more than 70 people who had gathered at a restaurant and a rugby field in Kampala, the Ugandan capital, to watch the final match of the World Cup.

September 22, 2013: Death toll rises to 59 in Kenya mall attack; hostages still held’

NAIROBI (Reuters) Updates: - Gunfire erupted on Sunday at an upmarket shopping mall in Kenya's capital Nairobi, where at least 59 people were killed and several more held hostage by gunmen from a Somali Islamist group that has declared allegiance to al Qaeda. The shooting, lasting about 30 seconds, came after a period of tense quiet in the standoff, a Reuters witness said, speaking from close to the shopping centre that has several Israeli-owned outlets and which is frequented by Westerners and Kenyans.

Foreigners, including a Canadian diplomat, were killed in Saturday's attack at Westgate mall, claimed by the Islamist group al Shabaab. Shortly after the shots were fired, troops in camouflage ran crouching below a restaurant terrace along the front of the building that had been buzzing with customers when assailants charged in. One witness said they first told Muslims to leave. For hours after the brazen attack, the dead were strewn around tables of unfinished meals. At one food outlet, a man and woman lay in a final embrace after they had been killed, before their bodies were later removed. In the darkness of Sunday morning, music still played.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, facing his first major security challenge since his election in March, said his close family members were among the dead. The assault was the biggest single attack in Kenya since al Qaeda's East Africa cell bombed the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi in 1998, killing more than 200 people. In 2002, the same militant cell attacked an Israeli-
owned hotel on the coast and tried to shoot down an Israeli jet in a coordinated attack. Interior Minister Joseph Ole Lenku told reporters the death toll had risen to 59, and that security forces were doing everything they could to rescue hostages still inside the mall.

He added that 175 people had been taken to hospital after an assault that could prove a costly setback for east Africa's biggest economy, which relies heavily on tourism revenues. The dead included children, and the wounded ranged in age from 2 to 78. Many victims were at a cooking competition when assailants opened fire on them, witnesses said. The focus of attention on Sunday was on Nakumatt supermarket, one of Kenya's biggest chains.

DAZED: Soldiers joined the security operation backed by armored personnel carriers in the hours after the attack that was launched around 12.30 p.m. (0930 GMT) on Saturday. Security forces have been combing through the mall, clearing the floors. As helicopters hovered over the capital, a paramilitary officer at the scene, a rifle slung over his shoulder, said: "They will be arranging how to attack (the assailants)." One woman emerged on Sunday morning after she had been hiding under a car in the basement. She was holding one shoe and looked dazed, and was making a frantic phone call to her husband who later met her.

France said two of its citizens were killed, and Canada said two Canadians died, including a 29-year-old diplomat. A Chinese woman was also killed, China's official news agency said. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, who offered assistance to Kenya in the incident, said several U.S. citizens had been hurt and the wife of a U.S. diplomat working for the U.S. Agency for International Development was killed. Al Shabaab, which is battling Kenyan and other African peacekeepers in Somalia, had repeatedly threatened attacks in Kenya if Nairobi did not pull its troops out of their country. The group appeared to taunt the security forces, saying on its official Twitter handle @HSM_Press that there would be no negotiations whatsoever with Kenyan officials over the standoff. "10 hours have passed and the Mujahideen are still strong inside #Westgate Mall and still holding their ground. All praise is due to Allah!", the group said late on Saturday, although its account on Twitter was suspended on Sunday morning.

VIGIL: Kenyatta, who faces charges of crimes against humanity at a trial starting in November at the International Criminal Court, vowed to defeat the militants who have said it is time to shift the war to Kenyan soil. "We have overcome terrorist attacks before," he said. Relatives of hostages still trapped in the mall kept vigil overnight at a nearby religious community centre. "I want her to come out alive," said Kevin Jamal, as he joined Kenya Red Cross Society volunteers and waited for news about his sister who he said was being held inside. He said security forces could have done better. "They should not allow themselves to be outmaneuvered by less than 20 people," he said.
A private security firm would normally search patrons of the mall using metal detectors and open the trunks of cars entering parking areas, but the guards would be unarmed. Nakumatt closed its other stores on Sunday, local media reported, while the mall was cordoned off and surrounded by police and paramilitary forces. Ole Lenku said the government believed that there were 10-15 attackers who security forces had been able to "isolate", but no communication had yet been established with them. Those rescued said at least one of the assailants was a woman. One militant was shot and arrested in clashes following the initial siege, but died shortly afterwards at a hospital.

Witnesses said the attackers were armed with AK-47 rifles and wore ammunition belts. Police said they stormed in during a children's cooking competition hosted by a radio station at the mall, just as the winners were about to receive prizes. Kenya sent its troops into Somalia in October 2011 to pursue militants it blamed for kidnapping tourists and attacking its security forces. Al Shabaab's last big attack outside Somalia was a twin strike in neighboring Uganda, targeting people watching the World Cup final on television in Kampala in June, 2010. Seventy-nine people died.

September 23, 2013: Kenyan authorities arrest 10 WestGate suspects'

NAIROBI: The Kenyan Police have confirmed, via their Twitter page, that about 10 suspects have been taken in for questioning in relation to the Westgate attack. One suspect is reported to have been shot in the heat of the exchange. Earlier today, Kenyan authorities confirmed that they have regained control of the entire building except the supermarket where the terrorists are camped. It is unclear if any progress has been made beyond this point. This attack continues to make headlines across the world. Presidents from nations all over the world have expressed their support and sympathy for the Kenyan people, while urging the authorities to do all that is possible to save the hostages. According to official sources, possibly all the hostages may have been taken out of the building. Since the unit behind the attack is made up of people from different nations, there would be a lot of international attention on the suspects and their trials. The authorities have not confirmed if any of the arrested suspect appears on the list released by al shabab earlier or if the list assisted them in making the arrests.

September 24, 2013: Kenyan president declares Terrorists defeated’

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) Kenya's president proclaimed victory Tuesday over the terrorists who stormed a Nairobi mall, saying security forces had "ashamed and defeated our attackers" following a bloody four-day siege in which dozens of civilians were killed. President Uhuru Kenyatta said the dead included 61 civilians whose bodies have been recovered so far and six security forces, while some 175 were injured, including 62 who remain hospitalized. Three floors of the mall collapsed and several bodies were trapped in the rubble, said Kenyatta. His office later said a terrorist's body was among those in the debris. Five other extremists were killed by
gunfire and another 11 other suspects had been arrested, he said; authorities had previously announced the arrest of seven at the airport and three elsewhere "These cowards will meet justice as well their accomplices and patrons, wherever they are," Kenyatta said, in a televised address to the nation. Kenyatta, 51, has visited wounded survivors in hospital and made other emotion-filled speeches about the terrorist attack, which has been the harshest test of his leadership since he became president in April. "Fellow Kenyans, we have been badly hurt and feel great pain and loss. But we have been brave, united and strong," said Kenyatta, the son of the country's founding president, Jomo Kenyatta. "Kenya has stared down evil and triumphed."

KENYA: why did an Al Shabaab Islamist unit attack a shopping mall in the centre of Nairobi?

The Al-Shabaab Leader Sends Message to Kenyans’

(Mogadishou): The overall commander of Al-Shabaab, Mukhtaar Abdirahman Abu Zubeyr sent a voice message to the people of Kenya. The message is about the recent attack carried out at the Westgate. Abu Zubeyr thanked the attackers and termed them as the 'Westgate Mujahidin' while he also termed the attack as the 'Badar Attack'. "On Saturday 21 Sept 2013, 10 days after the 12th Anniversary of 9/11, one of the attacks in history that Muslims carried out started in Nairobi, during which some of the selfless Mujahidin have written its history using their blood and revenged on behalf of the Muslims who are being weakened, whereas those Mujahidin have reacted to the attack that was carried out in the Muslim land and the massacring of their weak people" Abu Zubeyr said. Abu Zubeyr claimed that the attack was revenge against the Westerners for their support for the Kenya's incursion into Somalia. "It was surprising to the leaders of Kenya who attacked the Islamic Regions without thinking twice. It was revenge against the Westerners who supported the Kenya's invasion and who are shedding the blood of the Muslims for the interests of their Petroleum Firms". The commander of Al-Shabaab called the people of Kenya to choose between two options. "Decide today and withdraw your army from the Somali regions, or else be ready for a lot of bloodshed in your land, economic devastation and displacement". The commander added. He accused them of the responsibility of the incursion by their government into Somalia. He said that people of Kenya have opted for war in which they can't win. "We are telling the people of Kenya that you have involved in a war which you are not suppose to involve, a war that is against your interests. You lost your security and your economy. You lost your sons. You are part of the perpetrators of the genocide which your army has done in Kismayo and in the other areas because you are the people who elected the politicians. The army of Uhuru that massacres the Muslims is armed using the tax that you pay and you have supported the decision for the war". He stressed that. He told the people of Kenya that their country has no ability to cope with a prolonged war and that they will not be able to withstand
for more bloody attacks in Kenya. He advised them to pull out their forces from Somalia. Source: Radio Dalsan

September 24, 2013: KENYA: Police Alert at Border With Ethiopia'

EAN: Security has been tightened at the border of Ethiopia and Kenya following the Westgate attack. Marsabit county commissioner Isaiah Nakoru said the security apparatus in the region have been upscaled and the patrols intensified to ensure that the suspected attackers don't flee out or into the country. He said all police chiefs have been ordered to beef up their security checks and ensure no one gets in or out of the country. Nakoru directed all lodges, hotels, bars and Public Service Vehicle operators in the region to review their security arrangements, including screening visitors. He was addressing officers at Marsabit Catholic Hall on Sunday when he presided over a forum for uniformed officers. Nakoru said officers have been deployed in communal places such as churches to check on the security. He said adequate security measures have been put in place to avert the terrorist attack by the al Shabaab.

October 1, 2013: Beyond the Nairobi Massacre’

Mareeg: NAIROBI - By Michael Meyer - Kenya heaved a collective sigh of relief when the four-day siege at Nairobi’s Westgate shopping mall finally ended. Yet the aftermath of the massacre is in many ways turning out to be as dramatic – and grisly – as the event itself. The sophistication of the plot has stunned investigators. The attackers – members of the Somali Islamist extremist group al-Shabaab – spent weeks reconnoitering the site. They knew every exit and safe haven, and they appear to have leased a shop where they pre-positioned ammunition, explosives, and heavy weaponry. Their use of social media was a case study in digital virtuosity.

The attackers issued a clear demand: Kenya must withdraw the forces that it deployed two years ago as part of an international effort to drive al-Shabaab out of Somalia and return the country to government rule and a semblance of normal life. Their strike, they said, was intended chiefly as a warning to Kenya’s government: change your policy, or else. The attackers also made a great show of telling the world that they had taken special care to safeguard the lives of fellow Muslims during the assault. Tell that to a colleague here in Nairobi who was trapped in the mall for five hours as gunfire echoed all around. She emerged unharmed to find that two members of her family were dead and a third wounded. The survivor was a nine-year-old boy, shot in the hip. As he lay bleeding, terrorists trained their guns on his mother and 15-year-old sister. Recite a passage from the Koran, they ordered. Being Muslim, they did so. The terrorists shot them anyway.

“Why did you do that? Why did you shoot them?” the little boy wailed. “Because,” replied one of the gunmen, “they were not wearing the hijab.” Amid the chaos, a French woman grabbed the child and carried him to
safety. We have heard many such stories in recent days. Brutal as they sound, worse is likely to come. A police doctor working with forensic teams left the scene in shock, telling reporters of seeing bodies beheaded, and others bearing clear evidence of unspeakable torture. He recounted entering the still-smoldering ruins of the mall last week and seeing bodies hanging from hooks. Many of those taken hostage suffered terrible deaths. There were bodies with their noses and ears wrenched off with pliers. Others had their eyes gouged out. The terrorists seem to have used knives to shave some victims’ fingers like pencils, he said, forcing them to write their names in their own blood. At least 72 people were killed in the attack.

How much that toll increases, and how graphic investigators will be in describing the scenes they encounter, remains to be seen. It is important to understand what is at stake in this gruesome episode, not only for Kenya but for the region and beyond. President Uhuru Kenyatta made clear almost immediately that last week’s events will not weaken Kenya’s determination to maintain its policy on Somalia, even as he confirmed that he, too, lost loved ones in the Nairobi massacre. The warlords of al-Shabaab are not the only threat to the region’s security. Today, an arc of crisis stretches from Somalia on the Indian Ocean across the African Sahel to the Atlantic coast. Sudan, another country in Kenya’s neighborhood, is fractured by rebellion. In the south, secessionist groups are fighting in Kordofan and Blue Nile. To the west, in Darfur, protesters burned government buildings in the provincial capital of Nyala while the siege in Nairobi played out. Days later, riots erupted in cities across Sudan, including the capital, Khartoum.

According to news reports, security forces have shot over 100 people, adding to a toll of casualties that has made this year one of the deadliest in Sudan’s recent history. Diplomats view these developments with alarm. Over the past year, Darfur has spun out of government control. As Darfur goes, many analysts say, so goes Sudan. Conditions across the wider Sahel are similarly worrisome. Mali may be stable for now, but, with the separatist Tuareg rebels in country’s north having just suspended their participation in peace talks, many experts believe that it is only a matter of time before the conflict there reignites and spreads. Drug barons and local warlords control increasingly large swaths of territory from Guinea on the Atlantic coast through Senegal to Mali, Niger, and beyond. Libya is already partitioned among rival warlords, with a “national” government that operates only at the indulgence of the armed groups that support it. Against this background, the stakes in Kenya’s fight against terrorism in and emanating from Somalia are high. It is not a struggle that Kenya should wage alone.

Michael Meyer, former Communications Director for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the UN mission in Darfur, is Dean of the Graduate School of Media and Communications at Aga Khan University in Nairobi.
October 2, 2013; Somali Al-Shabab threatens to escalate attacks in Kenya’

PRESS TV: Somalia’s al-Shabab militant group has threatened to increase its deadly attacks against Kenya, days after they killed tens of people at a mall in the Kenyan capital. The al-Shabab fighters vowed to transform Kenyan cities and towns into what they call grave yards, on Wednesday. "We will strike Kenyans where it hurts the most, turn their cities into graveyards and rivers of blood will flow in Nairobi," the militants said in a statement. This comes after Kenya refused to pull its soldiers out of Somalia. "The Kenyan government's decision to keep its invading force in Somalia is an indication that they haven't yet learnt any valuable lessons from the Westgate attacks." Late last month, nearly 70 people were killed after Somalia’s al-Shabab fighters stormed the Westgate mall, a shopping center popular with rich Kenyans and foreigners in Nairobi. Dozens of others are reportedly still missing following the hostage-taking that took place in the building.

The group claimed responsibility for the attack. Al-Shabab leader Ahmed Godane said the raid was in retaliation for the Kenyan military’s invasion of southern Somalia in October 2011. Kenya currently has over 4,000 army soldiers stationed in southern Somalia, where they have been battling the al-Shabab. The Kenyan forces are part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) that gets training and equipment from the United States. Somalia has not had an effective central government since 1991, when warlords overthrew former dictator Mohamed Siad Barre. However, MPs meeting in Mogadishu elected Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the new president of Somalia with a big majority in September 2012. The weak Western-backed government in Mogadishu has been battling al-Shabab fighters for more than six years and is propped up by the 10,000-strong AMISOM forces from Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, and Kenya. SZH/PR

October 5, 2013: KENYA - U.S. Navy SEAL seize al-Shabaab leader in Nairobi attack response: NY Times’

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A U.S. Naval commandos seized a senior leader of the al Shabaab militant group from a seaside villa in Somalia in response to a deadly attack on a Nairobi WestGate shopping mall last month, the New York Times quoted U.S. officials as saying. The SEAL team seized the unidentified target in a predawn firefight after approaching the beachfront house in the Somali town of Barawe by sea, the paper reported on its website "The Barawe raid was planned a week and a half ago," the newspaper quoted an unnamed U.S. security official as saying. "It was prompted by the Westgate attack," he added, referring to a militant assault on a Nairobi shopping mall two weeks ago in which at least 67 people were killed. The Times quoted witnesses as saying that the firefight lasted more than an hour, with helicopters called in for air support. The Times report quoted a spokesman for al-Shabaab as saying
that one of its fighters had been killed in an exchange of gunfire but that the group had beaten back the assault. The U.S. officials said it was unclear whether the SEAL team's target was taken alive or killed.

October 5, 2013: Assassinations of Muslim clerics in Kenya boosting al-Shabaab'

MOMBASA, Kenya REUTERS – Updates: The killings of popular Muslim clerics in Kenya's port city of Mombasa is strengthening support for Somali militants who massacred at least 67 people in a Nairobi shopping mall two weeks ago, a prominent Islamist said on Saturday. The apparent assassination of Sheikh Ibrahim Omar on Thursday night raised religious tensions in Kenya's commercial and tourism hub. Young Muslims, streaming out of a mosque where Omar had preached, torched a church, burned tires and fought the police on Friday. Four people were killed during the day-long riots. Abubakar Shariff, whom the U.N. and the U.S. accuse of funding al Shabaab, said Omar's killing would boost recruitment and support for the Somali group among Kenyan Muslims convinced the cleric was gunned down by Kenyan security agencies. "After this attack I think more youth will be willing to go over," the Kenyan Islamist told Reuters at his home in Mombasa, a city in which several prominent Muslim preachers have been killed over the past 18 months. "(The extrajudicial killings) make Muslims realize or sympathize with Al Shabaab because they see a Christian government killing Muslims and they sympathize with them," added Shariff, whose assets have been frozen by western powers. The Kenyan police have repeatedly denied killing Omar. "The city is calm," said Robert Kitur, Mombasa County Police Commander, on Saturday as businesses re-opened and cars returned to Mombasa's palm-lined streets.

The U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia has called Shariff a "leading facilitator and recruiter of young Kenyan Muslims for violent militant activity in Somalia" and imposed financial sanctions on him. He denies funding or recruiting for al Shabaab. One of the Westgate mall attackers was a Kenyan of Arab origin, who was born in Mombasa and travelled to Somalia with his uncle at the age of 16, a Kenya Defence Force spokesman said on Saturday. A group of Kenyan Muslim leaders on Friday condemned the Mombasa riots and said the police should properly investigate the "extrajudicial" killing of Omar and three other people who were in a car with him. "Coming in the wake of the deplorable Westgate (mall) attack, the killings point to a worrying and deteriorating security situation in the country which needs to be addressed urgently," the leaders said in a statement.

DRIVE-BY SHOOTINGS: The drive-by shooting of Omar was strikingly similar to that of Sheikh Aboud Rogo, a firebrand cleric who had been Omar's mentor, last year. Both men were popular with youths along Kenya's Indian Ocean coastline where many Muslims feel marginalized by the mainly Christian government. They both died on the same stretch of
road outside Mombasa, their cars sprayed with bullets. Shariff said Omar's killing was linked to the deadly raid on Westgate mall, the worst militant strike on Kenyan soil since al Qaeda bombed the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi in 1998. Al Shabaab have formal links with al Qaeda.

Shariff said Kenyan authorities had been planning to link Omar to the Westgate raid by planting evidence in his car, but this was thwarted by the quick arrival of witnesses on the scene. The police deny attempting to plant evidence and say Omar's death is being treated as a regular criminal investigation. Shariff said he believed the Westgate attack was "justified" under Islamic teachings as Kenyan forces were doing the same to civilians in Somalia. The killings of Muslim clerics had made Kenyan security agencies complacent, he added. "It happen because Kenyan Anti-Terror Police Unit or the Kenyan intelligence started eliminating potential targets … thinking they removed every threat to the security of Kenya," Shariff said. "Westgate happen because they relaxed."

October 7, 2013: Kenya identifies four suspects involved in WestGate attack’

(EAN) Updates: The Kenyan military on Saturday revealed the names of four terrorists who took part in the September 21st attack on Westgate Mall in Nairobi. The spokesman for the Kenya Defence Forces, Major Emmanuel ChirChir said the four were Abu Baara al-Sudani, Omar Nabhan, Khattab al-Kene and Umayr. The military has also released CCTV footage of the four, armed with guns and walking around the mall during the attack. The footage, however, did not show the terrorists attacking or killing any civilians. Contrary to earlier reports, none of the attackers were from the West. Police have also ruled out the possibility that Samantha Lewthwaite, a British citizen, was involved in the attack. She is one of the terrorists who took part in the bombing of London’s transit system in 2005 and the Kenyan police have been trailing her for a long time. According to Kenya Police, the four men had received terrorism training from Islamist militant groups. Al-Sudani, a Sudanese citizen, was the leader of the group. ChirChir described him as “an experienced fighter and sharpshooter.” Nabhan, a Kenyan of Arab origin, left his home town of Mombasa for Somalia at the age of 16. He is reported to be the brother of Saleh Ali Nabhan, a top Al Qaeda member based in Somalia, who was killed by U.S. forces in a raid in southern Somalia in 2009. Al Kene was an American-Somali Islamist militant from Mogadishu and is linked to Al-Shabab. Umayr’s full name and nationality has yet to be established. The Kenya Police claim that all four terrorists were killed when the mall collapsed. However, their charred bodies are still undergoing DNA identification. ChirChir told Reuters, “I confirm these were the terrorists, they all died in the raid.” The latest information that only about four to six terrorists stormed the crowded mall on September 21st raises questions about how such a small number of people were able to hold off Kenyan security
forces for up to four days. This revelation also contradicts earlier accounts from witnesses and the Kenyan security forces. Earlier some witnesses reported that some of the attackers had managed to escape from the mall by hiding among the hostages. Kenyan authorities had also previously stated that between 10 and 15 terrorists were involved in the attack.

October 11, 2013: KENYA - Coal until geothermal is ready’

(EAN) The government will rely on coal to fire its electricity power plant in its plan to triple capacity to 5000 MW by 2017, as it is cheaper than geothermal power.

October 12, 2013: African Union urges ICC to defer Uhuru Kenyatta case’

BBC News: The African Union summit in Ethiopia has demanded a deferral of The Hague trial of Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, due to start in November. It also agreed a resolution stating no sitting African head of state should appear before an international court. With both Kenyan and Sudanese presidents facing ICC cases, African leaders have long complained that the court unfairly targets them. The AU had discussed withdrawing from the ICC, but failed to get support. Senior figures including Kofi Annan have criticised plans to quit the ICC.

October 12, 2013: African Union demands ICC trial of Kenyatta be suspended’

(EAN) Updates – News updates: African leaders at the African Union summit in Addis Ababa have called for the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) trial of Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta to be delayed. Failing this, the continent’s leading body decided it is acceptable for President Kenyatta to absent himself from the proceeding which is scheduled to begin on November 12th. President Kenyatta had earlier requested the court grant him permission to attend the proceeding via video link, but nothing came of the request. Under the laws of Kenya, it is unacceptable for the President and his deputy to be out of the country at the same time. But according to the ICC’s schedule, both men are expected to be at the Hague at the same time. Explaining the importance of the AU’s directive to the ICC and UN Security Council, AU Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma said “We should not allow Kenya slide back [to the destabilised state it was in 2007 following widespread violence after disputed elections] for any reason and the AU is keen to see stability and an improved security situation in Kenya. This requires the undivided attention of its leadership.”

There have been concerns about the effect the absence of both leaders will have on the stability of Kenya. These questions have taken on extra importance in light of last month’s attack on the Westgate mall and other terrorists attacks in Nairobi in the past few weeks. Earlier in the week, President Kenyatta made it unequivocally clear that he would not shirk his national responsibilities in order to answer to the ICC. There are reports that Kenyatta’s legal team have also requested the court halt the
proceeding against him as there are concerns he will not get a fair trial. There had been widespread concerns that this gathering, which is focused on the continent’s ailing relationship with the international court, will evolve into a platform to generate support for a mass pull out of the ICC. However, this has failed to happen, African leaders seem to be united on one stand and the AU seems to be determined to take charge of its affairs. This request by the AU is the culmination of many months of complaints by numerous African leaders and individuals about the ICC’s questionable handling of African cases.

