

Hello,

Please find below a collection of excerpts of news articles on emerging or continuing humanitarian emergencies, and calls for action.

- An article on the re-surfacing humanitarian problems in Ethiopia and Eritrea;
- Two articles on the situation in Myanmar and international concern;
- An article on an escalating violence in Indonesia against West Papuans; and
- A collection of articles on the situation in Darfur, including calls to action invoking R2P, government and regional action, and editorials.

Regards,

Angela Edman

Ethiopia and Eritrea

Buildup Brings Ethiopia, Eritrea Back to the Brink;
As Leaders Trade Threats, Many Fear Neglect Of Internal Problems, Regional Destabilization
The Washington Post
December 25, 2005
By: Emily Wax

()

In a report released this week, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group said foreign organizations must "urgently re-engage if a disastrous new war between Eritrea and Ethiopia is to be averted." A resumption of conflict, the report said, would destabilize and rearm the entire Horn of Africa, "rekindling a proxy war in Somalia and undermining the fragile peace process in southern and eastern Sudan."

In an interview Monday in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi charged that Eritrean leaders "will not hesitate for a moment to start another war if they think they will profit from it. Our military balance has to be such to dissuade them."

In Eritrea, President Isaias Afwerki has recently restricted helicopter flights by U.N. monitors along the border and expelled 180 U.N. peacekeepers sent to help maintain a cease-fire. He also refused to meet with a delegation sent by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

()

Civic leaders from both countries say a return to war would be mutual suicide. In the previous conflict, each side suffered high casualties among both fighters and civilians. And the war cost each country an estimated \$1 million a day.

Although largely confined to several border towns, the conflict was particularly bitter because of ties between the two countries. They have a common culture and have high rates of cross-migration and intermarriage.

A decade ago, Meles and Isaias were hailed by U.S. officials as part of a new generation of progressive and democratic African leaders. Today, both are increasingly unpopular at home, where they are criticized for failing to reduce desperate poverty and high unemployment.

To curb unrest, both leaders have jailed opposition leaders and sent riot police with live bullets to quell protests. And both have used the prospect of another deadly border war as a way to unite the populace against a foreign foe.

()

Last month, political tension in Ethiopia intensified as opposition party supporters filled the

streets of Addis Ababa to protest disputed elections in May. Dozens of people, including women and children, were killed when security forces fired into crowds.

In the following weeks, police jailed at least 15,000 protesters and 130 senior opposition figures, including professors, judges and the city's elected mayor, Berhanu Nega. Most were charged with treason, but some are being prosecuted for calling for genocide against Meles's ethnic group, the Tigrayans.

()

This is not the first time that both Ethiopia and Eritrea have used the threat of a border war to deflect internal problems.

()

Threatened with U.N. sanctions, Ethiopia has started to pull back some troops, but Eritrea has remained defiant. The United Nations says Ethiopia has not taken steps to begin demarcation of its contested boundary, and the Security Council will debate the issue over the next month.

"Never has there been such a great crisis for the mission," said Jean-Marie Guehenno, the U.N. undersecretary general for peacekeeping operations. "Brinkmanship has been tried by countries many times in history, and very often it fails and leads to unintended consequences."

Meles, in the interview, said his government would not respond to Eritrean aggression "short of a full invasion of our country." He said the first war with Eritrea "should have never happened. But if they invade our country, we have no choice."

Eritrea, in turn, is frustrated by Ethiopia's refusal to implement the 2002 ruling by an international boundary commission, set up as part of the peace agreement. Three years later, Ethiopian forces still occupy territory awarded to Eritrea.

Yet the international community has been reluctant to pressure Ethiopia to give up its border claim, or to halt the abuses of domestic opponents, because of its importance as a strategic ally in the U.S.-led war against terrorism. American soldiers are stationed along its border with Somalia to the southeast, a perceived haven for terrorist cells with possible links to al Qaeda
http://www.boston.com/news/world/africa/articles/2005/12/26/troop_buildup_brings_ethiopia_eritrea_back_to_the_brink/

Myanmar

So Much Need, So Little Help for the Deathly Ill in Myanmar

The nation suffers from high numbers of AIDS, TB and malaria cases, but gets minimal foreign assistance because of its repressive regime.

