

Somalis in Uganda brace for post-attack backlash

AFP, Kampala
Somalis who moved to Kampala to escape their country's long-running civil war feared a backlash following deadly bomb attacks claimed by Somalia's Shabab insurgent group.
Many in Uganda's small Somali community fled the Shabab in the first place but the al-Qaeda inspired movement caught up with them when bombings on Sunday night killed at least 76 people gathered to watch the World Cup final.
"Obviously there is going to be a change. Because they are saying that what happened (Sunday) night, that some Somali people were behind it," said Kampala resident Abdul Mohamed Shire.
"Everybody in the Somali community is going to be suspicious. At the moment we are living under fear. Although we have committed no crime," he added.
The Shabab said they were delivering on a promise to punish Uganda for providing the backbone the African Union force in Somalia and thwarting their bid to topple the president and seize power.
"Somali people since (Sunday) are very fearful," said Mohamed Hassan Shaya, the

spokesman for a Somali community estimated at around 10,000 residents.
Uganda is also home to roughly the same number of Somali refugees.
Kayihura said the Somalis had so far been cooperating with security officers in investigations.
Shaya said they were ready to assist the government in the probe and provide information to counter any possible resentment by Ugandans.
"We are in fact ready to give a hand if the government needs a hand. We are ready to do whatever the government instructs us to do," he told AFP.
Uganda was the first country to send forces to the war-torn country in early 2007 to prop up Somalia's embattled western-backed transitional government, but the AU troops have been unable to quell the insurgency.
After an earlier Shabab threat to attack Kampala in October, Uganda's Somali community began a drive to register all its members and provide biographical details to Ugandan authorities, but the plan was never completed.
Shaya said that despite the community's gestures, there was still fear among the Somalis after the weekend explosions.

Farah Mohamed, a 27-year-old aid worker, said he expected anything could happen to them after the blasts.
"I think everything is possible," he said, adding nevertheless that nothing could make him return to Somalia just yet. "As long as my country is burning, I am here."
For some Ugandans, Sunday's attacks ignited concerns about the rationale of sending soldiers to Somalia, whose near-two-decade civil war has defied several international peace initiatives.
"For me, what I want is for Uganda to leave Somalia. We are not benefiting anything," said Richard Luthkome, a property agent.
"We have already suffered so many insurgencies. Why are we now bringing another one?"
"For them (Somalis), some of them have been here since Amin. They are free. I have no problem with them," Luthkome said in reference to Uganda's former brutal dictator Idi Amin, who was deposed in 1979.
On Monday, Deputy Foreign Minister Okello Oryem insisted his country would not withdraw its more than 3,000 soldiers from Somalia.

Arrests made over Uganda bombings

ALJAZEERA ONLINE
Ugandan authorities have made a number of arrests in connection with explosions at two sites in Kampala that left at least 74 people dead.
Kale Kayihura, the inspector-general of police, said yesterday that investigators had also found a unexploded suicide bomb belt at a third site, a discotheque, in the capital.
Somalia's al-Shabab group has said it carried out the attacks on Sunday.
"We have established that what was found at the discotheque was in fact a suicide vest, and it could also be used as an IED [improvised explosive device]," Kayihura said.
The vest, laden with explosives and fitted with a detonator, was found on Monday, packed in a laptop bag at a club in the southwestern Kampala district of Makindye.
"It's possible that the person who was supposed to do this was [a coward] because the system was intact," he said.
One blast hit an Ethiopian restaurant in the south of the city on Sunday, while the other occurred at a rugby sports club as people watched the World Cup final.
AL-SHABAB STATEMENT
The near-simultaneous attacks on Sunday were the first time the group, which has carried out multiple suicide attacks inside Somalia, has

struck outside of the country.
"Al-Shabab was behind the two blasts in Uganda," Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, the group's spokesman, announced in Mogadishu.
"We thank the mujahideens that carried out the attack. We are sending a message to Uganda and Burundi, if they do not take out their Amisom [African Union Mission in Somalia] troops from Somalia, blasts will continue and it will happen."
Uganda and Burundi currently have peacekeepers in Somalia as part of a stabilisation mission supported by the African Union.
"[Al-Shabab's] strategy is to undermine getting troops into Somalia through attacks like this," Simmons said.
Hussein Mohammed Noor, a Somalia analyst, said the Ethiopian restaurant was likely targeted because of "Ethiopia's involvement in Somalia."
However, he told Al Jazeera that these attacks were unlikely to make African countries reconsider sending troops to Somalia.
Lieutenant-Colonel Felix Kulaigye, a Ugandan army spokesman, said: "Al-Shabab is the reason why we should stay in Somalia. We have to pacify Somalia."
Kayihura that the attacks, which took place amid large crowds at the two locations, could have been carried out by suicide bombers.

