

## WORSENING

### **AFGHANISTAN: The presidential candidates agree to a vote recount to resolve the electoral crisis**

The outcome of the second round of the presidential elections triggered a major political crisis in the country after one of the two candidates, Abdullah Abdullah, refused to accept the provisional results of the election, which indicated that he had lost. After US Secretary of State John Kerry visited the country, a full audit of the vote recount was accepted by both Abdullah and the other contesting candidate, Ashraf Ghani. The audit is being overseen by the United Nations, representatives of the candidates and local and international election observers. Various analysts have discussed the urgent need to disclose the results, since in September NATO will announce its plans regarding the country and the Bilateral Security Agreement—which must regulate the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan after the international military withdrawal to be completed in 2014—will not be signed as long as Hamid Karzai remains president of the country. Moreover, significant episodes continued to occur throughout the month of July, one of the most serious of which was a suicide attack on a market in the province of Paktika that caused the death of 42 people. The Taliban insurgency denied responsibility for the attack. The UNAMA released a report on the impact of the armed conflict on the civilian population in the first six months of the year, citing 1,564 civilians killed and 3,289 wounded, a 17% increase in deaths and 28% in injuries compared to the same period in 2013. There was a notable rise in deaths resulting from battles between the insurgency and official domestic and foreign security forces. (UNAMA, July 2014; BBC, 12, 15 and 20/07/14)

### **PHILIPPINES (MINDANAO-MILF): Tension between the government and the MILF rises during the process to discuss and approve the Bangsamoro Basic Law**

Tension rose between the government and the MILF after the office of the presidency submitted its amendments and comments to the draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law that was created by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission and must later be reviewed with the government and approved by Parliament. The MILF said that the government's position is far from the letter and spirit of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro signed last March and that it finds the version sent by the government to be unacceptable and useless for resolving the historical conflict in Mindanao. It also anticipated its categorical refusal to renegotiate issues that had already been agreed on. Meanwhile, the head of the governmental negotiating team said that the draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law submitted by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission could contain some issues incompatible with the current Constitution. Thus, the MILF accused Manila of interpreting the Constitution conservatively and strictly, while it had sustained throughout the negotiating process that it had been flexible enough to accommodate all the content of the peace agreement. Given this impasse, both sides, as well as the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, the International Contact Group and the government of Malaysia, which acts as a facilitator, met in Kuala Lumpur in early July to address the differences between the government and the MILF. (Philstar, 07/07/14; Philippine Daily Inquirer, 05/07/14)

### **ISRAEL-PALESTINE: Escalating violence kills more than 700 people in three weeks and spurs accusations of war crimes against Israel**

The conflict between Palestine and Israel escalated in July after Israel decided to launch an offensive by land, sea and air against the Gaza Strip for the stated purpose of stopping rocket attacks from Palestinian territory towards Israel and neutralising Hamas' weapons stockpiles. In less than three weeks, Operation Protective Edge, which began on 8 July, had claimed the lives of at least 1,200 Palestinians, most of them civilians (around 75%, according to the United Nations) and many of them children. Another 4,500 people had

been injured. By late July, 55 Israelis, 53 soldiers and two civilians had been killed in fighting with Palestinian militiamen or by rocket attacks. The Israeli offensive forcibly displaced more than 120,000 people, exacerbating humanitarian needs in the area. The Israeli attacks affected at least four UN facilities, including a school turned into a shelter, in an incident that killed at least 15 people. Benjamin Netanyahu's government attempted to hold Hamas responsible for the civilian casualties, denouncing the use of Palestinians as human shields by the Islamist group. Meanwhile, Hamas rejected a truce, arguing that it had not been consulted on the terms of the agreement by Egypt, and said that a ceasefire would depend on ending the blockade on Gaza. US Secretary of State John Kerry travelled to the area to try to negotiate a truce. In this context, the UN's highest authority on human rights, Navi Pillay, warned that Israel committed war crimes in its attack on Gaza, considered its operations disproportionate and called an emergency session of the UN Human Rights Council to study the situation. Pillay also criticised Hamas for its indiscriminate attacks against Israel. (BBC, al-Jazeera, 08-30/07/14)

