

CEWARN Situation Brief: Kenya

Marsabit and Moyale following the Plane Crash and Death of Leaders

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Current Situation on Marsabit and Moyale following the Plane Crash and Death of Leaders

Introduction

This report provides a brief on the current situation in Marsabit and Moyale following the deaths of leaders in a plane crash on 10th April 2006. The purpose of the report is to explain the events following the crash and the heavy media coverage of the area after the accident.

Background

After the Turbi massacre in which 84 people were killed in Marsabit on 12th July 2005, the office of the National Steering Committee on peace and conflict management (office of the president), which also doubles up as the Kenyan CEWERU decided to investigate the cause of the massacre. With the support of several NGOs, a fact-finding mission was undertaken and the findings collated into the "Marsabit Conflicts Assessment Report."¹

The same team initiated a dialogue meeting process between the Gabra and Boran in the two districts commencing with a meeting from 12th to 22 September 2005.²

Following this, another meeting on 7th February 2006 was held in Nairobi where member of district peace committees from Marsabit and Moyale met along side 4 members of parliament and the NSC to discuss the way forward since the Turbi massacre. Some of the problems highlighted during this meeting pointed to political problems between the different MPs, lack of adequate response by government to incidences of violence, the OLF factor of which one MP was accused of being a sympathizer of the movement and proliferation of firearms.

Building from this meeting a larger community meeting was planned from 10th to 15th April 2006 in which the community leaders, government officials and religious institutions were to come together to find a lasting solutions. The NRI working alongside the NSC was invited to help in organizing for this meeting and was to provide a comprehensive report to Ceweru and Cewarn head Office.

Unfortunately on 10th April 2006 the plane carrying the entourage crashed killing the Assistant Minister in the ministry of Internal Security, Hon Mirugi Karuiki, an East Africa Legislative Assembly Member of Parliament, Abdulahi Adan, Members of Parliament Dr Bonaya Godana, Guracha Galgalo, Abdi Sasaura and Titus Ngoyoni. The District of Commissioner of Moyale, Peter Kingola also perished. Others who died also included personnel from the military, the police and a member of the religious community Bishop William Waqo. In total 14 people died on the fateful day.

Marsabit

In an unrelated incident following the accident, Kenyan families estimated at 82 were attacked in Ethiopia in areas of Gorai and Dillo. Media reports point to Ethiopian soldiers as the culprits. The families lost livestock estimated at between 1000-1200 camels, 3000-3500 shoats, 500 cattle and 52 donkeys. They had crosses into Ethiopia when the drought in Kenya made it impossible to survive in search of pasture and water. None of the livestock have been recovered so far. The herders came from Dukana location of Marsabit district. The affected families were camped at Dukana and El hadi primary schools creating a lot of tension in the district.

¹ This report was availed to Cewarn in 2005

² See a report compiled by SRIC, "Creating Space for Dialogue : Inter faith Mediation and Reconciliation Meeting between the Gabra and Borana of Marsabit and Moyale"

In a quick rejoinder, a diplomat from the Ethiopian Embassy in Nairobi explained that the OLF wear Ethiopian Soldiers uniform to give the impression that the Ethiopian government is involved in raids. He went ahead to confirm through the media that the two countries were friends who are working together to see the end of these pastoralist conflicts.

The affected people are mainly Gabra who accuse the Federal government of Southern Ethiopia of being sympathetic to the Boranas. This incident created wide coverage from the media since it followed the accident and helped to highlight a situation that had basically been ignored by the media for a long time. Furthermore, as this was all happening several incidences of raids and killings occurred in Samburu and Laikipia districts neighboring Marsabit- these were extensively covered by the media alongside the situation Marsabit.³

Moyale

On 26th April 2005, 60 Ethiopian soldiers crossed into Kenya and invaded Odda Village, Odda Location, five kilometers from Moyale town. They were searching for OLF fighters and they captured several unnumbered men but took away five. The Kenyan military pursued them and a battle lasting 3 hours ensued. An unconfirmed number of people were killed according to reports from the field monitor. One Kenyan soldier was also injured in the battle

On the same day in another incident between OLF and the Ethiopian government soldiers the Ethiopian soldiers killed 3 herders as they pursued the OLF. But on their way back they were confronted by the OLF and sources from Ethiopia report atleast 40 deaths during the incident. The actual numbers of deaths are conflicting and need to be verified.

Recommendations

The deaths of the leaders in this area may be a window of opportunity for the community to work harder at finding peace. The area demands a lot of attention from government and civil society actors if a future massacre is to be avoided. The current media coverage should continue but also highlighting the positive efforts being made by stakeholders.

³ Laikipia and Samburu are not part of the coverage for Cewarn Project.