

Kenyan Election Official Murdered Ahead of Highly Contentious Elections



Christopher Msando, an official responsible for observing the upcoming Kenyan presidential election, was [found](#) dead only ten days before the contentious election is set to take place. Msando was the acting director for Information and Communications Technology at the country's election commission, the creation of which was celebrated by many local civil society groups and NGOs as a sign that Kenya was achieving a lasting and legitimate democracy. Unfortunately, the expectation of a peaceful political transition was devastated, as officials reported that Msando's body was found with signs of torture and mutilation.

His apparent murder has [sparked](#) concern and undermined the already low public morale regarding the immensely critical elections. Some experts are publicly questioning the general legitimacy of the elections, as the results are expected to be very close and thus the outcome could be influenced by violence like the kind used against Msando. As the acting director for his department, Msando had [announced](#) plans to use technology that would reduce the possibility of a corrupt election, leading experts to question if he was targeted to enable tampering of the results.

Despite the demoralizing setback, the Kenyan public has [shown](#) a greater political interest in this year's elections than in those of the past, according to political experts, and there is still hope for a legitimate election to be borne out on 8 August.

Source of above photo: [Baz Ratner/Reuters](#)

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Burundi:

Tanzanian President John Magufuli has [called](#) upon the more than 240,000 Burundian refugees currently residing in Tanzania to voluntarily return to Burundi, stating that their country has been effectively stabilized. The call has sparked criticism from experts who believe that Burundi remains a dangerous place for civilians, and many worry that Magufuli's words would provide a basis to bully Burundian refugees into returning home. Contrary to Magufuli's words, a report released in May by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) indicated that Burundi has remained unstable since President Pierre Nkurunziza announced his intentions to secure a third term in office by altering the constitution. Furthermore, the UN commission of inquiry on Burundi has noted the "persistence of serious human rights violations in a climate of widespread fear."

On 1 August, the Burundian senate [voted](#) against abiding by a resolution passed by the European Parliament in early July, which had renewed the European Union's commitment to suspend financial assistance to the Burundi government. The initial vote by the European Parliament came last year after EU officials accused the Burundi government of doing little to deter the political instability affecting the country. Members of the Burundian senate have insisted that the resolution passed by the EU did not reflect the "real situation in Burundi."

Central African Republic:

Around two thousand Muslim civilians have [taken](#) refuge in a cathedral in Bangassou in an effort to protect themselves from an ongoing assault by the Christian-majority anti-Balaka militia. The cathedral is being protected by a UN peacekeeping force but has apparently been targeted by militias very recently, causing local human rights experts to fear for the civilians' safety. The majority of Bangassou's population has fled the ongoing violence.

Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix recently [visited](#) CAR and noted the extremely deteriorated security and human rights situation in the country, particularly in cities most affected by the violence, such as Bangassou and Bria. Lacroix also expressed concern about the town of Zemio, which is relatively close to Bangassou and which is currently on the brink of collapsing into a similar situation as its neighbor. Lacroix stated that the recent removal of US and Ugandan troops from the region may have left a power vacuum in which "hostile 'self-defense' groups" were able to thrive, and that a lack of thorough peace negotiations would only serve to worsen the situation.

[Democratic Republic of the Congo:](#)

Police forces have [arrested](#) at least 100 protesters that were demanding President Kabila step down from power by the end of the year. Opposition protests have been banned since this past September on the basis of security concerns, according to DRC authorities. On 2 August, Maman Sidikou, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the country and head of the UN stabilization mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), expressed concern about the recent spate of arbitrary detentions and restriction on peaceful assembly. Sidikou added that the DRC authorities particularly targeted members of the media.

On 2 August, MONUSCO [accepted](#) the surrender of Ntabo Ntaberi Cheka, the founder and leader of the Nduma Defence of Congo/Cheka armed militia. The group was allegedly responsible for the rape of at least 387 civilians, including 55 girls and nine boys, during a series of attacks in July and August 2010. It has also been implicated several times by the UN for its practice of recruiting child soldiers, with at least 150 known cases of using underage soldiers. Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in the DRC Virginia Gamba welcomed the surrender, claiming that Cheka was personally responsible for the "killing, maiming, abducting, raping and recruiting [of] children," and called upon the rest of the Nduma Defence of Congo/Cheka to end its practice of using child soldiers.

Iraq:

On Sunday, 30 July, Iraqi intelligence officials said they [blocked](#) attempts by the Islamic State (ISIL) to launch suicide attacks on revered Shi'ite Shrines in Karbala and Najaf. According to the officials, who spoke under anonymity, recent meetings between Iraq and Russia have increased intelligence sharing and enabled both countries to launch the joint air strikes that halted the planned suicide bombings.

Iraqi forces are reportedly preparing to [attack](#) Tal Afar, a city 40 km west of Mosul, where between 1,500 to 2,000 ISIL fighters and their families are said to have taken refuge since Mosul fell as the Iraqi stronghold. Iraqi Major General Najm al-Jabouri predicted an easy victory over ISIL forces in Tal Afar, as the fighters are "very worn out" and in low morale from the recent battles, according to intelligence reports. Furthermore, although ISIL used vast numbers of civilians as human shields to slow Iraqi forces' advance in Mosul, Jabouri stated that the risk of a similar tactic in Tal Afar is low since few civilians remain in the city.

