

International Asylum Seeker/Refugee Policy Issues

[No African citizens granted visas for African trade summit in California](#)

Sam Levin, The Guardian, 20 March 2017

The annual African Global Economic and Development Summit in California had no African attendees this year after between 60 and 100 people were denied visas, according to organizer Mary Flowers. This three-day conference at the University of Southern California (USC), is focused on the development of economic possibilities, growth and fostering partnerships between the US and African countries. The summit typically brings delegations from across Africa to meet with business leaders in the US in an effort to foster partnerships. This year, however, every single African citizen who requested a visa was rejected.

It has not been clarified yet whether the rejections are linked to Trump's travel ban. In past years, around 40 percent of visas have been denied, but there has never been an instance where the whole group of participants were unable to enter the US. A spokesperson for the US state department declined to comment on claims of visa rejections for summit participants, and underlined that applications are rejected when found ineligible according to the Immigration Act.

[EU: We can make members accept refugees](#)

News 24, 21 March 2017

Dimitris Avramopoulos, the EU's commissioner for migration, has indicated that the EU may force all EU member states to comply with the refugee relocation plan and compel them to accept refugees. Avramopoulos said that the EU will assess their options and make an announcement by the end of September. The relocation plan is geared towards easing the pressure states, such as Italy and Greece that have faced the greatest influx of refugees and are struggling to cope. However, countries such as Poland have refused to accept any migrants and have argued that the migrants are mostly economic migrants and not genuine refugees, and may in fact pose a security threat to the nation.

[Germany criticized by UNICEF over treatment of child refugees, after accepting 350,000](#)

RT News, 21 March 2017

German UNICEF released a report this week criticising Germany's handling of child refugees. The report, whilst acknowledging the fact that Germany has accepted a record number of minors since 2015 and has invested more in hosting refugees than many other countries in Europe, criticises Germany for providing inadequate housing and schooling for the child refugees it has accepted.

Germany have taken in around 350,000 over the last two years, with the majority arriving from Syria, Afghanistan, Africa and Eastern Europe. The government take responsibility for unaccompanied minors, giving them priority care. However, children arriving with families are, according to UNICEF's Sebastian Sedlmayr, 'explicitly excluded from that system and legislations' and are forced to rely on their parents who are likely to have limited capacity to care for their children, given the fact that they probably do not know the language or the customs in the country.

When these children arrive they are processed at a reception centre, where they usually sleep with 10-12 people in a room. In German law, refugee families are only meant to spend three months there, but the time period has now been extended to 6 months. According to the UNICEF report, around one-fifth of families actually spend up to one year in these centres. Adam Naber of the Federal Association of Unaccompanied

Minor Refugees lamented these centres, which lack lockable sanitation facilities, private space and cash-benefits. They also experience violence which puts refugee children at risk. Sedlmayr argues that the unacceptable circumstances children face are the result of the government being overwhelmed rather than a lack of intention, and that these issues can be corrected by setting new priorities. Acknowledging the complex political climate surrounding the migrant crisis, Sedlmayr urges that politics be kept out of humanitarian issues.

[Nigeria: Cameroon Forcing Nigerian Refugees to Return Home - UN](#)

Emmanuel Elebeke, AllAfrica, 22 March 2017

According to a report issued by the UNHCR, the Cameroonian army has so far this year sent home more than 2,600 refugees against their will to villages in northeast Nigeria, where insecurity persists and access to basic services remains limited. This occurs despite a recent agreement signed by both the Nigerian and Cameroonian governments to protect Nigerians refugees living in Cameroon from forced repatriations.

[Another group of refugees leave Dadaab for Somalia](#)

Stephen Opana, Ureport, 22 March 2017

This week, a group of 850 refugees left Dadaab refugee camp for Somalia under the ongoing voluntary repatriation program. According to the UNHCR, about 7,000 refugees have been repatriated since the beginning of this year and circa 79,000 more refugees will return home by the end of this year.

Kambios, the newest and smallest part of the Dadaab camp was closed after most non-Somali refugees were moved from Kambios to a refugee camp in Kakuma called Kalobeyei, which is located over a thousand kilometres north of Dadaab, close to the border with South Sudan.

In Kenya many criticisms about refugee management focus on the hostilities between the refugees and the local populations, as well as land use and the exploitation of other resources. Therefore, the UNHCR aim to transform Kalobeyei throughout the next decade into an integrated settlement area, in which refugees and the host community have access to social services and develop economic ties to build sustainable livelihood amongst them. In particular, it is a socio-economic development program (KISEDPP) that is being undertaken by the Kenyan Government, UN agencies like UNHCR, UN-Habitat, FAO, WHO, UNICEF, development actors-World Bank, NGOs, private sector and civil societies.