October 14, 2013: Kenya - UK Gov’t to Compensate and Apologise to Mau Mau Victims’

(EAN) Summary & Comment: LONDON - UK Foreign Secretary William Hague announced a £14m compensation package in the British House of Commons and expressed “sincere regret” to the more than 5000 victims who have been fighting for years for reparation from the UK government. The Kenya Human Rights Commission says 90,000 Kenyans were executed, tortured or maimed, and 160,000 people were detained in appalling conditions. Most have died since independence. The UK government is expected to announce compensation for and express regrets to the victims who were tortured during the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya in the independence struggle. UK Foreign Secretary William Hague will announce the £14m compensation package in the House of Commons and thereafter express “sincere regret” to the more than 5000 victims who have been fighting for reparation from the UK government. The Mau Mau uprising which emerged in the 1950s fought bitter battles with then the British administration demanding for land and end of the oppressive colonial rule. The victims say they were mistreated – some through torture and other abuses while in detention.

The Mau Mau case becomes the first compensation settlement resulting from the official crimes committed under the British colonial rule. One claimant Mwai Wanughigi in reaction to the compensation scheme said there had been no consultation over the amount they would receive. He said the £3,200 (350,000 Kenyan shillings) per claimant would be inadequate. “These people were relocated, deprived of everything, today they are not able to buy anything when you give them 350,000 Kenyan shillings - and I assure everybody, that figure is not acceptable by any standard," he told the BBC News agency. The case traces its course back in 2002 when the Kenyan government lifted the ban on Mau Mau, that the survivors of the torture began considering legal action. It was not until 2008 when the survivors sought for permission from the High Court in London to sue the British government for damages. It is in October last year, the court ruled the victims had established a proper case and allowed their claims to proceed to trial despite the time elapsed. The British government held that the claim should not be heard, arguing that the Mau Mau veterans should sue the Kenyan government instead, under the legal principle of state succession.
The success of the Mau Mau case follows discovery of crucial documents which the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) had kept hidden for decades. The secret papers revealed that senior colonial officials had authorised appalling abuses of inmates held at the prison camps established at the height of the rebellion. One survivor Wambugu WaNyingi told the high court in London last year during the case that he was detained on the Christmas eve of 1952 and held for nine years, much of the time in shackles. He was beaten unconscious during a particularly notorious massacre at a camp at Hola in which 11 men died. The Mau Mau rebellion consisted of a diverse movement within the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru areas of Kenya's central highlands. Support for the rebellion came from those who objected to Britain's imperial presence, from agricultural workers denied land ownership, and from Nairobi's unemployed. The Kenya Human Rights Commission says 90,000 Kenyans were executed, tortured or maimed, and 160,000 people were detained in appalling conditions.

October 25, 2013: KENYA/SOMALIA – Marine Transport Resurfaces’
(EAN) A Kenyan firm has joined forces with a Singapore shipping company and a Somalian concern to create a Mombasa-Mogadishou shipping route.

October 25, 2013: 15 Kenyan immigration officials fired over WestGate attack’
(EAN) The Kenyan government has dismissed fifteen immigration officials following an investigation into last month’s deadly attack on the Westgate mall. Authorities say the officials are being dismissed for their involvement in issuing illegal immigrants with Kenyan identification documents. The officials, which includes senior and mid level immigration officers, are set to be arraigned before a court. Kenya’s Cabinet Secretary for the Interior, Ole Lenku said the government wants “to remove all those who may have been part of the network that is facilitating the issuance of Kenyan identification documents to illegal immigrants who turn out to be criminals.” He added that “The government is committed to do everything in its power to ensure that Kenyans live in [a] secure and peaceful environment”.

The terror attack of September 21st was the deadliest Kenya has experienced in over a decade, leading the government to launch an extensive investigation into the event. All government institutions are set to be audited by security personnals as part of stringent investigations into the siege which left at least 67 people killed and 175 injured. Somali based terror group, Al-Shabab, have since claimed responsibility for the carnage and promise more in a bid to pressurize Kenyan authorities to withdraw from Somalia. Kenya, which shares a northern border with Somalia, is looking to better manage the influx of unregistered immigrants into the country. Security experts believe members of Al-Shabab may be moving through this border into Kenya in search of new recruits and to further develop their network. As part of the efforts to stem this largely
uncontrolled illegal immigration, Kenyan authorities are seeking to amend laws which deal directly with the registration of persons.

The government has also recruited some more experienced officers to the immigration department as way of systematically revamping the entire service. The Minister said the government is hopeful “These officers will help to streamline and revamp the immigration department to avoid a recurrence of security lapses we have witnessed in the past.” As part of the investigations into the 21st September attack, the Kenyan government is scheduled to carry out a strict examinations of all Kenyan identity cards issued within the last two years. According to reports, about 350,000 identity cards in registration centres across the Kenya have not been claimed. Authorities are giving a waiting period of three months, after which the cards will be destroyed.

October 25, 2013: KENYA – Mwai Kibaki advising Kenyatta on the ICC’

(EAN) Former President Mwai Kibaki deems that his successor Uhuru Kenyatta would have a lot to lose by ceasing cooperation with the International Criminal Court.

October 25, 2013: KENYA - NIS chief stays in his job’

(EAN) During the meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) on 15 October under leadership of President Uhuru Kenyatta, the latter persuaded the head of the National Intelligence Service (NIS, formerly NSIS), General Michael Gichangi, not to resign as he had planned to do so.

October 29, 2013: Paul Kagame of Rwanda pushes Uhuru Kenyatta to defy ICC’

(EAN) President Paul Kagame of Rwanda is encouraging his Kenyan counterpart Uhuru Kenyatta not to go to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague for his trial which is due to start on 12 November, 2013.

November 1, 2013: KENYA - Government launch anti-corruption website’

(EAN) The Kenyan Strategic Digital Communications Unit have launched a website to allow citizens report instances of corruption directly to President Uhuru Kenyatta. The revolutionary website allows people to anonymously report cases of corruption along with documents like videos, audio recordings and other incriminating materials as evidence. This move is seen as part of the government’s efforts to curb widespread corruption in the administration and improve the country’s reputation. Recently, human-rights group Transparency International revealed that many Kenyans choose not to report when they encounter corrupt officials because it is believed their complaints will be ignored. The human rights group ranks Kenya 139th out of 176 countries on its global corruption perception index. State House Spokesperson Monoah Esipisu has commended the government’s initiative. He described it as a clear
example of President Uhuru’s tough stand on corruption and other official
malpractices. “The president is committed to a clean government and this
site advances his intentions to act strongly against corruption,” he said.

This digital assault on corruption also sees Kenyan authorities set up an
SMS code (33000) to enable people send complaints via text message
directly to the head of state. Kenya, like many African countries, has
struggled with widespread corruption and this decadent culture is thought
to be a major impediment to economic and social progress. Although
offering and collecting bribe is considered a crime under the laws of
Kenya, the practice has steadily increased. Last year, Kenyan activist
Anthony Ragui set up a website – similar to the government’s – to tackle
corruption in the East African nation. The ‘I Paid a Bribe’ website has over
three-thousand accounts of outrageous demands made by corrupt officials
seeking bribes as well as schemes people use to outsmart them. The
website also has some inspiring stories of honest officials who refused to
be bribed. According to a tweet on the President’s Twitter account,
Kenyans have already started reporting corrupt officials through the
website. Pundits believe more people will be motivated to report
corruption once they are convinced their reports will be taken seriously.
The Strategic Digital Communications Unit is expected to reveal a draft
social media policy for the public service soon. This policy is expected to
regulate all Kenyan official communication on the internet.

December 12, 2013: Kenya Celebrates 50 Years of Independence’

EAN - Kenya is celebrating 50 years of independence from British colonial
rule. While there is plenty to be merry about, many Kenyans are using the
occasion to reflect on the journey ahead and the work to be done as the
country grows into a regional economic powerhouse. The celebrations
officially kicked off on Wednesday midnight with the Kenyan flag being
raised in the Uhuru Gardens in Nairobi. This was done as part of a re-
enactment of the historic moment in 1895 when Kenya became politically
free of British colonialism. Also as part of celebrations to mark the event,
the Kenyan flag is set to be raised at the peak of Mount Kenya. Several
climbers are reported to have already set out for the snowy peak. The
Kenyan government has also unveiled a special 50 Kenyan Shilling coin to
mark the celebrations, which will last until Friday, 13th December.
President Uhuru Kenyatta made history earlier when he address the nation
on the same grounds as his father Jomo Kenyatta in 1963. President
Kenyatta also planted a tree next to one planted by his father during the
independence celebrations 50 years ago.

“On this night 50 years ago Kenyans gathered at these grounds, that
night was at once the dusk of oppression and the golden dawn of liberty,”
he remarked. Several delegates from across Africa and the world have
sent congratulatory messages and joined Kenya in her celebrations.
Britain, Kenya’s former colonists, said on Wednesday that it would support
the building of a memorial for all those who were brutally killed in the
Mau-Mau uprising. Britain’s Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds officially opened a competition for Kenyans to design the building of the memorial in association with the Mau Mau War Veterans Association and several other parties. “Kenyans were subject to torture and other ill treatment at the hands of [the] colonial administration, and we expressed sincere regret that these abuses took place”, Minister Mark Simmonds said. Kenya’s independence story begins with the Mau-Mau rebellion orchestrated by Kikuyu ethnic groups.

The freedom fighters, who preferred to refer to themselves as Kenya Land and Freedom Army, fought a historic war between 1952-1960 against the British colonial administration–aided by British troops and soldiers from other African nation. The death of the group’s leader, Dedan Kimathi in 1956 marked the end of the rebellion. The Mau-Mau rebellion led to the death of about 10,000 Kenyans. Although this rebellion contributed much to the country’s campaign for independence, it also created divisions within the ethnic groups of the young nation. Recently, it was revealed that several of the surviving Mau-Mau warriors still continue their fight for land over 50 years after their bloody war against the British. According to reports, despite several promises from the government, several of the surviving fighters say they have not received the land promised to them by Kenya’s first president.

January 22, 2014: East African Community to Launch Single Tourist Visa Next Month’

EAN NAIROBI, KENYA - After its much publicised failure to kick off as expected on January 1st, reportedly due to logistical constraints, the East African Community’s single tourist visa is set to be launched next month. According to President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda in his opening address to the East African Legislative Assembly meeting in Kampala on Tuesday, the implementation of the single visa scheme fits appropriately into the entire East African Community integration strategy, which also includes the establishment of a customs union, a common market and a single currency. He disclosed that the lack of a comprehensive national identification system in Uganda is one of the reasons the launch of the single tourist visa was postponed. Reports had earlier emerged that the scheme was allegedly postponed due to logistical constraints. Officials however promised to resolve these issues within a few weeks.

The visa, which will ultimately cost tourists less time and money, is expected to drastically improve tourism in East Africa. Despite boasting of some of the world’s most fascinating natural sites, the tourism industry in east Africa has not grown as fast as many observers expect. The single visa scheme therefore intends to attract tourists with the combined appeal of the entire east African community. But Tanzania and Burundi continue to object to the implementation of the single tourist visa scheme. Protests from these two nations against the scheme last year led Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya (the other members of the east African community) to form a
splinter faction, which has been labelled the Coalition of the Willing – putting the other two nations de facto in the opposing Coalition of the Unwilling.

Samuel Sitta, the Minister for East African Cooperation recently revealed that one of the reasons the Tanzanian government objects to the launch of the single tourist visa is due to some disagreements over the revenue sharing agreement between members states of the community. Currently, tourists are required to pay about $50 to renew their visa at the entry point of each nation. However, under the single visa scheme, tourists are required to pay a flat fee of $100 at their first point of entry, which will allow them access to all countries in the community, without any need to renew their visas at each entry point.

Meanwhile, East African leaders have also relayed plans of launching an East African Community passport to give citizens free access to other member states. Since the beginning of this year, however, citizens have been permitted to travel into the territories of other member states with their national identification cards only.

Uhuru Kenyatta at the ICC: Is Justice Deferred, Justice Denied?

By Alemayehu G. Mariam (January 26th, 2014) - I am getting a little jittery over the repeated delays, postponements and all the backpedalling talk about “false evidence” and “lying witnesses” in the Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta International Criminal court trial. I don’t want to say I smell a rat but I feel like I am getting a whiff. Is the stage being set to let Kenyatta off the ICC hook?

There has been feverish efforts to defer, delay and dismiss Kenyatta’s prosecution as a sitting head of state since January 2012 when the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) Pre-Trial Chamber confirmed charges against him. In May 2013, Kenya’s Ambassador to the U.N. Macharia Kamau filed a 13-page “Confidential” letter with the President of the UN Security Council seeking to take the Kenyatta case out of ICC hands and directing it to relinquish jurisdiction to Kenyan courts. In the same month, Hailemariam Desalegn, the ceremonial prime minister of Ethiopia and rotational chairman of the African Union, went on the warpath accusing the ICC of going on an African safari “race hunting” black African leaders. In June 2013, the ICC delayed Kenyatta’s trial until November 12 having determined Kenyatta’s defense team needs adequate time to prepare for trial. In September 2013, Hailemariam formally demanded that the ICC drop charges against both Kenyatta and Ruto. At the 68th UN General Assembly, Hailemariam hectored that the ICC is undermining the “ability of the Kenyan leaders in discharging their constitutional responsibilities” and that dropping the charges “is very critical to support the peace building and national reconciliation processes in [Kenya].”

In October 2013, the African Union (AU) held a special summit to discuss the Kenyatta/Ruto ICC trial and to demand that the ICC
relinquish jurisdiction to Kenyan courts. In the alternative, they vowed to stage a mass walk out of African countries from the Rome Statute. They gathered in Addis Ababa in a pathetic spectacle like panicked prey fleeing a stalking predator (race hunter) seeking safety in numbers. They huffed and puffed, ranted and raved against the ICC, but the threatened “mass treaty-cide” flopped. The Sturm und Drang of a mass walkout on the Rome Statute proved to be nothing more than a tempest in a teapot. The AU subsequently filed a request with the Security Council to delay Kenyatta’s trial by one year. In mid-November 2013, the Security Council rejected a resolution to delay the trial. Ambassador Kamau declared, “The deferral has not been granted. Reason and the law have been thrown out the window, fear and distrust have been allowed to prevail.” Surprisingly, the U.S. did the right thing. U.S. UN Ambassador Samantha Power affirmed, “The families of the victims of the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya have already waited more than five years for a judicial weighing of the evidence to commence. We believe that justice for the victims of that violence is critical to the country’s long-term peace and security. It is incumbent on us all to support accountability for those responsible for crimes against humanity.” Last week, it was announced that Kenyatta’s trial set to begin on February 5, 2014 has been postponed once more for three months to give the Prosecutor time to reassess evidence against Kenyatta after “a witness withdrew and another admitted giving false evidence.”

False evidence and lying witnesses? For the past month, there has been disturbing talk of “false evidence” and “lying witnesses” in the office of the ICC Prosecutor. On December 19, 2013, ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said, “On December 4, a key second witness in the case confessed to giving false evidence regarding a critical event in the Prosecution’s case. This witness has now been withdrawn from the Prosecution witness list... Having carefully considered my evidence and the impact of the two withdrawals, I have come to the conclusion that currently the case against Mr Kenyatta does not satisfy the high evidentiary standards required at trial... I therefore need time to complete efforts to obtain additional evidence and to consider whether such evidence will enable my office to fully meet the evidentiary threshold required at trial.” In March 2013, when the ICC prosecutor dismissed its case against former Kenya head of Civil Service and co-defendant Francis Muthaura, Bensouda said his dismissal has no impact on her case against President-elect Uhuru Kenyatta. “Logic dictates that the withdrawal of charges against one indirect co-perpetrator does not have an automatic knock-on effect with the respect to the charges against another alleged indirect co-perpetrator. The fact that multiple individuals are charged in the same Document Containing Charges under the same mode of liability does not require lock-step decisions to be taken with respect to each co-accused... Whereas Kenyatta was allegedly in charge of the provision of financial and logistical support to the direct perpetrators, Muthaura allegedly secured the support of the Mungiki and directed the latter to
commit the crimes in Nakuru and Naivasha (and) provided institutional support for the execution of the crimes on behalf of the PNU Coalition.”

Arguments to let Kenyatta and Ruto off the ICC hook: Various legal, political and policy arguments have been advanced to get Kenyatta and Ruto off the ICC hook either by “delaying” their trial until they leave office, granting one-year “deferrals” and postponing the trial indefinitely or dismissing the ICC charges and returning the matter to the jurisdiction of Kenyan courts. Among the major arguments include the following: Prosecuting Kenyatta and Ruto violates Kenyan sovereignty. Kenyatta and Ruto are entitled to immunity from prosecution because they were found “innocent” in the March 2013 election. The evidence against Kenyatta and Ruto is “false and manufactured”. The Office of the ICC Prosecutor is unfair and has engaged in a pattern and practice of abuse of prosecutorial powers resulting in a denial of due process to Kenyatta and Ruto. The ICC and the Prosecutor have unchecked powers and are accountable to no one. By prosecuting Kenyatta and Ruto, the ICC has usurped the powers of the U.N. Security Council. The Rome Statute violates the U.N. Charter and its prosecution of Kenyatta and Ruto is illegal and beyond its legal authority (ultra vires). Kenya is ready, willing and able to prosecute violators of crimes under the Rome Statute in its own courts. The ICC prosecution of Kenyatta and Ruto is pointless.

After the dust settles, what African dictators really want is a double standard of justice. They want the ICC to allow them to be prosecuted and adjudicated by their own hand-picked prosecutors and judges at the time of their own choosing.

Handwriting on the wall: “Double standard of justice for African ‘leaders’ accused of crimes against humanity.” Are all the delays, postponements and deferrals gentle hints and winks that some kind of a political “deal” has been cut between the ICC, Kenyatta, the African Union and the UN Security Council to eventually let Kenyatta off the hook? Is all of the talk about recanting and lying witnesses a trial balloon (a way of testing public opinion and gauging potential public reaction) and part of the political theatre to prepare international public opinion for the inevitable dismissal of charges against Kenyatta for lack of evidence? Is there some sort of orchestration (I did not say conspiracy) between the ICC, the African Union, Kenyatta and the U.N. Security Council to let Kenyatta off on a legal technicality? Don’t read me wrong. I am just reading the handwriting on the wall and asking questions. That’s all.

Will Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta in 2014 walk out of the International Criminal Court “for lack of evidence” and declare to the world, “I told you I was innocent. The ICC’s accusations against me were nothing more than race hunting and legal lynching. The ICC is out to get black African leaders… One last thing, Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan is also falsely accused. Dismiss the charges against him too…”
Call me suspicious if you like. It is a professional trait; defense lawyers are notoriously suspicious and have hypersensitive olfactory senses to smell rats (I said I just feel like I am getting a whiff). While I am talking about lawyers, let me say that the mantra of the criminal defense lawyer is “deny, delay and defend the case”. I am beginning to wonder in the Kenyatta trial if the ICC is getting cold feet and trying to extricate itself from a highly controversial case by adopting a new mantra: “Defer, delay and dismiss the case”. I am just thinking out loud. To me, justice deferred, delayed and dismissed is justice denied.

The evidence against Kenyatta: Just as “one swallow does not a summer make”, one or two witnesses do not a criminal case make. Kenyatta is charged in a five count indictment under article 25(3)(a) of the Rome Statute for the crimes against humanity including murder (article 7(I)(a), deportation or forcible transfer (article 7(I)(d), rape (article 7(I)(g), persecution (article 7(I)(h), and other inhumane acts (article 7(I)(k). The allegation are based on evidence shocking to the conscience and detailed in a 155-page document based on the testimony of hundreds of witnesses. When the Pre-Trial Chamber confirmed the allegations against Kenyatta, it wrote, “the Prosecutor has provided sufficient evidence to establish substantial grounds to believe that the contextual elements common to all crimes against humanity are fulfilled…”

Much of the testimonial evidence against Kenyatta is independently corroborated and documented. For instance, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber determined “there are substantial grounds to believe that on 3 January 2008 at the Nairobi Club… Mr. Kenyatta met with Mungiki members [sometimes referred to as the “Kenyan mafia”] and directed them to commit the crimes charged.” There is substantial evidence to show Kenyatta and others “agreed to pursue an organizational policy to keep the PNU [former president Kibaki’s Party of National Unity] in power through every means necessary, including orchestrating a police failure to prevent the commission of crimes”. There is substantial evidence to show Kenyatta and Co., “devised a common plan to commit widespread and systematic attacks against perceived ODM supporters by: (i) penalizing them through retaliatory attacks; and (ii) deliberately failing to take action to prevent or stop the retaliatory attacks”.

There is substantial evidence to show Kenyatta “taking the role of mediator between the PNU and the Mungiki criminal organization, facilitated a series of meetings from November 2007” in which “senior PNU government officials, politicians, businessmen and Mungiki leaders solicit[ed] the assistance of the Mungiki in supporting the government in the December 2007 elections”. There is substantial evidence to show that in the post-election period, Kenyatta and others “facilitated the meetings with the Mungiki with a view to organizing retaliatory attacks against perceived ODM [Orange Democratic Movement] supporters in the Rift Valley [and] strengthen the PNU’s hold on power after the swearing in of the President”. There is substantial evidence to show Kenyatta and others
“contributed to the implementation of the common plan, by securing the non-intervention of the Kenya Police and by failing to punish the main perpetrators of the attacks.”

It seems the ICC Prosecutor’s position is that the alleged false testimony of two witnesses completely undermines the Prosecution’s case. It is not at all clear why the two witnesses gave false testimony in the first place and how the ICC Prosecutor’s office failed to further corroborate their testimony before filing charges. It is, however, a fact that witnesses against Kenyatta have been threatened and bribed. In February 2013, Prosecutor Bensouda claimed Kenyatta bribed a witness to withdraw his testimony and not to testify in the case. Bensouda stated, “Witness 4 revealed in May 2012 interview that he had been offered, and accepted, money from individuals holding themselves out as representatives of the accused to withdraw his testimony against Uhuru... The witness provided emails and bank records that confirmed the bribery scheme. In light of these cumulative revelations, the prosecution considers it is not useful to call him as a witness.” Kenyatta’s defense team has also demanded the ICC turn over to Kenyan authorities the evidence given by the “self confessed criminals so they can face the full force of the law.” Prosecutor Bensouda had asked the Court to grant the witnesses courtroom protective measures, including voice and image distortion, use of pseudonyms and in camera sessions for identifying evidence. Should it come as a surprise to anyone that witnesses who face massive retaliatory actions by the Kenyan Government suddenly declare they have given false testimony to save their lives?

I believe the whole “lying witnesses” “false evidence” talk is disingenuous. The case against Kenyatta is not based on the testimony of a couple of witnesses. There are hundreds of witnesses who gave evidence. There is “substantial evidence” to bring Kenyatta to trial and let the Court determine whether that evidence points to Kenyatta’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. It is incomprehensible that ICC Prosecutor should hinge her entire case on the veracity or recantation of one or two witnesses. There is a mountain of circumstantial evidence against him. There is no reason not to proceed with the trial.

