

# WORLD BRIEFS

## STARVATION LOOMS IN KENYA'S COAST PROVINCE

NAIROBI, Kenya (PANA) — Starvation is threatening thousands of people in the Tana River district of Kenya's coast province where whole villages have been submerged by floods. The flood water from the River Tana has damaged roads and bridges, effectively hampering government efforts to provide residents with food, fuel and medicine. This year the Kenyan coast province has received unprecedented rainfall because of the El Nino weather phenomenon. An aerial survey clearly showed that floods from the River Tana had covered stretches of land ranging from two to three kilometers on both sides of its banks. Only the top of grass-thatched huts were visible for miles around. Tana River district commissioner John Litunda said the people of Kipini were in the worst hit area since no food supplies have been sent there for almost a month. Meanwhile aid workers in Somalia say that floods have killed more than 1,000 people. "A month of flooding has inundated large areas of southern Somalia between the Ethiopian border and the Indian ocean coast. They have wiped out freshly harvested shorghum (the staple food), left hundreds of thousands homeless and hungry and killed more people than aid workers can reckon," they said. The World Food Programme said more than 60,000 hectares of prime farm land was under water.

## DAKAR HOSTS MEETING ON HARMFUL HEALTH PRACTICES

DAKAR, Senegal (PANA) — On Nov. 17, 200 delegates began a five-day meeting in Dakar devoted to the eradication of traditional practices that affect the health of women and children in Africa. The meeting was jointly organized by the Addis Ababa-based Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Harmful Practices and the Regional Africa Office of the World Health Organization (WHO). IAC has identified female genital mutilation, early marriage and nutritional taboos as harmful practices because they affect the reproductive health and violate the human rights of women and children. IAC, which operates in 26 African states in both anglophone and francophone countries, said the meeting in Dakar is its fourth General Assembly. The meeting sought to reinforce IAC operations and reiterate its appeal for support, collaboration, integration and consolidation, in the effort to eradicate these practices. The IAC was granted observer status with the Organization of Africa Unity in 1994. In June 1995, it won the United Nations award for its population activities.

## TANZANIAN FILM FESTIVAL SET TO PROMOTE COUNTRY

ZANZIBAR, Tanzania (AIA/GIN) — An international film festival will take place in July next year in Zanzibar. The festival's theme, "Sea-Faring Cultures," reflects Zanzibar's centuries-old sea merchant tradition, which linked East Africa with Arabia and the Indian subcontinent. An international panel of judges will award the Golden Dhow and the Golden Coconut Awards. The organizing committee works under the Dhow Countries Film Trust. Its chairman, Emerson Skeens, must raise \$1 million to underwrite the cost of the event. Organizers also hope that the festival will bring Zanzibar to the attention of international film makers as a possible film location. To showcase the island's culture and music, the film festival will coincide with the annual cultural festival in mid-July. For further information, the sponsors have set up a web page at <http://www.zanzibar.net>.

## SPLA REJECTS MEDIATION ROLE BY MANDELA

NAIROBI, (IPS) — Sudan's main rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), has rejected a direct mediation role by President Nelson Mandela, preferring the South African leader to act only as a facilitator to an already existing regional peace forum. The snub comes just one week after the South African president had agreed to mediate the Sudanese conflict, following a visit to South Africa by Sudan's President Lt.-Gen. Omar Hassan al Bashir. Following the parley, Mandela told journalists in Cape Town that he would meet al Bashir, rebel leader John Garang and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda in South Africa soon, in an effort to kick-start peace talks between the Sudanese government and the SPLA. Then in a statement signed by the SPLA spokesman, John Luk, the rebel movement said it was not seeking an alternative forum. "The SPLA remains committed to the IGAD peace process under President Daniel Arap Moi (of Kenya) and will not seek another alternative forum." IGAD is the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, which is under the auspices of President Moi. It groups Kenya, Uganda, D'jibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Sudan.

# INTERNATIONAL

## Analysts view new U.S. sanctions on Sudan skeptically

By Alex Whiting  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
LONDON, England (IPS)

— While some welcomed Washington's new sanctions on Sudan, most analysts conclude that they will make little difference to the Khartoum government, and only marginally threaten rebel groups fighting its rule in the south.

U.S. humanitarian aid, worth some \$650 million, will not be affected by the sanctions; it is the country's failing economy that will feel the pressure they say.