## **LIBYA: Clashes between militias at the Tripoli Airport leave more than 40 dead and prompt the withdrawal of UN staff from the country from security reasons**

In a sign of the chaos and instability prevailing in the country, at least 40 people were killed in several days of fighting between militias to control the Tripoli Airport. In the middle of the month, a militia called the Islamist Revolutionaries Operation Room (LROR) tried to seize control of the airport, which has been controlled by the Zintan militia since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime. The LROR, which is considered an armed group with an Islamist agenda, had officially been assigned the task of protecting the capital until October 2013, when some of its members kidnapped then-Prime Minister Ali Zeidan. The Zintan militia is known for its refusal to surrender Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam to the authorities, as well as for its attack on Parliament last May. According to press reports, both groups receive funds from the Libyan government, which has unsuccessfully tried to provide security and control militia activity in the country. Analysts described the LROR's offensive as an attempt to assume control of the key facilities after the elections, in which the Islamists did not do well, amidst many clashes in Benghazi. In this eastern part of the country, armed battles increased between Islamist militias and regular forces and other armed groups led by former General Khalifa Haftar. In late July, a double suicide attack on the general headquarters of the special forces in Benghazi killed four soldiers. Attempts to mediate among the rival militias have failed. This climate of violence, and especially the fighting at the airport, prompted the UN to withdraw its staff from Libya, citing security reasons. The Libyan authorities asked the UN Security Council to give serious consideration to Libya before it is too late and requested help to protect airports and oil ports. The government considered the possibility of seeking help from international forces to protect the civilian population and prevent chaos. (Reuters, 14, 17, 22, 23/07/14; BBC, 15, 22/07/14; New York Times, 13/07/14)

## **MYANMAR: Two people die in a new outbreak of intercommunal violence in Mandalay**

Clashes between Buddhists and Muslims in the city of Mandalay caused the death of two people, one Buddhist and the other Muslim, after information spread that a Buddhist woman had been raped by a Muslim man. Fourteen people were wounded. Several days of rioting resulted in burned buildings, including an orphanage, especially in parts of the city mostly inhabited by Muslims. The government imposed a curfew and around 200 people were arrested for their involvement in the violence. In order to defuse the tension and prevent the unrest from leading to large-scale violence between Buddhists and Muslims, as has occurred on various occasions in recent years, an interfaith committee was formed that also included various local leaders. Meanwhile, the UN special rapporteur for Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, visited Mandalay and met with government representatives and community

leaders. Her visit to the city was part of a larger trip to Myanmar. (The Irrawady, 04, 07 and 23/07/14)

## **PAKISTAN – UNITED STATES: Various US drone strikes in Waziristan kill dozens**

In June the United States resumed its drone strikes in tribal areas of Pakistan after suspending them for six months. In July, three air strikes caused the death of between 32 and 46 people, according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, which stated that the attack that took place on 16 July may have produced civilian casualties. Al-Qaeda recognised that six of the deceased were leaders of the organisation. Moreover, the Pakistani Army continued its large-scale offensive against Taliban insurgents, stating in mid-July that 400 insurgents and 26 soldiers had died during its military operations. The Pakistani Army also said that it had eradicated the insurgency from 80% of Miranshah, the capital of North Waziristan. The area subjected to US air strikes is under the control of Taliban leader Hafiz Gul Bahadur, who had maintained a peace agreement with the government since 2006, but declared a new war on Pakistan after the operation in Waziristan began. (Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 10, 16 and 19/07/14; The Express Tribune, 16/07/14; The News, 22/07/14; The New York Times, 19/07/14)

## **SYRIA: The armed conflict has one of its bloodiest days, with hundreds of fatalities, while ISIS gains ground in the east**

