



(France complained on Thursday that its European allies were not doing enough to help fight terrorism and instability in Africa and demanded a fairer sharing of the burden. In the past few years France has intervened militarily against al-Qaeda-linked Islamists in Mali and to restore order in Central African Republic (CAR), but has struggled to rally support for European Union (EU) missions from partners wary of military involvement.)

BURUNDI :

[Burundi: une foule inédite pour accueillir le journaliste Bob Rugurika](#)

Par RFI /19-02-2015

Bob Rugurika, célèbre journaliste burundais de la Radio publique africaine (RPA), une chaîne privée, est libre. Il a été relâché sous caution tôt ce jeudi 19 février suite à une décision rendue la veille par la cour d'appel. A son retour vers la capitale du pays, Bujumbura, une foule impressionnante l'attendait dans les rues.

C'est du jamais-vu : un véritable triomphe pour Bob Rugurika et sa radio, la RPA. Dès que la radio a annoncé sa libération ce jeudi matin, aux environs de 8h heure locale, des dizaines de milliers de Burundais sont descendus dans la rue et sont venus s'installer sur l'ensemble de son parcours, sur plusieurs kilomètres. Et ce, malgré une mise en garde très solennelle du ministre de l'Intérieur Edouard Nduwimana, qui avait interdit dès la veille toute manifestation.

L'ordre avait même été donné à la police de tout mettre en œuvre pour empêcher un éventuel rassemblement. Mais rien à faire, les forces de l'ordre ont été totalement débordées. Des hommes, des femmes, des enfants, des chômeurs, des fonctionnaires ; tout le monde est venu spontanément pour ovationner le retour de prison du directeur de la RPA, devenu aujourd'hui le symbole de la liberté d'expression au Burundi.

Un cortège sur la route

Ce que voulait éviter le pouvoir burundais est donc arrivé. Mercredi soir, la police a tout tenté pour emmener Bob Rugurika à Bujumbura de nuit. Mais le directeur de la RPA a refusé, craignant un attentat contre sa vie. Il a donc quitté sa prison de Muramvya, à une cinquantaine de kilomètres à l'est de la capitale, ce jeudi matin, dans un cortège d'une cinquantaine de voitures, sans compter des taxis-motos et des taxis-vélos, couverts de branches d'arbres vertes, symbole des uniformes des prisonniers burundais.

De mémoire de Burundais, c'est la première fois que l'on voit une telle manifestation. Des personnes rencontrées dans cette foule assurent qu'elles n'ont plus peur : « Le courage de Bob Rugurika a déteint sur nous, nous n'avons plus peur de leur police, de leurs armes », martèle une vieille femme. « Tout a changé, la peur va désormais changer de camp », renchérit un jeune homme, taxi-vélo de son état, tandis que l'un de ses aînés, âgé de 50 ans, confie : « Cela ressemble aux scènes qu'on m'a racontées, qui ont marqué le jour de l'indépendance en 1961. »

Des remerciements au peuple burundais

Devant le siège de la RPA, c'est aussi une ambiance de folie qui règne ce jeudi. Bob Rugurika s'est tout de suite rendu sur place dès sa sortie de prison. Et la foule l'a acclamé en dépit de la forte présence des forces de l'ordre. Une centaine de policiers équipés de matériel anti-émeute et de deux camions étaient déployés pour tenter de déloger les manifestants, mais la foule n'a rien voulu entendre. La situation reste tendue et pourrait dégénérer d'un moment à l'autre.

Dès son arrivée dans la station de radio, Bob Rugurika a participé à l'émission Kabizi, diffusée en direct. C'est la plus célèbre du pays. Les premiers mots de Bob Rugurika ont été adressés à la population du Burundi, à laquelle il « doit cette victoire ». Puis il a annoncé que quoiqu'il arrive, les assassins des trois religieuses italiennes tuées en septembre 2014 seront tôt ou tard châtiés.

« J'ai des sentiments de joie. J'ai un sentiment de victoire mais ce n'est pas ma propre victoire ; c'est la victoire, aujourd'hui, du peuple burundais, de ce peuple conscient et responsable de l'avenir de son pays. Aujourd'hui, c'est aussi la victoire de la justice ; c'est la victoire de la famille des journalistes. Je salue le courage des journalistes qui se sont battus pour ma libération. Je salue et je remercie du fond du cœur l'implication des activistes de la société civile, sans oublier l'implication des amis du Burundi, des diplomates accrédités ici. Cette victoire ne va plus s'arrêter », s'est-il réjoui.