By Richard C. Paddock

LA Times

December 27, 2005

A growing humanitarian emergency has sparked fears that thousands could die of disease and malnutrition in Myanmar, whose repressive military regime has drawn international condemnation and punishing U.S. trade sanctions.

Myanmar faces one of Asia's worst AIDS epidemics and suffers 60% of all malaria deaths on the continent, U.N. officials say, but it receives little foreign aid.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which is financing worldwide efforts to combat the three diseases, cut off \$87 million in funding for Myanmar this year, citing a lack of cooperation from the ruling junta, which continues four decades of military control.

If other major donors don't come forward, U.N. officials say, thousands of people will die, including as many as 5,000 AIDS patients who were supposed to receive antiretroviral drugs under the five-year Global Fund program.

()

The regime's actions have been costly. Despite its overwhelming poverty, multiple epidemics and dearth of social services, Myanmar receives less international humanitarian aid per capita than almost any country in the world, including others with repressive governments.

()

<http://www.latimes.com/features/health/medicine/la-fg-myanmar27dec27,1,5352387.story?coll=a-health-medicine>

U.N. concerned about Myanmar

UPI

December 19, 2005

The U.N. Security Council has been told the political, social and economic situations in Myanmar are so bad they are of international concern.

Following a request from the United States, Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari Friday briefed the panel behind closed doors, saying "the past year has proven very disappointing."

He said Secretary-General Kofi Annan's "efforts to engage with the authorities to address the concerns of the international community remain stalled."

Nobel Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, general-secretary of the National League for Democracy, has been held under house arrest for ten years. She is one of an estimated 1,147 political prisoners in the Southeast Asia nation, he said.

Gambari also pointed out a rapid rise in HIV infection, food insecurity and limited health care and educational opportunities, with forced labor employed.

However, Annan said there was encouragement from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' recent decision to send an envoy to Yangon to discuss the issues with Myanmar leaders.

U.S. Ambassador John Bolton, who sought the briefing, told reporters afterwards, "The threats to international peace and security caused by actions of the Burmese government that have resulted in things like ethnic cleansing, refugee flows, international narcotics trafficking, trafficking in persons, failure to act adequately on threats like HIV/AIDS or avian flu.

()

Link to full article unavailable

Indonesia

In Indonesia, the battleground has shifted

Tom Benedetti

International Herald Tribune

3 January 2006

The attention that the tsunami brought to the previously overlooked conflict in the Indonesian province of Aceh is contributing to an end to three decades of insecurity and terror there. But while Aceh may be moving toward peace, West Papua, at the other end of the Indonesian

archipelago, has been witnessing the opposite trend - a sudden escalation of military activity by the same force that occupied Aceh, and East Timor before that.

For more than 40 years, the world has looked the other way while West Papua has been ravaged by the Indonesian military in a well-documented program of repression and plunder. In 2004, a Yale University report concluded that there is "a strong indication" of genocide against the Papuans.

Since the tsunami, the number of Indonesian troops in West Papua has grown to an estimated 50,000. The Indonesian military's power is further augmented by police forces and local militias that they fund and protect.

This escalation of military activity is ostensibly to bolster security in the region, even though the vast majority of indigenous Papuans remain true to their ideal of a land of peace. The Free Papua Movement has never been known to attack civilians during 42 years of Indonesian oppression. Yet Indonesia has labeled the movement a terrorist organization, enabling the Indonesian military to regain military support from the United States, Britain and Australia that had been withheld after the East Timor massacres in 1999.

West Papua's coalition of 250 tribes has repeatedly asked the Indonesian military and its militias to lay down arms and show respect for human rights so that conflicts can be resolved peacefully, through dialogue, to no avail. If Indonesia was willing to talk peace in Aceh, why not in West Papua? There are three major reasons.

First, foreign journalists and most researchers and aid workers are still banned from West Papua. Unlike in Aceh after the tsunami, no one is looking.

