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SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The World This Week



AL-BASHIR TO BE EXTRADITED TO ICC

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SUDAN AGREES TO CONVICT AL- BASHIR

Following months of negotiations between Sudan's government and rebel groups, rulers have agreed that ex-president Omar al-Bashir must face the International Criminal Court (ICC) over charges of genocide and war crimes.

The ICC has been seeking the extradition of al-Bashir since 2009. During his presidency, Al-Bashir refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the court. However, in April 2019 he was ousted as president.

The decision came after a period of uncertainty over whether al-Bashir would be handed over to the ICC. The legitimacy of the court is disputed, and countries such as Russia, China and the US have refused to join, while African countries often accuse the court of unfairly targeting African countries.

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Darfur is the region where al-Bashir's forces systematically killed thousands of Darfuri people starting in 2003. The rebels in this region have demanded that al-Bashir must face the ICC as a condition of forming a unified government. The formation of a unified government is a crucial step towards peace in a country which has been decimated by years of war and authoritarian rule.

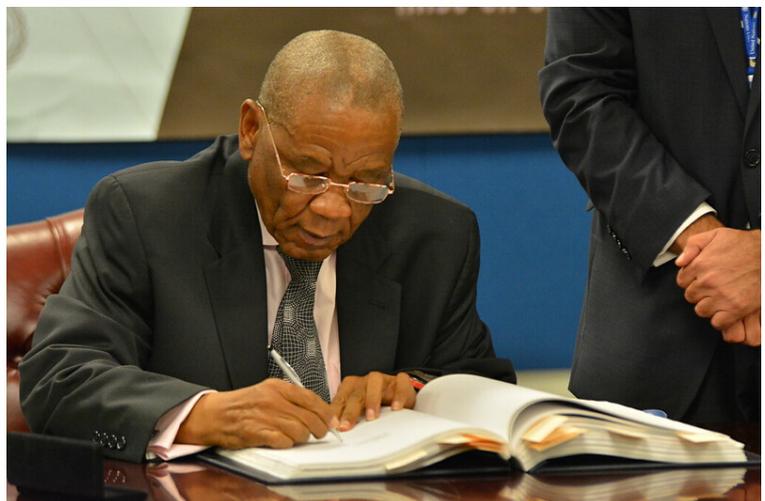
Lesotho's Prime Minister Charged with Murder

Lesotho's Prime Minister, Thomas Thabane, will face a murder charge following the death of his estranged wife, Lipolelo Thabane. Two days before his inauguration in 2017, Mr Thabane was questioned over the shooting of Mrs Thabane, which had occurred earlier that year.

Mrs Thabane had refused to divorce her husband, and won the court case which allowed her to retain her privileges of first lady. Mrs Thabane was shot several times at close range, while waiting in her car near her home.

The Prime Minister remarried two months after the death of Mrs Thabane. His second wife, Maesiah Thabane, was called in for questioning by Lesotho police in January 2020, but had fled the country. Mrs Thabane returned to Lesotho and turned herself in to the police, and was charged with murder. It is alleged that Mr Thabane and Maesiah had hired a hitman.

Mr Thabane will step down in July, though did not cite the controversial murder charge as one of the reasons. The tiny mountainous country has been rocked by the scandal. Many of Lesotho's citizens had hoped that Mr Thabane's re-election in 2017 would usher in a period of stability and growth for Lesotho.



Thomas Thabane - Control Arms (flickr.com)

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South Sudan Strikes Peace Deal

South Sudan president Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar have agreed to a power-sharing agreement which seeks to bring an end to the years-long civil war in the country.

In 2011 South Sudan became the world's newest country. After only two years, the country was plunged into civil war when President Kiir accused Machar of plotting a coup against him. The civil war resulted in the death of an estimated 400,000 people and the displacement of one third of the population. The civil war also decimated the fragile new economy.

In 2018, both parties reached an agreement on a peace deal to end the conflict. The deal stated that a unified government must be formed by November 2019, but the implementation of the deal was delayed by several disputes. In early February the government agreed that Kiir would retain the presidency, and Machar would assume the position of vice-president again.

The agreement coincides with a UN report detailing the cost of the seven-year civil war. The report found that thousands of citizens were displaced in a scorched earth policy, and forces are accused of atrocities such as mass rape and torching villages. The UN commission has stated some violations may amount to war crimes. It has also been alleged that despite the agreement between the two parties in 2018, children have continued to be recruited into military forces. The commission estimates that as many as 19,000 children are currently serving in military units in South Sudan.