« Vous savez, les gens qui ont décidé mon arrestation ; les gens qui ont décidé ma détention se recrutent parmi les gens impliqués dans cet assassinat. Cela, je n'ai pas peur de le dire parce qu'on l'a démontré dans les informations qu'on a diffusées et on le démontrera même dans l'avenir. Ces gens ont pensé, qu'en procédant à mon arrestation, qu'ils enterreraien cette histoire mais cela leur ait revenu en pleine figure. Tôt ou tard, ils payeront cela », a déclaré le directeur de la RPA, Bob Rugurika.

Satisfaction également des membres de la société civile qui ont combattu pour la libération du journaliste de la RPA, à l'image de Pacifique Ninihazwa, membre du Forum pour le renforcement de la société civile au Burundi.

C'est avec soulagement et beaucoup de joie que nous avons accueillis l'annonce de la libération de Bob Rugurika.

Pacifique Nini Nahzwé membre du Forum pour le renforcement de la société civile au Burundi

RWANDA :

Rwanda: Kagame, Kenyatta Open 140mw Geothermal Power Plant in Kenya

By James Karuhanga/The New Times (Kigali)/20 February 2015

President Paul Kagame and his Kenyan counterpart Uhuru Kenyatta, yesterday, inaugurated a 140-megawatt Olkaria Geothermal Power Plant in Naivasha, a town in Nakuru County, north-west of Kenya's capital Nairobi.

This comes as Kenya's main electricity producer, Kenya Electricity Generating Company Ltd (KenGen) is stepping up efforts to upgrade the country's power distribution systems to cut down costs.

The commissioning is the last phase of a larger 280MW Olkaria geothermal power project.

The new plant, it is hoped, will lead to reduced costs of production of goods, which ultimately leads to a lower cost of living in Kenya and the region.

Kagame thanked Kenya's leadership for the progress that the country continues to make, noting that the same progress is also contributing a lot to transformation of the East African Community (EAC).

The President noted that the commissioned plant is important not only to Kenya but to Rwanda, Uganda and other east African countries.

Kagame said as "we produce more electricity, as we continue to lower prices of electricity, what is expected is that the prices of other essential goods are also going to go down."

Wondering if it is guaranteed that prices would go down automatically as more power is availed, Kagame said a communication between government, industry, businesses and the citizens, should always suffice.

The necessity of such a conversation, he noted, is to avoid a situation where one will just assume that everything is okay.

"We create a healthier situation if we are able to speak to each other and reach some common understanding," Kagame said.

Referring to what a cement producer told the two leaders during an earlier tour of the plant, Kagame said apart from costs of production going down due to increased electricity production, "we need more good news" in the form of constant lowering of cement prices too.

This is a situation in Kenya, he said, but it is not much different from that in Rwanda.

"If the problem is addressed, almost automatically, the problem in Rwanda and elsewhere is going to be addressed as well."

Earlier on, Kenyatta, who said the development is another milestone in his government's journey to

deliver an additional 5,000 megawatts in five years, also emphasised the essential impact of the power plant on households, among others.

"Take my word that the cost of goods will come down and this will lead to a lower cost of living for all Kenyans," said President Kenyatta.

"We will not achieve the transformation we want if we do not increase the quantity of power, reduce its cost and ensure its regular supply. You cannot fight poverty when you do not have power to run an economy with industries to create jobs and create wealth."

Kenyatta also noted that an industrial park that will be established in the area will demonstrate the actuality of the connection between geothermal power and industrialisation.

Kenya is now the seventh highest producer of geothermal power in the world as it unveiled the biggest geothermal plant in the world, Kenyatta tweeted.

Is the power enough?

Reacting to people's suppositions, Kagame said Kenya - or the region - is not producing more than enough electricity.

"That can't be true because we know some single European countries that produce more electricity than the whole of Africa put together," he said. "So, what is it that they are doing with their electricity that Africa cannot do now?"

The region, or the continent, does not have enough electricity, he emphasised, further noting that even though clean and renewable energy is the way to go, people need to focus the conversation on how to deliver electricity.

