

Mikhala Lantz-Simmons: MIGS Media Monitor Reporter for Kenya
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1. The food crisis and state of Kenyan Refugee Camps

“Kenya told to open up new refugee camp”
Daily Nation, privately-owned newspaper
July 12th 2011

“I have visited refugee camps around the world, but I must admit I have never seen people living under such conditions,” said Antonio Guterres, the head of the UN refugee agency upon seeing the Dadaab refugee camp in northeast Kenya. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the camp, set up for 90,000 refugees, has exceeded its capacity by five times. Guterres wants Kenya to open a new settlement as the number of refugees continues to increase not only due to the war in Somalia but also to escape hunger and famine in surrounding countries.

“Settle refugees outside: Kenya”
Daily Nation, privately-owned newspaper
Report by Aggrey Mutambo and Kevin J Kelley
July 13th 2011

Kenyan Internal Security Assistant Minister Orwa Ojode has stated he wants Somali refugees settled outside Kenya. “[Handing refugees] is a very heavy burden which we did not budget for. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) can feed them in Somalia since the latest arrivals are not fleeing due to insecurity but lack of food” said Ojode.

UNHCR chief Antonio Guterres stated that aid is needed in Somalia to control that large number of people fleeing to Kenya. The refugees at the Dadaab camp in northern Kenya have vowed not to go back to Somalia, according to Mahmoud Gulled, a refugee who is in charge of around 400 families in the camp. “We have had challenges here [at the Dadaab camp], but at least we get constant supply of food rations and our children get medical attention,” said Gulled. According to Rukiah Ali, another refugee, it is not safe for them to return to Somali. Al-Shabab forces citizens to donate food to them and those who fail to do so are killed.

The top emergency aid official of the United Nations expressed her disappointment over Kenya’s unwillingness to open the Ifo II camp to help alleviate the pressure on the Dadaab camps (which were built to hold 90,000 refugees rather than the current 400,000).

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is expected to convene a UN meeting on Tuesday to review the world body’s response to the food and water crisis in the horn of Africa.

“Looming crisis as refugee camps burst at the seams”

The Standard, privately-owned daily newspaper

Report by John Oywa, July 15th 2011

Humanitarian works at Dadaab, the world’s biggest refugee complex, described the situation there as “hell on earth” and warned that hundreds of malnourished children could die in upcoming weeks. Officials at the Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) said they are overwhelmed by the high number of children suffering from severe malnutrition and other disease. The MSF Research Coordinator, Caroline Abu-Sada described the situation in the camps as an international crisis. “The situation is really bad and it appears the influx of more refugees will not decrease soon because the drought is worsening ... Between 30 to 35 per cent of the 122,000 refugees already registered at the Dagahaley camp are children and many of them are suffering severe malnutrition” said Abu-Sada.

“Open border for refugees, orders Raila”

Daily Nation, privately-owned newspaper

Report by Jacob Ng’etich

July 15th 2011

Prime Minister Raila Odinga has ordered a section of the border with Somalia to be reopened to allow those seeking humanitarian assistance to enter Kenya. Odinga stated that Kenya has a responsibility as a good neighbor to offer help in this humanitarian crisis. According to Odinga, about 10 million people in the Horn of Africa are facing starvation. Political instability has also worsened the situation for Somalis.

An entry point at Liboi on the Kenya-Somalia border will be opened soon to screen and register the refugees. The refugees need to be screened “because we want to make sure that those who enter are genuine refugees and not criminals who want to take advantage of the situation,” said the Prime Minister. He also said that construction of IFO II camp will be continued to accommodate the influx of refugees. The construction was previously ordered to a stop due to “security concerns.”

Odinga dismissed claims that the government was allowing more refugees as a result of external pressure. “Kenya has been supporting the refugees for over two decades and we continue to receive more and more. We act as good neighbours and the international community always comes in later when we are taking care of the situation,” said Odinga who is asking for further humanitarian aid from friends of Kenya.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, about 380,000 refugees from Somalia are now in the country. This number increases by the day. Another 70,000 refugees are currently living on the outskirts of the three camps.

“Somali refugees to be given citizenship - Kenyan immigration minister”

KTN, Kenyan privately-owned TV station

July 15th 2011

Somali refugees fleeing violence and drought are stranded at the Kenya-Somali border in Liboi. In a move aimed at curbing insecurity in the northeastern region, these refugees will be registered as Kenyan citizens within 30 days. Minister for Immigration Otieno Kajwang says registration will allow the Kenyan government to monitor their movement within and outside the refugee camps. According to Kajwang, if people feel they have no nationality, they are more likely to turn to terrorism. By registering them as citizens, a refugee fleeing from conflict may enter Kenya and be protected. The refugees need to register within 30 days of being within Kenyan territory to apply for citizenship.

“Kenya wants refugees moved to Somalia”
Daily Nation, privately-owned newspaper
Report by Jacob Ngetich
July 16th 2011

“The situation in Somalia is now stable; there are no more conflicts. The problem is that people are running away from famine caused by the drought. If that is the case, they don’t have to travel all the way to Kenya when food can be supplied to them near their border,” said Orwa Ojodeh, Internal security assistant minister.