Time for an ICC Witness Protection Program? Witness intimidation, paying off witnesses, subornation of perjury and witnesses changing stories are nothing new particularly in high profile criminal trials. It is not uncommon for witnesses to recant (take back) testimony before or after trial. It is not uncommon for intimidated witnesses not to cooperate with prosecutors or make themselves intentionally unavailable as witnesses at trial. For instance, witnesses (“snitches”) in the criminal trials of Mafia bosses and other underworld figures have been known to recant or withdraw their testimonies because of intimidation and threats to themselves and family members. Jurors have been bribed by criminal bosses to return not guilty verdicts. In fairness, witnesses are also pressured by prosecutors who offer “cooperating” witnesses secret deals in the form of reduced charges
and sentences and other benefits to give testimony. The recantation of the Kenyatta witnesses raises unsettling and puzzling questions. It seems they are withdrawing their testimonies not because they actually gave "false testimony" but because they fear certain retaliation if they appear at trial and testify. Their recantations should not be taken as genuine but as the product of fear of persecution and prosecution.

I believe there is a reasonable solution to the problem of recanting witnesses in the Kenyatta trial: Create an “International Criminal Court Witness Protection Program” for deserving witnesses. In the U.S., the Federal Witness Protection Program provides protection to threatened witnesses before, during, and after a trial. In the program, witnesses and their family are provided new identities and documentation and relocated. Since the program was launched in 1971, nearly ten thousand witnesses and family members have been placed in the witness protection program. Incredibly, “95% of the witnesses in the program are criminals.”

I believe the ICC should launch its own “Witness Protection Program” for witnesses coming forward to testify against suspects charged with crimes against humanity, genocide and other infamous crimes. The numerous Munguki ("Kenya’s mafia") face real (not imagined) threats of persecution and prosecution not only from the Government of Kenya but also the wrath of their own organization for attracting such unwelcome attention of the government. The Munguki witnesses should be presented the option of testifying the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth at the trial of Kenyatta and being placed in a witness protection program outside of Kenya. Without an ICC witness protection program, it would nearly impossible to get cooperating witnesses with credible evidence to come forward. Few would be brave enough to pay the cost in their lives to bring the truth to light. Without a witness protection program, I believe many African criminals against humanity in power today would feel assured that they will laugh their way out of the International Criminal Court certain in the knowledge that no one in their countries would dare testify against them and expect to live. The ICC should learn this fundamental lesson from the Kenyatta case.

Could the ICC let Kenyatta off the hook? I want to make it absolutely crystal clear that I have no evidence or objective basis to believe or suspect the ICC will let Kenyatta off the hook for political or other reasons. I need to state no reasons in defense of my faith in the integrity of the institution as I have volunteered myself to be a “Witness for the ICC.” I will readily accept any criticism suggesting that my anxiety about the ICC letting Kenyatta off the hook is a figment of an overactive and suspicious legal imagination. I much prefer to think that it is a product of a “thought experiment”, an exploration of hypothetical counterfactual propositions and imaginary situations to think through possible consequences and outcomes of real problems. This commentary is my “thought experiment” about thinking the unthinkable, the unimaginable: 1) “The ICC has
dismissed the charges against Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta for lack of substantial evidence."

I agree fully with the observations of U.S. UN Ambassador Samantha Power: “The families of the victims of the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya have already waited more than five years for a judicial weighing of the evidence to commence. We believe that justice for the victims of that violence is critical to the country’s long-term peace and security. It is incumbent on us all to support accountability for those responsible for crimes against humanity.” In other words, justice deferred, delayed and dismissed is justice denied!

Africa: Uhuru Kenyatta Roots for an African Army’

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia — (January 30, 2014) - President Uhuru Kenyatta has challenged African countries to scale up their contribution to peace and stability in the continent. He backed the call made by the African Ministers of Defence for all countries to meet their obligations in ensuring an African Standby Force is ready for deployment by 2015. "Our partners and friends have been of great help to us. But to rely on outside help for our security would be to sully our independence. In any case, the help is often inadequate to our needs, and its application inflexible," President Kenyatta said. He was addressing the 22nd Ordinary Session of the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on Thursday. As part of Kenya's 50th anniversary and an expression of solidarity with the continent’s determination to secure its future, President Kenyatta announced a voluntary contribution of $1 million (Sh86 million) to the AU Peace Fund.

"Whichever way it is used, we have made concrete our commitment to solidarity and peace in this time of conflict," President Kenyatta said.

On the Central Africa Republic and South Sudan, the President said the conflicts have reminded the continent of the need to galvanise support to pre-empt political differences before they deteriorate into full-blown wars. "These conflicts, so near to us, remind us that we must join hands with our neighbours to prevent them from breaking, and respond to them when they do break, as occasionally they will," the President said.

He disclosed that with partners in East Africa, Kenya is building a Rapid Deployment Capability as part of the East Africa Standby Force. The President said his Government has already a fully-fledged Rapid Deployment Capability to be activated in emergencies.

"It is not enough - the full value of this capacity will be realised only when all our states stand equivalent capabilities, and can meet any threat to our nations, regions and the continent quickly, firmly and judiciously," he said.

Saying Africans are reviving the promise of prosperity in regional and continental cooperation, President Kenyatta said the countries should use the bonds of solidarity to defend their legacy
On agriculture and food security, the President commended African countries’ efforts to free themselves from foreign domination by ensuring self-reliance in food production.

"More than 30 of us have committed ourselves to spend 10 percent of GDP on our agricultural sectors," the President said.

He said innovation in science and technology has improved production, citing the example of tissue culture, which has doubled banana yields and tripled the yield per hectare in Kenya.

"No one can deny our progress. No one can deny that much remains to be done. The broad shape of the road ahead is clear. We have proven adept users of markets, information and new technologies. Let us put them to use in delivering ourselves from hunger," President Kenyatta said.

In his address, Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the incoming AU Chairman, said for most African countries, agriculture constitutes "the development battlefield where the war on poverty, hunger and indignity could be won".

"The agenda of agricultural transformation is strategically positioned to provide enormous opportunities for inclusive and sustainable development in Africa," he said.

The AU Chairman said following the adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in 2003, the continent has made significant strides in agricultural growth targets. (Text ends)

ETHIOPIA/KENYA: Kenya charges 2 police officer for the kidnapping of 2 Ethiopian rebel negotiators’ (AP) NAIROBI, KENYA – Two Kenya police officers have denied kidnapping two officials of the Ethiopian rebel group the Ogaden National Liberation Front. The two men were charged Thursday with the Jan. 26 kidnapping of Sulub Abdi Ahmed and Ali Ahmed Hussein, members of the ONLF team that was negotiating with the Ethiopian government. According to Abdi Rahman Mahdi, the chief negotiator for the rebels, after the pair’s abduction the two were driven to the Kenya-Ethiopian border where they were picked up by Ethiopian helicopters. Mahdi said if the two are not released by Ethiopia unconditionally, negotiation between the ONLF and Ethiopian government will not resume. Negotiations broke down in October 2012. The rebels want an independent state for Ethiopia’s Ogaden region, which is mostly inhabited by ethnic Somalis.

KENYA/ETHIOPIA – 2 Kenyan cops due in court for the abduction of ONLF negotiators with Ethiopia’ (AP) NAIROBI, Kenya Updates: Two Kenyan police officers will be charged in court with the kidnapping of two officials of the Ethiopian rebel group, the Ogaden National Liberation Front, a Kenyan official said Monday.

Nairobi Criminal Investigations chief Nicholas Kamwende said witnesses identified the two Kenyan officers as having allegedly abducted of Sulub

The two police officers were brought to court on Monday but the reading of their charges was postponed until Thursday.

Court documents show that Kenyan police believe that after their abduction Ahmed and Hussein were taken to Ethiopia. The rebels want an independent state for Ethiopia's Ogaden region, which is mostly inhabited by ethnic Somalis.

Ahmed and Hussein were part of Ogaden rebel team in Kenya for negotiations with the Ethiopian government, said Abdi Rahman Mahdi, the chief negotiator for rebels told AP from London in a telephone interview.

Mahdi said on the day they were abducted, Ahmed, a negotiator, and Hussein, a member of the negotiation team's secretariat, were invited for lunch by an unknown person.

When the two walked out of the restaurant after lunch, six men came out of two cars and attempted to grab them but they resisted causing a melee, Mahdi said reconstructing event from witnesses and accounts given to him by the Kenya police.

Mahdi said Ahmed and Hussein were subdued when one of the abductors pulled out a police identification card and shouted for help from the crowd gathering around to see the commotion claiming that he was arresting two terrorists "who were planning to bomb the country."

He said with help from some people from the crowd the abductors forced Ahmed and Hussein into the cars using blows and kicks. Mahdi said the two were driven to Moyale, at the Kenyan-Ethiopia border where they were picked up by helicopters

"We fear for their lives and their well-being," he said. Mahdi said he did not think the Kenyan government knew about the abduction and claimed it was solely the work of the Ethiopian military commander in charge of Eastern Command under which the Ogaden region falls.

Shimelis Kemal, an Ethiopian government spokesman, said he has no information about the alleged kidnapping of Ogaden officials in Nairobi.

Mahdi said without the unconditional release of the two rebel members negotiations with Ethiopia will not resume and Kenya will no longer be safe as a venue to hold the talks. He said Kenya has been working to revive the talks.

"If they're not returned safely it will be very hard for us to face another round of talks with Ethiopia let alone coming to Kenya," he said.

Negotiation between the Ethiopian government and Ogaden rebels broke down in Oct 2012 after the Ethiopian government side walked out of the talks. Mahdi claimed the Ethiopian government made demands for the
talks to begin which the rebels refused because both parties had agreed there should be no pre-conditions for the talks to be held.

The Ogaden rebels are blamed for the 2007 attack on a Chinese-run oil field in the region in which scores died. (Text ends)

ETHIOPIA/KENYA : Police officers deny abducting Ethiopian ONLF rebel negotiators’

BBC (February 6, 2014) Two Kenyan police officers have pleaded not guilty to kidnapping two Ethiopian rebels in the capital, Nairobi. Painito Bera Ng'ang'ai and James Ngaparini are alleged to have driven to the Ethiopian border and handed them over to Ethiopian officials. The men are from a splinter group of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), fighting for independence for the Somali-speaking Ogaden region. They were in Kenya to facilitate peace talks with the Ethiopian government. Correspondents say their alleged abduction on 26 January is threatening to scupper the next round of talks. Sulub Abdi Ahmed and Ali Ahmed Hussein are senior negotiators for the ONLF in the talks being brokered by the Kenyan government.

The ONLF told the BBC Somali Service that it believed the Ethiopian government was behind their kidnapping. But Abdinur Abdullahi Farah, a security adviser to the president of the Somali region, as the Ogaden is officially known, told US VOA radio that the men had given themselves up voluntarily. Rebels in the Ogaden region have been fighting for independence since the 1970s and the ONLF has been at the forefront of the fight since it was founded in 1984. The Ogaden is an ethnic Somali part of Ethiopia. One ONLF faction has signed a peace deal with the government, but another has continued to fight the army.

Controversial Kenyan polygamy law: Female MPs storm out of parliament’

BBC News (March 21, 2014) - Female MPs in Kenya have stormed out of a late-night parliamentary session in a row over the legalisation of polygamy. The law is intended to bring civil law, where a man is only allowed one wife, into line with customary law, where some cultures allow multiple partners. But male MPs voted to amend the new marriage bill to allow men to take as many wives as they like without consulting existing spouses. Traditionally, first wives are supposed to give prior approval. Correspondents say about 30 of Kenya's 69 female MPs were in the 349-member chamber for the debate but were outnumbered by their male counterparts. The women walked out in disgust over the matter. The marriage bill now passes to the president to sign before it becomes law.

This is Africa: MP Samuel Chepkong'a, who proposed the amendment, said that when a woman got married under customary law, she understood that the marriage was open to polygamy, so no consultation was necessary, Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper reports. Mohammed Junet, an MP representing a constituency from the western Nyanza province, agreed. "When you marry an African woman, she must know the
second one is on the way and a third wife... this is Africa," Kenya's Capital News website quotes him as saying.

But female MPs argued that such a decision would affect the whole family, including the financial position of other spouses. "It behoves you to be man enough to agree that your wife and family should know," Capital News quotes Soipan Tuya, the women's representative from Narok County, as saying.

The BBC's Angela Ngendo in the capital, Nairobi, says the new marriage legislation has been under discussion for several years and some initial proposals were scrapped at committee stages. Plans to ban the payment of bride prices were dropped - although a person must be 18 to marry and this will apply to all cultures.

Proposals to ensure equal property and inheritance rights were also watered down - a woman will be entitled to 30% of matrimonial property after death or divorce. Under current Kenyan law, a woman must prove her contribution to the couple's wealth. There was also a proposal to recognise co-habiting couples, known in Kenya as "come-we-stay" relationships, after six months, but this too was dropped. It would have allowed a woman to seek maintenance for herself and any children of the union had the man left.

Kenya's marriage bill

Bans marriage for those under 18

All marriages - even customary unions - must be registered

Legalises polygamy, allowing men to marry without consulting other spouses

A woman entitled to 30% of matrimonial property

Specifies that marriage is between a man and a woman, but does not explicitly ban custom of an infertile woman marrying a younger woman

Proposals dropped: Banning bride price payments, recognising cohabiting, or "come-we-stay", relationships.

PRESS: End of Kenyatta and Ruto's honeymoon period’

ION (March 28, 2014) - Ever since President Uhuru Kenyatta and Vice President William Ruto came to power a year ago, their main battle has been to try to delay their trial before the International Criminal Court (ICC). During this period, they have had to deal with problems at home getting steadily worse: crime and terrorist acts have grown steeply and the new institutions (county governorships and the senate) are in a muddled state, and so on. Not only that, there has been infighting among the presidential staff to extend their prerogatives, leading to internal bureaucratic squabbles. It's no easy matter to keep election promises in a context like this, while also trying to rein in the public deficit. In addition,
corruption still looms as large as ever in the higher echelons of the civil service, fuelled by a good economic outlook, particularly in the energy sector. The overall record of this first year of Kenyatta and Ruto's five year term has turned out quite chaotic.

Kenya: Somali Kenyans are treated like second-class citizens‘

Nairobi (HAN) April 13, 2014 - The same question remains unresolved despite the collective national pretense that all Kenyans are equal, writes Ahmednasir Abdullahi.

There is a great urgency for President Uhuru Kenyatta to call for a national convention to determine once and for all the fate of Kenyan Somalis in Kenya.

Are Kenyan Somalis Shiftas who should move with their camels to Somalia? Or should Kenyan Somalis be confined to what was once called the Northern Frontier Districts (NFD)? Are Kenyan Somalis genuine and bonafide citizens?

“A second class citizen is defined as: a person whose rights and opportunities are treated as less important than those of other people in the same society”

Who Is Somali? Kenyan man Talk about Somalis - influence of Kenyan Security minister

“This act of cowardice perpetrated against innocent and peace-loving Kenyans who were going about their normal activities is barbaric,” Joseph Ole Lenku said in a statement.

These are questions that have stubbornly refused to go away since 1963. They are questions the country can no longer ignore. The questions need urgent answers.

Kenya and Kenyan Somalis, for the first time since 1963, need to negotiate on the way forward. And President Uhuru must provide leadership to the process.

Uhuru’s father tried to solve the Somali question through the barrel of the gun. He succeeded in putting out the fire for secession but failed to win the hearts and minds of Kenyan Somalis. His successor, Daniel arap Moi, tried to solve the Somali question by using force, thinking that those who would survive would flee with their camels.

Mwai Kibaki simply thought that such a question was too absurd. Uhuru, in office for 12 months, faces the same question his father faced in his first year as Prime Minister.

The mass arrest of Somalis in Nairobi in the past two weeks and the inhumane and degrading camp they are being held in shouldn’t be blamed on the Interior Minister Joseph ole Lenku and Police Inspector-General David Kimaiyo.
To do so would be too naive. True, both gentlemen have little understanding of the security challenges facing the country. But that doesn’t mean they are in charge or even privy to the end game of the exercise.

Mr Lenku was a beverage manager in a two star hotel in the outskirts of Nairobi, while Mr Kimaiyo, a Bible-wielding police officer, spends more time in Bible studies than in mapping out security strategies. How can one blame these two innocent Kenyans for what has befallen the Somali community?

DENATIONALIZED THROUGH SCREENING

From 1963 to date, Somalis in Kenya have been subjected to one form or another of indiscriminate gross human rights abuse.

The army and police in government-sanctioned massacres have killed hundreds in the past 50 years. Somalis in Kenya seem to be, in law and in fact, second-class citizens.

The entire community was denationalised through the screening exercise of 1989, with thousands expelled and others issued with pink cards to certify their Kenyan nationality.

Northern Kenya has since 1963 remained under-developed due to deliberate governmental policy. The health services, education sector and other socio-economic indicators are at byzantine level.

National identity cards are restricted, disenfranchising thousands during election periods. Even the government is contesting, through the courts, the population numbers of Kenyan Somalis.

Then we have the five-year ritual when the government, through its actions like the current screening in Nairobi, reminds the community — just in case they forgot — that they are not real citizens after all.

Fifty years since 1963 has taught one painful lesson to Kenyan Somalis: That Somalis will never be accepted or treated as true citizens of Kenya.

The reason is simple. Because this country has failed to address the Somali question in Kenya, and why Somalis voted to secede and fought to secede in 1960s, the same remains unresolved despite the collective national pretence that all Kenyans are equal.

Kenyan Somalis at times naively buy into this national delusion until they are violently awakened to the reality by events like the current exercise, and then put in their rightful place.

Fifty years of abuse and neglect is too long to endure. But it is not that Kenyan Somalis don’t want to be part of Kenya. It is Kenya that does not want Somalis in Kenya.

May 12, 2014: COOPERATION: China signs mega east Africa rail deal’
Nairobi (AFP) - China on Sunday signed a deal to build a $3.8 billion rail link between Kenya's Indian Ocean port of Mombasa and Nairobi, the first stage of a line that will eventually link Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. Under the terms of the agreement, Exim Bank of China will provide 90 percent of the cost to replace the crumbling British colonial-era line with a 609.3 kilometre (379 mile) standard-gauge link and Kenya the remaining 10 percent.

Construction is due to start in October and take three-and-a-half years to complete, with China Communications Construction Co. as the main contractor. Once the Mombasa-Nairobi line is completed, construction would begin to link east Africa’s largest economy with Kampala, Kigali, Bujumbura and Juba. The deal was signed at State House in Nairobi and witnessed by presidents Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Salva Kiir of South Sudan.

"This project demonstrates that there is equal cooperation and mutual benefit between China and the East African countries, and the railway is a very important part of transport infrastructure development," Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said.

May 12, 2014: KENYA: African Union: Reject Immunity for Leaders’

African Groups say Plan Would Harm Regional Court

( HRW) Justice ministers and attorney generals of African Union (AU) member countries are scheduled to meet in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on May 15 and 16, 2014, to consider a draft protocol to expand the authority of the African Court on Justice and Human Rights to include criminal jurisdiction over genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. A proposal providing immunity for heads of state and senior government officials from prosecution for such crimes is being considered as part of the amended protocol.

“Exempting sitting heads of state and senior government officials from African Court jurisdiction on grave crimes would shield the powerful from the reach of the law,” said Sulemana Braimah, executive director of the Media Foundation for West Africa. “This is fundamentally at odds with the AU Constitutive Act, which rejects impunity.” The consideration of the draft protocol comes at a time of intense opposition to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by some African leaders, particularly in the face of the ICC’s proceedings against Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, who were later elected as Kenya’s president and vice president. “Impunity remains one of the biggest threats to human rights protection in Africa,” said Thuso Ramabolu, human rights officer at Lesotho’s Transformation Resource Centre. “It’s crucial for people responsible for mass atrocities to face justice, irrespective of their official positions. Immunity poses grave alarm and would create an incentive to hold on to power indefinitely.”

International conventions, including the Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,
and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 recognize the imperative of accountability for grave crimes irrespective of the title or position of those responsible. The irrelevance of official capacity before international criminal courts has become entrenched in international law since the post-World War II trials before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. Immunity with respect to serious crimes is also barred before some domestic courts in Africa. (Text ends)

May 12, 2014: KENYA: Groups say Refugee journalists under attack in Kenya

Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and the Rory Peck Trust—three international organizations dedicated to defending freedom of information and journalists worldwide—are writing to express concern over the Kenyan government’s recent decision to transfer all urban refugees to designated areas.

Research conducted by organizations indicates that refugee journalists, whose work makes them highly visible at home and recognizable in their respective communities in exile, make up a particularly vulnerable population. Transferring them to designated areas that are known to be penetrated by Somali insurgents and Ethiopian intelligence agents, puts them at risk of continued threats and persecution for their work.

As known, in December 2012, Kenya’s Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) issued a directive ordering all refugees to be relocated to designated areas. After Kenya’s High Court declared the directive unconstitutional in 2013, the DRA appealed the decision. The official status of urban refugees remains ambiguous.

Kenya expels hundreds of Somalis’

AFP (May 23, 2014)

Nairobi - Hundreds of Somalis have been expelled from Kenya, with 98 in the latest batch detained and sent back in a major crackdown on suspected Islamists, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Friday. The crackdown, which has seen people held in police cells or a football stadium, follows a spate of attacks in Kenya by suspected supporters of Somalia's Al-Qaeda-linked Shebab rebels.

A batch sent to Somalia by airplane on Tuesday was the fourth round sent home, taking the total expelled to 359, HRW said. "Deporting people to conflict zones in Somalia shows a total disregard for their rights and their safety," said HRW's Gerry Simpson, adding that returning refugees against their will to a war zone is unlawful.

"What little remains of Kenya’s shaky reputation for respecting basic refugee rights is fast disappearing," Simpson added. The UN’s refugee agency has said it was "concerned" at the wave of arrests and has demanded access to those detained.
The Shebab on Thursday vowed to move their war to Kenya, in a broadcast by a top commander urging fighters to rise up against Nairobi. Kenyan troops crossed into southern Somalia in 2011 to fight the Shebab, later joining the now 22,000-strong UN-mandated African Union force battling the Islamists.

Fighter jets, believed to be from Kenya, pounded Shebab strongholds this week, as part of the latest push against the insurgents by the AU force, which said it was targeting its "senior leadership and foreign fighters" and boasted of having killed over 50 rebels.

The Shebab, who claimed responsibility for the September 2013 attack on Nairobi's Westgate mall in which at least 67 people were killed, have also been blamed for a string of grenade blasts and killings. Late Thursday a grenade blast in the port city of Mombasa wounded two police officers.

Kenya's key tourism industry has been badly damaged after western nations issued warnings advising travellers to avoid Mombasa due to the threat of attacks. Last week two British tour operators evacuated hundreds of tourists from coastal resorts.

Islamist gunmen kill at least 48 in Kenya attack’
Mombasa (Kenya), AFP (June 16, 2014)

At least 48 people were killed when suspected Shebab militants from Somalia stormed into a Kenyan coastal town and launched a major assault on a police station, hotels and government offices, officials said on Monday.

Around 50 heavily-armed gunmen drove into the town of Mpeketoni, near the coastal island and popular tourist resort of Lamu, late on Sunday. Witnesses said they first attacked a police station, before starting to randomly shoot at civilians, some of whom had been watching the World Cup in local bars and hotels.

District deputy commissioner Benson Maisori said several buildings in the town — which is around 100 kilometres (60 miles) from the border with Somalia — were burned down including hotels, restaurants, banks and government offices.

“There were around 50 attackers, heavily armed in three vehicles, and they were flying the Shebab flag. They were shouting in Somali and shouting ‘Allahu Akbar’ (‘God is Greatest’),” he said.

Local resident and witness John Waweru, 28, said he lost two of his brothers to the attackers.

“The attackers came in around 9pm. I heard them shouting in Somali as they fired around. I lost two of my brothers, and I escaped. I ran and locked up myself in a house,” he told AFP.
The fierce gun battles continued until after midnight, but by dawn on Monday the town of Mpeketoni was reported calm with security forces saying they were in pursuit of the attackers and authorities recovering the dead.