Regional Displacement Issues

[Refugees on rise in Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

Godfrey Olukya, Anadolu Agency, 21 March 2017

The number of refugees settling in the Democratic Republic of Congo is increasing, the UNHCR reported on Tuesday. According to the UN's refugee agency, there are currently 460,923 refugees currently living in the country, with 245,052 Rwandan refugees alone. There are also 103,420 refugees from the Central African Republic, 71,529 from South Sudan and 494 from Angola. However, it is important to note, that there are also 539,106 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo living in neighbouring countries.

The UNHCR report particularly emphasised the rise in the number of Burundian refugees fleeing to the Democratic Republic of Congo in recent times. At present there are 39,499 Burundian refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with at least 60 Burundian refugees arriving in the country every day.

The UNHCR further warned that it has much less than the \$232.9 million it needs in 2017 to help the refugees living in the country, and has actually only received three percent of that amount. The UNHCR's senior regional external relations officer in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Andrea Kirchhof, explained that there is simply not enough resources to support the Burundian refugees arriving. As a result, new arrivals cannot be accommodated in the transit centres and are instead being forced to wait outside. Kirchhof called on the

international communities and donors to increase their support for Burundian refugees in the DRC and surrounding region.

[At least 10 mass graves found in crisis-hit DRC region](#)

News24, 22 March 2017

The United Nations said on Wednesday that investigators found 10 mass graves in the violence-prone Kasai region in central Democratic Republic of Congo. UN human rights officer Barbara Matasconi communicated that seven mass graves were found in the town of Demba and three in Tshimbulu. Reports of other mass graves are yet to be confirmed. Previously the government admitted the existence of three mass graves, though did not share any information.

Since August 2016 the area has been characterised by ongoing violence due to the killing of a tribal chief and militia leader, Kamwina Nsapu. The killing was carried out by government forces after Nsapu rebelled against the government of President Joseph Kabila. Clashes between government forces and Nsapu supporters began in central Kasai, but the violence has since spilled over to the neighbouring provinces of Kasai-Oriental and Lomami.

[Somalia names 26-minister cabinet](#)

Africa News, 22 March 2017

On Tuesday, Somali Prime Minister Hassan Ali Kheyre announced the new Somali cabinet, which comprised of 26 members. The announcement marked the formation of a new government and is expected to be approved by parliament in the upcoming days.

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, elected last month, has promised to rid Somalia of the Islamist insurgent group al-Shabaab and has urged al-Shabaab fighters to surrender in return for a 'good life'. However, al-Shabaab have continued to carry out deadly attacks in the country.

[Somalia: Somaliland Drought 'A Kind of Nightmare' - and a Security Threat – Minister](#)

Laurie Goering, Thomson Reuters Foundation, 22 March 2017

Shukri Ismail Bandare, the minister of rural development and environment has warned that the prolonged drought in the semi-autonomous region of Somaliland, and the loss of livestock could increase security threats in the Horn of Africa. Since the drought began, between 65 and 80 percent of the region's livestock. Livestock is the cornerstone of Somaliland's economy, with around 70 percent of its economy built around livestock. Such a significant loss in livestock levels has unsurprisingly led to desperation amongst people that have lost almost everything.

The feelings of desperation are increased due to Somaliland's difficulty in accessing aid, given its continued non-recognition as an independent state. Whilst small levels of international assistance is trickling into the region, it cannot keep up with the worsening drought which is forcing the widespread migration of herders in Somaliland anxious to find water. This has overwhelmed the villages and cities with little water, who now host several thousand migrants. The drought has also meant greatly limited development, all funds originally allocated to infrastructure and development have been redirected to relief food and water. According to the UN Secretary General António Guterres, 5.5 million people will need assistance to survive over the next 6 months.

Increasing levels of migration along with other socio-economic stresses could undermine the truly significant role that Somaliland is playing in fighting Islamic extremism, such as al-Shabaab, in the Horn of Africa, experts have warned. Michael Higgins of the Independent Diplomat, a non-profit advisory group in Somaliland has warned about the effect that this displacement is likely to have on the very social fabric of Somaliland's society, which could increase the region's instability and reduce its ability to act as a 'buffer' against Islamic militants.

[Congo-Kinshasa: ICC Gives Jean-Pierre Bemba Extra Year in Prison](#)

Al Jazeera, 22 March 2017

After facing a second trial for the separate charges of attempting to bribe witnesses during his war-crimes trial, Jean-Pierre Bemba has had one year added to his 18 year prison sentence by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Wednesday. Bemba was also compelled to pay a 300,000 euro fine to a court fund allocated to support the victims of atrocities to 'discourage this kind of behaviour', according to the ICC's presiding judge Bertram Schmitt.