"Before it becomes even clean for use, it must be there. The debate is about having sufficient electricity to power industries, schools, homes, and power the whole economy as it should be."

Last year, Rwanda sealed a power importation deal with Kenya, which will see the former import 30 megawatts of electricity from Kenya, and help ease the electricity woes of local manufacturers.

The agreement was part of a regional initiative to improve the power grid in the Northern Corridor states of Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya.

Transmission grids in Kenya and Uganda will need to be improved to facilitate the initial power sale of 30 megawatts by Kenya to Rwanda to be wheeled through Uganda by July 2015.

A memorandum of understanding that Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda entered into in 2013 allows the trio to share cheaper generation capacity as more power becomes available.

Rwanda also plans to import 400 megawatts from Ethiopia in the near future.

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RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Uganda's First Nobel Peace Prize Nominee

February 19, 2015 /by Alyssa Klein/okayafrica.com

On Tuesday, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) nominated Ugandan lawyer and grassroots activist Victor Ochen and his African Youth Initiative Network for the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize. Ochen's nomination marks the first time a Ugandan has been nominated for the award, which is one of the five Nobel Prize categories awarded by the Norwegian Nobel Committee annually (with a few exceptions) since 1901. At 33, Ochen is also the youngest African to be nominated.

"Victor Ochen has consistently shown both commitment and effectiveness in his efforts to address the needs of victims. He has worked for transitional justice, while simultaneously promoting human rights through nonviolent means, nourishing the leadership skills of other young people, and challenging systemic issues that lead to the continued vulnerability and suffering of war victims," the AFSC wrote in its nomination letter. Ochen, who was born and raised in Abia (a former command post of the Lord's Resistance Army) in the Lira district of northern Uganda, founded the African Youth Initiative Network (AYIN) in 2005. Supporting communities affected by the LRA, the Lira-based non-profit aims to bring about transitional justice and healing in northern Uganda through two key areas: medical rehabilitation and the promotion of youth leadership.

Ochen and AYINET "offer a unique and powerful example to be emulated by marginalized people all over the world," added the AFSC, a Quaker organization who themselves won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947. "We therefore respectfully request that the Norwegian Nobel Committee recognize Victor Ochen and the African Youth Initiative Network's work on behalf of victims of violent conflict by awarding them the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize."

AYINET wrote in an acceptance note on their website, "The nomination is a sign of deep respect for victims and survivors of unspeakable atrocities who, instead of being crushed by war, struggled and regained their dignity that allows them to leave in peace with their fellow humans. Further, it is a recognition for those victims who have devoted their lives to heal others. Many such people represent AYINET today, notably our director and founder, Mr. Victor Ochen."

SOUTH AFRICA :

TANZANIA :

Tanzanian albino boy found mutilated

18 February 2015/bbc.com

An albino toddler missing since Sunday has been found dead in northern Tanzania with all his limbs hacked off.

Yohana Bahati, aged one, was snatched from the house of his mother, who was cut with a machete.

His body was found a few miles away. Two people have been arrested in connection with the killing.

At least 74 albino children have been killed this century in Tanzania, where some witchdoctors use albino body parts to make their charms.

Last month the Tanzanian government placed a ban on all witchdoctors in the country. The ban is part of a nationwide operation to clamp down on attacks on people living with albinism.

The UN has condemned the attack and warned that 2015 could be a "dangerous year" for albinos. It fears that the forthcoming general and presidential elections will cause some candidates to turn to influential witchdoctors for help.

Witchdoctors are prepared to pay \$75,000 (£50,000) for a complete set of albino body parts according to the Red Cross.

Still missing

Another albino toddler remains missing after being kidnapped in December.

Tanzanian police have offered a reward for information leading to the recovery of Pendo Emmanuelle Nundi, aged four. Police have arrested 15 over her disappearance, including her father.

Albinism is particularly prevalent in Tanzania with one in 1,400 affected according to a 2006 BMC Public Health report. This compares with one in 20,000 in Western countries.

The higher rate is thought to be due to inbreeding.

Tanzania: AfDB Approves Sh261 Billion for Tanzania-Kenya Power Line

Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)/20 February 2015

THE African Development Bank (AfDB) has approved a \$145 million (about 261bn/-) loan to fund the building of an electricity line between Tanzania and Kenya to improve regional power connections.