“The number of bodies taken to the mortuary is 47, while one has died in hospital,” a local police officer said, as the Kenyan Red Cross also confirmed 48 people had died.

“Our officers are still combing the area,” Kenyan police chief David Kimaiyo told AFP. “It is an atrocity we would not want to see repeated anywhere else.”

“We suspect the involvement of Al-Shebab in this attack. We are appealing for calm as we do our best the search for the attackers. It is a very unfortunate incident.”

Kenyan troops crossed into southern Somalia in 2011 to fight the Shebab, later joining the now 22,000-strong African Union force battling the Al-Qaeda-linked militants.

The Shebab vowed revenge, carrying out a string of attacks on Kenyan soil, including last September’s assault on Nairobi’s Westgate mall in which at least 67 people were killed.

‘Bodies on the road’

The town of Mpeketoni, a trading centre on the main coastal road, lies on the mainland some 30 kilometres (20 miles) southwest of Lamu island, a popular tourist destination whose ancient architecture is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Kenyan army spokesman Major Emmanuel Chirchir described how the gunmen had stormed the town, overwhelming local police officers, and firing from vehicles “shooting people around in town.”

Chirchir also said the attackers were “likely to be Al-Shebab,” although there was no immediate claim of responsibility from the Islamists themselves.

Military surveillance planes were launched shortly after the attack began.

Attackers tried to storm a police post including an armoury, but Maisori said officers had defended the building and fought the gunmen off.

Residents in villages surrounding the town also reporting that the gunmen attacked settlements as they pulled out after fighting in Mpeketoni. (Text ends)

“There are six bodies here, a man and a child in their house, four lying on the road,” said Mohammed Hassan, a local resident of Kibaoni, a small settlement some five kilometres (three miles) outside the town.
Last month one of the Shebab’s most senior commanders, Fuad Mohamed Khalaf, released radio broadcasts urging fighters to strike Kenya.

Hundreds of British tourists were also evacuated last month from beach resorts near Kenya’s port city of Mombasa following new warnings of terror attacks from Britain’s Foreign Office.

Britain this week released warnings to citizens in several East African nations — including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, who all have troops in Somalia — speaking of the threat of attacks at public screenings of the World Cup.

The Shebab claimed responsibility last month for killing two Kenyan soldiers in the same district as Sunday’s attack, although further north nearer to the lawless border zone with Somalia. (Text ends)

KENYA: Aircraft that transports Khat to Somali capital crashed in Kenya’s

Euronews (July 2, 2014) - TV footage taken from the crash site showed the aircraft had been transporting tonnes of the mild drug Khat when hit a commercial building shortly after take off from the city’s main international hub. The plane had reportedly been heading to the Somali capital of Mogadishu. Early investigations into the accident suggest the plane had been flying low and might have hit an electrical pole before crashing. Recently banned in Britain, Khat remains popular in parts of east Africa, particularly in Ethiopia and Somalia.

Kenya: Commissioner Warns Ethiopia ‘Assassins’

Africa, Immigration, Politics BY STEPHEN ASTARIKO, The Star (July 14, 2014)

Garissa county commissioner Rashid Khator has warned illegal immigrants from Ethiopia against committing crimes in Kenya. Khator said the criminals are sent from Ethiopia as hired assassins. The criminals are part of the Oromo Liberation Front rebels, who oppose the national government. Last week, a rebel crossed into Kenya and killed a businessman in Garissa town. The man was arrested while in a group of three while trying to flee after killing a businessman in the town. Khator was addressing residents in Garissa town on Saturday.

Report from Xinhua: The Kenyan police said Sunday they have arrested five key suspects behind a spate of insecurity which has rocked the northern Kenya, particularly Garissa town, scarred by previous terrorist attacks. Detectives have also released identities of the serial killers who have claimed five lives within two months. Regional Criminal Investigation Department commander Musa Yego told Xinhua that the police are interrogating three Ethiopians and two Kenyans in the last two days with regards to bomb and grenade attacks in Garissa town. “We are happy that we have made a breakthrough to unravel unexplained killings that have thrown our town into security scare in the last two months,” Yego said. “Among those arrested are three Ethiopian suspected to be from the
Somali region (Ethiopia), while two others were Kenyans, a taxi driver and a landlord,” he added.

Yego said the taxi driver was helping to transport the killers to their destination during their killing spree in the town, while the landlord had been giving accommodation to the foreign criminals by renting his houses to them without informing the security agencies of their illegal presence in the country. The investigators are being helped with investigation by one of the assailants, who was arrested last Wednesday by members of the public shortly after killing a prominent businessman along Gulled hotel area. Yego said the police have recovered some vital documents, including an Ethiopian passport and communication tracks, that indicates there are teams of people believed to be security officials from the Somali region of Ethiopia sneaking into the country through Moyale and Mandera border points on a mission to kill people they suspect to have associations with a rebel group back at home and cause tribal clashes in the county.

“The passport carried by the suspected killer who was arrested in Garissa briefly after killing a businessman indicates he entered the country through Moyale border before heading to Nairobi, where we believe he met some people, before traveling to Garissa to cause a felony,” he noted. Yego urged the residents in northeast region to be on the look out and avoid embracing people from other countries and giving them accommodation without first establishing their motive in the country. Two of the assassins, Khalif Hassan, 38, and Abdirahman Abdi, 40, who are the team leaders are among those in custody at Garissa police station now. While speaking to Xinhua on phone from London, the Oromo National Liberation Front (ONLF) foreign secretary Abdirahman Sheikh Mahdi blamed the attacks in Garissa on Ethiopian intelligence officers of changing their tactics to fight them by carrying out criminal activities inside friendly country to discredit them. “They want to carry out killings inside Kenya and in turn blame on us so that Kenya, which has been hosting hundreds of thousands of our refugees and asylum seekers, can turn hostile against our people,” he said. Source: Xinhua

Report from Kenya Standard Media: Garissa, Kenya: Two armed people were on Tuesday evening shot and seriously wounded in Garissa town, Garissa County. The two were shot by a gang of unidentified assailants along Ngamia Road adjacent to Gulied Hotel in the middle of Garissa town at around 4pm. Police were alerted of the shooting by members of the public. When police responded to rescue the victims, they found two pistols in their possession. Speaking to The Standard at the Garissa General Hospital the local County Commissioner Rashid Khator said the two, who were being treated at the hospital, were under police watch. We suspect the two were planning criminal activities before they were shot by another group of armed people who may have been following them, Khator said.
Our officers have handed over the recovered firearms to ballistic experts to ascertain their origin and whether they were used in the renewed mystery killings witnessed in Garissa town in the recent past,” he said. He added that the victims will help the security agents unravel the mystery. Curious public onlookers jammed the hospital disrupting medical services to the patients, forcing security personnel accompanying the wounded culprits to use teargas canisters to disperse them. Khator decline to comment whether the attackers could be the members of the Somali Islamist group Al-Shabaab who have claimed responsibility for previous killings in the town. A sources who sought anonymity said the victims who were shot are close relatives of the cleric who was shot dead recently near Khalif Mosque a few metres from the scene of Tuesday attack. (Text ends)

August 9, 2014 UN: Drought and war in East Africa put 14 million people at risk, In Ethiopia 2.7 million refugees are in dire need of supplies. EAST AFRICA, NAIROBI (AFP) – Poor rains and multiple conflicts across eastern Africa have put over 14 million people in need of food aid, three years since extreme drought devastated the region, the United Nations said Friday.

“The situation is very worrisome,” said Matthew Conway, spokesman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for Eastern Africa. “There are similarities to the situation that we saw leading to the 2011 crisis,” he said, adding that the United Nations was appealing for $2.6 billion (1.9 billion euros) in aid. Conditions are still far from the crisis in 2011, when some 12 million people in four nations were hit by one of the worst droughts in 60 years, with parts of Somalia declared famine zones. The 14.4 million people classified by the UN as food insecure are spread over nine nations, with the hardest hit countries including war-torn South Sudan and Somalia.

Aid workers say famine could be declared in South Sudan within weeks if fighting continues, while last month the UN warned Somalia is sliding back into an acute hunger crisis. Arid northern Kenya, which like much of the region suffers from recurring droughts, is also struggling. Oxfam said failed or poor rains, conflict and drought have contributed to the rising food insecurity in the region. “It is imperative that we learn from the lessons of 2011,” Oxfam’s regional director Fran Equiza told AFP. “Early intervention has the potential to save thousands of lives and keep millions more from the brink of starvation.”

Some 2.7 million people are in dire need of supplies in Ethiopia and 1.3 million in Kenya, many of them refugees from neighbouring Somalia. Some 120,000 are in need in Djibouti. In Sudan, five million people are at risk, while in South Sudan 3.5 million are struggling. Tens of thousands are also in need in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. More than 250,000 people, half of them children, died in the devastating 2011 famine in Somalia. (Text ends)
KENYA: Raila Wants Kenya Withdrawn From Somalia'

Nairobi (CapitalFM) — Coalition for Reforms and Democracy leader Raila Odinga says it is time for Kenya to withdraw its troops from neighbouring Somalia.

The former Prime Minister who addressed members of the Somali community in Eastleigh said the continued stay of Kenya Defence Forces soldiers in Somalia is hurting Kenyans. "It is high time the Government should evaluate whether there is any reason to still have our soldiers at Somalia. Does their continued stay in Somali bring peace to our country?" he posed. "We went there because there were many attacks then by the thugs." President Uhuru Kenyatta has insisted that he has no intention of withdrawing the troops from the war torn country until they accomplish their mission. Kenyan forces that are now fighting under the AMISOM command moved into Somalia in 2011 and have continued to boast of major success in neutralising the Al Shabaab militia. Odinga also challenged the Government to enhance security instead of launching ad-hoc operations that are allegedly targeted at one community. "The kind of operation we saw here was discriminatory; this should not happen," he argued. The Usalama Watch operation has seen over 2,000 people arrested and screened with more than 200 being deported to their countries for lack of legal documents. Explosive materials and illegal fire arms were recovered but critics of the operation argue it was targeted at the Somali community. The operation was mainly carried out at Eastleigh in Nairobi and in some parts of the coast region mostly in Mombasa County. The Government has vowed to enhance security in the country following the upsurge of insecurity which has negatively impacted the country's economy and citizens' well being.

In a bid to roll out major security programmes, the Government has set aside Sh78.5 billion for various programmes in the next financial year. The Government will in the 2014-2015 budget for instance use Sh6.7 billion for leasing motor vehicles and at least five helicopters in efforts to enhance security operations in the country. Last year, the government hired 1,200 police vehicles as a way of cutting high cost incurred through direct purchase and maintenance. The National Police Service will also have a medical insurance scheme which has been allotted Sh1.6 billion. To boost its surveillance, the Government has also awarded Safaricom a Sh15 billion tender to install surveillance equipment in Nairobi and Mombasa. On the calls for national dialogue, Odinga termed a decision for him and Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka "to go and have tea with President Uhuru Kenyatta at Statehouse" as an insult saying, "do you think I am the kind of person who can do that?" he posed. "My brother, the president had agreed at Nyayo Stadium but some people have gone to him saying he did wrong." "I want to tell my brother, Uhuru Kenyatta, I can see a storm... a huge storm which will hit all areas and sweep all the dirt to the ocean. The President should allow the talks instead of waiting for this." He said, if there will be no dialogue, "Saba Saba is coming, Kenyans shall
meet and we shall talk. That day, God will hear our talks." Odinga was accompanied by Suna Member of Parliament Mohammed Junet and Homabay senator Gladys Wanga who equally said the Government had failed its citizens.

East African nations on high alert for Ebola’

East African News (August 11, 2014) - The east African region has been set on its toes following the revelation of an outbreak of Ebola infections in west Africa this March. This disease, which was first identified in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan in the 70s, has been a recurring scourge in the region. However, the lastest outbreak in west Africa, where it has never been recorded, is regarded as the worst in history. Over 1,000 people have been reported infected and nearly 700 dead from the virus in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. This has forced the World Health Organization (WHO) to designate Ebola an international public health emergency.

According to local sources, the relative inexperience of the local population with this disease and the unpreparedness of health facilities for such an infection has exacerbated its wide diffusion and fatality. Many west African nations have expressed concerns about a possible spread of this infection into their borders and have set up preventive measure to curb this possibility. In east Africa, where the population and health experts are well acquainted with the disease, the scene is quite similar. Meanwhile, health experts have raised concerns about the disease resurfacing in the region – particularly in countries like Uganda, DRC and Sudan, where it has a history.

Ebola surveillance and preventive measures

Last week, the Rwandan Health Ministry announced that mobile health centers have been created at all entry points into the country (including the country’s main airport) to screen people. Rwandair employees are also set to be trained on how to deal with infected passengers. Local sources say health facilities across the country are on high alert for the virus and have expressed confidence in their ability to contain an infection.

In Kenya, officials have also been screening passengers at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. The Director of Medical Services, Dr. Nicholas Muraguri, told the VOA recently that the country has “a contingency plan that’s been coordinated by an Ebola outbreak response team which has a number of sub-committees looking at various aspects.” He also hailed the preparedness of Kenya Medical Research Foundation (KEMRI) to guide the collection and testing of samples from patients.

The Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health has also set up its defenses against this scourge. Last week, a workshop was organized by the Ministry
in Addis Ababa to educate health workers on the Ebola virus. Reports indicate that more than 200 participants attended the event.

Meanwhile, the Ministry has reportedly also formulated a preparedness plan and equipped a unit of front line health workers with the necessary equipments to respond to an outbreak.

Patients with Ebola symptoms placed in quarantine

At least three people, suspected of being infected with Ebola, have been isolated from the public in three countries in the region in the past few days. On Sunday, the Rwandan Ministry of Health revealed that a German medical student, who recently returned from Liberia, had been quarantined after reporting symptoms consistent with the deadly disease. Reports indicate that samples have been collected from the patient and transferred to an international laboratory for testing. The results are expected to be released in about 48 hours.

Meanwhile, in a press release on Monday, the Ministry allayed growing concerns after disclosing that the unidentified German national is recovering. “his temperature has significantly gone down and he is recovering well from malaria and other symptoms,” the press release noted.

The Ministry further announced that other people, who had come in contact with the patient and were resultanty also quarantined, have shown no symptoms of infection. In Kenya, a Congolese traveler was detained last Friday at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport after showing signs of Ebola. However, over the weekend, the Health Ministry announced that tests results have revealed that the 43 year old was only suffering from food poisoning and has been responding well to treatment.

In Uganda, another patient quarantined under the suspicion of being infected with Ebola has been set free after test results revealed that he did not have the disease. Reports indicate that the passenger, who was held up at the Entebbe airport, had been travelling from South Sudan.

This is the second false Ebola infection scare in Uganda since the virus resurfaced in west Africa earlier in the year.

Regional Airlines defy health scare

As fears over the inability of local authorities to contain the virus continues to grow, airline operators have displayed some apprehension about visiting countries that have recorded cases of Ebola.

At least two international airline operators have temporarily stopped flights to some west African destinations recently. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has however failed to impose any travel restrictions on flights to/from countries affected by the virus.
According to reports, this is partly due to the fact that the disease isn’t airborne. Although the possibility of an infected patient travelling by plane and spreading the virus is credited, authorities say it does not warrant a total travel ban. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) has published guidelines for airlines to deal with suspected cases of Ebola infection. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has reportedly also been collaborating with the IATA to control the spread of the virus.

Kenya Airways has announced that flights to west African destinations will not be stopped due to the outbreak of Ebola. The company’s CEO, Titus Naikuni, has however revealed that the airline is working closely with the country’s health authorities to monitor the spread of the virus. Ethiopian Airlines has instituted surveillance and preventive measures against Ebola. In a recent statement, the company noted that “The safety and well-being of our customers and staff always come first...Ethiopian has taken the lead in taking extraordinary precautions in connection with the outbreak of the disease in some parts of West Africa.”

Rwandair has also revealed that flights to affected countries will not be stopped. The company has further disclosed that measures have been put in place to ensure the safety of its passengers and staff. Reports indicate that the governments of Uganda and Kenya are set to dispatch health experts to assist west African nations contain the widespread Ebola infection. (Text ends)

August 17, 2014: HEALTH: Kenya bans contact with Ebola-affected countries.

The WHO has already said that the risk of Ebola transmission from air travel is low, but the level of fear is so high that several airlines have disregarded the UN agency's advice. The disease has already killed at least 1,145 people across west Africa this year. "The scale of the outbreak is much larger than anything ever seen before," said Gregory Hartl, a WHO spokesman. "It is an obvious source of concern and it is not to be underestimated, but we must take measures commensurate with the risk. What you don't want to do is to take blanket measures to cut off travel and trade."

Despite such advice, Kenya is the latest country to jump on the bandwagon by declaring a travel ban on Saturday. From midnight on Tuesday, people travelling from or through Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia will not be allowed to enter the east African country, said Kenya's health ministry. Nigeria, which allows entry to health professionals and Kenyans returning from those countries, was not included in the ban. The outbreak began in the forested zone on the borders of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia earlier this year, and spread to Nigeria last month.

The World Health Organisation has urged governments not to impose blanket bans on trade and travel on Ebola-affected countries after Kenya
joined a growing number of countries and airlines severing links to three west African states. Ebola outbreak in West Africa, affecting Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea in particular. It's the worst outbreak ever recorded - more than 1,000 people have died. These countries have some of the weakest health systems in the world. Not enough trained doctors and nurses. Clinics without enough supplies to diagnose and treat patients. Villages without running water or reliable electricity, compounding the crisis. Just days ago, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a global health emergency. This crisis is showing just how important it is to have strong health systems in place. In this case, governments and institutions around the world are beginning to step up, pledging resources in response to the World Health Organization's emergency appeal. (Text ends)

KENYA Legalizes Polygamy

Kenya's parliament has passed a bill allowing men to marry as many women as they want, prompting a furious backlash from female lawmakers who stormed out, media reports revealed. The bill, which amended existing marriage legislation, was passed late on Thursday to formalize customary law about marrying more than one person. The proposed bill had initially given a wife the right to veto the husband's choice, but male members of parliament overcame party divisions to push through a text that dropped this clause. As in many parts of Africa, polygamy is common among traditional communities in Kenya, as well as among the country's Muslim community, which accounts for up to a fifth of the population.

August 25, 2014: Kenyan police discovered regime agents behind the killing of Ethiopians in Kenya. Kenyan police have discovered that the Ethiopian secret police headed by the state security is behind the recent serial killings of Ethiopians in Kenya, according to the report by Standard Digital.

KENYA: Raila Wants Kenya Withdrawn From Somalia'

Nairobi (CapitalFM) - Coalition for Reforms and Democracy leader Raila Odinga says it is time for Kenya to withdraw its troops from neighbouring Somalia. The former Prime Minister who addressed members of the Somali community in Eastleigh said the continued stay of Kenya Defence Forces soldiers in Somalia is hurting Kenyans. "It is high time the Government should evaluate whether there is any reason to still have our soldiers at Somalia. Does their continued stay in Somali bring peace to our country?" he posed. "We went there because there were many attacks then by the thugs." President Uhuru Kenyatta has insisted that he has no intention of withdrawing the troops from the war torn country until they accomplish their mission. Kenyan forces that are now fighting under the AMISOM command moved into Somalia in 2011 and have continued to boast of major success in neutralising the Al Shabaab militia. Odinga also challenged the Government to enhance security instead of launching ad-
hoc operations that are allegedly targeted at one community. "The kind of operation we saw here was discriminatory; this should not happen," he argued. The Usalama Watch operation has seen over 2,000 people arrested and screened with more than 200 being deported to their countries for lack of legal documents. Explosive materials and illegal firearms were recovered but critics of the operation argue it was targeted at the Somali community. The operation was mainly carried out at Eastleigh in Nairobi and in some parts of the coast region mostly in Mombasa County. The Government has vowed to enhance security in the country following the upsurge of insecurity which has negatively impacted the country's economy and citizens' well being.

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KENYA - Fourth most corrupt country in the world’

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

(The Star) Kenya is the fourth most corrupt country in the world according to a 2013 survey released by anti-graft body, Transparency International. The report showed that seven out of 10 people paid bribes to a public officer in a public institution last year. The survey, which was carried out in 95 countries worldwide indicated that Sierra Leone is the most corrupt country in the world with corruption levels standing at 84 per cent. Liberia comes second at 75 per cent, followed by Yemen at 74 and Kenya completes the list of the top four most corrupt nations at 70 per cent. The poll showed that corruption levels posted by the top four most corrupt
nation, make 27 per cent of the world's corruption level on average. It showed that African nations have the highest number of people admitting to having paid a bribe in 2013. It further indicates that seven out of nine of the countries with the highest reported bribery rate are in sub-Saharan Africa. Ethiopia is the least corrupt nation in Africa at six per cent followed by Rwanda at 13 per cent.

In East Africa, Uganda is the second most corrupt with 61 per cent of the people having said they bribed public officials to access services in 2013. Tanzania is at 56 per cent and Sudan stands at 17 per cent. South Africa is at 47, Nigeria 61, Libya 62, Senegal 57, Mozambique 62, Morroco 49, Zimbabwe 62 Ghana 54 and Madagascar 28 per cent. In the world, the countries with the lowest reported bribery rate are Denmark, Finland, Japan and Australia, they all have a bribery rate of one per cent. Only 16 out of the 95 countries posted corruption levels of less than five per cent. Transparency International’s Global Corruption Barometer gathered data from 95 countries on bribery. 1000 people were sampled in each country. The margin of error for each country was three per cent. Source: TI

Somalia's Al-Shabab Says It Killed 28 In Kenya

By Tom Odula (November 22, 2014)

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — One gunman shot from the right, one from the left, each killing the non-Muslims lying in a line on the ground, growing closer and closer to Douglas Ochwodho, who was in the middle. And then the shooting stopped. Apparently each gunman thought the other shot Ochwodho. He lay perfectly still until the 20 Islamic extremists left, and he appears to be the only survivor of those who had been selected for death.

Somalia's Islamic extremist rebels, Al-Shabab, attacked a bus in northern Kenya at dawn Saturday, singling out and killing 28 passengers who could not recite an Islamic creed and were assumed to be non-Muslims, Kenyan police said. Those who could not say the Shahada, a tenet of the Muslim faith, were shot at close range, Ochwodho told The Associated Press. Nineteen men and nine women were killed in the bus attack, said Kenyan police chief David Kimaiyo.

Al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the killings through its radio station in Somalia saying it was in retaliation for raids by Kenya's security forces carried out earlier this week on four mosques at the Kenyan coast. Kenya's military said it responded to the killings with airstrikes later Saturday that destroyed the attackers' camp in Somalia and killed 45 rebels.

The bus traveling to the capital Nairobi with 60 passengers was hijacked about 50 kilometers (31 miles) from the town of Mandera near Kenya's border with Somalia, said two police officers who insisted on anonymity because they were ordered not to speak to the press. The attackers first tried to wave the bus down but it didn't stop so the gunmen sprayed it
with bullets, said the police. When that didn't work they shot a rocket propelled grenade at it, the officers said.

The gunmen took control of the vehicle and forced it off the road where they ordered all the passengers out of the vehicle and separated those who appeared to be non-Muslims—mostly non-Somalis—from the rest. The survivor, Douglas Ochwodho, a non-Muslim head teacher of a private primary school in Mandera, said was travelling home for the Christmas vacation since school had closed.