The war in Syria continued to claim hundreds of lives amidst the government forces' offensive in areas under rebel control and growing fighting between different insurgent groups. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that in only two days, 17 and 18 July, more than 700 people were killed as a result of the conflict, the highest number of casualties in 48 hours since 2011. Intense fighting was reported around Damascus and in Homs, where clashes between ISIS militiamen and government forces for control of a gas field killed 270. There was also intense combat between ISIS fighters and Kurdish militiamen. While consolidating its positions in Iraq, ISIS (renamed the Islamic State, or IS) also expanded the territory under its control in eastern Syria, where it is imposing its radical interpretation of sharia. Thus, the first case of the stoning of a woman accused of adultery was reported in the city of Al Tabqah and ISIS called on all women to submit to a clitorrectomy. In this context, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution authorising humanitarian aid convoys to enter rebel-controlled areas without Damascus' approval. So far, 90% of the aid has been delivered to areas under government control. Almost half of the Syrian population, around 10.8 million people, need assistance, of which half were in areas dominated by the insurgency. The measure is expected to facilitate the delivery of aid to at least 1.3 million people. The UN also appointed a new envoy for the crisis in the country, Staffan de Mistura, after the resignations of Lakhdar Brahimi and Kofi Annan before him, who were frustrated by their inability to move negotiations towards a political solution to the conflict. (Asharq al-Awsat, 20/07/14; BBC, 14, 24/07/14; New York Times, 14, 18/07/14)

## **SOMALIA: Al-Shabaab increases military action during Ramadan**

Violence increased during Ramadan (which in 2014 falls between 28 June and 28 July), just as the armed Islamist group al-Shabaab had threatened. The various acts of violence included the assassination of two federal government MPs, including the famous artist Saado Ali Warsame, who was shot dead with her chauffeur in the district of Hoolon, in Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab also launched a failed massive assault on the Presidential Palace with suicide militants that caused no fatalities. The Kenyan Air Force launched various strikes on al-Shabaab strongholds in the district of Jilib, there was fierce fighting between AMISOM-supported government troops and al-Shabaab in the district of Qoryoley in the region of Middle Juba (central southern region of Lower Shabelle) and AMISOM-supported forces of the Jubaland government skirmished with al-Shabaab in Afmadow, in the

southern region of Lower Juba. The number of casualties in these clashes was unknown. Meanwhile, the United States has revealed that US military advisors have been operating secretly in the country since 2007 and Washington is now planning to expand military assistance to support the federal government for the purpose of fighting al-Shabaab. In 2013, Obama recognised this support, which dates back to the period of the George W. Bush Administration and exceeds the handful of advisors that the Pentagon announced in January, since there are actually 120. Moreover, this figure is expected to rise in the months to come. These advisors have been working with AMISOM, not with government troops, and have not been engaged in combat. However, it is known from other sources that small special forces and CIA units have been operating in the country in recent years. These plans coincide with the efforts that the AU and the Somali government are making to stop the Islamist group. (Reuters, 03/07/14; Garowe Online, 08, 16, 17 and 23/07/14)

## **SUDAN (DARFUR): Attacks and insecurity persist in the Sudanese region of Darfur**

In early July, clashes between militias of the Ma'aliya and Rezeigat communities claimed at least 18 lives near Ed Daein, the capital of East Darfur. Moreover, four people were arrested for the murder of Ali Adam, the coordinator of the paramilitary militias known as the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), which occurred on 12 July in the area of Tulus (in South Darfur). Investigations have also revealed that four of the 18 people that made up the active criminal network in this region were killed in the incident. In the middle of the month, in South Darfur, Governor Adam Mahmoud Jar Al-Nabi declared an indefinite state of emergency and imposed a curfew, in addition to prohibiting more than one person from riding the same motorcycle, banning the possession of arms in public spaces without a military uniform and other emergency measures. Some incidents due to non-compliance with these measures were reported and recently two people were killed and one was wounded in the attempted kidnapping of a trader. In North Darfur, the armed group SLA denied involvement in the attack near the capital, El-Fashir, which left 13 people dead on 19 July. In the same region, three aid workers were released after 32 days in captivity. Finally, the head of the hybrid UN/AU mission (UNAMID), Mohamed ibn Shambas, told the AU Peace and Security Council that the proliferation of militias and criminal activity is still a source of concern. (Jeune Afrique, 06, 21/07/14; Sudan Tribune, 20 and 22/07/14)