Second, peace in West Papua is not what the Indonesian military wants. It earns millions selling security services to resource companies such as the gold-mining company Freeport-McMoRan - as documented by Jane Perlez and Raymond Bonner in the IHT (Dec. 28) and The New York Times - and conflict is good for business.

Third, most of the military's revenue does not come from the government but is generated from all kinds of businesses, legal and illegal. Under the auspices of its own network of foundations, the military generates income from private security contracts, extortion, prostitution, smuggling and illegal logging.

()

In 2005 Yan Christian Warinussy, West Papua's only indigenous independent human rights lawyer, described human rights abuses "carried out with total impunity by members of Indonesia's armed forces" including "torture, rape, summary executions, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, the killing of indigenous leaders and civilians alike, the displacement of indigenous populations and confiscation of their lands."

In 2005, the U.S. Congress condemned human rights abuses in Papua, and parliamentary committees in Britain, Ireland and New Zealand also expressed concerns about injustice, crimes against humanity and military impunity. We can only hope that mounting international pressure will encourage Indonesian military reform, and lead to fruitful dialogue in West Papua and other outlying regions of Indonesia.

(Tom Benedetti is the moderator of the West Papua Action Network, a group of Papuans and Canadians working for justice and the environment in West Papua)

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/01/02/opinion/edtom.php>

Darfur

Chad President Wants Darfur Put Under UN Mandate

Reuters AlertNet

By Betel Miarom

Jan 4

Chad's President Idriss Deby urged the United Nations on Wednesday to take control of Sudan's volatile Darfur region because he said Khartoum was using the conflict there to destabilise neighbouring states. Deby, who faces threats from rebel attacks on Chad's eastern frontier with Sudan and from army desertions at home, made the call during a meeting of central African leaders which he convened in N'Djamena to discuss tensions with Khartoum. The Chad president has accused neighbouring Sudan of backing rebels who last month attacked the eastern town of Adre bordering Darfur, where tens of thousands of people have been killed in chaotic fighting since 2003. Khartoum denies the accusations.

"This attempt at destabilisation knowingly orchestrated by Sudan aims to export the Darfur conflict in the sub-region, where the first victims are Chad and Central African Republic," Deby told leaders of the six-nation Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC). The union groups Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Heads of state or representatives from the six countries signed a declaration supporting Deby and calling on the African Union to investigate

"I would like Darfur to be placed under a U.N. mandate," Deby said, although he did not explain how he envisaged U.N. control being established. Following the Dec. 18 attacks on Adre, Deby launched a diplomatic offensive to try to isolate Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir within the African Union, the continental diplomatic body. Chad has made clear it objects to Sudan hosting an AU summit in Khartoum on Jan. 23-24. Traditionally the country which hosts the AU summit also takes over the rotating chairmanship of the body, which has peacekeeping troops in Darfur.

"All of Africa, and particularly the CEMAC, cannot let President al-Bashir be the next president of the AU," Deby told his central African colleagues

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L04444428.htm>

Bush, Congress Should Take Action to Try to End Genocide in Darfur

By: Nat Hentoff

The Capital Times (Madison, Wisconsin)

January 3, 2006

On Nov. 28, in Vatican City, Pope Benedict XVI said to the archbishop of Khartoum, "The horror of events unfolding in Darfur points to the need for stronger international resolve to ensure security and basic human rights" there. Reuters, reporting the pope's concern, noted, as much of the world knows, that hundreds of thousands of black Africans have died of violence or disease, and more than 2 million have been driven from their homes.

On Dec. 13, Luis Moreno Ocampo, the lead prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, told the U.N. Security Council -- which has evaded all direct responsibility for stopping the genocide -- that while he has been charged by the United Nations to document those responsible for these continuing crimes against humanity, he can't provide protection for witnesses, and so has to do what he can outside Darfur.

Britain's ambassador to the United States, Emyr Jones Parry, told National Public Radio that what the lead prosecutor has determined is that "the nature of the attacks in Darfur demonstrated a degree of coordination which implied that someone was in command and

control of that operation."