AfDB said in a statement that the funding would help construct 507.5 km of transmission lines and substations along its path to allow for the transfer of 2,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity in either direction between Kenya and Tanzania.

"The Kenya-Tanzania Interconnection Project plays an important role in promoting regional integration through power trade," AfDB said in a statement.

Earlier this month, the two countries said they were seeking a consultant to oversee the construction of the line. The Kenya-Tanzania interconnection project will involve the construction of a total of 507.5 km of 400Kv high voltage alternative current (HVAC) transmission line in double circuit from Isinya Substation in Kenya to Singida Substation in Tanzania.

A total of 93.1 km of the line is in Kenya and 414.5 km in Tanzania. The transfer capacity of the interconnector is designed for 2,400 MW.

The associated substation works include the extension of the existing Isinya (Kenya) and Iringa (Tanzania) substations to include 400 kV transformers, and the construction of a new 400kV substation in Arusha.

East Africa has some of the fastest growing economies on the continent but electricity shortages deter investment, pushing up business costs and sustaining poverty and inequality.

Kenya is adding 5,000 MW on installed capacity by 2017 from about 1,664 MW now. Tanzania aims to double its generation capacity to 3,000 MW by 2016.

Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia said in December they will spend \$1.4 billion to link their power grids by 2018 and create a regional power pool for trading electricity.

Ethiopia and Kenya are also constructing a power line aimed at improving electricity supply between the two countries. Southern Africa already has a series of interconnections linking countries, including South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, which allows them to trade power.

KENYA :

Kenya stockbrokers back down on threat to stop trading

Fri Feb 20, 2015/Reuters

Feb 20 (Reuters) - Kenyan stockbrokers retreated from a threat to stop trading for a month due to a court case involving the reintroduction of a capital gains tax and said trading would resume as normal on Friday, their association said.

"In the interest of maintaining the sanctity and stability of the capital markets in Kenya, the Council of KASIB has further resolved that they shall not suspend trading services," the brokers' association, known as KASIB, said in a statement distributed by the regulator, the Capital Markets Authority.

(Reporting by Duncan Miriri; Editing by Edmund Blair)

Supermarket chains vie to unlock Kenya retail market

Author: Duncan Miriri, Reuters/19 February 2015

The average value of a shopper's basket has risen 67% in five years, making Kenya the continent's fastest-growing retail market.

When Kaleli Muli needed to buy rings for his wedding, he popped into his local superstore in a suburb of Kenya's capital to avoid the hassle of a trip downtown to find a jeweller.

He left 20 minutes later clutching a plastic bag with two gold bands worth 45,000 shillings (\$492), happy with his purchase but also the time saved. Before the advent of hypermarkets, the rings might also have cost hours of shopping.

"It is more convenient and there is a wider variety of products that I can choose from," said the agri-business consultant, who also does his weekly grocery shopping and bought his flat screen TV at Nakumatt, Kenya's largest retail chain.

Nakumatt and other local retailers have long served Kenya's market but now international store chains and private equity investors are also coveting the strong growth prospects in east Africa's leading economy.

Kenya, with a GDP of \$53.4 billion, is a gateway to regional trade, but it holds other attractions for retail investors.

Analysts say the penetration of formal retail is 25-30 percent, double that of Africa's biggest economy Nigeria. In addition, the average value of a shopper's basket has risen 67 percent in five years to \$20, making Kenya the continent's fastest-growing retail market, say industry executives.

Nairobi's shopping malls hit the headlines in September 2013 when Islamic militants attacked the upmarket Westgate shopping centre and killed at least 67 people. It remains closed and security at other malls has been tightened, though shoppers are undeterred.

BARRIERS TO ENTRY

New market entrants face numerous challenges in addition to local competition. They must race to complete buildings on time, overcome legal hurdles and establish reliable supply chains.

Wal-Mart's bid to enter Kenya through an acquisition flopped in 2013 due to a court case involving the owners of local retailer Naivas, which it sought to acquire through its South African business, Massmart.

"The dominance of local chains in the modern retail segment makes it difficult for new entrants and resistance to foreign takeovers complicates mergers and acquisitions," said research firm Euromonitor International.