Ochwodho told AP that the passengers who did not look Somali were separated from the others. The non-Somali passengers were then asked to recite the Shahada, an Islamic creed declaring oneness with God. Those who couldn't recite the creed were ordered to lie down. Ochwodho was among those who had to lie on the ground. Two gunmen started shooting those on the ground; one gunman started from the left and other from the right, Ochwodho said. When they reached him they were confused on whether either had shot him, he said. Ochwodho lay still until the gunmen left, he said. He then ran back to the road and got a lift from a pick-up truck back to Mandera. He spoke from a hospital bed where he was being treated for shock. Seventeen of the 28 dead were teachers, according to the police commander in Mandera County. A shortage of personnel and lack of equipment led to a slow response by police when the information was received, said two police officers who insisted on anonymity because they were ordered not to speak to the press. They said the attackers have more sophisticated weaponry than the police who waited for military reinforcements before responding.

Kenya has been hit by a series of gun and bomb attacks blamed on al-Shabab, who are linked to al-Qaida, since it sent troops into Somalia in October 2011. Authorities say there have been at least 135 attacks by al-Shabab since then, including the assault on Nairobi’s upscale Westgate Mall in September 2013 in which 67 people were killed. Al-Shabab said it was responsible for other attacks on Kenya’s coast earlier this year which killed at least 90 people. Al-Shabab is becoming "more entrenched and a graver threat to Kenya," warned the International Crisis Group in a September report to mark the first anniversary of the Westgate attack. The report said that the Islamic extremists are taking advantage of longstanding grievances of Kenya's Muslim community, such as official discrimination and marginalization.

Kenya has been struggling to contain growing extremism in the country. Earlier this week the authorities shut down four mosques at the Kenyan coast after police alleged they found explosives and a gun when they raided the places of worship. Some Muslims believe the police planted the weapons to justify closing the mosques, Kheled Khalifa, a human rights official said Friday warning that methods being used to tackle extremism by government will increase support for radicals. One person was killed during the raid on two of the mosques on Monday. Police said they shot
dead a young man trying to hurl a grenade at them. The government had previously said the four mosques were recruitment centers for al-Shabab. (Text ends)

Al Shabab massacres 36 in northeast Kenya’

AFP (December 2, 2014)

Nairobi (AFP) - Gunmen have massacred 36 people in northeast Kenya in the latest attack by suspected militants from Somalia's Al-Qaeda-affiliated Shebab rebels in the troubled region, officials said Tuesday.

A group of gunmen attacked a quarry near the town of Mandera in the early hours of Tuesday morning. After spraying tents where the quarry workers slept with gunfire, the militants then weeded out non-Muslims and shot them in the head. Some of the victims were also beheaded, police sources and reports said. The attack comes just over a week after the Shebab claimed responsibility for the execution of 28 people who were grabbed from a bus travelling from Mandera, a border town located on the frontier between Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia.

In a separate attack late Monday in the town of Wajir, also in the northeast and close to the dangerous border with war-torn Somalia, one person was killed and 12 wounded when gunmen hurled grenades and fired into a bar. "We have lost 36 people, but there are others missing," said a local police official Mandera, who asked not to be named. "We don't know whether they were taken by the attackers." Police spokesman Zipporah Mboroki confirmed the attacks but said the force would provide an exact toll of those killed later. Media reports said most of the victims were laid out on the ground and shot in the head, a style of killing used in the recent attack on bus passengers. Kenya has suffered a series of attacks since invading Somalia in 2011 to attack the Shebab, and its troops are still in Somalia as part of an African Union force battling the Islamists. Media reports from Somalia said the Shebab's radio station has hailed the killing of "crusaders", although there has not yet been formal claim of responsibility from the militants. The group said it carried out the recent attack against the bus passengers in retaliation for Kenyan police raids against suspected radical mosques in Kenya's port city of Mombasa, the scene of mounting religious tensions.

National security worries Kenyans: Professionals working in the largely Muslim and ethnic Somali northeastern regions often come from further south in Kenya, where Christians make up about 80 percent of the population. Those working in the quarry attacked on Tuesday were also reported to have been from outside the region. Several key unions including for civil servants have warned their members to leave the restive northeast until the government can ensure their safety. On Sunday the Nation newspaper reported that Kenya's embattled interior minister and police chief may soon be sacked over "repeated lapses" in security. The newspaper said key advisors to President Uhuru Kenyatta were pushing
for Interior Cabinet Secretary Joseph Ole Lenku and Inspector-General of Police David Kimaiyo to go, due to dwindling public confidence in the country's security apparatus.

It said intelligence officials had alerted police to the presence of a group of Shebab attackers in the northeast before the bus attack, and added that survivors had said that police "took two hours to respond to distress calls" after the murders had taken place -- leaving the attackers plenty of time to escape. Both officials have been under fire since last year's attack by the Shebab against the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, in which at least 67 people were killed in a siege involving just four gunmen and which lasted four days. Worries over internal security mounted when Shebab rebels massacred 100 people in a string of Shebab raids against villages in the Lamu region on the Kenyan coast in June and July. Shebab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane was killed in a US air strike in September. The group has since named Ahmad Umar, also known as Abu Ubaidah, as its new head. (Text ends)

Kenya arrests 77 Chinese in connection with Internet hacking case’

By Tom Odula NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) (December 5, 2014)

Police in Kenya are consulting technical experts to determine if 77 Chinese nationals arrested with advanced communications equipment in several houses in an upscale Nairobi neighborhood were committing espionage, an official said Thursday.

The Chinese were arrested since the weekend with equipment that Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper said was capable of hacking into government servers. "We have roped in experts to tell us if they were committing crimes of espionage," said Ndegwa Muhoro, the head of criminal investigations for Kenya's police. "These people seem to have been brought here specifically for a mission which we are investigating."

The arrests began on Sunday, when computer equipment in one of the upscale houses the Chinese nationals had rented near the U.S. Embassy and U.N. headquarters caught fire, killing one person. Police said it appeared the group was manufacturing ATM cards, and that the suspects may have been involved in money laundering and Internet fraud. The case has caught the attention of the highest levels of Kenya’s government as authorities investigate whether the group was also engaging in espionage. The minister of foreign affairs and the minister of information communications and technology both were on hand Wednesday as police arrested 40 people. The Chinese ambassador was summoned to the foreign affairs ministry over the arrests.

The 37 suspects arrested Sunday were charged with operating an illegal radio station. Many of those arrested cannot speak English and some don't have identification such as a passport, police detective Nicholas Kisavi said. A woman at China's embassy in Kenya told The Associated Press on Thursday to call back on Friday to speak with an embassy spokesman.
Fred Matiang'i, an official in Kenya's ministry of information, communications and technology, told the Daily Nation that China has promised to send investigators to Kenya to work on the case. (Text ends)

KENYA: December 5, 2014: ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda withdraws case against Uhuru Kenyatta.

The Hague, The Netherlands: Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda has withdrawn the charges against Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta at the International Criminal Court. "In light of the Trial Chamber’s 3 December 2014 "Decision on Prosecution’s application for a further adjournment”, the Prosecution withdraws the charges against Mr Kenyatta," the prosecutor said in her application to the court on Friday. She said the evidence had not improved to a point where President Kenyatta's alleged criminal responsibility could be proven beyond reasonable doubt.

Ms Bensouda, however, noted that the notice for withdrawal was subject to the possibility of bringing new charges at a later date in case the prosecution obtained sufficient evidence.

"This withdrawal is without prejudice to the possibility of bringing new charges against Mr Kenyatta at a later date, based on the same or similar factual circumstances, should [the Prosecution] obtain sufficient evidence to support such a course of action”.

'VERY EXCITED'

President Kenyatta said he was “excited” over the Prosecution’s decision to withdraw the charges. "I am excited by this news, which I have awaited ever since the day my name was announced to the world in connection with the case. I am also deeply relieved by this decision, which is overdue by 6 years," the President said in a statement.

President Kenyatta faced charges at the ICC as an indirect co-perpetrator, with five counts of crimes against humanity consisting of murder, deportation or forcible transfer, rape, persecution and other inhumane acts allegedly committed during the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007-2008. The charges were confirmed on January 23, 2012, and the case was committed to trial before Trial Chamber V(B). (Text ends)

Nairobi Security Police admit to “eliminating” suspected Muslim radicals’

Nairobi (HAN) December 8, 2014 – Public safety and Regional Security news. For the first time members of Kenya’s counter-terrorism police admit to “eliminating” suspected Muslim radicals. They have received training and intelligence from Britain's military and other officials as part of their counter-terrorism efforts to eliminate Muslims and Muslim leaders in Kenya.

INSIDE KENYA’S DEATH SQUADS: Britain is facing fresh allegations of complicity in the killings of terrorism suspects by Kenyan death squads. The Inside news report claims come from members of Kenyan intelligence
and special police units who say they carry out extrajudicial killings. They also say they have received training and intelligence from Britain’s military and other officials as part of their counter-terrorism efforts. Speaking exclusively to Al Jazeera’s Investigative Unit, officers from four units of Kenya’s counter-terrorism apparatus admitted the police A Kenyan intelligence officer claimed Britain knows of the elimination programme: “Yes. When these people come for their training, I believe that all this information is being passed to them.” (Text ends)

KENYA: ICC Chief Prosecutor has withdrawn the case against the Kenyan President.

BBC news (December 16, 2014)

The Kenyan President wrote recently at social media that “I am excited by this news, which I have awaited ever since the day my name was announced to the world in connection with the case. I am also deeply relieved by this decision, which is overdue by 6 years. I have repeatedly declared my innocence to the people of Kenya and the whole world. I repeat this even now: as relates the incidents comprising the Kenyan cases at the ICC, my conscience is absolutely clear.

It has always been my position that the Kenyan cases at the ICC were rushed there without proper investigation or preparation, and sustained by a strong interest to stigmatise accused persons. As an institution of the international community, victims of serious crimes and people around the world had a right to expect the Court to dispense justice with integrity and without undue considerations. For the Prosecutor to sustain an obviously deficient case for so long demonstrates beyond doubt the intensity of pressure exerted by improper interests to pollute and undermine the philosophy of international justice. There is no justice when human rights clubs and an international tribunal conspire to betray victims of human rights abuses and persecute the innocent. The tragedy of this travesty is beyond words.

The victims in this case will get no satisfaction from the ICC, owing to the Prosecutor’s decision to compromise a quest for justice in favour of political considerations. This is an incomparable tragedy. Just as the ICC failed me, it has also failed the victims of the 2007-2008 post-election violence. They were killed, maimed, displaced, dispossessed and utterly traumatized. I have been victimized, libeled and senselessly profiled by the same defective process. The Government of Kenya has sustained its efforts to restitute and reintegrate the victims of the PEV as best as it can. Our justice system continues to process the cases which have been instituted. I have supported these efforts because ultimately, the victims must get justice. The world may have failed them, but they will not be let down at home.

The Prosecutor opted to selectively pursue cases in a blatantly biased manner that served vested interests and undermined justice. As a result,
the Court has had to pay a steep reputational price, which it will continue
to face unless a serious and systemic rethinking of the International
Justice framework is undertaken.

My brother and deputy, Hon. William Ruto, as well as Mr Joshua Sang
continue to face their accusers at the ICC with a clear conscience. With
me, they have been steadfast in declaring their innocence. I am confident
that they will be vindicated in due course. I stand with them, and will
support them and pray with them until that time. As my deputy and
principal assistant, William Ruto is an indispensable asset in my
Government. I look forward to the day when we shall not have the
distraction of the trials, so that we can continue delivering our
transformational agenda to the people of Kenya.

I thank the people of Africa and all their leaders who, through the African
Union, demonstrated robust and unflinching support by word and deed, in
the true spirit of African brotherhood. Your solidarity has deeply touched
and inspired me. I urge you to continue supporting us as we give my
Brother William Ruto and his co-accused, Joshua Sang support and
solidarity to confront the last outstanding case. Fellow Kenyans, I thank
each and everyone of you for your support, prayers, words of
encouragement and best wishes. God has not let us down. God will never
let us down. As we promised, we have not, and shall never let the cases
sully our sovereignty, or get in the way of managing the affairs of our
nation.”

KENYA: ICC charges against Uhuru Kenyatta defended by Ocampo

BBC News (December 16, 2014) The ex-chief prosecutor of the
International Criminal Court (ICC) has defended his decision to charge
Kenya's president, despite the case collapsing. Luis Moreno Ocampo said
the charges against Uhuru Kenyatta prevented violence in the 2013
elections. Mr Kenyatta won the poll after campaigning on a nationalist
ticket, accusing the ICC of meddling in Kenya's affairs. He had been
charged with fuelling violence in the 2007 election. Last week, Mr
Ocampo's successor, Fatou Bensouda, dropped the charges against Mr
Kenyatta, saying there was a lack of evidence as the Kenyan government
had refused to hand over documents vital to the case. Mr Kenyatta denied
the charge of crimes against humanity. He was the first head of state to
appear before judges at the ICC. Some 1,200 people died and 600,000
fled homes in the conflict - the worst in Kenya since independence.

'UN powerless'

Mr Ocampo told BBC Newsday that Mr Kenyatta's indictment had created
a "deterrence", ensuring that the violence of the 2007 election was not
repeated in the 2013 election. "ICC changed the game," he said. Last
week, Uganda's President Yoweri reiterated calls on African states to pull
out of the ICC, saying the continent was unfairly targeted by the court.
Rejecting the criticism, Mr Ocampo said the ICC was a "problem" for about
10 African leaders who relied on violence to remain in power. He also defended the ICC's decision to charge Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir with genocide over the conflict in Darfur.

Ms Bensouda ended that investigation last week blaming lack of action by the UN. Mr Bashir was charged after the UN Security Council referred the conflict to the ICC for investigation, following allegations by UN and US officials that Sudanese government forces were committing "genocide" in Darfur.

Mr Ocampo said the ICC did not have the power to arrest Mr Bashir and put him on trial. The UN Security Council had to "act" against the Sudanese leader, but the problem was that it no longer had the "power" to do so, Mr Ocampo said. China is an ally of Sudan in the UN Security Council, and is bound to veto any action against him, correspondents say.

The African Union also called on its members not to arrest Mr Bashir, saying he enjoyed presidential immunity - a view the ICC rejects. Sudan does not recognise the ICC's jurisdiction, unlike Kenya. Kenya's government has denied that it has failed to co-operate with the ICC prosecutor. The trial of Mr Kenyatta's deputy, William Ruto, is ongoing at The Hague. They were on opposing sides during the 2007 election but subsequently formed an alliance to win elections last year. (Text ends)

KENYA: The President signed into law the Security Laws (Amendment) Bill 2014,

In his televised address to the public, the Kenyan President affirmed that "Today I signed into law the Security Laws (Amendment) Bill 2014, which provides a firm framework for the fight against terrorism. I call on all Kenyans to read the new law for yourselves instead of depending on interpretations that mislead. I am confident that you will find that there is nothing in this law that goes against the Bill of Rights or any provision of the constitution. Its intent is one; to protect the lives and property of all citizens. I was appalled by the deplorable behavior of Members of Parliament yesterday who as a result denied Kenyans the opportunity to follow the proceedings of Parliament. Those who disrupted the smooth operation of Parliament yesterday are oblivious to the threat that is upon the country. For the first time, we now have a law that focuses on prevention and disruption of threats. Further, the law allows for the use of technology in processing and advancing the ability for successful prosecution of suspects. This new law establishes an institutional framework for the counter-terrorism war and will create synergy between the different security agencies by creating clear command structures. This synergy is cascaded from the highest level to the lowest level through the national Government security structures. The law also raises the threshold for public and state officers who are charged with the responsibility of protecting Kenya and its people. The raised threshold is necessary because of lack of integrity and its role in compromising national security. It provides for heavy penalties for any transgression. My Government has
Kenya security law: President Uhuru Kenyatta signs bill’

BBC News (December 19, 2014)

Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta has signed into law a controversial security bill which saw MPs trade blows in parliament.

It was passed on Thursday during a chaotic parliamentary session, with opposition MPs warning that Kenya was becoming a "police state".

The government has said it needs more powers to fight militant Islamists threatening Kenya's security.

Somalia's al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabab group has stepped up attacks in Kenya.

The new anti-terror legislation gives the security and intelligence agencies the right to detain terror suspects for up to one year and requires journalists to obtain police permission before investigating or publishing stories on domestic terrorism and security issues.

It also stipulates that police must approve publication or broadcasting of information relating to investigations on terrorism.

"We must all remember that we are still at war and still vulnerable to terror attacks," Mr Kenyatta said in a televised address, defending the law. He denied that it infringed on civil liberties.

Stripping punishments

The BBC's Dennis Okari in the capital, Nairobi, says the security bill has gone through various amendments. The provision giving the security and intelligence agencies power to intercept phone conversations without a court order was dropped, he says.

A court order must be sought to hold terror suspects within 24 hours, after which they can be held for 360 days, up from the previous period of 90 days.

Anti-terror measures:

Bans publishing or broadcasting of "insulting, threatening, or inciting material", images of dead or injured people "likely to cause fear" and information that undermines security operations (this covers social media). Punishable by a fine of $55,000, a three-year jail term or both.
Terror suspects can be held for questioning for 360 days

Limits number of refugees and asylum seekers to 150,000 - those applying for refugee status not allowed to leave camps

Sets up National Counter-Terrorism Centre to co-ordinate security agencies' efforts

Public officials found guilty issuing irregular IDs or allowing irregular entry into the country liable to a minimum of 15 years in jail

Person in charge of a premises where weapons recovered may face up to 30 years in prison

Person promoting ideology based on violence to advance political, religious or social change may face up to 14 years in jail

Anti-stripping measure:

Person who forcibly strips someone is liable to a minimum of 10 years in prison.

The opposition, civil society groups and the media have all said they will go to court to challenge the legislation.

The legislation also included a clause providing for a minimum of 10 years in prison to anyone convicted of forcibly undressing someone.

This follows several incidents of women have their clothes ripped off and being sexually abused by a group of men in public. Thursday's special parliamentary sitting, which turned into mayhem live on television, shocked many Kenyans, our correspondent says.

Opposition MPs tore up papers and chanted anti-government slogans - there was a fist-fight and the deputy speaker had water poured over her. Mr Kenyatta condemned their behaviour as "deplorable" and said the law was only meant to "protect the lives and property of all Kenyans and disrupt any threats to our national security". "May peace dwell within our borders during this festive season," he said at the end of his address.

Since last month, al-Shabab has killed 64 people in two attacks in the north-eastern region of Mandera, which borders Somalia. Last year it was also responsible for the Westgate shopping centre siege in Nairobi in which 67 people died.

Kenya sent troops into Somalia three years ago, and they now make up part of the African Union force helping to fight the militant group. (Text ends)

President Uhuru Kenyatta faces rebellion in North Rift over David Kimaiyo seat’

STANDARD DIGITAL By Faith Rono (December 27, 2014)
The appointment of the next Inspector General of Police is expected to rekindle bad blood between the governing Jubilee partners after MPs from Rift Valley warned they would walk out of the coalition should the region be overlooked.

The disgruntlement over Kimaiyo has echoes of the row generated by Standard Gauge Railway tendering bids and the tiff over sacking of former National Youth Service director Kiplimo Rugut.

Immediately, Kimaiyo announced his retirement, there was talk that he had been compelled to step down. The retirement was triggered by a spate of terror attacks, which in turn piled pressure on him to resign or President Uhuru Kenyatta shows him the door. However, the Constitution mechanism for his impeachment is long and tedious compared to the shorter option of retiring.

In a recent thanksgiving in Turbo, Uasin Gishu County, MPs from Elgeyo Marakwet, where Kimaiyo comes from, were conspicuously missing as other URP and TNA legislators turned up to show support for Deputy President William Ruto who is still facing charges at the ICC.

Apart from Senator Kipchumba Murkomen and Jackson Kiptanui (Keiyo South), other legislators including Elgeyo Marakwet County Governor Alex Tolgos skipped the function.

One MP from the region who spoke to us, but declined to be identified, said the leaders snubbed the meeting because of their disappointment following Kimaiyo’s ouster. (Text ends)

Kenya flagged off the first batch of 170 Kenyan health volunteers to help contain the deadly Ebola in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The volunteer nurses, doctors and laboratory technicians, trained on detecting and management of Ebola will form part of the African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa. Kenya is committed to Africa’s resolve to provide solutions to the continent’s challenges. Kenya fulfilled of it’s pledge of USD 1,000,000 financial support to Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea to fight Ebola. Kenya will also fulfill commitment to contribute 319 health workers to join the Ebola response in West Africa as pledged during the 10th Ordinary meeting of the East African Community Sectoral Council of Ministers in October last year. "Kenya has a proud and exemplary name in peacekeeping, diplomacy and voluntary international service in times of crisis. This is a time of great pride for all Kenyans. I thanked our courageous and selfless volunteers who have taken a bold stand to bring the spirit of African solidarity into life and action. They join a roll of distinguished Kenyans who have served their African kin selflessly under daunting circumstances. The greatest resource we discovered as a continent is confidence: the confidence in our own ideas, solutions and capacities. It is humbling and inspiring to know that the country boasts of innumerable committed, compassionate and courageous professionals
whose love and empathy literally knows no boundaries.” Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta quoted as saying at social media fb.

KENYA: What Fidel Odinga’s exit means for the Jaramogi dynasty

By Oscar Kwena Obonyo

Had he completed building his house in Bondo, and had he officially “entered” the house after partaking in the mandatory traditional rituals, Fidel Castro Odinga would have been laid to rest in his own compound, next to his father’s farm in Opoda, Siaya County. But as fate would have it and despite his financial muscle, Fidel, who was a wealthy businessman in the petroleum industry, just never managed to complete erecting his rural home by the time of his death. This is precisely why he was laid to rest next to his grandfather, Kenya’s first Vice President Jaramogi Adonija Oginga Odinga, in accordance with dictates of Luo traditions.

That the body of Fidel, whom family members confess was regarded by Jaramogi as a favourite grandchild, now lies next to that of the famous political leader, is a curious coincidence. An apparent political heir to his father — Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) leader and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga — Fidel was third in the lineage of the Jaramogi dynasty.

Political asset

Roundly hailed by many, including President Uhuru Kenyatta and Deputy President William Ruto as a sociable individual whose relationships cut across the political and ethnic divide, Fidel was a crucial political asset and linkman of the Odingas. In fact to many, Fidel was perhaps an easier political candidate to sell to the rest of Kenyans as compared to his grandfather and father.

His re-union, in death, with his grandfather now poses a major political challenge to the Odingas. With the exit of Fidel, who will be the third generation bearer of the mantle of one of Kenya’s most political families?

With regard to the male gender, only Raila Odinga Jnr remains in the former Premier’s political stable. And although he was named after his father, the younger Raila has very little in common with the Orange party leader in terms of political interest. Family members describe Junior as reclusive but a perfect gentleman who shies away from controversy. He is totally disinterested in politics.

Within the family of Raila’s elder brother, Dr Oburu Oginga, there are three male children. There is Dick, a Kisumu-based businessman who deals in the transport and farming sectors, as well as Elija, who is also embedded in business. The two are believably contented with business and have little interest in politics.

There is a third one, though, Jack Oburu, who was briefly involved in his uncle’s presidential campaign in 2013. Popularly known among friends as
Jaoko, he played a key role in Raila’s campaigns where he served as one of the leaders of the Friends of Raila (Fora) lobby group.

Jaoko disappeared from the political radar soon after Jubilee’s candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta, was declared President. The Standard On Sunday has, however, traced Raila’s nephew to the Siaya County Government where he works as an investment advisor.

