

What's new in Africa?

Weekly newsletter of the Polish Center for African Studies
17th week of 2015 (20.4 – 27.4.2015)

Top story of the week

As elections approach, Burundians fear a return to war 23 April 2015

Nkurunziza, a Hutu elected president in 2005, has exceeded many expectations in his ability to consolidate peace. Armed with a new constitution, which guarantees significant representation for both Hutu and Tutsi in the army, police and all branches of the national government, he's presided over a period that most Burundians say has yielded a noticeable reduction in ethnic tension. Despite this progress, however, Nkurunziza's popularity has long been in decline and ethnic tensions are beginning to resurface. Much of this is a consequence of Burundi's limp economy. In addition to his country's economic woes, Nkurunziza's rule has been blighted by what human rights groups say are an alarming number of politically motivated assassinations.



Read more [here](#)

Other stories

UN says Libya peace talks 'very close' to final accord Agreement 19 April 2015

The UN envoy for Libya has announced that rival factions in the strife-torn North African country have reached a draft accord which is "very close to a final agreement". Bernardino Leon, the UN envoy for Lybia told reporters in the Moroccan resort of Skhirat on Sunday, at the end of the latest round of negotiations between the factions, that preparations were under way for armed groups to hold direct talks. The envoy stressed however that any deal would need the approval of fighters on the ground, adding that his mission was hoping to convene a face-to-face meeting next week.

Read more [here](#)

Lesotho's coalitions of instability 20 April 2015

With no party winning an outright majority in the snap elections held on 28 February, the country's two million people will once again be governed by a potentially unstable coalition. Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili was sworn in on 17 March with a long list of urgent reforms on the agenda to prevent more of the instability that shook the former government of Thomas Thabane in late 2014. Lesotho has a history of unstable governments and divided political support. The country adopted the mixed member-proportional system, consisting of a combination of a first-past-the-post and proportional representation systems. Mosisili assured international and domestic observers that the coalition is ready to govern peacefully and restore stability, but his reliance on smaller alliance partners could be problematic.

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Sudan's president cancels trip to Indonesia

21 April 2015

Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir at the last minute cancelled a trip to Indonesia for a summit this week, a government official said, in what would have been his first trip outside of Africa or the Middle East in nearly four years. Bashir's plan to attend the Asia-African leaders conference in Jakarta sparked protests among rights groups, who want the president to be arrested. The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant in 2009 accusing him of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the conflict in Darfur. A conference organiser confirmed Bashir will not be attending, but declined to say why.

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Ebola drug cures monkeys infected with West African virus strain

22 April 2015

An experimental drug has cured monkeys infected with the Ebola virus, US-based scientists have said. The treatment, known as TKM-Ebola-Guinea, targets the Makona strain of the virus, which caused the current deadly outbreak in West Africa. All three monkeys receiving the treatment were healthy when the trial ended after 28 days; three untreated monkeys died within nine days. Scientists cautioned that the drug's efficacy has not been proven in humans. At present, there are no treatments or vaccines for Ebola that have been proven to work in humans.

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Tensions Burkina Faso's Transitional troubles

23 April 2015

Faso's transitional government will not achieve all its targets before the October national elections. After armed forces and a popular uprising swept President Blaise Compaoré out of power in October 2014, transitional president Michel Kafando arrived in office promising to meet all the hopes of the people. Proclaiming that "nothing will be like it was before" on his inauguration on 21 November, Kafando said that justice would be sought for assassinated former president Thomas Sankara and journalist Norbert Zongo, and that the government would fight against the corruption of the former regime while reforming the army and the justice system. More than three months in, Kafando and prime minister Yacouba Isaac Zida have admitted the challenges are much greater than they had expected.

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Nigeria, allies bombard Boko Haram forest stronghold 23 April 2015

The Nigerian army has laid siege on a forest considered to be the stronghold of terrorist group Boko Haram as the tide continues to turn against the murderous Islamists. The shelling of the Sambisa forest has been aided by armies from Chad, Niger and Cameroon and indications are Boko Haram's six-year-old insurgency is heading for an end. In the past two months, allied forces from West Africa backed by the African Union and the United Nations, launched an intensive push to try to crush the insurgents, who have killed thousands and kidnapped hundreds in their battle to establish an Islamic state. The raid on Sambisa is expected to lead to the discovery and rescue of the kidnapped girls. However, United States planes flying over Sambisa for reconnaissance have failed to spot the girls in the forest.

Read more [here](#)

Togo election: Will Gnassingbe dynasty retain power? 23 April 2015

President Faure Gnassingbe is looking to continue his family's 48-year rule of Togo in elections on Saturday, 10 years after violence marred the handover of power from his father. Although still seen as the favourite, he may face a bigger challenge than in the past. No opinion polls are published, but most observers think the election will be a two-horse race between Faure Gnassingbe and Jean-Pierre Fabre. The 2005 elections were overshadowed by fraud allegations and violent protests which left at least 400 people dead. Five years later, the opposition unsuccessfully contested official results that handed Mr Gnassingbe a second term, while international observers judged it "acceptable". Last year, opposition protests failed to bring about constitutional changes limiting the president to two terms in office - a move that would have prevented Mr Gnassingbe from standing. Western observers see it as encouraging that, so far, the campaign has been peaceful.

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Did you know that?

Child malaria vaccine: Final trials bring hope
24 April 2015

Final clinical trials of a malaria vaccine - the first to reach this stage - suggest it could help protect millions of children against malaria. But tests on 16,000 children from seven African countries found that booster doses were of limited use and vaccines in young babies were not effective. After children aged 5-17 months were given three doses of the vaccine, the immunisation was only 46% effective. But experts say getting the vaccine this far is a scientific milestone. Scientists have been working on the vaccine for more than 20 years, but observers believe there is still a long way to go.

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