French retailer Carrefour says it will inaugurate its first Kenyan store this year through its Dubai-based franchisee Majid al Futtaim.

By contrast, Nakumatt, which has annual sales of \$750 million, bought four stores in Tanzania from South Africa's Shoprite last year, taking its total in east Africa to 52, as it ramps up its presence in underserved neighbours.

It has 38 outlets in Kenya, up from 11 a decade and a half ago, eight in Uganda and two in Rwanda.

In Kenya, the Naivas ownership row has been resolved in court and the company says it is open to talks with potential suitors, although not with Massmart.

"We are open to talks with parties that can actually help us improve the business," said Willy Kimani, Naivas' head of business development.

Massmart said it still wants to expand into east Africa, where it will open its Game brand store at a new shopping mall to be opened in Nairobi this year.

Nakumatt is also looking to expand by selling a quarter of its shares, though the process has taken more than five years. Managing director Atul Shah said the company was in talks with an investor

but declined to give details.

PROBLEMS STOCKING SHELVES

New investors still have to deal with delays in the construction of shopping malls in big cities and a lack of retail space in upcountry towns.

Paul Kavuma of Catalyst Principal Partners, a \$125 million private equity fund invested in a local pharmacy retail chain, warned that failure of real estate developers to keep pace with the growth in retail could curb investments.

"The real estate industry has to also be modernising and evolving, not just within Nairobi but also upcountry into other commercial centres," he said.

Retailers can also face problems stocking shelves, said Ayisi Makatiani, managing partner at Fanisi Capital, a \$50 million private equity fund.

"It is one thing to build beautiful supermarkets. The other thing is can you get good, constant supply of eggs? Can you get good, constant supply of quality vegetables?" he said.

Fanisi has invested in a food distribution business and a meat processor in Kenya to fill that supply gap.

Uchumi Supermarkets, Kenya's only listed retailer, prefers local suppliers where possible, said chief executive Jonathan Ciano. Retailers have been left vulnerable by a recent exodus of manufacturers to Egypt from Kenya due to high costs.

Cadbury and Kenya's Eveready closed their production plants in Kenya last year, opting to supply the market with chocolate and dry batteries from their plants in Egypt instead.

"If you have challenges in Egypt, of course they won't deliver," Ciano said.

ANGOLA :

AU/AFRICA :

Libye: nouvelles tensions égypto-qataries, l'EI renforce son emprise

19/02/2015/AFP

L'Egypte et le Qatar ont étalé leurs désaccords jeudi après des frappes égyptiennes contre le groupe Etat islamique (EI) en Libye, où l'organisation jihadiste a renforcé son influence en s'emparant de l'université de Syrte.

Après la décapitation de 21 chrétiens, en grande majorité des Egyptiens, revendiquée dimanche par la branche libyenne de l'EI, l'Egypte a bombardé mardi des positions jihadistes en Libye et réclamé une intervention militaire internationale dans ce pays plongé dans le chaos et contrôlé par des

milices rivales.

Le Qatar a critiqué une "action militaire unilatérale" de l'Egypte qui a agi sans consulter ses partenaires au sein de la Ligue arabe. Le délégué égyptien à la Ligue a répliqué en accusant Doha de soutenir le "terrorisme".

En signe de protestation, le Qatar a aussitôt rappelé son ambassadeur au Caire. Et les cinq autres monarchies du Golfe -Arabie saoudite, Emirats arabes unis, Koweït, Oman et Bahreïn- se sont rangées à ses côtés face aux accusations "infondées" du Caire, selon le secrétaire général du CCG, Abdellatif al-Zayani.

Mais en soirée, ce dernier a reconduit ce soutien au Qatar et affirmé que les autres monarchies pétrolières appuyaient l'Egypte et son président.

La plupart de ces monarchies avaient pourtant soutenu l'ex-chef de l'armée égyptien et désormais chef d'Etat Abdel Fattah al-Sissi après la destitution en 2013 du président Mohamed Morsi, issu des Frères musulmans, et avaient accusé le Qatar de soutenir cette confrérie classée "terroriste" en Arabie saoudite et aux Emirats.

Mettant fin à des mois de tensions entre les deux pays, le Qatar avait finalement apporté en décembre son soutien à M. Sissi.

- Pas de consensus international -

Le nouveau différend avec le Qatar illustre l'absence de consensus international sur la Libye, la plupart des pays ne privilégiant pas l'option militaire.

