STATELET in eastern Ukraine. The trio have been accused of acting as mercenaries for Ukraine following Russia’s invasion of its neighbour. Taher Saadoun, father of the accused, has said his son, who obtained Ukrainian citizenship in 2020, “is not a mercenary”, calling him instead a “victim of manipulation”.

The Moroccan government had not responded until June 13th, saying through its embassy in Ukraine that Saadoun “was captured while wearing the uniform of the army of the state of Ukraine, as a member of the Ukrainian marine unit”. It said he was “currently imprisoned by an entity that is recognised by neither the United Nations nor Morocco”, without commenting further.

Morocco has taken a position of neutrality as new cases have been reported.

According to him, the West African States (ECOWAS) have recently provided $250 million in financial and technical support to the WHO. "Currently, 1,597 suspected cases of monkeypox, with 25 countries reporting more than 1,500 cases, or 85% of the global total," Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, told a news conference on June 25th quoting the Russian Defence Ministry. Senegal’s private Dakaractu also cited Russian officials who said four of 15 Senegalese mercenaries fighting in Ukraine were killed. Five remain in the frontline, while six had returned to Senegal.

The website added: “In Africa, the countries providing mercenaries are listed as follows: Nigeria, South Africa, Senegal, Guinea, Gabon, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea”. (Sahara Reporters 21/6)

Morocco, with its large neighbour’s products, has a position of neutrality at the moment.

Meanwhile the Kenyan minister of health has asked Kenyans to ensure they wear masks in enclosed spaces as the country continues to experience low infections, leading to a spike in cases of Covid-19, the Star website reported on June 20th.

"Political indoor meetings are superspreader events. Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe said as he urged those in public service vehicles, aircraft, offices, supermarkets and places of worship to wear masks.

He noted the weekly average had gone up from 0.6% at the beginning of May to 10.4% in late June, although there was no increase in hospitalisations.

Kagwe said the steady increase in infections is likely to get worse in the coming weeks due to the cold weather. (New Times 6/6; The Star 20/6)

Monkeypox

Africa: Preparations for vaccination against monkeypox in the continent, as it had reported 1,597 cases and 66 deaths in 2022 by mid-June.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is in the process of procuring thousands of monkeypox tests for Africa but is not recommending mass vaccination at this stage, its Africa Director Matshidiso Moeti has said.

She added that the continent should be prepared for vaccination should the need arise.

The decision to start preparations comes as new cases have been reported.

This year, the continent has documented 1,597 suspected cases of monkeypox, with 66 deaths, the acting director of Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Ahmed Ogwel Ouma, said on June 23rd.

Monkeypox, a mild viral infection, is endemic in 11 African countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Nigeria.

There is no known vaccine currently, but the smallpox vaccine has been shown to offer up to 85% protection against monkeypox.

Health administrators now believe that when a smallpox vaccination campaign starts to contain monkeypox worldwide, it should begin in Africa.

“Here...the burden is larger, the risk higher and the geographical spread is also broader,” he said.

The confirmed cases in Africa were reported from Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Republic of Congo, DRC, Nigeria, Morocco, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Ouma said.

Cases have since been confirmed in South Africa and Guinea. (News24 25/6; AfricaNews 18/6)

But Europe remains the epicentre of the global monkeypox outbreak, according to the WHO, “Europe remains the epicentre of this emerging outbreak, with 25 countries reporting more than 1,500 cases, or 85% of the global total.”

Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, told a news conference on June 15th. (aljazeera.com 16/6)

Following an emergency committee meeting, the WHO concluded on June 25th that monkeypox is not a global health emergency, but should continue to be monitored. (medicalnewstoday.com 27/6)

President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Jean-Claude Brou, has also cautioned member states on the spread of monkeypox.

He gave the warning at the 2022 First Ordinary Session of ECOWAS Parliament, in the Nigerian capital Abuja.

According to him, the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) is currently monitoring the development of the virus’ outbreak and evolving measures at containing its spread.