

Regional News Roundup

SOMALIA

Minister urges WFP to release food from Mogadishu stores

Somalia's government has asked the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to release food stocks in Mogadishu for distribution to hundreds of thousands of needy internally displaced persons (IDPs), Interior Minister Sheik Abdulkadir Ali Omar said on 19 April. Life in the camps was getting worse every day and many families have already run out of food, he said.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88849>

Al-Shabaab metes out repression in the south

The Islamist armed group al-Shabaab is subjecting inhabitants of southern Somalia to killings, cruel punishments, and repressive social control, Human Rights Watch said in a report released on April 19. Al-Shabaab, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and African Union (AU) forces in the war-torn capital, Mogadishu, continue to conduct indiscriminate attacks, killing and wounding numerous civilians. The 62-page report, *Harsh War, Harsh Peace: Abuses by al-Shabaab, the Transitional Federal Government, and AMISOM in Somalia*, finds that al-Shabaab forces have brought greater stability to many areas in southern Somalia, but at a high cost for the local population - especially women. Based on over 70 interviews with victims and witnesses, the report describes harsh punishments including amputations and floggings, which are meted out regularly and without due process. People accused of being traitors or government sympathizers - often on flimsy pretexts - face execution or assassination.

Full report:

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/04/18/somalia-al-shabaab-metes-out-repression-south>

SUDAN

NCP and SPLM pledge to form Sudan's next government

Sudan's partners in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) have agreed to accept the election results at all levels in the country and pledged to jointly form the next government, despite any complaints from parties. Leaders of both parties also discussed the way forward in the expected formation of the next government and expressed the need for immediate resumption of dialogue on the implementation of the other remaining outstanding issues in the CPA. President Omar Hassan al-Bashir is expected to remain the President of the Republic while Salva Kiir Mayardit is expected to continue as First Vice President of the Republic and President of the semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan.

Read more: <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article34830>

Elections flawed but an important step, say observers

Sudan held its first multiparty elections in 24 years on 11-15 April, but the election has been marred by opposition boycotts and allegations of vote rigging. Although preliminary reports from the election observation teams have been mixed, nearly all agree that the elections, even if flawed, represent an important step in the implementation of Sudan's 2005 peace deal. According to the Carter Center, the election falls short of international standards. Its 70 observers, spread across all 25 states, noted inadequate protection of political freedoms, logistical troubles, insufficient transparency and intimidation. In a preliminary statement, the European Union focused its blame on a highly complex electoral design which it said led to confusion. Domestic observers which had 3,500 local observers spread around the country, said various failures in the whole process led to corruption, malpractice and fraud, calling for a rejection of the results. The African Union said, the elections are imperfect but historic while the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) concluded, the elections are credible, considering the big challenges in holding such a vote. Meanwhile, the USA, UK and Norway have called on Sudan to begin in earnest border demarcation and referendum preparations.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88868>

TANZANIA

Tanzania gives citizenship to 162,000 Burundian refugees

The UN has praised Tanzania for granting citizenship to some 162,000 refugees who fled Burundi 38 years ago. "It's the most generous naturalisation of refugees anywhere," said UN refugee agency (UNHCR) spokeswoman Melissa Fleming. UNHCR head Antonio Guterres described it as a "historic moment" and urged other countries with long-term refugees to follow Tanzania's example.

Read more: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8625429.stm>