"Ordinary people are already feeling the squeeze and finding it hard to get hold of basic supplies, even in the capital," says Peter Verney, London-based editor of Sudan Update magazine.

"Sanctions will not worsen this noticeably but will affect the business community more," Verney said. "This gesture is a public slap in the face to the Sudanese government but I don't think it will change the government much. The sanctions are a morale booster for the opposition as a whole."

Sudan specialist Peter Woodward of the Department of Politics at the University of Reading said the sanctions are meant to be a warning to companies that Sudan's position is being "tightened up."

"Oil companies have been showing an interest in Sudan and the Sudanese government is hoping that if it can hang on in power, it will benefit from an oil boom in the future."

According to the White House, the Nov. 4 order freezing Sudanese assets in the United States, prohibiting U.S. trade with Sudan and barring financial transactions, will raise the pressure on Sudan to make a serious effort to end the country's 14-year-old civil war.

Peace talks are underway in Nairobi between Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Osman Mohamed Taha and second-in-command of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Salva Kiir. The conflict between the mainly Christian and animist southerners and the Islamic government in the north is estimated to have cost a million lives.

"If the peace talks fail, there could be a popular backlash," Woodward said. "Life is very grim for ordinary people and

discussion has intensified, particularly in the last two years, about whether or not there will be an uprising."

The SPLA has been working closely with the National Democratic Alliance, the main opposition party, in the last year, while making significant military advances during a 10-month offensive in the south. Its morale is high.

The Sudanese media claimed recently that the sanctions were part of a U.S. plan to abort the peace talks in Nairobi. One periodical carried the headline "To Hell with USA, Sudan Must Gear Up to Attract Asian Economic Support," while the daily Akhbar al-Ayoun charged that Washington was fueling the civil war and working to destabilize the Horn of Africa.

But Verney said the sanctions' announcement, coming halfway through the peace talks, may also imply that the United States does not have high expectations of them.

And though the sanctions will stop U.S. investment in Sudan's oil industry, other countries will likely fill the gap. Firms from Austria, Canada, China, Malaysia, Russia, France and several Arab

countries are already investing heavily in energy projects.

Yasin Miheisi of the Sudan Human Rights Organization in London agreed that the sanctions would not add much pressure on the Sudanese government because the regime is isolated diplomatically, especially with Europe and the United States.

"There has been a suggestion made in the United Nations of enforcing a blockade to prevent the supply of arms to Sudan. This would be the only effective way of preventing the government from waging war."

The efforts of Sudan to rein in the terrorists allegedly operating from its lands have also been questioned. "(The Sudanese government) is guilty as charged of human rights abuses and terrorism. Many crimes have been excused in the name of alleviating their hardship," said Alex De Waal of the London based NGO African Rights, who said the sanctions are "thoroughly deserved."

But some note that Sudan did eject high profile international terrorists Saudi Osama Bin Laden, linked to the bombing of U.S. targets in

Sudan and Saudi Arabia, and the Venezuelan Ilyich "Carlos the Jackal" Ramirez Sanchez. And while the U.S. and Egypt accuse Sudan of supporting gunmen who attempted to assassinate Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995, Egypt has quietly made its peace with Sudan, with recent high level diplomatic exchanges.

"The United States is the biggest loser of its decision," Sudan state radio quoted state minister for foreign affairs Mustafa Osman Ismail as saying. "It is an extension of the role of the Americans in supporting some neighboring countries in their aggression against Sudan."

"This is one of the injustices that the United States is imposing on other countries which do not submit to it, which make their own decisions," he said.

Not all in Sudan agreed. "The embargo is a political and moral support to Sudanese pro-democracy campaigns," a taxi driver told IPS in Khartoum this week. "We have suffered and we are prepared to suffer more and more, but the most important thing is that this government must go."

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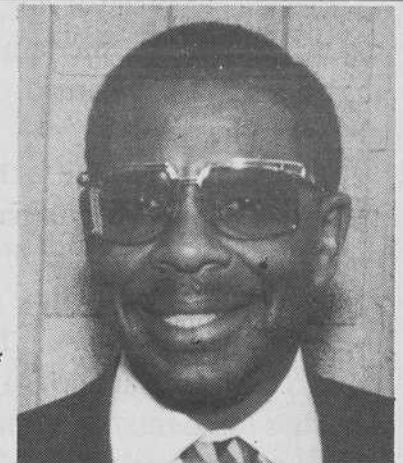
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