This is the first verdict and sentence of its kind for the ICC, which has often seen the court cases of prominent political figures plagued by the bribing of witnesses. The ICC's decision to charge Bemba along with four members of his legal team with bribery is seen as an indication that the Court is finally deciding to seriously address the practice of bribery, which significantly undermines their ability to prosecute the most heinous of crimes against humanity.

[Zimbabwe opposition leaders demand electoral reform ahead of 2018 vote](#)

Connor Gaffey, Newsweek, 22 March 2017

Following the breakdown of talks between opposition parties and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) over the format of the 2018 elections on Tuesday, the National Election Reform Agenda (NERA), a coalition of opposition groups, organised a march in Harare on Wednesday. The march was organised to protest against the current electoral process and to demand electoral reforms. Specifically, NERA called for the ZEC to be disbanded and for new electoral commissioners to be appointed before the election takes place. They also called for the UNDP to monitor the 2018 elections, and in particular to help Zimbabwe establish biometric voter registration in order to update the country's electoral register.

The march was attended by several opposition leaders, including Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Tsvangirai warned that MDC supporters would orchestrate mass protests if their demands were not met. They have reason to be concerned over the integrity of the upcoming electoral process. Indeed, President Mugabe has been in power since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, and international observers have frequently criticised ZANU-PF for rigging elections and intimidating political opponents. For example, when Mugabe lost the first round of voting to Morgan Tsvangirai in the 2008 election, tens of thousands of civilians were displaced in the subsequent violence before Mugabe eventually won the vote in a controversial second round of voting.

[CAR children being kept out of school by militants, peacekeepers: UN](#)

eNCA, 23 March 2017

Human Rights Watch released a report on Thursday which revealed the impact that the protracted conflict in the Central African Republic is having on the nation's school children. The country has experienced persistent violent clashes between the predominantly Muslim Seleka rebels and the Christian anti-balaka militias since the Seleka rebels ousted the president in early 2014. The Human Rights Watch report found that armed groups from both sides of the conflict have occupied schools or established bases near schools, even looting and damaging the schools, which has prevented many students from receiving an education. Indeed, one in three children are not attending school and about a fifth of schools are closed due to lack of teachers, insecurity and displacement. Lewis Mudge, an Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch, has warned that if more is not done to address this issue, the Central African Republic may have a 'lost generation'.

Perhaps more shockingly, the report found that on two occasions, with the last being in January, UN peacekeepers with MINUSCA also used schools as bases, which goes against the mission's directive that it's peacekeepers must 'not use schools for any purpose'. Given that MINUSCA are increasing their efforts to remove armed groups occupies groups, these actions appear extremely contradictory, said Mudge. For its part, MINUSCA sought to clarify that it only briefly occupied two schools in late 2016 and early 2017 whilst it was carrying out operations to protect civilians, but as soon as MINUSCA leadership found out they ordered the peacekeepers to leave the schools.

[DRC government advised to step up efforts in search of missing UN team](#)

Ismail Akweij, Africa News, 25 March 2017

The six members of the UN Group of Experts team that went missing in the Kasai Central province two weeks ago have still not been found. Ida Sawyer, the Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch called on the Congolese government to fully cooperate with partners to find the missing team. The Group of Experts were investigated allegations of widespread human rights abuses near Bunkonde village, south of Kananga. The only government announcement so far regarding the missing team is that the two non-Congolese UN experts have 'fallen into the hands of unidentified negative forces'.

[Central Congo Militia Decapitates 40 police officers in ambush](#)

Eyewitness News, 26 March 2017

Around 40 police officers in central Democratic Republic of Congo were decapitated by Kamuina Nsapu militants on Friday. The incident was the deadliest attack on security forces since August 2016. The police officers were attacked whilst they were driving from Tshikapa to Kananga, and in addition to the executions, the militant also stole arms and vehicles. Six police officers were spared because they spoke the local Tshiluba language.

The Kamuina Nsapu insurgency has now spread to five provinces in Democratic Republic of Congo and poses the most serious threat to the rule of President Kabila, according to News 24. So far, over 400 people, including 67 police officers and many soldiers, have been killed in the violence in central Democratic Republic of Congo.

South Africa

[Home affairs to send Zimbabweans on special permits packing](#)

Business Tech, 20 March 2017

Home affairs minister Malusi Gigaba is expected to announce changes to the country's position on Zimbabwe special permits (ZSPs) before the end of the month. Following a harsh shift in migration policy and previous government declarations, the media have reported that there is very slim chance for an extension. The ZSP was first introduced in October 2014, as a three year permit that would allow Zimbabwean nationals living in the country to legally work, own a businesses and study in South Africa, despite not carrying a valid visa. By ending the ZSP programme, Zimbabwean nationals will now only be allowed to enter the country if they meet the requirements for a regular study, work or business visa. In the case they are already in the country, they would also need to leave South Africa and apply for these visas back in Zimbabwe.