Devant le Conseil de sécurité mercredi, le ministre libyen des Affaires étrangères Mohammed al-Dairi a demandé à l'ONU de lever l'embargo sur les armes imposé à son pays pour "aider" l'armée "à renforcer ses capacités" alors qu'elle peine à lutter contre les milices.

Son homologue égyptien Sameh Choukri a appuyé cette demande, indiquant que le projet de résolution prévoyait une "levée des restrictions" sur les seules armes à destination du gouvernement reconnu par la communauté internationale.

Plusieurs membres du Conseil, dont la Russie, sont réticents à lever l'embargo imposé depuis 2011, évoquant le risque de voir des armes tomber entre de mauvaises mains.

Washington, Paris et Londres ont eux affirmé leur préférence pour une solution politique.

Le représentant de l'ONU en Libye Bernardino Leon a dit "espérer qu'un accord politique pourra être trouvé bientôt" en Libye, un espoir partagé par la Tunisie et l'Algérie.

La Libye est morcelée et sous la coupe de milices rivales. Deux gouvernements s'y disputent le pouvoir: l'un proche des miliciens de Fajr Libya, et l'autre, reconnu par la communauté internationale, siégeant dans l'est du pays. Fajr Libya contrôle Tripoli et une grande partie de l'Ouest libyen.

Le principal bastion de la branche libyenne de l'EI est à Derna, à 1.300 km à l'est de Tripoli. Ce groupe extrémiste sunnite, responsable d'atrocités -viols, rapt, décapitations-, sévit aussi en Irak, en Syrie, où il a conquis de vastes régions, et en Egypte.

- 'Horrible mensonge' -

Renforçant son emprise en Libye, l'EI a pris le contrôle jeudi de l'université de Syrte (450 km à l'est de Tripoli), qui a suspendu ses cours, selon des témoins.

La veille, une soixantaine de véhicules appartenant à l'EI ont paradé à Syrte, ville natale du dictateur Mouammar Kadhafi qui y a été capturé puis tué par les rebelles en octobre 2011 après huit mois de révolte.

Des photos, signées de la branche libyenne de l'EI et diffusées sur les réseaux sociaux, montrent des dizaines de jihadistes cagoulés paradant à bord de pick-up et véhicules tout terrain armés de canons anti-aériens et brandissant les drapeaux noirs du mouvement extrémiste.

Selon des habitants, des combattants de l'EI ont également pris position devant le centre Ouagadougou, où Kadhafi organisait les sommets africains ou arabes.

Cette démonstration de force intervient après l'envoi par la coalition Fajr Libya d'une force pour "rétablir la sécurité" à Syrte. Mais pour le moment il n'y pas eu de combats entre les deux camps.

Au dernier jour d'un sommet à Washington sur la lutte antijihadistes, le président américain Barack Obama a dénoncé comme "un horrible mensonge" l'idée, mise en avant par diverses organisations extrémistes, selon laquelle l'Occident serait en guerre contre l'islam.

"Les Etats-Unis feront plus pour lutter contre les idéologies haineuses", a ajouté M. Obama dont le pays est à la tête d'une large coalition internationale qui mène des raids contre l'EI en Syrie et en Irak

Islamic State lays claim to North African outpost

Reuters/February 20, 2015

ALGIERS/CAIRO: The images match the worst of Islamic State's atrocities: black-clad fighters and an English-speaking jihadist taunt the West before slaughtering their victims in orange jumpsuits on a Libyan beach.

Their masked leader turns to the Mediterranean and points a bloodied knife towards Europe, declaring, "We will conquer Rome, God willing."

The execution of 21 Egyptian Christians by militants in Libya proclaiming allegiance to Islamic State was an announcement that the group, also known as ISIS or ISIL, has spread from Syria and Iraq to Libya. Militants have profited from chaos to claim a North African outpost a boat ride away from Italy's coast.

International reaction came swiftly. Egyptian jets pounded suspected militant sites in Libya, and Paris joined Cairo in calling for UN action to halt the militants' spread.

Libya appears to be Islamic State's most successful move yet beyond its Middle East heartland, likely attracting more recruits and increasing Western fears of a new North African base for jihadist fighters.