Ugandan police find suicide vest

REUTERS, Kampala
Ugandan police have found an unexploded suicide vest and made a number of arrests in connection with Uganda blasts.
The vest was found on Monday in Makindye, a suburb of Kampala, and was consistent with evidence found at the other blast site in the capital, Inspector General of Police Kale Kayihura told reporters.
Ugandan police said the vest was designed so it could be planted, rather than worn, and be used as an improvised bomb.
"Rage blessed those who carried the attack and expected a long life for them. That shows there was no suicide bomb. These were planted," a man who identified himself as Yonis, assistant to al-Shabab spokesman Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage, told Reuters by telephone.
Analysts have questioned whether they might have been helped or funded by elements in Uganda, or foreign militants within al-Shabab itself.



People demonstrate in front of the Labour minister, yesterday during a nationwide day of strike called by unions to protest against the pension overhaul in France. The French government on Monday was to officially launch plans to raise the retirement age from 60 to 62, in a sweeping overhaul of the pensions system that labour unions have vowed to fight.

PHOTO: AFP

FREED CUBAN DISSIDENTS First group arrives in Spain

BBC ONLINE
The first group of political prisoners freed by Cuba has arrived in the Spanish capital, Madrid.
The six men and their families landed at 1249 local time (1049 GMT) while a second flight carrying a seventh dissident is due in Spain shortly.
They are the first of 52 detainees to be set free under a deal brokered last week by the Catholic Church and Spain.
Just hours before the dissidents left on Monday evening, former President Fidel Castro made a rare TV appearance.
The Cuban government has agreed to free all 52 of the prisoners, who were jailed in 2003, in the coming months. At least 20 are said to have expressed a desire to go to Spain.
Spanish officials say they will not be required to stay in the country and will be free to head elsewhere. Both the US and Chile have offered them asylum.
Elizardo Sanchez, head of the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCHNR), has said at least three prisoners have told the Church that they want to remain in Cuba.
The former prisoners were

reunited with their wives and children late on Monday. Spanish consular officials at the airport interviewed them one by one and then granted them visas.
In a phone call from Havana airport, one of the freed men, Omar Ruiz, told the Associated Press: "I won't consider myself free until I arrive in Spain."
In the hours before their departure, relatives had been told to prepare to leave Cuba at a moment's notice.
"Sunday they performed medical check-ups, did paperwork for the passports and told us to be ready starting today," Irene Viera, the wife of community organiser Julio Cesar Galvez, told AP.
"I'm very nervous about all of this," she said. "I can finally see him without it being in prison for the first time in years."
The first flight, operated by Air Europa, landed at Madrid's Barajas airport with Lester Gonzalez, Omar Ruiz, Antonio Villarreal, Julio Cesar Galvez, Jose Luis Garcia Paneque and Pablo Pacheco on board.
The second, operated by Iberia, carrying journalist Ricardo Gonzalez and his family, is expected to arrive shortly.

Fidel Castro appears in rare TV interview

AP, Havana
Former Cuban president Fidel Castro used his most prominent television interview since falling seriously ill four years ago to discuss everything from the threat of global nuclear war to the use of energy efficient light bulbs.
The one thing the 83-year-old revolutionary leader did not discuss in his return to the airwaves Monday was events in Cuba, where the government freed and sent into exile the first of 52 political prisoners it has promised to release in coming months.
Why Castro agreed to go on the air yesterday after so long in the background was a mystery, as are so many things involving the former Cuban leader, who has spent a lifetime keeping the world guessing.
Castro provided no answers in the hour and 15 minute conversation on "Mesa Redonda" -- or "Round Table" -- a daily Cuban talk show on current events.
Castro wore a dark blue tracksuit top over a plaid shirt. He looked relaxed and lucid, though his voice was raspy and he spoke slowly.
Much of the interview was spent with either Castro reading essays by someone else or having his own words read back to him by presenter Randy Alonso. Three academics sat silently nearby as Castro spoke, sometimes nodding in agreement.
Castro warned that an attack on Iran would be catastrophic for the US.
"The worst (for the US) is the resistance they will face there, which they didn't face in Iraq," he said.
The scene at a sparsely lit office at an undisclosed location was slightly surreal, even in a country that often feels stuck in a 1950s time warp. It was even unclear whether the interview was live or when it might have been taped.
At one point, Castro referred to a July 5 article as having been published six days ago, which would mean the show was taped on Sunday. Later, however, the program's host read from an essay published Sunday evening, referring to it as having come out "last night."
As the interview progressed, Castro at times showed flashes of his prowess as a powerful speaker. At other points, however, he paused for lengthy periods and shuffled pages of notes he kept in front of him. Later, he listened as the host read back long tracks from essay's Castro himself wrote recently.
The former Cuban leader has shunned the spotlight since undergoing emergency intestinal surgery in July 2006. The illness forced him to step down -- first temporarily, and later permanently -- and cede power to his younger brother Raul. His recovery has been a closely held state secret, and his health has been the subject of persistent rumours among exiles in Florida.