But the head of the African Union's gravely insufficient peacekeeping force in Darfur, Baba Gana Kingibe of Nigeria, has been much more factually detailed. As reported in the Weekly Standard on Dec. 12, "He accused (Sudan's) government security forces of making four specific coordinated offensive attacks against civilians, using Arab Janjaweed militias" in September.

While the Arab Janjaweed killed and raped during their invasion of the Aro Sharow refugee camp, "Sudanese army helicopters flew overhead in what Kingibe called an 'apparent air and land assault' on the black African victims."

Although President Bush was the first world leader to condemn Sudan's government for the crime of genocide, he has since said and done little about the continuing horrors. But Human Rights Watch -- which has conducted more intensive and documented investigations on the ground in Darfur than any other human rights organization -- released an 82-page report on Dec. 12 titled, "Entrenching Impunity: Government Responsibility for International Crimes in Darfur."

This meticulously researched report will help those members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, who keep trying to get Republican leadership in the House to pass the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (already passed by the Senate unanimously), which would put sustained pressure on the Khartoum government.

What Human Rights Watch has done in this report is to begin to end the impunity of those primarily responsible for these atrocities so that the world cannot claim after millions have died that they did not know who -- specifically -- was responsible. And with that knowledge available right now, maybe countries with a conscience -- by contrast with Khartoum's protectors on the U.N. Security Council, primarily China -- will act to save those who have survived before they, too, disappear.

Human Rights Watch demonstrates that "Senior Sudanese officials played a direct role coordinating the offensive -- and particularly the aerial bombing campaign -- from Khartoum. ... The report is based on hundreds of eyewitness accounts, more than 10 investigations by Human Rights Watch in Chad and Darfur, and Sudanese government documents."

The long list of potential defendants includes Sudan's national officials, current and former regional officials, military commanders, Janjaweed militia leaders and, at the very top, President Omar El Bashir.

Human Rights Watch points out -- and this should wake up what's left of a credible international community of leaders who said "never again" after Rwanda: "Despite the Sudanese government's involvement in ongoing crimes in Darfur, the African Union is allowing Sudan to host January's A.U. summit in the capital, Khartoum. A new African Union president is also due to be elected, and there are indications that President Bashir might obtain the post." How many will be killed on that celebratory day in Darfur?

Bush has a lot to deal with these days, but as New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, the one journalist who has most often tolled the death knell in Darfur, wrote on Nov. 26: "Bush should use the bully pulpit. He should talk about Darfur in his speeches and invite survivors to the Oval Office. ... He can call on China to stop underwriting this genocide."

* * *

I disagree with the president on civil liberties, but I fully believe that in his inner being, he does care about the murders, gang rapes, destroyed families and the desperation of those barely surviving in Darfur. Let him say so to the Republican leadership in Congress -- and to all of us -- in a prime-time television address. He will feel better, and so will we.

Nat Hentoff is a nationally renowned authority on the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights and author of many books, including "The War on the Bill of Rights and the Gathering Resistance" (Seven Stories Press, 2003).

Link to full article unavailable

UN warns of growing catastrophe in Sudan The international community's efforts to stem 'horrendous crimes' in the Darfur region are not working.

By: Mark Turner

Financial Times (London, England)

December 31, 2005

A new wave of violence in Sudan's Darfur region is a "shocking indication" of the international community's collective failure to stem "horrendous crimes" there, the United Nations has warned, amid daily reports that the killings continue unabated.

Despite regular Security Council discussions and an African Union (AU) mission, a new UN report says: "Large-scale attacks against civilians continue, women and girls are being raped by armed groups, yet more villages are being burned, and thousands more are being driven from their homes."

Its findings leave few doubts that the world's efforts to stem Sudan's catastrophe are not working, despite its leaders' assertion at last year's UN summit that all nations bore a "responsibility to protect" civilians from crimes against humanity.

Officials are warning that the AU presence needs either a substantial boost, or to be transformed into a fully fledged UN mission. The report says the situation is getting worse; the confirmed number of violent civilian deaths doubled from October to November, caused both by "politically motivated attacks and criminal banditry".