## **UKRAINE: The downing of a Malaysian airplane in the region of Donetsk and the death of its 298 passengers and crewmembers internationalises and further aggravates the armed conflict**

The armed conflict between the central Ukrainian authorities and the pro-Russian insurgency in the eastern part of the country, which claimed the lives of between 500 and 1,000 people from April to early July (according to various sources), took a dramatic turn with the downing of a civilian Malaysian airliner on 17 July over the eastern region of Donetsk. All 298 passengers and crewmembers were killed, including 154 Dutch, 45 Malaysians and 27 Australians. The Ukrainian and US governments said there was evidence that the missile that struck the plane had been launched from an area controlled by the pro-Russian insurgency. The downing, which has caused great international tumult, has increased pressure on Russia for its alleged support for the insurgency by providing it with arms and training, as well as flows of mercenaries and money across the Russian-Ukrainian border, though Russia has denied these accusations. The insurgency eventually turned the airplane's black boxes over to a team of OSCE inspectors. The bodies of the deceased that were located were finally sent to the Netherlands for identification. The UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution demanding access to the remnants of the plane and calling for a cessation of hostilities in the area. The United States pressured the EU to impose greater sanctions on Russia. The day before the plane was shot down, the United States had approved new sanctions, including on financial, energy and defence businesses. The tragedy of the downed plane was preceded in July by weeks of ongoing combat. After the Ukrainian government's unilateral truce ended, it resumed its military

offensive in early July, pushing the insurgency from its stronghold in Slavyansk. It reorganised around Donetsk and Luhansk, which in turn prompted an exodus of civilians from these areas. Between May and July, the insurgency had shot down around a dozen Ukrainian transport planes, reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters. (New York Times, El País, BBC, Reuters, 1-24/07/14)

## ALERT

### **CHINA – JAPAN: Tension between both countries mounts over a reinterpretation of an article of the Japanese Constitution that allows the government to deploy its Armed Forces abroad**

The Chinese government criticised the Japanese government's recent announcement that it will reinterpret (and not reform, as that would require a qualified majority in Parliament) Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (adopted after the Second World War), which restricted the activity of the Japanese Armed Forces to self-defence and prevented Tokyo from deploying them outside national territory. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared that his government had no intention to participate in military alliances, stably deploy troops abroad or assist in the defence of third countries, and that the aforementioned reinterpretation is intended to protect Japanese citizens in non-secure situations. However, a senior government official later said that among other things, the reinterpretation would allow Japan to come to the United States' aid in case of attack of threat, whereas the current military alliance between the countries does not. Both the Chinese government and various analysts view this reinterpretation of Article 9, as well as other changes to Japan's national security strategy, in connection with the territorial dispute between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Beijing said that the new Japanese security strategy undermines peace and stability in the region. This position was supported by a report released in July by a leading Chinese think tank that warned of a notable rise in Japanese military exercises in 2013 (alone or in conjunction with third countries such as the United States) and stated that Japan's military capabilities were primarily directed against China's interests and were moving towards preparations for war. (Global Post, 23/07/14; Big News Network, 17/07/14; Reuters, 01/07/14)

### **NORTH KOREA – SOUTH KOREA: The start of joint military exercises between South Korea, Japan and the United States raises tension with North Korea**

