In the same vein, Medii TV – which is privately owned – reported news of his visit without comment.

However, the prominent privately owned Lakome news website differed in its coverage, drawing attention to objections within the country to the visit.

It recalled remarks by prime minister Saadeddine El Othmani, who is also head of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD), saying he was not due to meet with Lapid during his visit.

Lakome recalled also that Othmani had called the decision to normalise relations “painful and difficult” in an interview with Alaraby TV on August 7th. (Sources as referenced in text) Spyware allegations p. 23249A

**SUDAN – ICC**

**Increasing Cooperation**

The country is ready to hand over the former president to face trial.

Sudan will hand longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court (ICC) along with two other officials wanted over the Darfur conflict, officials said on August 11th.

Bashir, 77, has been wanted by The Hague-based ICC for more than a decade over charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Sudanese region.

The United Nations says 300,000 people were killed and 2.5m displaced in the Darfur conflict, which erupted in the vast western region in 2003.

The “cabinet decided to hand over wanted officials to the ICC,” foreign minister Mariam al-Mahdi was quoted as saying by state news agency SUNA.

The cabinet’s decision to hand him over came during a visit by ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan, but it still needs the approval of Sudan’s ruling sovereign council, comprised of military and civilian figures.

On August 11th, Khan met the sovereign council’s leader, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, its deputy chair. Daglo said Sudan “is prepared to cooperate with the ICC”, SUNA reported.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who also met Khan, said: “Sudan’s commitment to seek justice is not only to abide by its international commitments, but it comes out of a response to the people’s demands.”

The transitional authorities have previously said they would hand Bashir over, but one stumbling block was that Sudan was not party to the court’s founding Rome Statute.

But earlier in August Sudan’s cabinet voted to ratify the Rome Statute, a crucial move seen as one step towards Bashir potentially facing trial.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Ned Price praised Sudan’s decision, saying handing over Bashir “would be a major step for Sudan in the fight against decades of impunity”.

In December, Washington removed Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, and later also vowed to clear the country’s arrears with the World Bank.

Bashir, who ruled Sudan with an iron fist for three decades before being deposed amid popular protests in 2019, is behind bars in Khartoum’s high security Kober prison.

He is jailed alongside two other former top officials facing ICC war crimes charges – ex-defence minister Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein and Ahmed Haroun, a former governor of South Kordofan. (© AFP; SUNA 11/8 2021)

SUNA (20/8) reported that justice minister Nasr al-Din Abdel Bari had said that Sudan’s cooperation with the ICC will be expanded to include both Hussein and Haroun. (SUNA 20/8)

**IN BRIEF**

**Algeria – Spain**: An Algerian former gendarme wanted for alleged membership of a “terrorist” group has been handed over by Spain to Algerian authorities, a judicial source and local media said on August 23rd.

Abdelhah Mohamed, 33, was also banned from entering Spain for 10 years due to his membership of Islamist movement Rachad, according to an extradition document.

Algeria branded Rachad a terrorist organisation in May.

A court issued an arrest warrant for Mohamed – an alleged gendarmerie deserter – in March.

Mohamed appeared before a civilian court and will later appear before a military court for “desertion”, according to a judicial source.

He is wanted on other charges, including two linked to his alleged membership of a terrorist group, according to the El Watan newspaper. (© AFP 23/8 2021)

**Ethiopia – Turkey**: Turkey signed various agreements with Ethiopia on August 18th during Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali’s visit to the capital Ankara, pro-government CNN Turk news website reported.

Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met Ahmed at the presidential complex amid Ankara’s increased diplomacy with African countries in recent weeks.

The defence ministers of the two countries signed financial and military agreements as well as a deal on water cooperation, CNN Turk reported.

The Ethiopian premier’s visit also marked the 125th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Economic and trade relations between Turkey and Ethiopia were discussed during the meeting, Erdogan said in a joint press conference with Abiy Ahmed.

The conflict in Tigray was also on the agenda, the president said, highlighting the importance of Ethiopia’s peace and unity.

Turkey has investments worth $2.5bn in Ethiopia, Erdogan said, adding that Turkish companies employed some 10,000 Ethiopians. (Sources as referenced in text)

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**Social and Cultural**

**HEALTH**

**Covid-19**

West Africa deaths surge amid Ebola and other outbreaks.

West Africa has recorded its highest number of Covid-19 deaths since the pandemic began as several countries grapple with outbreaks of cholera, Ebola Virus Disease and Marburg Virus Disease that threaten to further strain the already stretched emergency response capacity in the region, the WHO Africa regional office has warned.

The WHO has said that overall Africa recorded over 244,000 new cases in the week ending August 15th, an 11% drop from the week before and a second straight week of declining cases. Covid-19 fatalities in West Africa over the past four weeks increased by 193% from 348 in the previous four weeks to 1018 in the week ending on August 15th, it said in a statement on August 19th.

Although the case fatality ratio, or the proportion of people diagnosed with the disease who have died, stands at 1.4%—below the continental average of 2.5%—it is higher than the previous two waves in the sub-region, a sign that health systems are feeling the strain of a heavy caseload.

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WHO noted that overall Africa recorded over 244,000 new cases in the week ending on August 15th, an 11% drop from the week before and a second straight week of declining cases.

However, nine out of 23 countries experiencing a resurgence are in West Africa: Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Nigeria are experiencing a surge in cases and all three countries are tackling other outbreaks.

The statement said West Africa health systems are even more fragile than those in other sub-regions. A WHO assessment of the functionality of health systems in West Africa found that they were 21% lower than in Southern Africa.

