

Dateline Africa

1 December 2023 to 29 February 2024

■ FEBRUARY

21 February: Türkiye – once the Ottoman Empire, a colonial occupier of north Africa for centuries – is extremely active in Africa once again. It is to assist in strengthening coast-guard services in Somalia. This comes amid infrastructure projects in east Africa and its dodgy ‘powerships’ all around the continent. Türkiye has diplomatic missions in 43 African countries, compared to India (40), China (51) and the US (47).

15 February: Senegal’s Constitutional Council rejected efforts of the government and the National Assembly to postpone the national election (that was scheduled for 25 February 2024) to December 2024. (The election was held successfully on 24 March. Two-term President Macky Sall was not a candidate.)

02 February: The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported intensified armed attacks against civilians in the North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri provinces in the far east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Clashes resumed between non-state armed groups and the army and 5,690,000 people have been registered as displaced in the three provinces. A lack of funding, physical access challenges and security constraints have forced many aid partners to reduce or partially suspend their support activities.

■ JANUARY

28 January: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, three west African countries run by military juntas, said they would withdraw from the Economic Community of West African States(ECOWAS) which has been pressing for a return to democratically elected civilian government. All three states had been members since its founding in 1975.

20 January: Senegal’s Constitutional Council ruled that Ousmane Sonko, an opposition leader, could not stand in the presidential election in February because of a conviction for defamation, following a case brought by the minister of transport. Sonko was already serving sentences for other charges, supporting evidence of a tendency for ruling parties in Africa to use the courts to restrict political competition, often by bringing criminal charges against opposition candidates.

04 January: Muhammad Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo, Sudan’s most notorious warlord and head of the feared rebel army the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), visited Pretoria to brief President Ramaphosa on developments in the civil war which began in April 2023. The RSF has won a string of victories against the Sudanese army. He was welcomed by leaders in Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Uganda during his tour.

01 January: Ethiopia signed a memorandum of understanding with neighbouring Somaliland for naval and commercial access to ports along Somaliland’s coast on the Gulf of Aden. Somaliland is not recognised internationally – or by the African Union – as a country. It is a breakaway region from Somalia, based on the boundaries of a former colony of Britain. At present, 95% of Ethiopia’s sea trade

goes through the port of Djibouti.

■ DECEMBER

20 December: The DRC held chaotic national elections in which Félix Tshisekedi was re-elected president amidst credible reports of widespread voting irregularities.

15 December: South Africa declared a public holiday to recognise and celebrate the victory of the Springboks, the national team, in the Rugby World Cup in Paris, France.

15 December: Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a genocidal militia, occupied Wad Madani, one of Sudan's biggest cities about 200km south-east of Khartoum. The defeated soldiers of the regular army, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), fled to the south with many panicked civilians. Since April 2023, seven million people have been displaced within the country. Another 1.4 million have fled to neighbouring states, many to Chad, after genocidal violence against the Masalit, a black African tribe, by the RSF. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) denied reports that it sent arms to the RSF.

06 December: In an excoriating three-page letter, ANC Veterans League deputy president Mavuso Msimang explained why, after 60 years as a member, he resigned from the ANC. The "litany of economic and social woes — crime, unemployment, destitution — associated with my beloved ANC is not only embarrassing, but also defies enumeration". Ten days later he un-resigned, as the ANC announced that "only members whose reputations are beyond reproach will be included in our list of candidates for Parliament and Provincial Legislatures" (in the 2024 elections).

03 December: A Nigerian army drone strike accidentally killed at least 85 civilians observing a Muslim festival in the northwest village of Tudun Biri in Kaduna state. The government has been battling jihadists and armed groups of bandits who have terrorised large parts of the north.