In late July, tension rose between both countries over the start of joint military exercises between South Korea, Japan and the United States; North Korea's launch of nearly 100 missiles; and the interruption of the talks that both Korean governments were holding about North Korea's participation in the Asian Games to be held in the South Korean city of Incheon from 19 September to 4 October. The North Korean government withdrew from the talks in a border town, accusing South Korea of seeking to humiliate it, yet also stating that the Asian Games could be a magnificent opportunity for improving bilateral relations and for reconciliation between both countries. Coinciding with the interruption of these negotiations, the governments of South Korea, Japan and the United States began joint military exercises on Jeju Island. Some analysts said that the launch of dozens of missiles in the weeks prior was closely related to these military exercises. This time, the South Korean government did not respond to the short-range missile launch because none of them fell in its territorial waters, but the South Korean defence ministry described the tests as provocative and warned of an adequate military response if any North Korean missile did fall in South Korean waters. (Reuters, 23/07/14; Associated Press, 14/07/14; ITAR-TASS, 21/07/14)

## **IRAN: Teheran and the G5+1 countries agree to extend negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme for four more months to give more time to resolve differences**

Iran and the G5+1 countries (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Russia and China—plus Germany) agreed to extend the deadline for negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme for four months to get more time to debate their differences. According to the framework agreement signed by the Iranian government and the G5+1 in November 2013, which began to be implemented in January 2014, the deadline for the meetings was 20 July. The new deadline was set for 24 November. At the end of the final round of negotiations, held in Vienna in July, the head of European diplomacy, Catherine Ashton, stressed that there were still significant differences on key issues that will require time and effort to resolve. The greatest disagreements focused on Iran's desired ability to enrich uranium and what the powers consider admissible, together with how long restrictions on its civilian nuclear activities will last. The Iranian foreign minister has raised the option to freeze the level of operations in the country for three to seven years. However, the G5+1 proposed restrictions for a decade or longer. Beyond these differences, in July it emerged that Iran has fulfilled its commitments made under the framework agreement, including the destruction or neutralisation of its uranium stock enriched to the highest level (20%). A new report released by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said that Teheran had met all its other commitments, including ensuring access for inspectors, not installing new centrifuges and postponing work on a reactor. In a memorandum justifying the extension of the deadline for the negotiations, the United States government also welcomed the steps taken by Iran to address international concern about its atomic programme. During these four months, Iran may gain access to 2.8 billion USD of the more than 100 billion USD frozen in its accounts abroad, to which are added the 4.2 billion USD that it has received in the last six months for complying with the agreement. (BBC, 19, 21/07/14; New York Times, 18/07/14; Al-Monitor, 23/07/14)

## **MOLDOVA (TRANSDNIESTRIA) – RUSSIA: Tension rises between Moldova and Russia due to Moldova's alignment with the EU while Russia and Transdniestria deepen their relations**

The political gap between Moldova and Russia grew in a context of regional and international polarity, which had repercussions for the prolonged conflict in the region of Transdniestria. The Moldovan government's signature of the association agreement with the EU in early July was followed by a host of retaliatory measures by Russia, including the announcement the same day on the signing of import restrictions on Moldovan meat and the entry into force of a ban on imports of Moldovan fruit in the middle of the month. Meanwhile, the Transdniestrian and Russian authorities deepened relations by signing various cooperation agreements early in the month dealing with the economic, trade, transport, agricultural and science sectors. The agreements also allow the Russian presence to increase in Transdniestria. Though the OSCE-mediated talks between Moldova and Transdniestria are still active, the round initially planned for 17 and 18 July was postponed until 11 and 12 September. The OSCE's special representative for the process to resolve the conflict in Transdniestria, Radojko Bogojevic, who visited the region early in the month and met separately with the leaders of Moldova and Transdniestria, urged the parties to hold both political and working group-level meetings on confidence-building measures and adopt the 5+2 format of the negotiating process (Moldova, Transdniestria, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, as well as the EU and the United States as observers). (OSCE, 2/07/14, RFE/RL, Reuters, 1-24/07/14)

## **SOUTH SUDAN: Government and rebels violate the ceasefire routinely, causing 60 fatalities in the western region of Bahr al-Ghazal**