“We are particularly concerned about West Africa and we can expect the pressure of Covid-19 to hit health services harder and faster,” Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO regional director for Africa, said at a news conference. “In addition to the strain of Covid-19, comes Ebola and other outbreaks. Fighting multiple outbreaks is a complex challenge.”

WHO said West Africa has to date received around 29m vaccine doses – almost twice the amount as East and Southern Africa. However, the rollout has been slow, with 38% of the doses administered compared with 76% in East and Southern Africa and 95% in North Africa. West Africa has delivered 2.4 doses per 100 people. In East and Southern Africa, the figure stands at 4.8 doses per 100 people.

WHO noted that vaccine shipments to Africa have picked up with the Covax Facility delivering almost 10m doses to Africa so far in August, that is, nine times what was delivered in the same period in July.

The African Union (AU) has so far delivered 1.5m doses to nine countries. Since June, the number of doses administered per 100 people in sub-Saharan Africa has almost tripled from 1.2 per 100 people to 3.4 per 100 people.

“While Covid-19 vaccine shipments seem to be taking off, Africa is encountering headwinds. Moves by some countries globally to introduce booster shots threaten the promise of a brighter tomorrow for Africa. As some richer countries hoard vaccines, they make a mockery of vaccine equity,” said Dr Moeti. (PANA 20/8)

The Ministry of Health on August 14th confirmed the Côte d’Ivoire’s first case of Ebola since 1994. The Institut Pasteur confirmed virus in samples collected from a patient, who was hospitalised in Abidjan, after arriving from Guinea. Guinea experienced a four-month long Ebola outbreak, which was declared over on the 19 June 2021.

The Guinean government on August 15th dispatched a team of experts and 5,000 doses of vaccine to Côte d’Ivoire.

Meanwhile the WHO is supporting Guinea following a confirmed death from Marburg virus disease, the first known case in the country and West Africa. Marburg, a highly infectious disease that causes haemorrhagic fever, is transmitted to humans by fruit bats. The virus is in the same family as Ebola. (PANA 11,15,16/8)

**Egypt to Produce Sinovac Jabs**: Egypt has said it will produce 15m doses of the Sinovac vaccine as part of its precautionary measures in response to an expected fourth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in September. Egypt is due to receive 5.2m doses of the Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines in September.

Egypt’s presidential adviser for health affairs Mohamed Awad Tag al-Din told Sada al-Balad TV (23/8) that a fourth wave of the pandemic had already started in the country.

Some 10m citizens have already registered to get jabbed at the Health Ministry’s website, and 7.5m of them have already been vaccinated, according to Health Minister Hala Zayed. (Egyptian sources 23/8)

Meanwhile second dose vaccination campaigns have begun in Libya and Mali. The Moroccan Health Ministry is preparing to launch a vaccination campaign for those aged 12-17, as the country extends the state of emergency until October in a bid to bring down infection numbers. Morocco has succeeded in a rapid roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccine, and has administered the highest number of doses of any African country by a significant margin.

In Tunisia, over 500,000 people were inoculated as part of a mass vaccination day on August 8th. Before the event, 3.29m people had been vaccinated since Tunisia began rolling out vaccines in March. (BBC Monitoring 9, 23/8) Vaccine demand spirals p.23251A; Covid responses in Africa p.23252A

**SPORT**

**Tokyo Olympics**

On August 8th, the delayed Tokyo 2020 Olympics came to an end after 19 days of competition. Thirteen African nations won medals, some for the first time. Kenya topped the ranking of African countries and was 19th overall with ten medals – four gold, four silver and two bronze.

African highlights included Kenya’s Eliud Kipchoge defending the gold medal he won in Rio in 2016, becoming only the third man in history to defend a marathon title and the first in over four decades; 18 year old Tunisian swimmer Ahmed Hafnaoui won the continent’s first gold medal of the games in the 400m freestyle and South African Tatjana Schoenmaker took gold in the 200m breaststroke having already won silver in the 100m event. Egypt’s Ahmed Elgendi, 21, became the first African to win a medal in modern pentathlon. Triple jumper Hugues Fabrice Zango won Burkina Faso’s first ever Olympic medal (bronze) while Egyptian duo Feryal Abdelaziz and Giana Farouk won gold and bronze respectively as karate made its debut at the Games. South Africa’s Bianca Buitemag won silver as surfing also debuted at the Games. (Daily Nation 9/8)

**MEDIA**

**Algeria**: State news agency APS has inaugurated a new director general, Samir Gaid, in a move overseen by

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**Table: African countries by rank and Medals**

| Olympic Games 2020 | Africa rank (overall rank) | Country | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------|------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1 (19)            | Kenya                    | 4      | 4    | 2     | 10     |
| 2 (36)            | Uganda                   | 2      | 1    | 1     | 4      |
| 3 (52)            | South Africa             | 1      | 2    | 0     | 3      |
| 4 (54)            | Egypt                    | 1      | 1    | 4     | 6      |
| 5 (56)            | Ethiopia                 | 1      | 1    | 2     | 4      |
| 6 (58)            | Tunisia                  | 1      | 1    | 0     | 2      |
| 7 (63)            | Morocco                  | 1      | 0    | 0     | 1      |
| 8 (74)            | Nigeria                  | 0      | 1    | 1     | 2      |
| 9 (77)            | Namibia                  | 0      | 1    | 0     | 1      |
| 10 (86)           | Botswana                 | 0      | 0    | 1     | 1      |
| 10 (86)           | Burkina Faso             | 0      | 0    | 1     | 1      |
| 10 (86)           | Ivory Coast              | 0      | 0    | 1     | 1      |
| 10 (86)           | Ghana                    | 0      | 0    | 1     | 1      |

( BBC News Online )