[Echoing Trump, Mashaba targets undocumented migrants](#)

Sam Mkokeli, Antony Sguazzin and Amogelang Mbatha, Mail & Guardian, 23 March 2017

Johannesburg's DA mayor, Herman Mashaba, keeps making strong statements against foreigner nationals. He said that he is on a mission to clean up Africa's richest city, and the prime targets in his sights are undocumented immigrants and allegedly corrupt deals by the officials of the ANC. He wishes to boost the justice system to face the huge rate of corruption. At the same time, he advises the government to close South Africa's borders.

Mashaba is targeting thousands of unauthorised inhabitants in the city centre, his goal for downtown Johannesburg is to move people out of 'hijacked' buildings, hire private companies to renovate them and then rent them to people earning at least R4,000 a month. About 135,000 people in the city centre are from households that earn less than R3,200 a month, according to the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa, citing census data. The mayor has continuously states that foreigner nationals and asylum seeker are turning the economy down and hinder the urban renovation project. Various experts harshly criticised the mayor by pointing out that his comments may incite xenophobic attacks, are likely unconstitutional and unimplementable, and underlined the fact that the Democratic Alliance is tacitly supporting Mashaba's strategy.

[Justin Ejimkonye: Nigerian Immigrant Wants R4.5M For Being Shot After He Refused To Pay Bribe](#)

Buzz South Africa, 23 March 2017

In a court case that is due to be heard at a Johannesburg high court in August 2017, Justin Ejimkonye, a Nigerian immigrant, is suing a local government for 2.5 million rand in damages for personal injury, as well as suing the Department of Home Affairs for two million rand for illegal detention.

Ejimkonye is suing over an incident that occurred in 2010. He was driving in Johannesburg when he was stopped by the police, who demanded a 900 rand bribe. When Ejimkonye refused to pay the bribe, his car was impounded and he was forced to pay a fine to retrieve it. Weeks later, he was stopped by the same group of police officers and again refused to pay a bribe. This time, however, instead of impounding his car, one of the police officers, identified as John Kichener Johnstone, shot Ejimkonye in the leg. The police officers alleged that Ejimkonye was arrested for cannabis possession, but they did not charge him with any crime until 18 months later. A public prosecutor, however, refused to pursue a police case against Ejimkonye due to a lack of evidence.

Nevertheless, Ejimkonye continued to suffer police intimidation and on 14 October 2013 was taken to the police station and detained for 36 days. During his detention, an immigration officer called Boitumelo Mokobi revoked his visa, claiming that it was illegally obtained. Ejimkonye refutes this, stating that he arrived legally in the country in 2005 and married a South African woman in 2007, allowing him to remain in the country permanently. However, as his visa was revoked he had essentially become an illegal immigrant and subsequently sent to the Lindela detention centre, where he spent six months until Judge Segopotje Mphahlele of the South Gauteng High Court ordered his release. Judge Mphahlele ruled that both the police and the government 'dismally failed to comply with the applicable requirements of the Immigration Act'.

However, once again on 27 May 2014, Officer Johnstone along with other police officers visited Ejimkonye's house for the second time, assaulted him again and detained him on charges of being an illegal immigrant. Judge Mphahlele made a second ruling that not only was the detention unlawful but that the police cannot approach him until his immigration issues are clarified.

Ejimkonye's attorney Bulelani Mzamo stated that the case was being brought to send a clear message that the police and immigration officers cannot get away with such actions.

[Legality of Muslim marriage a religious, human rights issue – divorcee](#)

Tammy Petersen, News24, 24 March 2017

The class action case calling for Muslim marriages to be declared legally valid will be heard by the Western Cape High Court on 28 August 2017, three years after the Women's Legal Centre first filed. Judges Siraj Desai, Gyaat Salie-Hlophe and Nolwazi Boqwana are expected to preside over the matter.

The class action case argues that the historical basis for not recognising polygamous marriages was negated when customary marriages were given full legal recognition, as customary marriages allow for more than one wife as well. Moreover, whilst Muslim marriages allow for a man to take up to four wives, it is not commonly practiced because it comes with the responsibility to provide equally for each wife.

In South Africa, Muslim marriage, known as a nikah, is not legally recognised in South Africa. This means that wives are not entitled by law to the assets acquired during the marriage or to spousal support afterwards. This has 'resulted in widespread oppression and gender discrimination in areas such as divorce, the duties of support, parental rights and responsibilities and inheritance', according to the Women's Legal Centre. Should Muslim marriages be declared legally valid by the Western Cape High Court, this would help protect the wives in the event of a divorce and help ensure that they are not left penniless.