Clashes between government forces and the rebellion led by former Vice President Riek Machar, SPLA-In Opposition, caused 60 fatalities in the western region of Bahr al-Ghazal. There was also fighting in the city of Nasir, in Upper Nile State, in the north of the country. This military activity strained the ceasefire agreement that both sides reached on 9 May and reaffirmed on 11 June. According to the South Sudanese government spokesman, the rebels did not achieve full control of the city. At the beginning of the month, President Kiir urged the rebels to resume peace talks with the government, in which Machar displayed a willingness to participate, warning at the same time that he would attack oil facilities if the profits were used to buy arms. Meanwhile, a rebel delegation met with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, in an attempt to negotiate the withdrawal of Ugandan troops from South Sudan, considered sympathetic to President Kiir. Triggered in December 2013 as a result of the power struggle between President Salva Kiir and his former Vice President Riek Machar, the violence often follows along ethnic lines, pitting the Dinka community of Salva Kiir against the Nuer community of Riek Machar. The EU and the United States have imposed sanctions on the commanders of both sides that violated the first peace agreement reached in January, quickly rendering it worthless. (Reuters, 09, 11, 20 and 21/07/14; Sudan Tribune, 17/07/14)

## **TURKEY (SOUTHEAST): The PKK accuses Turkey of giving support to ISIS in its struggle with the Kurds in Syria and warns of the impact that this may have on the Kurdish issue in Turkey**

The Kurdish conflict in Turkey increased in complexity in July with the siege laid by the jihadist Islamic State (IS, previously known as ISIS) on the area of Kobane in Syria, one of the three regions under the control of the PYD, a Syrian Kurdish group linked to the PKK. The co-chairs of the KCK (an umbrella body of the Kurdish movement, which includes the Kurdish guerrillas of Turkey) and Syrian Kurdish leaders accused parts of the Turkish government of arming, sheltering and training Islamist combatants that have been participating in military assaults on Kobane since early July, preceded by other waves of attacks in previous months. Turkey has always denied these allegations. The KCK also told Turkey that either it gave support to ISIS or it acted in the spirit of the negotiations with the PKK and said that the “revolutionary” events taking place in the Kurdish regions of Syria and Turkey could become one and the same issue. Paradoxically, these risk factors came at the same time as progress in the talks in Turkey, after the Turkish Parliament and president’s adoption in July of a government-proposed law to give new impetus to the peace talks, supported by the Kurdish opposition (and also welcomed by PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan) and the main Turkish opposition party, the CHP, which guarantees a legal framework for the process. The law grants immunity to state actors participating in the talks and authorises the government to take steps in the cultural, socioeconomic, political, legal and psychological spheres and to take measures to facilitate the return and reintegration of PKK combatants. Furthermore, the Turkish press reported that following approval of the law, the PKK could restart the process to withdraw its guerrillas to northern Iraq, which it interrupted in September 2013. Senior PKK officials have warned that given the current regional context, the PKK cannot be expected to lay down its weapons or abandon its “self-defence” strategy. (Hürriyet Daily News, Firat, AFP, 1-24/07/14)

## PROGRESS

### **MALI (NORTH): Peace talks begin between the government and various armed groups in Algiers**

The government of Mali and six armed Tuareg and Arab separatist groups have begun peace talks in Algiers, facilitated by the African Union. The special advisor to the head of the AU mission, Issaka Souaré, expressed optimism about the talks, in which ECOWAS, the UN, and the EU are also participating. The radical Islamists are not involved in the process. The Malian government has declared that it is willing to negotiate, as long as its territorial integrity, national unity and republican government model are respected. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and two other rebel groups negotiating with the government have already stated that they have given up their aspirations for independence. The parties involved have agreed to release prisoners as a gesture of good faith prior to the Algerian-mediated negotiations. Meanwhile, the group Al-Mourabitoun claimed responsibility for a suicide attack that claimed the life of a French soldier and wounded six others. After 18 months, France announced the end of Operation Serval, which had given support to the African military presence in the country, and set up a new operation (Operation Barkhane) to cooperate on security issues in various countries of the Sahel, including Mauritania, Chad, Mali and Niger. (allAfrica, 16 and 17/07/14; BBC, 14/07/14)