Ojodeh disagreed with Prime Minister Raila Odinga’s move to last Thursday reopen the Kenya-Somalia border, saying he was committed to keeping “these people (Somali refugees) within their borders.” Ojodeh said that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was coming up with a program to ferry Somali refugees back to their country after a place across the border has been identified.

UNHCR’s mandate does not cover internally displaced persons. Therefore moving the refugees back to Somalia would mean less assistance for those Somalis in need.

“US to partner with Kenya in Somali border security”
The Star, privately-owned newspaper
Report by Isaac Ongiri
July 16th 2011

The US government has pledged to partner with Kenya to help mitigate security threats arising from the opening of the Somali border. US Deputy Assistant Secretary Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Reuben Brigety said he was happy with the announcements and commitments made by Prime Minister Raila Odinga that the government will open the borders with Somalia to address the emergency situation. More than 20,000 refugees are entering Kenya every month. The US government will release an initial sh445 million (\$5 million US) to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “The US is already programming \$63 million (sh5.6bn) for refugee support in the region.”

“Somali crisis: Kenya PM seeks international help”
KBC, government-owned broadcasting company
July 17th 2011

Prime Minister Raila Odinga held talks with British Minister for International Development Andrew Mitchell on Sunday in Karen, Kenya. The main subject was the refugee crisis in northern Kenya and the drought in the Horn of Africa. Odinga asked the UK and other nations to help Kenya by contributing food. He said the government had started restoring irrigation schemes that collapsed many years ago. The government, said Odinga, is also building dams as a way of ensuring food security. He called for support in constructing food storage facilities and the expansion of irrigation schemes nationwide.

Mitchell said the UK was prepared to support Kenya and encouraged the government to submit a proposal. The two leaders also discussed the Free Primary Education Funds scandal. They both agreed that every stolen shilling needs to be accounted for. Mitchell thanked the government of Kenya for agreeing to open the IFO II camp in Daadab saying it was an act of kindness. On the subject of the upcoming general elections, Mitchell said the date needs to be known in good time to enable the country and international community to prepare and support Kenya. According to Mitchell, the international community is waiting for the next election with tremendous interest after the experiences of 2007/2008. Odinga replied that there is no shortage of credible people to manage elections. He promised that the government-assembled team will be “convincing and trustworthy”.

2. Updates on the 2012 General Election

“Kenya MPs seek Merkel’s support on 2012 polls”

Daily Nation, privately-owned newspaper

July 13th 2011

Kenya’s parliamentary leaders reached out to the German government for assistance for next year’s elections. Speaker Kenneth Marende and seven members of parliament met with German chancellor Angela Merkel to discuss the establishment of strong and credible electoral institutions that will ensure a free and fair election. Narc* Kenya presidential candidate and Gichugu MP Martha Karua said the German government needs to ensure the constitution is fully implemented and that the elections will be held in August of next year. Merckell promised that her government will support institutions that will ensue all legislation dealing with elections is enacted.

*Narc: National Rainbow Coalition Kenya – the party of president Mwai Kibaki

“Raila ahead in polls”

Daily Nation, privately-owned newspaper

July 15th 2011

The latest opinion polls show that Orange Democratic Movement presidential candidate Raila Odinga leads in the race to the State House with 42.6 per cent. Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta is second with 21.4 per cent. Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka, William Ruto, and Martha Karua all have less than 10 per cent each. 3,070 people were polled.

“Principals urged to confirm election date”

KBC, government-owned broadcasting company

Written by George Kithuka

July 16th 2011

The Centre for Multi-party Democracy-Kenya (CMD) is calling on President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga to speed up the appointment of a seven member selection team that will oversee the recruitment of the commissioners for the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. CMD also wants the executive to announce election dates as written in the new constitution. The President and Prime Minister are supposed to appoint the commissioners Tuesday of this week.

3. Change of guard in top military positions

“Karangi is military chief in shake-up of top brass”

Daily Nation, privately-owned newspaper

July 14th 2011

General Julius Waweru Karangi was named Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces on Wednesday July 13th. All of the services, army navy, and air force, have new commanders, creating a complete change of guard at the top of the military.

The new constitution stipulates that the top military officer serve a maximum four-year term or retire at the age of 62, whichever comes first. General Karangi, will replace his predecessor on September 1st.

4. Arms destined for South Sudan

“Puzzle as arms ship docks at port”
Daily Nation, privately-owned newspaper
July 14th 2011

A ship carrying military hardware believed to be destined for South Sudan has docked at the port of Mombasa. Mystery surrounds the destination of the hardware after the Kenyan military denied it belonged to them. A source within the maritime industry told the Nation, “Just like the last consignment, these, too are heading to South Sudan. But one cannot dismiss the possibility that they could belong to Kenya.” The Mombasa port has been a major transit point for arms within the region.

5. Prime Minister dismisses rumors of grudge against ethnic group

“Raila says he has no grudge against Kikuyus”
KBC, government-owned broadcasting company
July 16th 2011

Prime Minister Raila Odinga is seeking to put down the rumor that he will take revenge against members of the Kikuyu community should he to ascend to the country’s leadership. Blaming the propaganda on a group of elites from the community, the Prime Minister stated that he has no issue with the Kikuyu. Odinga noted that problems faced by ordinary Kenyans were the same irrespective of their tribal backgrounds. Odinga said he had excellent working relationship with President Kibaki, who is Kikuyu, and if there are differences between them, they are ideological and not personal