Nigeria:

The UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) has [announced](#) plans to step up its emergency response efforts in Nigeria to assist those who have been displaced by Boko Haram. According to IOM on 1 August, of the one million people who have fled the militant group to date, half are children and more than 130,000 are infants.

South Sudan:

David Shearer, the head of the UN mission in South Sudan, [reached](#) an agreement on 30 July with the government of South Sudan to deploy regional protection forces in order to protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance to civilians suffering from the ongoing civil war. Since the war began five years ago, tens of thousands have died and at least two million have been displaced.

According to a 1 August report by ICRtoP member Human Rights Watch (HRW), South Sudan's government has [failed](#) to deter crimes against humanity in the form of murder, rape, and forced displacement, as well as failed to uphold justice for those accountable. In the report, HRW named numerous individuals in the government - such as President Salva Kiir, ex-Vice President Riek Machar, former army chief of staff Paul Malong, and six other army commanders - that it believes ought to face punishment for their alleged role in the raging conflict that has engulfed the country. HRW called for the Commission of Human Rights to conduct an investigation into these members of government, following the UN Human Rights Council mandating the Commission to preserve evidence in March.

Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix [met](#) with government officials in South Sudan this week to discuss how to best promote peace in the region. Lacroix explained that the conflict plaguing South Sudan must end in order to begin the peace process, as any attempt at peace negotiations have little chance of success while fighting continued. During the meeting, Lacroix also applauded the efforts of other parties assisting the country in its peace negotiations efforts, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as well as neighboring countries, such as Uganda.

Sudan/Darfur:

The joint UN and AU mission in Darfur (UNAMID) [held](#) training on 1 August for members of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) to emphasize the importance of child rights and the protection of children in armed conflict. The training is apparently part of a Darfur-wide effort to improve the

knowledge of armed forces and groups about standards and principles of child protection in armed conflict, and is meant to supplement the efforts already underway since 2009 to end the recruitment of child soldiers in the country. Boubacar Dieng, Head of UNAMID's Child Protection Unit, stated that building trust between SAF members and surrounding communities, particularly internally displaced persons, was paramount to achieving a lasting piece in Darfur.

Syria:

Around 7,000 Syrians, including about one thousand militants, have begun to [move](#) from the Lebanese town Aarsal and surrounding areas back to Syria's northwestern rebel-held Idlib province, where they will be allowed to settle under the deal struck by the Sunni Islamist Nusra Front and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. The deal also allows captured Hezbollah militants to be released back to Lebanese territory. According to former residents of Aarsal, most of the Syrian refugees originally fled to the city when the Syrian army, backed by Hezbollah, took over their towns over three years ago. Now many refugees no longer feel safe in Aarsal camps, where Hezbollah has extended greater influence.

Khaled Raad, a member of the Aarsal Refugees' Coordination Committee of the Lebanese government, [stated](#) that tens of thousands of displaced Syrians still have no plans to leave Aarsal, as war and military rule await them in Idlib. According to Raad, many of the Syrian refugees have calculated that it is safer to stay in Lebanon, despite restrictions on movement and employment in the country, as well as threats of imprisonment. "There are people who say Idlib is going to become a second Mosul, and I would rather stay in Lebanon and go to prison than move there," Raad stated. The UN Refugee Agency in Lebanon stated that there are anywhere from 50 to 80 thousand Syrian refugees in the Aarsal region.

The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have continued to [advance](#) and are on the brink of fully capturing the southern neighborhoods of Raqqa from the Islamic State (ISIL), a Kurdish official publicly stated on 1 August. The official confirmed that although the resistance from ISIL fighters has been fierce, around 90 percent of the southern area has been liberated. A spokesman for the US coalition, Col. Ryan Dillon, indicated that ISIL's defence has been less coherent in Raqqa compared to Mosul, and they have a clear inability to address the multiple advances from the SDF. On Monday, 31 July, the World Health Organization described the situation in Raqqa as "particularly worrying," saying the city's main healthcare facilities have been closed due to airstrikes and that there are critical shortages of medicinal supplies and equipment.

Yemen:

Muammar al-Iryani, a minister serving in the Yemeni government, [said](#) on Monday that the government “will not accept that Houthi control of [the] Hodeidah port continues,” and accused Houthis of using the port to smuggle in weapons and of collecting custom duties on goods. Iryani reiterated that the government has agreed to a plan proposed by the UN to turn Hodeidah, from which 80 percent of food imports enter the area, to a neutral third party. The Houthis denied the accusations and indicated that they are ready for the implementation of the UN plan if the government pays back long-delayed salaries of state workers and resumes commercial flights from Sanaa.

Meanwhile, Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen is [blocking](#) deliveries of jet fuel to UN aid planes, which are responsible for bringing humanitarian aid to the rebel-held capital Sanaa, said Auke Lootsma, the country director of the UN Development Programme. Lootsma added that the Saudi-led coalition has repeatedly been accused of blocking aid to Yemen, but acknowledged that aid efforts have also been obstructed by delays and refusals of visas by both the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels. An outbreak of meningitis in Yemen has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis situation in the country, where cholera and famine are already prevailing. Lootsma [insi](#)

[sted](#)
that there is “no end in sight” to the war in Yemen and that time is running out to aid the ailing population, about 70 percent of which is in dire need of humanitarian assistance.