In the absence of Fidel, pundits opine that Jaoko stands out as the sole politically-minded grandson in the wider Jaramogi family. But if the net is cast wider to include granddaughters, family members point to Raila’s last born daughter, Winnie, as an emerging political force. (Text ends)

KENYA: protection needs increase with refugee influx'

Kakuma, (January 14, 2015) – Without the opportunity to integrate into Kenyan society due to a strict encampment policy and with low chances of resettlement, most refugees in Kenya spend years living in refugee camps. While they are provided a physical space free from war, camps are not necessarily free from human rights abuses, particularly sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Kakuma refugee camp is ripe with cultural diversity that enriches camp life, but unfortunately "some of the cultural practices and beliefs degrade women. Among the South Sudanese, especially Dinka and Nuer, women are seen as valuable assets who are traded for expensive dowries of herds of cattle, which many families depend on for survival," said Jeremiah Orongo Otieno, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Safe Haven Assistant Coordinator in Kakuma. This creates circumstances where women and children are not granted the agency they deserve.

Two JRS Safe Havens – one for adolescent boys and another for girls, single women and mothers with their children – provide physical and emotional protection, safe spaces within the camp for those caught in a cycle of violence. Adolescent boys residing in the Safe Haven attend a nearby camp school, receive food and other basic necessities, and are offered access to a child therapist and mentorship programmes.

Girls, women and their children engage in literacy and tailoring classes and also receive counselling, food and other basic necessities. Children under 10 years of age attend nursery school within the shelter. The facility also offers numerous workshops for women and girls on reproductive, maternal and child health, including HIV/AIDS awareness.

"Equipping the safe haven participants with these skills improves their healing process and enables them to feel safe, secure and at ease with themselves."

New phenomenon of trafficking.

According to UNFPA, in 2014 alone, more than 43,000 South Sudanese refugees have arrived into the already overcrowded Kakuma camp.
Seventy percent of these new arrivals are women and children. Given the severity of the conflict in South Sudan, it is inevitable that many of the children who flee lose their parents or guardians along the way, leaving them vulnerable to trafficking, abductions and SGBV.

“Trafficking of South Sudanese children as young as ten is a growing phenomenon. Traffickers find those separated from their families on route to or inside the camp and take them the southern Africa, often to Malawi, where they use or sell them as slaves (both for forced labour and sexual exploitation)." Camp officials work vigilantly to identify trafficking victims and refer them to the JRS shelter. "A group of about 50 children were rescued in August in Kakuma shelter before they were taken by traffickers."

Coordinated response

In addition to camp officials, organisations such as Lutheran World Federation, responsible for school management, as well as the Refugee Consortium of Kenya and the International Rescue Committee, responsible for healthcare, identify women and children in need of protection and refer them to the JRS Safe Haven. These organisations then try to find a durable solution for their protection, ideally within six months, which could include reintegration in their community, relocation to Dadaab refugee camp or another community in Kakuma, or, in very rare circumstances, resettlement abroad.

However, meeting a six-month time limit is often not possible. Just as the camp is overcrowded, so too are the safe havens. The women’s shelter should house 40 refugees but currently hosts 72 with some beneficiaries sleeping on the floor. The waiting list for referrals continues to grow.

Fortunately, JRS is not alone in addressing SGBV. Many organisations work to raise awareness among communities and prevent future incidents. FilmAid, for example, raises awareness about identifying and reporting incidences of SGBV with community leaders, zone leaders and community groups. Other organisations do the same in schools with trainings designed for children. UNFPA Kenya also leads initiatives in community outreach, psychosocial support and protective spaces. Angela Wells, JRS Eastern Africa Communications Officer

International Criminal Court terminates proceeding against President Uhuru Kenyatta’

By Standard Digital reporter (March 13, 2015)

Kenya: The International Criminal Court (ICC) has terminated the proceedings against President Uhuru Kenyatta following prosecution’s move to withdraw charges facing him last year.

ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda dropped the charges in December last year saying she did not have enough evidence against him. “Noting the Prosecution’s withdrawal of charges against Mr Kenyatta, the Chamber decided to terminate the proceedings in this case and to vacate the
summons to appear against him”, reads part of ICC statement sent to newsrooms Friday.

The Chamber stressed also that, although the proceedings shall be terminated, the court retains jurisdiction over any interference with a witness or with the collection of evidence and that the protective measures ordered for witnesses and/or victims shall continue, subject to the review by the Court.

President Uhuru faced charges at the ICC as an indirect co-perpetrator, with five counts of crimes against humanity consisting of murder, deportation or forcible transfer, rape, persecution and other inhumane acts allegedly committed during the post-election violence in Kenya in the disputed 2007-2008 poll.

The charges were confirmed on January 23, 2012 and the case was committed to trial before Trial Chamber V(B). (Text ends)

It's Ethiopia! State now breaks silence over aborted Uhuru trip

By Geoffrey Mosoku and Cyrus Ombati (May 11th 2015)

It was revealed Sunday that the President's jet turned back after Ethiopian authorities advised the pilot to change the flight course in a bid to avoid the Yemen airspace.

It also emerged that President Uhuru Kenyatta's jet turned back to Nairobi in Somalia, after Ethiopian air controllers advised them to reroute.

Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the protest note was handed to Ethiopian Ambassador to Kenya Dina Mufti, who was reportedly summoned to the ministry last Monday over the matter.

"We sent a strong protest note to Ethiopia for embarrassing us. What they did was wrong," said a highly placed source who requested anonymity.

Foreign Affairs PS Karanja Kibicho confirmed that Kenya had sent a note to Ethiopia but denied the envoy had been summoned.

"It's wrong to say that we summoned the ambassador. He came to pick the note from the ministry just like all ambassadors do," Dr Kibicho said.

The PS told The Standard that the issue had been resolved amicably and it was now time to "let the country move forward".

"It was an unfortunate incident and all the countries involved have held discussions and resolved it. We will ensure this does not happen again," he said.

Until Sunday, government officials have been unwilling to give information about what exactly led to the cancellation of the trip, fueling all manner of speculation among Kenyans. Ethiopia and Eritrea have previously been separately blamed over the aborted journey. Mechanical problem has also been cited as a possible reason why the aircraft jetted back.
The presidential jet flew back to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport four hours after it had taken off headed for Dubai.

Although initial reports had indicated that it had crossed the Kenyan-Ethiopia border almost 40 minutes later headed for Eritrea, which was the safe route given the turmoil in Yemeni, the PS clarified that Uhuru's jet actually returned from Somalia.

"The plane returned from Somalia and not Ethiopia after it become untenable to reroute the presidential jet. There was a misdirection which has since been regretted," Kibicho added.

According to the PS, the President's pilot had two options; to return or land for refueling. The pilot chose to fly back since landing a presidential jet in a foreign country requires a lot of protocol arrangements.

"This is a decision you have to make within a short time given you are cruising at 800 kilometres per hour and you are 3,000 metres above sea level. You can't just land in any country with a head of state on board."

Dr Kibicho says the new route could have seen the President's plane entering Saudi Arabia airspace on its way to Dubai through Somalia and Djibouti. (Text ends)

Ethiopian forces ‘cross into Kenya’, risk diplomatic fallout with key regional ally'

Mail and Guardian Africa (May 19, 2015)

ETHIOPIA has risked diplomatically antagonising a major ally after local media reported that its forces had crossed into Kenyan territory.

Kenya’s largest-circulating newspaper the Daily Nation Tuesday reported that about 50 armed Ethiopian soldiers and policemen had briefly taken over a Kenyan police station to the country’s remote north.

Kenyan police told the publication that Ethiopian forces armed with AK47 rifles arrived and took strategic positions around the Illeret police station in the North Horr region.

The Ethiopians are said to have assessed and photographed the area, which is estimated to be less than 20 kilometres inside Kenya. They allegedly admitted that the Kenyan government was not aware of their presence, but said they would return.

Surveyors have in recent weeks reportedly been demarcating the Kenya-Ethiopia border, but this is unclear why given their joint border was agreed by treaty in 1970, having been mapped out 20 years before.

According to a police officer quoted by the paper, this is the third time Ethiopian forces have crossed into Kenya during the year, and called for reinforcements for the station.
A Kenya army spokesman said the military was not aware of the incident, terming Ethiopia a “traditional” friend and that he did not think they would “do anything bad.” Kenya has a defence pact with Ethiopia, dating back to the days of Emperor Haile Selassie and Kenya’s independence leader Jomo Kenyatta.

The two countries were so closely allied strategically, Kenyatta gave Selassie a generous piece of land close to State House Nairobi for Ethiopia to build its mission.

Kenyans have however reacted strongly, largely viewing the incident as a show of foreign policy weakness. The country has in the past also been involved in a border dispute with Uganda over the small but resource-rich island of Migingo.

Kenya is perceived to have come out with the more bloodied nose from that encounter, with Uganda forces still sighted on the island.

The country regained some national pride with the 2011 invasion of Somalia to flush out Al-Shabaab militants, but it has in turn had to endure deadly retaliatory attacks on home soil, piling more pressure on its security architecture.

The latest incursion by Ethiopia would thus present an unwanted headache for a country that already has its hands full of diplomatic headaches including Burundi and the threat of the Somalia militant group Al-Shabab, and which is struggling to project its influence regionally, despite being the biggest economy in East Africa.

Scholars of geopolitics have argued that the lack of a credible committed defence more often than not invites other nations to test borders and diplomatic boundaries.

In April, Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta’s jet was embarrassingly turned back while reportedly in Ethiopian airspace in a diplomatic riddle that is yet to be solved publicly.

The plane was initially thought to have been pushed back while over Eritrean territory, but Asmara denied the aircraft had even reached its territory.

Eritrea and Ethiopia have deeply strained relations and have had no diplomatic ties since 1998, but Nairobi and Addis Ababa have solid ties, with moves underway to strengthen economic relations.

Ethiopia has an active border dispute with Eritrea, with which it fought in 1998-2000, leaving tens of thousands dead.

That war was over the disputed territory of Badme, which the UN has ruled belongs to Eritrea. Asmara sought to retake it by force, but because the territory lay in the homeland of the ruling Ethiopian class, ran into major conflict with Ethiopia.
Ethiopia still controls Badme, leading to a tense northern frontier and a closed border.

But with Ethiopia set to vote next week, nationalistic sentiment may again be running high among its elite, leading to a flexing of strength in a bid to rally the frontier communities.

The UK has an active travel alert against all travel to Ethiopian borders with Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya and Somalia, and which was updated last week with a focus on the elections.

Ethiopia has also had a troublesome border with Somalia, into which it has crossed a number of times, for decades, including a simmering separatist movement.

The country could thus be looking to batten down the hatches ahead of an election where, though the ruling party faces no real threat, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn who took over the job after the larger-than-life Meles Zenawi died in 2012, needs to project strength in a country where it plays well to its history of not having been definitely conquered by a European colonizer. But given its robust ties with Nairobi, it would be against its interests to antagonise its southern neighbor. (Text ends)

GOVERNANCE: Kenya court urges change to law that penalises women who pass HIV to baby. Katy Migiro for Thomson Reuters Foundation, part of the Guardian development network (Wednesday April 1, 2015

Human rights groups welcome Kenya high court ruling that section of law to curb spread of HIV and Aids is unconstitutional. Human rights groups have welcomed moves to change Kenya’s 2006 HIV and Aids Prevention Act which at present effectively criminalises pregnant women who pass HIV to their babies. The law says that a person knowing they are HIV positive must tell “any sexual contact” of their status in advance and could be jailed for seven years if they “knowingly and recklessly” placed another person at risk of being infected.

Kenya’s high court ruled this section of the law unconstitutional on 18 March as “it could be interpreted to apply to women who expose or transmit HIV to a child during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding”. The law was introduced to curb the spread of HIV and Aids in Kenya, which has the fourth largest HIV-positive population in the world – 1.6 million people. Rights groups argue that it discriminates against women, who are often the first members of a family to find out their HIV status as they are usually tested when pregnant. “This law has inflicted fear, shame and punishment on countless Kenyans, especially pregnant women,” Evelyne Opondo, Africa director of the New-York based Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), said in a statement on 30 March.

“Now is the time for the Kenya government to immediately amend this legislation and ensure people living with HIV can get the care they need
without fear of discrimination or criminalisation.” CRR submitted an amicus brief in a case brought against the government by the Aids Law Project, a charity providing legal services and counselling to people living with HIV.

The charity argued that the law discourages people from finding out their status and could even prevent those with HIV giving first aid or playing sports for fear of being prosecuted.

The law also puts women at risk of violence or rejection by their husbands because it allows doctors to disclose the status of patients to their next of kin, it said.

“If we want to reduce the spread of HIV and Aids and put an end to the stigma, violence and discrimination surrounding the disease, our public policies must be based on medical evidence and grounded in human rights,” Jacinta Nyachae, executive director of the Aids Law Project, said in the statement. The high court advised the government to review the law to avoid further litigation. (Text ends)

Ethiopia soldiers invade Kenyan village, rough up locals

BY LIBAN GOLICHA  Updated Wednesday, May 27th 2015 at 00:00 GMT

More than 30 heavily armed Ethiopian soldiers invaded Lataka village in Sololo on Tuesday morning and allegedly roughed up locals. The soldiers also allegedly disarmed a Kenya Police Reservist (KPR) officer and arrested some residents of the village.

Locals claimed the foreign soldiers demanded they produce and disclose whereabouts of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rebels, which is an outlawed militia in Ethiopia. The incident happened two days after Ethiopia held its national elections and at a time when the Sololo border remained closed due to the polls. Speaking to The Standard, they said soldiers were armed with hundreds of bullets, AK47 rifles, hand grenade and other sophisticated weapons.

INVADED VILLAGE

"They roughed up several people in the village and my elder brother suffered head and leg injuries during the 6am incident," a resident, Halkano Huka, said. Locals said the troops crossed into Kenya on Monday evening, through the Godi-loni border point, and invaded Lataka village on Tuesday morning which is some 20 kilometres from the border.

Moyale border re-opened after Ethiopia general polls

During the invasion they arrested two people from the village and released them after three hours. The residents said soldiers went towards Qicha village some 10 kilometres towards the border and by the time we went to press, the fate of the village remained unknown. The villagers said
Kenyan police arrived at the village at 9am and went to Sololo Police Station where they interrogated the two abducted villagers, Gimbe Jarso and Rob Jarso. Sololo Deputy County Commissioner Raphael Muiruri confirmed the incident and said a KPR officer was disarmed.

"Police are on the ground but we have scant information at the moment," he said adding they will release official information later in the day. The disarming of the KPR official brings to two the number of Kenya Government guns currently in the hand of Ethiopia authorities.

Mr Muiruri said the gun that was taken away by force on March 11 at Elle-bor is yet to be recovered adding that tension remains high at the border. The disarming of the KPR official brings to two the number of Kenya Government guns currently in the hand of Ethiopia authorities. Mr Muiruri said the gun that was taken away by force on March 11 at Elle-bor is yet to be recovered adding that tension remains high at the border. (Text ends)

Kenya deploys military along border after Ethiopian soldiers' invasion

BY LIBAN GOLICHA Updated Thursday, May 28th 2015 at 22:00 GMT +3

MARSABIT: Kenya has deployed military troops along Sololo border following Tuesday's invasion of Ethiopian soldiers into three villages in Uran Ward within the county. The military arrived in Sololo District on Tuesday, hours after the Ethiopian soldiers had left after invading villages and have been patrolling the border since then. Uran Ward Rep Qalicha Huka confirmed Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) officers have been deployed along the border and the situation is under control. “We thank security personnel for acting swiftly after we reported the incident,” he said, adding that combined police forces and military visited the invaded villages.

Locals harassed

On Wednesday, calm had returned to the border villages of Lataka, Qicha and Kiltipe where foreign forces' invasion had been reported and several locals harassed on Tuesday. The foreign soldiers have reportedly retreated to their country since Tuesday evening through Kiltipe border point.

During the invasion, they also allegedly disarmed a Kenya Police Reservist (KPR) officer identified as Guyo Galgallo. The villagers claimed the foreign force demanded them to disclose the whereabouts of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rebels, which is an outlawed militia in Ethiopia.

Sololo District peace chairman Galm Dabasso said four people were injured during the incident and KDF officers have kept vigil following the incident. He said foreign forces have reportedly crossed over to their country and tension has diffused in the region. Area Deputy County Commissioner Raphael Muiruri said Wednesday the situation is calm but the Government guns taken away by the foreign force are yet to be recovered. (Text ends)
Kenya Military fortifies border security after a second invasion by Ethiopian troops (STANDARD DIGITAL May 28, 2015) - Kenya has deployed military troops along Sololo border following Tuesday’s invasion of Ethiopian government soldiers into three villages in Uran Ward within the county.

The military arrived in Sololo District on Tuesday, hours after the Ethiopian soldiers had left after invading villages and have been patrolling the border since then. Uran Ward Rep Qalicha Huka confirmed Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) officers have been deployed along the border and the situation is under control. “We thank security personnel for acting swiftly after we reported the incident,” he said, adding that combined police forces and military visited the invaded villages.

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Area Deputy County Commissioner Raphael Muiruri said Wednesday the situation is calm but the Kenyan weapons that were taken away by the Ethiopian government troops are yet to be recovered. (Text ends)

KENYA: Ethiopia Spymaster infiltrates Kenyan police

By Kasembeli Albert Anxiety has gripped the Kenyan corridors of power and the National Police Service Commission (NPSC) after it emerged that Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) has infiltrated the Kenya police service and established a unit within, which pays allegiance to NISS and executes orders from Addis Ababa.

Security pundits consider this an act of treason on the part of Kenya police officers involved.

Despite notification from the Kenya spy-master – National Security Intelligence Services (NSIS), sources intimated to The Sunday Express that nothing had been done to avert the lurking threat to the national security by such infiltration by a foreign agency. “This guys are operating with impunity as though they are no longer officers of the National police Service,” said a senior police officer at Vigilance House.

When contacted the Inspector General, David Kimaiyo denied knowledge of such a unit operating under his arm bit. “Am not aware of that. In fact am hearing it from you,” said Kimaiyo.
Though officials at the Ethiopian Embassy in Nairobi declined to comment on the matter only referring as to Addis Abba, our sources within the embassy divulged that 50 police officers are on the payroll of the Ethiopia Government.

The officers under the command of senior police officer based in Nairobi received a total monthly payment of 900,000 Ethiopia Birr (KSh.4.5 million) monthly minus the allowances and money meant to facilitate specific operations. The officers are said to live a lavish life and are accessible to top of the range cars.

Even as Ethiopia appears to be using the old spying system. Questions are emerging as to why the government has never taken stern measures against officers involved including charging them with treason because it is clear espionage.

Security analyst Simiyu Werunga attributes this to poor pay and deplorable working conditions, leaving the officers more vulnerable to corruption and bribery. “The government should take a stern action against the suspects for having taken part in criminal activities against their country even after taking an oath,” he said.

It is worth noting that NISS is a very powerful and dreaded organ of Ethiopia’s totalitarian government. It is to protect national security by providing quality intelligence and reliable security services. Under the plans presented, it is accountable to the Prime Minister. The agency has a wide permit to lead intelligence and security work both inside and outside Ethiopia.

“The unit specifically compiles intelligence reports as to specifics missions as requests made by Addis,” said a source privy to operations of the unit. The unit too specifically monitors the operations of Ethiopian dissidents and refugees living in Kenya.

The unit is also said to be responsible for kidnappings of Ethiopian refugees and dissidents and their subsequent repatriation to Addis Ababa where they face death, brutality and long prison sentences. The unit has specific detail to trail their eyes on Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

Last week, two police officers appeared in court charged with alleged abduction of two ONLF leaders in Nairobi. On January 26, two top officials of ONLF were abducted from outside a popular restaurant in Upper Hill, Nairobi. The two who were identified as Mr Sulub Ahmed and Ali Hussein were members of the ONLF negotiation team that was in Nairobi for a proposed third round of talks.

It is claimed security agencies from Ethiopia and Kenya were involved in the kidnapping. They were abducted by men who were in three waiting cars. One of the cars, a black Toyota Prado was seized and detained at the Turbi police station on Monday but the two were missing amid speculation
they had been taken across to Ethiopia. The ONLF officials were invited by the Kenyan government for peace negotiations.

The two officers charged, a Chief Inspector Painito Bera Ng’ang’ai and Constable James Ngaparini are attached to Nairobi Area CID. He added the officers had been identified by witnesses as having participated in the abduction of Mr Sulub Ahmed and Ali Hussein who were members of the ONLF negotiation team that was in Nairobi for a proposed third round of talks.

Last week, the Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) wrote to President Uhuru Kenyatta expressing its deep concern regarding the safety of four Oromo refugees from Ethiopia who were arbitrarily arrested by Kenyan anti-terrorist squad from Isili area in Nairobi on different dates of operations and taken to unknown destinations.

According documents in our possession, Mr. Tumsa Roba Katiso, (UNHCR attestation File#: NETH033036/1) was arrested by people claiming to be a team of Kenyan police, who arrived at the scene in two vehicles, on February 1, 2014 at around 10:00 AM from 2nd Avenue Eastleigh Nairobi on his way home from shopping. The other three refugees, Mr. Chala Abdalla, Mr. Namme Abdalla, and the third person whose name is not known yet were picked up from their home which is located in the same vicinity.

They are alleged to have been picked by the special police squad on the payroll of Addis Ababa. The whereabouts of those Ethiopian-Oromo refugees is unknown until the time of going to press.

The HRLHA is highly suspicious that those Ethiopian-Oromo refugees might have been deported to Ethiopia. And, in case those Ethiopian-Oromo refugees have been deported, the Ethiopian Government has a well-documented record of gross and flagrant violations of human rights, including the torturing of its own citizens who were involuntarily returned to the country.

The government of Ethiopia routinely imprisons such persons and sentences them to up to life in prison, and often impose death penalty. There have been credible reports of physical and psychological abuses committed against individuals in Ethiopian official prisons and other unofficial or secret detention centres.

Under Article 33 (1) of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (189 U.N.T.S. 150), to which Kenya is a party, “[n]o contracting state shall expel or forcibly return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his . . . political opinion.”

This obligation, which is also a principle of customary international law, applies to both asylum seekers and refugees, as affirmed by UNHCR’s Executive Committee and the United Nations General Assembly. By
deporting the four refugees and others, the Kenyan Government will be breaching its obligations under international treaties as well as customary law.

Though some government officials denied it is official government policy, the Kenyan Government is well known for handing over refugees to the Ethiopian Government by violating the above mentioned international obligations. Engineer Tesfahun Chemeda, who died on August 24, 2013 in Ethiopia’s grand jail of Kaliti due to torture that was inflicted on him in that jail, was handed over to the Ethiopian government security agents in 2007 by the Kenyan police.

Tesfahun Chemeda was arrested by the Kenyan police, along with his close friend called Mesfin Abebe, in 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya, where both were living as refugees since 2005; and later deported to Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government detained them in an underground jail in a military camp for over one year, during which time they were subjected to severe torture and other types of inhuman treatments until when they were taken to court and changed with terrorism offences in December 2008. They were eventually sentenced to life imprisonment in March 2010.

“The Human Rights League of the Horn of Africa (HRLHA) is highly concerned about the safety and security of the above listed refugees who were recently arrested by the Kenyan anti-terrorist forces; and for those who are still living in Kenya,” said a communiqué petitioning President Kenyatta to intervene.

It urges the government of Kenya to respect the international treaties and obligations, and unconditionally release the arrested refugees, and refrain from handing over to the government of Ethiopia where they would definitely face torture and maximum punishments. It also urges all human rights agencies (local, regional and international) to join the HRLHA and condemn these illegal and inhuman acts of the Kenyan Government against defenseless refugees.

HRLHA requests western countries as well as international organizations to interfere in this matter so that the safety and security of the arrested refugees and those refugees currently staying in Kenya could be ensured. In the recent past, the rendition of Oromo refugees has been in the news. Kenyan authorities have been accused of illegal rendition of Oromo refugees to Ethiopia under the pretext of cracking down on the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) militias. While in Ethiopia, the individuals are allegedly arraigned before special courts where they are handed heavy jail sentences ranging from death to life in prison.