Talks between the Sudanese government and Darfur rebels are continuing but have had little success. The UN report pointed to an internal leadership struggle within the main Darfur armed rebel group, which has hindered negotiations, as well as an influx of Chadian military deserters into Darfur.

Idriss Deby, the Chadian president, has been calling on the AU to condemn Sudan for what he says is its support for rebels seeking to overthrow him, and has declared a "state of belligerence" between the two countries. Sudan has dismissed the allegations, but as long as the crisis in Darfur continues it will have a destabilising effect on both countries, analysts say.

"Darfur has provided an environment where rebel groups can operate, very simply it's a lawless and chaotic place," said David Mozersky, an analyst at the International Crisis Group, who recently visited Chad.

"Clearly Darfur has the capacity to have a negative impact and destabilising effect on Chad, and the longer it goes on without a political settlement, or at least an improvement in the security situation, the region will suffer security and economic implications."

In Darfur, the UN says the situation has been deteriorating since September, while AU officials complain that they lack resources and need more international assistance for their mission. One series of inter-tribal militia attacks in southern Darfur in November resulted in 60 deaths, huts torched and crops set alight, the worst single incident this year. The UN blamed the government of Sudan for a "continuing failure to protect its own population", as well the international community's impotence

Link to full article unavailable

World failing Darfur, Annan says: UN secretary-general disturbed by mounting violence against civilians

Windsor Star (Ontario)

December 30, 2005

By: Bill Varner, Bloomberg News Service

The third year of conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan is ending with an intensifying campaign of "horrendous" violence against civilians that demonstrates the world's failure to confront the crisis, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Thursday in a report

Annan said in the report to the Security Council that there has been "marked deterioration" since September, even with the presence of almost 5,000 African Union soldiers and a series of Security Council resolutions addressing the crisis.

The council this year imposed an arms embargo on the region, and froze the assets and barred the travel outside Sudan of anyone, including government officials, guilty of abuses.

British lawmakers have said as many as 300,000 people have died in Darfur, a region as large as France, since February 2003.

()

Developments in November included an influx of military deserters from Chad who engage in cross-border smuggling, cattle-rustling and banditry, Annan said.

'COLLECTIVE FAILURE'

Annan described the ongoing incidents as a "shocking indication of the government's continuing failure to protect its own population, and of the collective failure of the international community to prevent these horrendous crimes from occurring."

Omar Manis, Sudan's deputy ambassador to the UN, said he hadn't seen Annan's report and couldn't comment on its contents.

Eric Reeves, a professor at Smith College in Massachusetts who has testified before the U.S. Congress on Darfur, said the Security Council hasn't brought enough pressure to bear on the government in Khartoum, and cited opposition to stronger sanctions from Algeria, China and Russia.

"On the contrary, as the genocide enters its fourth year, the international community continues to defer to Khartoum, or even to suggest disingenuously that the regime has somehow reformed itself," Reeves says.

Greek Ambassador Adamantios Vassilakis, chairman of the Security Council committee formed to implement the sanctions, told the panel recently that no individual has been targeted. He said Sudan's government has impeded efforts of his panel to identify targets of the travel ban and asset freeze, that Sudanese troops have moved arms and equipment into Darfur, and that border controls are too lax for an effective embargo.

Reeves said another example of the appeasement of Sudan is that the Arab League and African Union will hold summits early next year in Khartoum.

"The African Union's decision to hold its January 2006 summit in Sudan provides the strongest evidence yet that the organization has no intention of ... halting the genocide," Reeves said.

"Because tradition dictates that the next chair of the African Union be the head of the most recent summit's host country, Sudanese President Omar el-Bashir is now poised to lead the very organization that claims to be seeking an end to the genocide he is orchestrating.

<http://www.canada.com/windsorstar/news/story.html?id=552c9490-b2fb-47ca-b338-628c9fb5fc1f>

Policy Adrift on Darfur

The Washington Post

December 27, 2005

By: Barack Obama and Sam Brownback

()

Yet, despite American engagement, Darfur's humanitarian, security and political conditions are deteriorating. If the United States does not change its approach to Darfur, an already grim situation is likely to spiral out of control.

