

Regional News Roundup

ETHIOPIA

Government denies food aid “manipulated” for political gain

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its allies won 545 out of 547 seats in the parliament in May elections, amid opposition charges - dismissed by the government - that it employed a broad-based campaign of harassment, intimidation and coercion, including the systematic denial of food aid to opposition supporters. Despite annual economic growth of over 7 percent in the past five years, about 13 million Ethiopians - nearly one-sixth of the population - receive some form of foreign aid. The ruling party vigorously denied the reports and said the opposition was fabricating such evidence to discredit the elections and undermine the government. The accusations are “outrageous and stupid”, Meles told reporters. “There is no such system. There will never be such a system.” However, a March report from New York-based Human Rights Watch, A Hundred Ways of Putting Pressure, states that government services, including food aid distributions, are “tools used to discourage opposition to government policies, deny the opposition political space, and punish those who do not follow the party line”.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89382>

KENYA

Thousands affected by floods

Torrential rains and floods in more than 15 districts in Kenya from December 2009 have claimed lives and left massive destruction of houses, household property, infrastructure and farmlands, according to the Kenya Red Cross Society. At least 24 people and more than 6,000 livestock have been killed by the raging floods that have affected some 70,000 people among them 30,000 who urgently require humanitarian assistance. Last week, rains and floods have displaced at least 314 households countrywide. The death toll due to floods, landslides and lightning between March and June 2010 is 94 people.

Read more:

http://www.kenyaredcross.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=295&Itemid=117

UGANDA

ICC to investigate allegations of army atrocities

The Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Luis Moreno-Ocampo, said on 3 June the ICC was assessing information accusing the Ugandan military of war crimes and atrocities committed in the 20-year civil war in the north of the country. Moreno-Ocampo told reporters that survivors of the war, NGOs and opposition political parties had all accused the country's army, the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF), of committing atrocities while battling the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels. “There are complaints [against the UPDF] and we are analyzing them. There are cases of torture and mass displacement though some are outside our mandate that started in 2002. Any citizen of Uganda could send communication to my office and I will treat them properly according to judicial standards,” he said.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89357>

SOMALIA

Rise in mental health disorders blamed on conflict

Prolonged conflict in Somalia, especially in and around the capital, Mogadishu, has contributed to an alarming increase in the number of mental health patients, according to health officials.

“There are a number of reasons why we are seeing so many mental health disorders but, in my opinion, the single biggest contributing factor is the conflict,” Abdiaziz Mohamed Warsame, the only practising psychiatrist in Mogadishu and professor at Benadir University, said on 3 June.

He said most city residents had been displaced more than a dozen times, with some experiencing horrific violence against themselves, family or friends. “Very few people can go through this kind of trauma for 20 years and come out unscathed,” Warsame said.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89352>

Thousands displaced by rains and clashes Renewed militia fighting and heavy rains in Somalia's central regions of Hiiraan and Galgadud have forced thousands of people to abandon their homes, say officials. According to locals fresh fighting between pro-government Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a - a traditional Sufi movement - and Al-Shabab broke out in Galgadud region on 3 June and continued for two days. "Our estimate is that about 5,000 families [30,000] have fled the towns of Dusamareb, Eil Dheer, Mareer Gur and Gadon and Bula'le and are now displaced," Abdulkadir Mohamud, an official of a local NGO known as Towfiq, said in Dusamareb, the regional capital. He said even though the fighting stopped short of Dusamareb, most displacement occurred there. "They [Al-Shabab] came as close as 10km from the town; it was a fear-driven displacement."

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=89403>