The fundamental objective of the Oromo liberation movement is to exercise the Oromo peoples’ right to national self-determination and end centuries of oppression and exploitation. The OLF believes the Oromo people are still being denied their fundamental rights by Ethiopian colonialism. According to Terfa Dibaba, head of the Oromo Relief
Association (ORA) based in Germany, 21 Oromo refugees have been adducted in Nairobi and Moyale and illegally shipped to Addis Ababa where they have been locked in custody.

Some of the people abducted in Nairobi and Moyale and clandestinely whisked to Ethiopia and languishing in jail include: Jatani Kuuno, Liban Wario and Milki Doyo. These, ORA alleges, were abducted in a friend’s house in Moyale by Kenyans enlisted by the Ethiopia authorities and ferried in two Kenya government’s Land Rovers to Ethiopia.

Others are Dabaso Kutu, Libani Jatani and Deban Wario. They are currently on trial in Ethiopia. Impeccable source have confided that a Kenyan, Abrhim Dambi, the head of the head of Ethiopian Spy network detailed to track down political dissidents has now fled to Addis Ababa where he is hosted by the government after he was exposed. Kasembeli Albert is a PR & Communications Consultant.

Kenya to build wall on border with Somalia

Kennedy Kepalat, KBC June 18, 2015

NAIROBI, Kenya - After suffering incessant terrorist attacks, Kenya is determined to build a wall on its border with Somalia, Kennedy Kepalat of Kenya Broadcasting Corp (KBC) reports:

The proposed security wall separating Kenya and Somalia is on course, north-eastern regional coordinator Mohamud Saleh has said. He said the Kenya government has begun constructing the security wall along its border with Somalia to curb cross-border incursions by Somalia based Al-Shabaab militants. The wall will run from Mandera in the north to Kiunga in the east coast, covering Mandera, Wajir, Garissa and Lamu counties.

Speaking during the tour of the project, Saleh said clearing and surveying along the border where the security line will pass through is ongoing but the actual construction is set to begin from next month. He said that the project is part of government policy in regard to war on terror and nothing will stop it.

Somalia parliamentarians have voiced their discontent over the security wall Kenya seeks to erect along its border with their country following frequent attacks launched on Kenyan soil by Al Shabab militant group.

Meanwhile, leaders and residents of Northern Kenya have been challenged to address the root courses of the current insecurity attributed to Al shabaab militants who have crippled virtually all sectors in the region. Area Regional coordinator Mohamud Saleh wondered why Al shabaab militants have not been able to penetrate in countries like Uganda, Burundi and neighboring Ethiopia but instead find it easy to enter and attack areas in Kenya almost at will.

Addressing chiefs and their assistants while on a tour of the county, Saleh cautioned the administrators against recommending issuance of National
Identification cards to aliens saying it was the genesis of the rising insecurity. Saleh acknowledged the lack of resources and equipment among the local administrators pledging government support.

He further reiterated that the government will employ 300 National Police Reservists in each of the three counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera to boost the war on terrorism. (Text ends)

Kenya wages war on smugglers who fund Somali militants

By Drazen Jorgic, Reuters (June 23, 2015)

KENYA: DADAAB, Kenya (Reuters) - When Kenyan police arrested six men in the vast Dadaab refugee camp near the Somali border last April, their ultimate aim was to dismantle a decades-old sugar smuggling trade that is funding Somali militants waging war on Kenya.

The arrests, coming weeks after four al Shabaab gunmen massacred 148 people at nearby Garissa university, were part of Nairobi's new strategy to choke off the flow of money to Islamists whose cross-border raids have hammered Kenya and its tourism industry.

While cash from sugar smuggling may amount to only a few million dollars, experts say such sums are enough for attacks that need just a few assault rifles, transport and loyalists ready to die - such as the Garissa raid or the 2013 assault on Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall that killed 67 people.

"It's like the government is awakening," said a senior Kenyan security source from Garissa region, adding the authorities had previously often "turned a blind eye to all these things because a lot of people were benefiting - but at a cost of security."

However if a lasting impact is to be secured more must be done, say security and diplomatic sources. That includes rooting out corruption in the police force and going after smuggling cartel bosses as well as the middle men detained so far.

The move to tackle the cross-border trade may prove as vital as the military offensive against al Shabaab inside Somalia by African Union peacekeepers and Somali soldiers that has pushed the group into smaller pockets of territory.

"Unless al Shabaab sources of revenue are chopped off, we are not going to see the end of instability in south Somalia and the region," said Rashid Abdi, a Somalia expert based in Nairobi.

President Uhuru Kenyatta's government has taken steps to halt the trafficking of sugar from the southern Somali port of Kismayu to Kenya's frontier and has set up a special unit in the National Intelligence Service (NIS) to dismantle smuggling cartels, the security source said.

"SECRET" DOCUMENT
Days after the Garissa attack, Kenya published a list of 85 entities and individuals with links to al Shabaab. That list did not elaborate on the links, but a government document marked "secret" and reviewed by Reuters detailed how 30 listed people were involved in smuggling. The six men arrested in Dadaab on April 18 were on both lists.

"The sugar barons pay illegal levies - or protection fees - to the al Shabaab who in turn uses the proceeds to fund terrorist activities/operations," says the "secret" document, drawn up by the government on April 25.

Sugar smuggling is lucrative in Kenya, where the local industry is protected from imports as part of an agreement with Kenya's African trading partners. So the commodity in Kenya is sold at an inflated price compared to global markets. Diplomats acknowledge progress against smugglers has been made, but worry the authorities will not keep up the crackdown.

"Those sugar folks are connected (to the authorities), so the question is what happens going forward," said one Western diplomat. Adding to scepticism, only mid-level dealers have been arrested and no cartel bosses have even been named.

How the smuggling trade works and how cash is paid to two al Shabaab was explained to Reuters by two ethnic-Somali sugar smugglers from the Dadaab camp - Hussein, a trader, and Farah, a broker linking smugglers and police. Both men joined the flood of refugees who crossed into Kenya after conflict erupted in Somalia in 1991. They agreed to meet in a secluded area in a Dadaab hotel on condition only their first names were used.

According to their accounts - corroborated by Kenyan and regional security sources - smuggled goods arrive in Kismayu port where Kenyan-owned trucks are loaded with 50-kg bags of Brazilian sugar imported from the Middle East.

CORRUPTION

From there, the trucks drive through al Shabaab-controlled territory to Kenya's border. At one of two al Shabaab checkpoints, drivers pay $1,025 per truck to pass. "Al Shabaab sometimes move the checkpoint," said Hussein. "But you receive a slip from them, so you can show that if you run into them again."

Once at Kenya's frontier, officially shut to any traffic whether carrying goods or passengers, trucks pay 60,000 shillings ($600) each to Kenyan police to cross. Somali authorities take a separate cut along the way.

Deputy County Commissioner Albert Kimathi acknowledged some police were involved but said this was being tackled by steps such as moving officers who had been in post for three years. Those in smuggling "hot spots" could be moved after six months.
"It's the only way not to institutionalise the corruption issue," he said. "If someone overstays, they become so well known to the locals that they become part of the racket." Hussein and Farah said that, until the crackdown began in April, about 35 trucks carrying sugar, rice and other contraband arrived each week at Dadaab, home to about 350,000 refugee Somalis. They said others unloaded in Garissa and Wajir, further north, but they were not sure how many.

Based on the Dadaab business alone, and the figures for the amount earned with each truckload, al Shabaab earns about $1.9 million a year, according to a Reuters calculation.

A senior police officer in Dadaab said Kenyan smugglers "look at the money they make and don't think about the money they give to al Shabaab, and the kind of damage that will do."

In Dadaab, the April 18 arrests had an immediate effect, at least for a short while, by driving sugar prices higher as shops started sourcing more expensive Kenyan sugar from Nairobi. "The fear is that if you are found with sugar you will be associated with al Shabaab," said one local Dadaab politician, who also wanted to remain anonymous. "No one wants that."

KENYA: Chaos disrupt Parliament special sitting on Security Bill'

REUTERS/STANDARD (December 18, 2014) Fight broke out in Kenyan Parliament over proposed anti-terrorism law. The proposed amendments to Kenya's existing security law, which include extending the time suspects can be held without charge to 360 days from 90 days, follows a spate of attacks by militants on Kenya's border region with Somalia that has killed dozens of people. The amendments would also fine media organisations up to Sh5 million for printing material that is "likely to cause fear or alarm". The proposal does not define such material.

Uhuru Kenyatta has faced mounting pressure to boost the country's security since an attack in September 2013 on Nairobi's Westgate mall that left 67 people dead. Early Thursday morning, Anti-riot police patrolled Nairobi streets and dispersed any group of up to four people. Witnesses say they saw police arrest three men near the Tom Mboya statue along Moi Avenue. "Security is tight and we discourage those planning chaos against doing so. We have enough personnel," said a senior police officer. Opposition leaders and civil rights activists had said they would hold street protests to oppose the debate and passage of the proposed law. (Text ends)

How much it costs to host the world's most powerful man

STANDARD DIGITAL By Oscar Obonyo Updated Sunday, July 12, 2015

When he first travelled to Kenya in 1986, he did so unnoticed, like any other ordinary American tourist. Twenty years later, as Senator of the State of Illinois, Barack Obama returned to a more respectable reception
by the Mwai Kibaki Administration. But the quality of his reception this time around is expected to hit a crescendo when, as leader of the world's most powerful country, Obama jets into Kenya in a fortnight.

Already, several equipment, including more than 50 special cars that will be at the disposal of America's 44th President while on his three-day visit, have arrived. And contrary to previous visits when he flew in on a commercial flight and private jet as senator, Obama will fly in on the US presidential Air Force One. When he last visited in August 2006, Moses Wetang'ula, then the assistant minister for Foreign Affairs, was the most senior government official present to receive him. Except for uncoordinated chants and ululations from excited crowds, there was no official choir to welcome him to Kenya, nor a guard of honour mounted for him to inspect.

His quiet reception at the vice-presidential pavilion upon arrival at 6pm on Thursday, August 24, barely lasted 30 minutes. He then drove off in a fleet of US embassy vehicles accompanied by Ambassador Michael Ranneberger. But an elaborate and colourful reception led by none other than President Uhuru Kenyatta awaits Obama when he arrives on the evening of Friday 24 for the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Nairobi.

President Kenyatta's spokesman Manoah Esipisu has already hinted at a huge reception for the US President, whose father was Kenyan. Addressing the press recently, Esipisu told Kenyans to brace themselves for inconveniences during the high-profile visit. Similar alerts have been issued by Inspector General of Police Joseph Boinett and other security agencies. Ordinarily, when a US President visits, transport and communication systems grind to a halt. This is because such trips require extraordinary security measures.

While in Kenya, Obama will be chauffeured in a luxury customised presidential Cadillac limousine code-named "the beast".

According to online details titled "Inside the President's armored limo", there are 12 "beasts" currently in service, with an estimated cost of $1.5 million (about Sh147 million) per car. The bulletproof "beast", which is 18 feet long, has doors that are eight inches thick while its windows are five inches thick. It is also installed with several luxury and essential features, including a direct phone line to the US Vice President. The contrast between the "beast" and the matatu (the type where travellers sat in two rows facing each other with knees touching or legs interlocked), which Obama boarded in 1991 to his father's home in Kogelo, Siaya County, is beyond comparison.

Then, he squeezed himself into the matatu, which he describes in his famous autobiography Dreams From My Father, as "a sad-looking vehicle with balding, cracked tyres." On that occasion, Obama ended up carrying his half-sister Auma on his lap together with a basket of yams while supporting a crying baby! This time around, Obama will also not have to
worry about traffic jams, similar to those he frequently experienced while in Auma's Volkswagen beetle, along Uhuru Highway and near the University of Nairobi, where his sister worked as a lecturer.

Nonetheless, foreign travel by US Presidents is a costly affair, much as it is difficult to ascertain exact figures since such data is considered confidential. But journalists David Nakamur and Carol Leonnig divulge that a Secret Service internal memo leaked to The Washington Post ahead of Obama's three-nation Africa tour in 2013 demonstrated just how costly long foreign trips can be.

In one of the online issues of The Washington Post, David, who is a White House correspondent and Carol, who covers federal agencies with a focus on government accountability, report that the trip entailed hundreds of Secret Service agents to secure facilities in Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania. There was also a Navy aircraft carrier with a fully staffed medical trauma centre stationed offshore in case of an emergency and military cargo planes to bring in 56 support vehicles, "including 14 limousines and three trucks loaded with sheets of bullet-proof glass to cover the windows of the hotels where the first family stayed."

Fighter jets were also expected to fly in shifts, giving 24-hour coverage over the president's airspace. It is estimated that costs of the eight-day African trip ranged between $60 million (Sh5.7 billion) and $100 million (Sh9.7 billion). Air Force One reportedly costs over $228,000 (Sh23.2 million) per hour to fly. Obama's presence in Kenya could equally be costly this time around — due to the heightened security owing to the threat from Al-Shabaab.

In the meantime, it remains unclear whether the US leader will visit kinsmen and women in his father's ancestral home. In 2006, Obama toured Kogelo via the lakeside city of Kisumu in the East Africa Safari Express commercial flight. Then, he squeezed himself into the matatu, which he describes in his famous autobiography Dreams From My Father, as "a sad-looking vehicle with balding, cracked tyres."

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KENYA: Why Government of Kenya is feverish ahead of US President Barack Obama's visit

STANDARD DIGITAL By Kipchumba Some July 12, 2015

With less than two weeks to US President Barack Obama’s historic visit to Kenya, the Government and the Opposition are sparring to control his agenda. The ruling Jubilee coalition is accusing the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) leaders of trying to take advantage of Obama’s visit to project the government in bad light. Corruption in Government and the management of the next general election in August 2017, are some of the top issues the two sides differ sharply about.

In addition, the place of homosexuality in Kenya seems to be driving a wedge between State House and Deputy President William Ruto. The itinerary of President Obama’s visit for the Global Entrepreneurship Summit has so far remained a tightly guarded secret. Although it is known that he will arrive in the country on the evening of July 24, it is not yet clear how many days he will be staying before flying to Ethiopia. When asked about it, Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohammed said President Obama’s itinerary will be communicated next Friday.

"Who said US President Barack Obama’s visit will be for eight hours? It could be for a longer period or even shorter. Until we receive full itinerary and programme from the US Government, whatever is circulating in the media is hearsay and speculation,” she said. Nonetheless, the
Government has launched an early offensive on the Opposition, which it accuses of trying to capitalise on Obama’s visit to portray the Government in bad light.

“CORD is trying to set an agenda for Obama so that he can lose focus on what he is supposed to do here,” said the Leader of Majority in the National Assembly, Aden Duale. “They want him to talk about IEBC, corruption and such things yet these are things that are handled by independent institutions,” he said.

In recent times, the Government and the Opposition have differed sharply over the faltering fight on corruption and over the planned reforms at IEBC. CORD accuses the Government of being insincere in fighting corruption and has accused IEBC of being partial and acting as an extension of the Jubilee government. Naturally, the Opposition would call on President Obama to press President Kenyatta to do more to address these issues when they meet.

This week, CORD threatened to boycott the next General Election, saying it was sidelined by IEBC when it launched its 2015-2017 strategic plan on Thursday. “There are problems in Burundi, South Sudan, Uganda, Somalia and so on. By threatening to boycott the next elections, they are trying to scare Obama into fearing a repeat of the 2007 clashes,” said Mr Duale.

However, CORD leader Raila Odinga said he had no secret agenda to share with Obama, though he could not comment on whether he was scheduled to meet the US President. “We have no secret agenda. I am not a mad man. I cannot create disorder. On NYS (National Youth Service), we are not opposed to the projects that uplift the youth. However, we are concerned that the youth projects are being used as a conduit for corruption,” he said yesterday in Kisumu. Mr Odinga has accused President Kenyatta of not doing enough to fight corruption at NYS, which he has labeled as a massive scam to siphon public money.

Furthermore CORD has claimed that Devolution Cabinet Secretary Anne Wiguru, in whose docket NYS falls, is favoured since she has not been suspended like her colleagues who were forced to step aside over corruption allegations.

Raila added that the Opposition’s aim with IEBC is to see the institution “reformed to seal all loopholes so that we confidently go to the next elections”. Given the prominent role that the US played in resolving the 2007 post-election violence, electoral reform is conceivably one area President Obama would be interested in talking about with Kenyan leaders from both sides. Besides the Opposition, President Kenyatta has to contend with his deputy Ruto, who is diametrically opposed to President Obama’s position on the rights of homosexuals.

On Sunday last week, while attending a church service in Nairobi, Mr Ruto launched what was widely seen as a broadside against President Obama.
“The Republic of Kenya is a republic that worships God. We have no room for gays and those others,” Ruto told a Nairobi church congregation in Swahili. “God did not create man and woman for a man to come and marry another man. We believe in God. This is a God-fearing nation and we will be firm on what is right,” he added. Gay rights is one of the key achievements of the Obama presidency and by taking such a diametrically opposing view, Ruto’s sentiments ran the risk of embarrassing both President Kenyatta and his high-profile guest.

Soon after the DP spoke, State House spokesman Manoah Esipisu quickly released a press statement that largely contradicted Mr Ruto’s position. “The Government believes in freedom of expression as enshrined in the Constitution and respects the position taken by the US Government on gays following a ruling by the country’s Supreme Court that same-sex unions will be recognised. As Kenyans we believe in freedom of speech. We cannot tell Obama what he can or cannot say during his visit to Kenya,” read Mr Esipisu’s statement.

It is instructive that Mr Ruto’s denunciation of President Obama was followed by anti-gay demonstrations in Nairobi, led by Kiharu MP Irungu Kangata and Kikuyu MP Kimani Ichung’wa. Both had attended the DP’s church service and on Monday they led demonstrations in which some of the participants displayed placards that read “No Obama Obama, No Michelle Michelle!”

The White House also followed with a comment saying that as the leader of the free world, President Obama is free to talk about anything that is in the interest of the US wherever he travels to. “I’m confident the President will not hesitate to make it clear that protection of fundamental human rights is also a priority for Kenya, something we hold dear here in the United States of America,” said Joshua Earnest, White House Press Secretary. “We have been clear that as the President travels around the world, he does not hesitate to raise concerns about human rights,” he added.

In light of Ruto’s views, it is not yet clear whether he will meet President Obama, although if the past is anything to go by, it is highly unlikely. When the US Secretary of State John Kerry visited the country in May, the DP was conspicuously absent from his meetings and generally kept a low profile. Complicating matters further is the fact that Mr Ruto is still facing criminal charges at the International Criminal Court, which makes it difficult for him to meet a leader of a country that styles itself as a beacon of democracy and rule of law.

Generally, Ruto has had an uneasy relationship with US officials. A US State Department memo that was released by the anti-secrecy website Wikileaks in 2011 lays bare this difficult relationship. During a meeting on May 2, 2009 between Mr Ruto, then the Agriculture minister in the Grand Coalition government and US Undersecretary for African Affairs, Johny
Carson, and US ambassador to Kenya, Michael Ranneberger, the US officials came out less than impressed on Ruto’s reform credentials.

“Ruto was unable to offer significant steps on reform that could be accomplished in the next three months. What he did expose again was his extreme sensitivity to the establishment of any kind of tribunal and his willingness to protect his own community regardless of the cost to the country as a whole. We do not expect Ruto to serve as a positive agent of change in the coming months,” concluded the two high ranking US government officials.

In the run up to the last general elections, the US and the West seem to have thrown their lot with the Opposition. At the time, they seemed spooked at the prospect of two men facing serious criminal charges at the ICC being elected to lead one of the strategic countries in Africa. Mr Carson went as far as cautioning Kenyans that “choices have consequences,” which was widely interpreted to mean that Kenya would be punished for electing the two ICC suspects. By the end of the polls, their worst fears were confirmed but in the realpolitik that govern international relations, the West moved fast to embrace the new government.

Therefore, Obama will be walking a tightrope in Kenya, trying to balance his role as the leader of the most powerful and democratic country in the world and the ethnic politics of his father’s land. Should Obama berate the government on issues such as corruption, his position is likely to be interpreted by a section of Kenyans to mean that he is pandering to one side of the political divide. And if this happens, he will, unwittingly, be inserting himself in to the morass of Kenya’s tribal politics. If he doesn’t, another section of Kenyans would see his visit as a mere face-saving tour to mend relations with the government following his initial position on the UhuRuto presidential ticket. (Text ends)

KENYA: Billionaires meet President Uhuru Kenyatta, seek to invest in energy sector

STANDARD DIGITAL News: By PSCU

A group of investors for talks with President Uhuru Kenyatta at Harambee House office yesterday. Together, they explored how to make the most of Kenya's abundant potential for green energy. Other investors in the delegation included Jacqueline Novogratz (founder and CEO, Acumen), Chris Anderson (curator, TED Conference) Dipender Saluja (Capricorn Investments), Steve Jurvetson (Draper Fisher Jurvetson), Strive Masiyiwa (founder and chair, Econet Wireless), Jean Oelwang (CEO, Virgin Unite) and Zia Khan of the Rockefeller Foundation. Sir Richard said the proposed renewables project would benefit the 50 per cent of Kenyans yet to access electricity. “Investors in this initiative have chosen Kenya because the Government is ready to listen to ideas and help implement them,” he said. He pointed out that the project would cover Kenya and Rwanda,
before being rolled out to other parts of Africa. Both countries would serve as models. The initiative comes in the wake of recent reports identifying a significant role for green mini-grids in rural electrification. (Text ends)

KENYA/ETHIOPIA: Fourteen NGOs & Experts called on Obama to help protect human rights’

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) — President Barack Obama should call for much needed human rights reforms in Kenya and Ethiopia in discussions with officials of the two countries during his trip there this week, fourteen nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and individual experts said in a letter to the President on Wednesday. “We urge you to clearly articulate that the United States expects its partners to support an environment where independent organizations and media outlets can thrive, and security forces undertake operations that protect — rather than abuse — their citizens,” the letter read. The NGOs stated that Kenya and Ethiopia are key US partners and expressed hope human rights concerns will be addressed during Obama’s discussions with officials of the two countries. Obama will be the first US head of state and government to visit Ethiopia where he will hold meetings with government representatives as well as with leaders of the African Union.

The President’s trip to Ethiopia will follow a visit to Kenya, where Obama will attend the 2015 Global Entrepreneurship Summit, according to the White House. The trip to Kenya will be Obama’s fourth visit to sub-Saharan Africa during his presidency. (Text ends)

LGBT News: Despite Agreements, Obama, Kenyan President Differ on Gay Rights’

NAIROBI, Kenya — Jul 25, 2015, By ARLETTE SAENZ Digital Journalist

President Obama publicly disagreed with his Kenyan counterpart over gay rights today as he urged African nations not to discriminate against individuals based on sexual orientation. The president made the remarks at a news conference he held with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, who called gay rights in his country a "non-issue." Obama discussed the subject on his first full day in Kenya while drawing on his own background as an African-American in the U.S.

"If somebody is a law-abiding citizen who is going about their business and working in a job and obeying the traffic signs and doing all the other things that good citizens are supposed to do and not harming anybody, the idea that they are going to be treated differently or abused because of who they love is wrong," Obama said. Shortly after, Kenyatta said while the U.S. and Kenya share many values, gay rights is an issue on which the two countries disagree. "There are some things that we must agree we don't share," he said. "Our culture, our societies don't accept [homosexuality]."
Kenyatta added it was difficult to impose beliefs on the Kenyan people that they "do not accept." "This issue is not really an issue that is on the foremost mind of Kenyans and that is a fact," he said. While the U.S. has made strides on gay rights issues, most recently with the Supreme Court's decision on same-sex marriage, many countries in Africa, including Kenya, hold more conservative views. Same sex relations are still illegal in Kenya and Ethiopia, where the president will travel on Sunday. Ahead of the trip, several Kenyan political and religious leaders had warned President Obama not to discuss gay rights while in the country.