Yet even as they thrive in Libya's unrest, Islamic State sympathizers must contend with rivalries and factional infighting that make securing the sort of territorial gains that IS has made in Iraq and

Syria more complicated.

“The statement in Libya is more a statement of defiance,” said Hassan Hassan, co-author of a book on IS. “By killing Christian civilians, they were delivering a message that they’re expanding.”

The rise of IS comes as no surprise. Libya has descended into factional fighting, leaving the country almost lawless nearly four years after Muammar Gaddafi’s fall.

Two competing governments backed by militia brigades are scrambling for control. Diplomats have fled, Tripoli’s airport is a bombed-out shell and oil flow is a trickle as combatants trade rockets and air strikes.

Libya’s IS sympathisers have used social media to display shows of strength, parades of armed men and appeals to implement sharia law in the eastern city of Derna, a stronghold of Islamist militancy.

But this year IS militants in Libya have escalated operations. Last month, they claimed an assault on the Tripoli Corinthia hotel, killing nine people.

Islamic State gunmen also attacked Libya’s Al-Mabrook oilfield, where France’s Total owns a stake. Some victims were beheaded.

A US government source said US officials do not yet know how many attacks by Islamic State sympathizers are directly tied to the central organisation or are just “copycat” claims.

But analysts said the Egyptian killings, their video release via an official IS outlet, excerpts from an IS magazine on the hostages and the executions themselves suggested ties with IS command.

In December, General David Rodriguez, head of the US Africa Command, said a couple of hundred militants were in training camps in eastern Libya that were likely to send fighters to Syria.

Now foreigners are being killed fighting for Islamist groups in Libya. Tunisian newspapers carry death notices of jihadists who have died not only in Syria or Iraq, but also in Libyan cities like Benghazi.

For Egypt, the rise of Islamic State just over its border is worrying. Egyptians officials see ties between Libyan Islamists and militants in the Sinai.

“What you have is a chaotic country where Islamic State and other militant groups are untouchable, on your border,” a senior Egyptian security source told Reuters. “Our goal is not to contain terrorists with air strikes, our goal is to eradicate terrorism in Libya.”

Libya is also host to Ansar al Sharia, blamed by Washington for an attack on the US consulate in Benghazi where the US ambassador died, and al Qaeda-linked groups as well as smaller Islamist rivals whose motives are more local than global.

More unsafe burials in Ebola-hit states

February 19 2015/AFP

Geneva - Ebola-hit Sierra Leone and Guinea saw an increase in the last week in unsafe burials that risk spreading the disease, the World Health Organisation reported.

In Guinea, there were 39 unsafe burials and in Sierra Leone, there were 45 reported in the week to February 15, WHO said in a report late on Wednesday.

Ensuring safe burials of the highly contagious bodies of those who die from the virus has been a top priority in fight against the deadly virus.

WHO also warned that more than 40 new confirmed Ebola cases in the two countries had been identified only after the infected people had died in their communities, and not in treatment facilities.

“Not only have these individuals not received potentially life-saving treatment, but other members of the community have been put at greater risk of exposure” to Ebola, the UN agency pointed out in its latest situation report on the 14-month outbreak.

WHO said the number of “security incidents” had also risen in Liberia over the past week after people were misinformed that Ebola was present in shots used for routine vaccinations.

WHO did not provide details on what the security incidents were.

As of February 15, WHO said 23 253 people had been infected with Ebola and 9 380 had died, the vast majority of them in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Guinea had reported 52 new confirmed cases and Sierra Leone had reported 74 in the week leading up to Sunday, both showing a small decrease from the previous week.

Liberia, which for a long time was the hardest-hit country, meanwhile counted only two new confirmed cases in the four days to February 12.

Ebola, one of the deadliest viruses known to man, is spread only through direct contact with the bodily fluids of an infected person showing symptoms such as fever or vomiting.

People caring for the sick or handling the bodies of people infected with Ebola are especially exposed.

As of February 15, a total of 833 health workers were known to have contracted the virus and 488 of them had died, the WHO said.

AFP

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

France urges EU to help in Africa fight

by Adrian Croft and Aija Krutaine/Reuters/février 20 2015

RIGA — France complained on Thursday that its European allies were not doing enough to help fight terrorism and instability in Africa and demanded a fairer sharing of the burden.