()

First, the administration must help transform the African Union protection force into a sizable, effective multinational force.

In the near term, Washington must pressure Khartoum to allow more advisers from Western nations to embed within the African Union's mission so they support intelligence, logistics and communications. It must work with other nations to provide military assets to African Union forces, such as attack helicopters and armored personnel carriers, so they can respond immediately to attacks. And it must urge the African Union to be more aggressive in protecting civilians. More important, Washington must immediately spearhead efforts to create a larger multinational force. The African Union has begun discussions with the United Nations about folding itself into a follow-on U.N. mission, but because of the West's reluctance to offend African sensibilities, all parties seem resigned to muddling along. It has become clear that a U.N.- or NATO-led force is required, and the administration must use diplomacy to override Chinese and Sudanese opposition to such a force and persuade outside troops to join it.

Second, the administration must keep up the pressure on the rebels to unite their negotiating positions, and it must enlist Sudan's allies to increase the pressure on Khartoum to share power and resources.

Third, the United States and other nations must place additional pressure on key nations -- Chad, Eritrea and Libya -- to stop playing a destructive role in the conflict.

Fourth, the administration needs to place its weight behind the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which would impose targeted sanctions on the leading perpetrators of the genocide.

The Bush administration has helped reduce suffering in Darfur, but the situation is dangerously adrift. And when the history of this tragedy is written, nobody will remember how many times officials visited the region or how much humanitarian aid was delivered. They will only remember the death toll.

Barack Obama is a Democratic senator from Illinois. Sam Brownback is a Republican senator from Kansas.

<http://www.decaturdailydemocrat.com/articles/2006/01/03/news/opinion/editorial02.txt>

U.N. disappointed in Sudan's Darfur effort

UPI

December 19, 2005

A U.N. genocide expert is disappointed in Sudan's efforts to address crimes committed in the country's western Darfur region.

Juan Mendez, special adviser to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the prevention of genocide, told reporters the Security Council's recent referral of Sudan to the International Criminal Court was not an option but a legal obligation.

Sudan said earlier this week it would not cooperate with the ICC.

The Darfur region has been marked by massive displacement, rights abuses and widespread killings.

"I have consistently stressed that ensuring accountability is an essential element of genocide prevention," said Mendez, who visited Darfur in September.

Asked whether the Khartoum government was living up to its pledges, he replied: "My impression is very discouraging, quite frankly. For months nothing was done about the literally hundreds of cases of destruction of villages."

He said the government's own special court had also produced "discouraging" results. "They have dealt with some cases that seem to be marginal to the serious events that happened in 2003 and 2004," he said.

He added that if Khartoum refuses to cooperate with the ICC then "the Security Council should take appropriate action." He did not elaborate.

Link to full article unavailable

Aid Effort in Africa Undermined By New Violence, U.N. Reports

The New York Times

December 20, 2005

By Warren Hoge

The United Nations emergency aid coordinator, Jan Egeland, said Monday that fresh outbreaks of violence across Africa were seriously undermining relief efforts at a time when those efforts were starting to produce positive results.

In an appeal to the Security Council, he said destructive conflicts would continue to spread in the absence of effective cease-fires, political solutions and a strong international security presence

In northern Uganda, Mr. Egeland said, the United Nations was able to reach only 18 of its 200 camps for displaced people without military escorts, and people in the relative safety of camps were increasingly under siege and unable to plant crops because of the breakdown in security

The Lord's Resistance Army, a guerrilla group that is notorious for kidnapping, raping and maiming thousands of children, was threatening the stability of three countries, Uganda, Congo and Sudan, he said.

Though the countries themselves are failing in their primary responsibility to protect their own civilians, he said, the Council should condemn those attacks and establish a panel of experts to find out how such a vicious group had been armed and financed

"We must recognize that too many of these humanitarian crises result from a total absence of peace and security," he said. "Humanitarian aid cannot be an alibi for unwillingness to address the root causes of conflict."

<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F30617FB3C540C738EDDAB0994DD404482>