Fighting al-Shabab

The two presidents also discussed the counter-terror efforts their countries have employed against al-Shabaab. Obama said strides have been made against the terror group in certain regions, but he also acknowledged they still pose a serious threat. “We have systematically reduced the territory that al-Shabab controls. We have been able to decrease their effective control within Somalia and have weakened those networks operating here in East Africa," he said. “That doesn't mean the problem's solved. As is true around the world, what we find is that we can degrade significantly the capacities of these terrorist organizations but they can still do damage.”

Cracking Down on Ivory Sales and Establishing Direct US-Kenya Flights

Obama also announced his administration is proposing a rule to crack down on illegal ivory sales by banning the sale of ivory across state lines. Poachers killed approximately 100,000 elephants for their ivory between 2010 and 2012, according to a study released last year by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The president also announced his intention to establish direct flights between the U.S. and Kenya, though he would not offer a timeline, saying there are protocols that must be cleared first. (Text ends)

Letter from Kenya: Dreaming of Obama

POLITICO: By EDWARD-ISAAC DOVERE

“Coming as a source of pressure to create more space for civil society and journalists is part of the reason we’re here,” the senior administration official added. Hailemariam seemed only mildly moved by Obama’s prodding. “Something has to be understood is that this is a fragile democracy, and we are coming out of centuries of undemocratic culture in this country, and it’s not easy that in two decades we can come out of all this,” Hailemariam said. “But we feel we are on the right track.”

He said Ethiopians feel obligated to follow the constitution, and pay attention to how other governments have opened up. “We have to learn the best practices of the United States and age-old democracies, because this is a process of learning and doing, and I think we understand that,” he said. This is hardly an open country. Hailemariam’s party controls all
government functions. Human rights abuses are commonplace. Most outside Internet and phone service does not work. And in an area where Ethiopia infamously leads the way, the jailing of journalists, Hailemariam seemed unwilling to budge beyond a little lip service. Ethiopia wants more journalists, he insisted, since there are so many good stories about the country to tell. “We need you, this is very important, but we need ethical journalism to function in this country,” he said, leaving the definition of “ethical” fully up to him.

Obama, Kenyatta clash on gay rights in Kenya’

POLITICO: By EDWARD-ISAAC DOVERE

But Hailemariam said, maybe the journalists he’s putting in prison are working with the same opponents of the government that he claims are terrorist groups — though Obama noted specifically at the press conference that the American government doesn’t agree that they are terrorists. “Journalism has to be respected when it doesn’t pass the line that is working with violent terrorist groups,” Hailemariam said. “My government is committed to this issue.”

Obama seemed suspicious, even as he urged observers to put the same standards of how America relates internationally on smaller countries like Ethiopia as it does on bigger ones that Washington is forced to deal with, such as Russia or China. Obama and aides say that they are expecting the trip to help prompt more changes in Ethiopia by highlighting these issues by making the trip, comparing what might be ahead here to the progress they claim credit for in Burma. As for legitimizing Hailemariam, the administration official said, “it’s not a worry because we are making very public our concerns.” “The Ethiopian government,” the official added, “is now on the hook.” (Text ends)

KENYA/ETHIOPIA EVENTS: theguardian: Obama criticised for calling Ethiopia's government 'democratically elected'

While the US president calls for end of crackdown on political and press freedom, his comments on Hailemariam administration are widely condemned

By David Smith in Addis Ababa Monday 27 July 2015 17.44 BS

Last modified on Tuesday 28 July 2015 01.05 BST

Barack Obama has been criticised by opposition groups and journalists in Ethiopia after referring to the country’s government as “democratically elected”, with one human rights watchdog describing the statement as “shocking”.

The US president was speaking at a joint press conference with Hailemariam Desalegn, the Ethiopian prime minister, after the two leaders held talks in the capital, Addis Ababa.
Although Obama said he had raised issues of good governance – “I don’t bite my tongue too much when it comes to these issues” – he also insisted: “We are opposed to any group that is promoting the violent overthrow of a government, including the government of Ethiopia, that has been democratically elected.”

Answering questions from journalists later, Obama repeated the phrase: “We are very mindful of Ethiopia’s history – the hardships that this country has gone through. It has been relatively recently in which the constitution that was formed and the elections put forward a democratically elected government.”

Barack Obama In Kenya: makes first visit to Ethiopia by serving US president;

US president’s meeting with prime minister of Ethiopia set to focus on security and threat of Somalia-based terrorist group al-Shabaab

Hailemariam’s party and its allies won 100% of seats in parliament two months ago. The opposition alleged the government had used authoritarian tactics to secure victory, including intimidation, arrests and violently breaking up rallies. At the time, the US said it remained “deeply concerned” by restrictions on civil society, media, opposition parties and independent voices and views.

But Ethiopia remains a key security ally for the US in the fight against the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab. It has also become an economic battleground with China, which has delivered huge infrastructure projects in Africa’s second most populous nation.

Critics accused Obama of granting legitimacy to the regime. Reeyot Alemu, a columnist released earlier this month after four years in jail on terrorism charges, said: “It’s not ‘democratically elected’ because there was only government media and people did not get enough information.

“They also arrested many opposition leaders and journalists. They won the election by using human rights violations. How can it be democratically elected? It is completely false. I wish Barack Obama had sent a strong message.”

Bekele Nega, general secretary of the Oromo Federalist Congress, representing Ethiopia’s biggest ethnic group, said: “I don’t know if democracy means robbing people’s vote and robbing their election result? They have killed people and they have taken the ballot box with them in organised fraud.”

Nega claimed his party found some of its votes thrown down a toilet, while at one polling station its victory by 800 votes to 40 was reversed to a 40-800 defeat. “I wonder if people could tolerate this in America or Britain or wherever? Is this the meaning of democracy in America? We are very sorry that Mr Obama’s comment on our election is really supporting
dictators. We know the US is always looking after its own interests and will take over on the military side, sending our people to Somalia.”

Barack Obama In Kenya: 'no excuse' for treating women as second-class citizens

‘Just because something is part of your past doesn’t make it right’, Obama says in rousing Nairobi address that also offers insight into his African heritage. Obama had let down opposition groups in Ethiopia, Nega added.

“We gave support for an African-American to be elected as president of the United States. We hoped Africa and Ethiopia would benefit from Obama, but we found it to be just a mockery of democracy. We expected a lot and we lost everything.”

Obama’s statement appeared to be the closest thing to a “gaffe” he has made so far on his east African tour. He earned widespread praise in Kenya for championing both gay rights and women’s rights, challenging Africans to reconsider traditional practices including female genital mutilation. But Ethiopia’s more restrictive approach to civil liberties was always going to pose a tougher diplomatic balancing act.

Felix Horne, Ethiopia and Eritrea researcher at Human Rights Watch, said: “For president Obama to suggest there is anything democratic about Ethiopia is a shocking statement. I wonder what the jailed journalists, bloggers and political prisoners think of his comments? Or the thousands of Ethiopians who have fled their country because they did not support the government? Or the 18 Muslim activists who were recently convicted under the anti-terrorism law? A truly disappointing statement from the US president.”

Rachel Nicholson, Horn of Africa campaigner at Amnesty International, added: “While President Obama described the Ethiopian government as democratically elected, the leadup to the elections saw a serious onslaught on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, undermining citizens’ right to participate in public affairs freely and without fear. Opposition political parties have continued to face harassment since the elections, including reports of the deaths of at least three opposition political figures in suspicious circumstances.”

Many journalists, bloggers and political activists remain behind bars in Ethiopia. Maya Foa, of the UK-based pressure group Reprieve, said: “It’s encouraging to hear President Obama telling Ethiopia to ‘open up space’ for opposition voices. But his praise for Ethiopia’s elections as ‘democratic’ was woefully misplaced, at a time when the government is systematically detaining and torturing leading activists such as Andy Tsege – a father of three who faces a death sentence for the mere ‘crime’ of holding democratic beliefs.”

Obama and African leaders to consider sanctions in South Sudan's civil war;
US president and top officials from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan to consider ‘plan B’ to address conflict, including possible arms embargo

Obama is the first sitting US president to visit Ethiopia. He praised the country’s progress in development that has lifted millions of people out of poverty, as well as its regional role in fighting al-Shabaab militants and helping peace efforts in wartorn South Sudan, the subject of talks with regional leaders later on Monday.

Speaking at the national palace originally built for emperor Haile Selassie, Hailemariam rejected criticism that his government had crushed opposition and press freedom. “Our commitment to democracy is real and not skin-deep,” he said, adding that Ethiopia is a “fledgling democracy, we are coming out of centuries of undemocratic practices”.

The country needed “ethical journalism”, he added. “For us it’s very important to be criticised, because we also get feedback to correct our mistakes. Media is one of the institutions that have to be nurtured for democracy.”

Obama’s visit to Ethiopia is rigidly organised and, although pictures of his face and US flags adorn much of Addis Ababa, there is little opportunity for interaction with the public. On Tuesday, he will also become the first US president to address the African Union, the 54-member continental bloc, at its Chinese-built headquarters.

KENYA: Giants Club: President lights the fire that puts Kenya at forefront of Africa’s battle against ivory poachers.

THE INDEPENDENT (August 6, 2015)

Ensuring the survival of elephants is a pan-African problem, and Uhuru Kenyatta’s Giants Club commitment is a huge step towards beating the illegal trade in ivory.

No visitor to Nairobi’s State House, a sprawling Palladian mansion designed by the Kent-born architect Herbert Baker more than a century ago, could be in any doubt about the symbolic power of ivory in this, the powerhouse of East Africa.

As I walked into the seat of authority of the Kenyan presidency – and the country’s most important building – two curling tusks, both 100lb at least, framed the entrance way through which all visitors, whether presidents or royalty, pass into its ceremonial rooms.

Ivory has a resonance in Kenya that goes beyond the merely symbolic, however. It illustrates the country’s precious natural inheritance, which includes some of the greatest wildlife on Earth. It is also the currency of an illegal and rampant industry worth billions: elephant poaching.

Africa’s elephants could be extinct before our grandchildren see them in the wild. This has created strong links with another eastern powerhouse,
China. Surging demand for illegal ivory from that country’s growing middle class has plunged Kenya, and China, into the dark side of the world economy in a way that could hardly be foreseen two decades ago.

This is what ivory is now for many Kenyans: a choice between keeping a resource they inherited alive on the land, and helping to make their country great, or a way to get rich quick. That is a false choice. Kenya’s prosperity, and its connections to global markets, need never involve selling industrial quantities of ivory, with all the slaughter of elephants that entails. One man who also believes this, I was delighted to discover, is the State House’s current occupant: President Uhuru Kenyatta.

President Uhuru Kenyatta signs the Giants Club declaration for Kenya, with (left) Evgeny Lebedev AFP Forty years ago there were 160,000 elephants in Kenya. Now the number has plunged by more than 75 per cent, and the country’s park rangers face a daily struggle to protect those that remain from the increasingly well-armed poacher gangs.

It is why I was delighted to find the President so committed to safeguarding those that remain. “It is our duty to preserve our remaining elephants, not only for future Kenyan generations but for the world,” he told me. “We have a duty to do so. This is a heritage not just for Africans but for everyone.

“I do not see why we cannot reach a place where [elephant populations] are sustainable. We can encourage a younger generation to see a future for themselves in conservation and demonstrate to local communities how they can benefit. As a country, but also as a continent, we can do a great deal in a very short space of time.”

I was at State House because Mr Kenyatta has become a founding member of the Giants Club, the new Africa-wide elephant-protection initiative launched by the conservation charity Space for Giants, of which I am patron. It recognises that no one country acting in isolation can save the continent’s elephants. This challenge is too big for that. So we want to bring wildlife agencies and governments together to take it up.

Kenya was always going to be at the forefront of this fight. The country has a long history of leading the way on conservation, whether in creating national parks or encouraging local communities to form their own wildlife conservancies. What I had not been prepared for was just how committed the President would be to our pan-African initiative. Not for him the kind of talking shop that plagues what we still call the developing world. He wants action rather than words.

For every country that joins the Giants Club, the commitments they sign are tailored to their wildlife agencies’ priorities. As part of Kenya’s Giants Club declaration, Mr Kenyatta pledged to bolster the frontline rangers who, night after night, go out on patrol to protect Kenya’s elephants. This will be a task in which Space for Giants will be assisting by helping provide
training, equipment and resources, at the Kenya Wildlife Service’s request.

Orphaned elephant calves at the Nairobi National Park AFP But he then went much further. On joining the Giants Club, Kenya also committed to the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI), the conservation programme that was launched during the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade of February 2014. This means that, as a Giants Club and EPI member, Kenya will now close any remaining domestic ivory markets, refuse to trade in ivory for at least 10 years, and work to put its ivory stockpile beyond economic use. This is a remarkable development to be celebrated.

Following the signing ceremony, I went to the Kenya Wildlife Service’s offices to see exactly what this meant in practice. Normally the site’s Rangers Restaurant is filled with staff grabbing lunch or a coffee. Today, however, almost every spare piece of floor was covered with piles of tusks as the gathered Kenyan media excitedly snapped photographs.

Many African nations have ivory stocks, much of it seized from poachers. These reserves are not only expensive to police but also at risk from corruption, resulting in pieces going missing and entering the black market. Kenya, assisted by the Giants Club partner charity Stop Ivory, is now going to conduct an inventory to determine exactly how big its ivory stocks are, before burning them to ensure that no more tusks can be stolen or officials tempted by the bribes on offer. Given the price the tusks could fetch on the black market, the Kenyan government could not have ordered a more powerful demonstration of its commitment to the conservation cause.

Mr Kenyatta, however, had one word of caution. Because so much of the ivory poached is smuggled to Asia, and to China in particular, some observers have blamed the present crisis on the Chinese government. In fact, Mr Kenyatta argues, it is the ruthless poaching gangs – a number of whom are also engaged in drugs and people trafficking and even have links to terrorist groups – who should be the focus of disdain as they are the people who actually carry out the killings.

He fears that unfairly stigmatising the Chinese could dissuade them from engaging with the international community in stamping down on the illegal trade in ivory. “The attitude towards China is that it is the great evil but we are starting to see initiatives coming from China,” he pointed out. “I have talked with the Chinese government and if you engage with them then they engage back. They kicked off a huge campaign through CCTV [the state television network] about the importance of conservation.”

He is right. In recent months Chinese officials have imposed a temporary ban on the importation of any ivory carvings and promised to strictly control the local ivory trade until it is finally halted. China deserves praise for what it is doing – but has too often been met with suspicion by some in the West about the genuineness of its commitment.
We have started planning with the Kenyan government for a wildlife summit next year for Giants Club members, to be hosted in Kenya by President Kenyatta. This will provide a forum for Africa’s leaders to meet with key figures from the worlds of politics, business and conservation to chart a common plan for the survival of Africa’s elephants and all the species that share the giant landscapes they inhabit. I hope the Chinese premier will be there. It would be an honour to have him sign up to the Giants Club and join our fight.

In the meantime, the pledges made by Mr Kenyatta show how the slaughter of elephants is not a price that need be paid for Kenya’s march to prosperity. Africa’s development, which will no doubt be one of the great stories of the 21st century, can make a friend of conservation, rather than an enemy. Evgeny Lebedev is the owner of the ‘Independent’ titles and the ‘London Evening Standard’. Follow him on Twitter: @mrevgenylebedev

**COUNTRY FACT FILE**

**Location**

On Indian Ocean coast of East Africa.

**Official title of the state**

The Republic of Kenya.

**Flag description:**

Three equal horizontal bands of black (top), red, and green; the red band is edged in white; a large Maasai warrior's shield covering crossed spears is superimposed at the center; black symbolizes the majority population, red the blood shed in the struggle for freedom, green stands for natural wealth, and white for peace; the shield and crossed spears symbolize the defense of freedom.

**Neighbours**

Uganda on W. Tanzania on S. Somalia on E. Ethiopia, Sudan on N.

**Land boundaries:** total 3,477 km. Border countries; Ethiopia 861 km, Somalia 682 km, South Sudan 232 km, Tanzania 769 km, Uganda 933 km.

**Local division**

47 devolved County governments including the capital (Nairobi)

According to the newly amended constitution of Kenya, the Counties are the newest administrative prefectures created in the most radical reforms in the entire history of decentralisation in Kenya.

**Government type**
Republic - semi-presidential

Legislation chamber

Unicameral Parliament (Bunge)

Form of State

Republic

Chief of State is the President who is elected every five years

The President is eligible for a second term. A unitary multi-party republic with one legislative house. The parliament (Bunge) 224 seats, members are elected by popular vote to serve for five-year terms.

Executive branch

Separated by Chief of State and Head of Government.

Chief of State is the President; VP appointed by the Chief of State; President elected by popular vote to serve for five-year terms, eligible for a second term. Head of Government is to be appointed as leader of a party held majority seats in the parliament (Bunge). Prime Minister; constitutionally charged with coordinating government business and the Cabinet which is appointed by the President and headed by the Prime Minister. According to the newly approved constitution, 47 County governments would be charged with managing the affairs of the people at the grassroots level. Meaning the 47 governors will be elected directly by the people. They will be "mini-presidents" with powers of control over county finances and administrative functions. The Kenyan President, who is a politician, runs a government through the cabinet and civil service, the county governor will also run the county using the county executive and the county civil service.

Former Rulers

1964 – 1978 Jomo Kenyatta (Mzee)
1978 - 2002 Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi
2002 – 2013 Mwai Kibaki
2013 – present Uhuru Kenyatta

Judicial chamber

High Court - Judge appointed by the president with legislature's approval.

Capital city

Nairobi Altitude 1820 mtrs/5970 ft Geographic coordinates - 1.17S, 36.49E. The name comes from the Massai phrase "Enkare Nyirobi, which translates to "the place of cool waters". Founded in 1899, to become capital of free Kenya Republic in 1962.
Name of main towns
Mombassa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Eldoret, Matchakot.

Date of independence
12, December, 1963.

Religions (Major)
Protestants 45 %, Roman Catholics 33%, Muslim 10 %, traditional belief 10%, others 2%.

Main spoken languages
English (official), Kiswahili (national), various tribal languages.

Currency unit
Kenya Shilling (KeSh)=100 Cents.

Area in Km2
582,646,00

Country area comparison in Africa
23 out of 55 states

Demographic terms
Average annual population growth rate 2.588 %
Birth rate 35.14 births per 1,000 population
Death rate 9.26 deaths per 1,000 population
Average life expectancy ; 58.82 years
Male 58.33 years ; Female 59.32 years;

Illiteracy rate (%)
Male: 22, Female: 30

Average per capita income
USD 1, 600

Population density
68.7/km2

Urban population (%)
22

Contributor groups (%)
Farming, Fishing: 24, Industry: 17, Social service: 59
Main Export Items

Economy is based on
Agriculture, Tourism & Light industry

Climate
Hot & Humid coastal, highland semi-desert, etc., varies from tropical along coast to arid in interior.

Extremes;- 
Lowesst point; Indian Ocean 0 mtr.
Highest point; Mt. Kenya 5199 mtrs

Weather of the Capital city (Nairobi) average temperature 17.9oc.

Altitude 1820 mtrs
Hottest Month February 13-28oc.
Coldest Month June, July 11-23oc
Driest Month August 24 mm Av. Rf.
Dry season 15mm
Wet season 211mm.

Measures
Metric system.

Time zone
3 hours ahead of GMT/UTC

Public holidays
1st July, October 10, 20 December 12, 25, 26, January 1, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May 1(labour day), June 1, All Muslim holidays.

Ethnic groups
Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin, 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6%, others including Asians, Arabs & Europeans 16%.

Topographic & Environmental concern
The Northern three-fifths of Kenya is arid to the low coastal area and plateau varying from 915 mtrs/3,000 ft to 3050 mtrs/10,000 ft. The great rift valley enters the country N to S flanked by high mountains. Environment: Deforestation; soil erosion; desertification; poaching. Bio diversity, climate change, endangered species, Marine dumping, and Shipping pollution, and water pollution from urban and industrial wastes;
Economic Overview

Industry
Tourism, light industries, consumer goods, plastics, furniture, batteries, textiles, clothings, agro-products, horticulture, oil refining, aluminum, steel lead, cement, commercial ship repair.

Chief crops
Coffee, corn, tea, cereals, wheat cotton, sisal, sugarcane, fruit, vegetables, dairy-products, beef, pork, poultry, eggs.

National resources

Other resources
Timber, Hides & skin.

Land in use (%)
Arable land: 8
Grassland: 65
Forest woods: 5
Other: 22

Marine:
Coastline; 536 km.

Commercial Sea port:- The port of Mombasa is not only Kenya's main and largest port but is a busiest port on the East African coast, and port of Kisumu. The Kenyan government plans to build a new port at Lamu to relieve the overcrowded port of Mombasa. A third port at Lamu proposed in 2011 and it expects the first Ship to call there before the end of 2012.

Development prospect;- 
Kenya is struggling to restore economic growth to levels last seen in the boom years before 2007. Just as Kenyans were getting used to living in an improving economy, with growth of 5.6 percent in 2010, soaring inflation and a weakening Kenya shilling looked set to end the goodtimes in 2011. Despite a more optimistic forecast by the IMF, planning minister Wycliffe Oparanya estimated GDP growth for 2011 down to 4 percent in October, and he forecast between 4-5 percent for 2012. This slowing may result in fewer employment opportunities and lower living standards. The economic outlook thus seemed likely to put a damper on President Kibaki's last year in office and heighten debate over prospects for the majority of Kenyans. Gaps between the top and low earners and among the ethnic communities
are in danger of widening again. Inflation was running at 18.9 percent in September, up from 5.4 percent in January, on reduced supply of food items, expensive energy and the weak shilling, which lost 25 percent against the dollar. Depressed economic spirits spawned a free fall in share prices at the Nairobi Securities Exchange. Planned investment in 2012 could also be put on hold because of concerns about a repeat of ethnic violence that followed the previous vote in 2007. Already, foreign investors have reduced their participation in Kenya's red-hot property market and in the NSE; dealers expect them to remain mute in 2012 on increased political risks. "Strong policies are urgently needed to improve the outlook and to reduce the risks," said central bank governor Prof. Njuguna Ndung'u. "Decisive and immediate action is required from the monetary policy side to stem these inflationary pressures, stabilise the exchange rate and re-establish a healthy growth base." Poor rainfall during the long rainy season from March through May – a vital period for farming – has damaged crops in an economy that derives almost a quarter of its GDP from agriculture. This implies that East Africa's largest economy will face acute supply shortage in the foods where a price rally has become one of the major drivers of inflation in the country. Inflation is expected to breach the 20 percent mark in the first quarter of 2012, leaving consumers with lower disposable incomes to spend on airtime, clothing and beer. Lower farm earnings from a sector that offers employment to a significant number of Kenyans will aggravate the sagging demand for goods, which slowed growth in the industrial sector to 3 percent in the second quarter compared to 4.9 percent in a similar period a year earlier. Thanks in part to the strength of the dollar against the shilling, the main foreign exchange earners, tea, horticulture and tourism, performed well, but the upbeat performance of the export business has not helped support the shilling against major global currencies because of rising demand for dollars to import fuel and machinery for the construction and energy sectors. As the trade deficit widened, the shilling moved above Ksh100 to the dollar compared to Ksh80 at the start of the year, and the ongoing currency woes and high inflation seem set to curtail growth.