In the past few years France has intervened militarily against al-Qaeda-linked Islamists in Mali and to restore order in Central African Republic (CAR), but has struggled to rally support for European Union (EU) missions from partners wary of military involvement.

With Islamic State (IS) present in Libya and Boko Haram posing a threat to French-speaking countries in West Africa, Paris sees the militant threat in Africa growing.

French Defence Minister Jean-Yves le Drian shook up an EU defence ministers' meeting in the Latvian capital with a public appeal for other European countries to make a greater commitment to security in Africa.

Following attacks in Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen there was no longer any real separation between internal and external security, Mr le Drian said.

"We must act both in our territories and in crisis theatres. Consequently ... the burden of European security must be fairly shared out. I called for solidarity."

He said, for example, that the EU was having difficulty putting together 60 experts needed for a military training mission in CAR and complained that the EU has a 2,000-strong rapid reaction force, known as a battle group, on standby, but has never used it.

Mr le Drian said the EU was placing its faith in United Nations (UN)-led efforts to end the conflict in Libya and there had been no talk at the meeting of military intervention.

The increasing danger IS poses in Libya — close to Europe's borders — became apparent on Sunday when it released a video showing the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians.

A French diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that Paris had been asking the EU diplomatic service for six months to prepare for a positive or negative outcome to the UN peace effort in Libya "and we have nothing on the table so far".

He said there was now an immediate threat from the presence of terrorist groups in Libya "who have a clear target, which is Europe".

France was not promoting a military option in Libya, but if the UN mediation succeeded, "we will need some strong follow-up, perhaps some military presence on the ground, and we have to prepare for that," he said.

Saying Boko Haram was becoming "perhaps the main threat for security in Africa", he said France was asking Britain to be "more proactive on the issue" and to work with neighbouring countries to contain the threat.

Troops from Chad, Niger and Cameroon have been battling the Boko Haram militants.

Libye : l'Etat islamique menace d'envoyer "500.000 migrants" en Europe

L' Obs/ 20-02-2015

L'EI envisagerait d'utiliser les migrants comme une "arme psychologique" contre l'Europe. Et tout particulièrement contre l'Italie si celle-ci intervient en Libye.

La menace est-elle sérieuse ? En tout cas, elle a été officiellement formulée. Le groupe Etat islamique a envoyé un message d'avertissement à l'Italie, rapporte "Le Figaro" jeudi 19 février : "Si vous engagez des forces armées en Libye, nous vous envoyons 500.000 migrants".

Selon des écoutes téléphoniques que le quotidien italien "Il Messaggero" a révélé, l'Etat islamique envisagerait de recourir aux migrants comme une "arme psychologique" contre l'Europe. Et tout particulièrement contre l'Italie si celle-ci intervenait en Libye.

Créer le "chaos" en Méditerranée

"Les djihadistes émettent l'hypothèse d'envoyer à la dérive direction l'Italie, des centaines de barques remplies de migrants, dès le moment où notre pays évoquerait une intervention armée en Libye", écrit le quotidien italien. L'objectif de l'État islamique serait de créer le "chaos" en Méditerranée.

L'Italie, qui redoute l'installation d'un "califat" en Libye, avertit que le temps était compté pour une solution politique, face au renforcement de l'Etat islamique à 350 km de ses côtes.

"La détérioration de la situation sur place requiert un changement de rythme de la part de la communauté internationale avant qu'il ne soit trop tard", déclare le ministre italien des Affaires étrangères, Paolo Gentiloni, devant les députés.

L'Italie redoute un "exode massif"

Le temps est d'autant plus limité, explique Paolo Gentiloni, qu'il existe en Libye des risques "évidents" de fusion entre l'EI et des milices locales.

Nous sommes face à un pays au territoire immense et aux institutions défaillantes et cela a des conséquences potentiellement graves non seulement pour nous mais aussi pour la stabilité et la permanence des processus de transition dans les Etats africains voisins".

L'Italie redoute un "exode massif" de migrants depuis la Libye, où déjà chaque jour des centaines d'entre eux sont récupérés en mer par les sauveteurs italiens.

Près de 4.000 ont ainsi été sauvés depuis vendredi 13 février dernier, ce qui dépasse déjà largement le total du mois de février 2014, une année pourtant record, selon le décompte de l'Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM).

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