US detains 12th person in Russia spy probe

REUTERS, US
The United States has detained a 12th person following the break up of a Russian spy ring which led to a dramatic spy swap last week, the Wall Street Journal reported yesterday.
FBI counterintelligence agents have been investigating the 23-year-old Russian man since last fall when his name surfaced in a decade-long espionage investigation, the Journal said, citing a US official familiar with the matter, adding that the Russian would be deported.
US prosecutors last month charged 11 people with being Russian agents. Ten in US custody entered plea deals last Thursday as part of a diplomatic agreement to swap them for four people held by Russia, most on charges of spying for Western intelligence agencies.
The 11th person jumped bail in Cyprus after he was arrested there.
FBI agents began monitoring the 12th man, whose name could not be learned, shortly after he entered the United States in October 2009, the Journal reported.
However, investigators weren't able to gather enough evidence against him to bring charges and came to believe his case was different from that of the others who ended up being charged in the spy ring, the papers said.
Instead of being charged, the man was in federal custody Monday in the process of being deported, the Journal reported. His location wasn't disclosed.

'Twisted parliament' bodes ill for Japan

AP, Tokyo
In Japanese, it's called a "twisted parliament," and it doesn't bode well for the country's future.
The Democratic Party-led coalition enjoys a comfortable majority in the powerful lower house, but it lost control of the upper house in an election this week. If past experience holds, the twisted parliament is a formula for policy gridlock, because both houses must approve legislation.
The predicament, which has plagued earlier governments too, comes at a time when Japan badly needs action. The world's second-largest economy faces serious challenges, from reducing its bulging budget deficit and reviving growth to fighting deflation and shoring up its social security system as the population ages and shrinks.
"This is potentially very bad news for Japan as a whole on various fronts, because very little can move ahead as far as government policies are concerned," said Takahira Ogawa, an analyst at Standard & Poor's. "There might be some more years wasted, which is a pity for the country."
Ogawa warned that Japan's AA credit rating could be lowered if the twisted parliament keeps the Democrats from reinstating government debt -- which is twice the nation's GDP -- and carrying out other reforms. A lower credit rating would raise borrowing costs, adding to the country's budget woes.
The Democratic Party of Japan and its small coalition partner lost 12 seats in Sunday's upper house election, leaving it with 110 seats in the 242-member chamber. In the lower house, the coalition is short of the two-thirds majority needed to override upper house opposition to a bill.
Control of the upper house -- often seen as a barometer of confidence in the prime minister or ruling party -- has proved an elusive goal for governments over the past 20 years.
Japan has had twisted parliaments three other times since 1989, and each time the ruling coalition struggled to get anything done.
In the most recent case, former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda quit in frustration in 2008 after facing repeated difficulties passing bills through an opposition-dominated upper house.
The Democrats, who came to power last year with an ambitious agenda of slashing wasteful government spending, fighting global warming, reining in the power of bureaucrats and putting cash in the hands of consumers, will almost certainly have to scale back their goals.
"The DPJ should take a very serious second look at what they can afford to do within the parameters of their own choices," said S&P's Ogawa, referring to the party by its acronym.
So far, the Democrats aren't wooing any other parties to obtain a majority in the upper house, and none say they want to join. The newly formed Your Party was considered a potential partner until its leader, Yoshimi Watanabe, demanded that Prime Minister Naoto Kan dissolve the lower house and call elections.
Democratic officials haven't ruled out expanding the coalition, but for now say the most likely strategy will be seeking support from other parties on individual bills.
If that leads to gridlock, Kan could be forced to call an early election, which doesn't need to be held for three years.
Some experts say Kan's job may be at risk. Japan has had five prime ministers in the past four years and 14 in the past 20.
Opposition parties may be waiting to see the outcome of a Democratic leadership election in September, when Kan may face challenges from fellow party members.

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Admission Test
Friday, 20 August 2010
Deadline
Thursday, 19 August 2010
Classes Start
Tuesday, 21 September 2010