### **CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: The armed groups reach a cease of hostilities agreement in Brazzaville**

The Forum for National Reconciliation and Political Dialogue was held in Brazzaville with the participation of the different armed groups of the country. The forum, which began on 21 July and was suspended the following day due to the reservations of some Séléka representatives about the draft of the proposed agreement, reached a cessation of hostilities on 23 July, the first after eight months of fighting. This minimal agreement regarding the purposes of the meeting held in Brazzaville, which was approved by around thirty countries and international organisations that form the International Contact Group for the Central African Republic, required an immediate cessation of hostilities and was signed by around forty Central African and international representatives. The first two people to sign it were Séléka representative Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona, national coordinator of the anti-balaka militias. The Archbishop of Bangui, Monsignor Dieudonné Nzapalainga, and Iman Layama Kobine, the head of the Muslim community in the Central African Republic, also signed the agreement to loud applause before Congolese President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, the facilitator of the forum. The forum was threatened with boycott by various armed groups and by Séléka's condition that it accept the principle of dividing the country. This proposal was rejected outright by all parties, casting doubt on the representatives' ability to lead regarding compliance with the ceasefire. Many negotiators accused Dhaffane and Séléka of establishing this precondition in order to obtain more returns after conceding on the issue ahead of a future transitional government. Several analysts have highlighted the difficulty of implementing the cessation of hostilities due to the sharp internal divisions within Séléka and to the fact that the anti-balaka militias are a movement lacking organisation and centralised coordination. (Jeune Afrique, 21-23/07/14; Libération, 23/07/14)

### **DR CONGO (EAST): The FDLR continues to disarm and engage in talks with the Congolese government under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio**

The disarmament and demobilisation of dozens of combatants of the armed Rwandan Hutu group FDLR continued. The UN Secretary-General's special representative and head of MONUSCO, Martin Kobler, said that the military option is still on the table despite the surrender of some combatants of the armed group, and that the Congolese government

shares this position. In early July, MONUSCO announced that it had already taken in more than 200 FDLR fighters and around 500 dependents since the start of the voluntary disarmament process in late May. According to government sources, around 1,400 FDLR combatants are still active in eastern DR Congo. The EU has insisted on the unconditional voluntary disarmament of the FDLR. The regional organisations SADC and CIRGL met in Angola to agree on a common position regarding the security situation in the east of the country and on the disarmament of the FDLR. Meanwhile, Rwanda accused the UN mission of supporting the armed group by asking the UN Security Council to lift the flight ban on the interim head of the FDLR, Gaston Rumuli Iyamuremye, also known as Victor Rumuli Byiringiro. Lifting the ban would allow Iyamuremye to travel to Rome to participate in negotiations on 25 June with Congolese and UN representatives, facilitated by the Community of Sant'Egidio. These talks are expected to speed up the armed group's DDR process. The UN Sanctions Committee did not approve the request, but without waiting for the decision, MONUSCO already decided to transport Iyamuremye and other FDLR representatives by plane from North Kivu to Kinshasa, from where they were about to board a flight for Rome. However, the Sanctions Committee's ruling was obeyed and in the end Iyamuremye and his delegation were transported back to the interior of DR Congo. The meeting in Rome was finally held without Iyamuremye's participation, but the content of the discussions was not made public. The FDLR has not carried out any major action in Rwandan territory for many years and aims to explore the Rwandan government's desire for peace by proposing to start talks with Kigali, but these have been categorically rejected. Meanwhile, the Congolese government has announced that it will establish a transit camp for FDLR combatants in Kisangani (Orientale province). Various provincial MPs and civil society activists in Kisangani have rejected the presence of FDLR fighters. (Radio Okapi, 15/07/14; Le Potentiel, 16/07/14; Xinhua, 02 and 21/07/14, AFP, 03/07/14)

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