

Unemployment threatens Africa

By Thalif Deen

INTERNATIONAL PRESS SERVICE

UNITED NATIONS - High rates of unemployment are the primary cause of growing poverty in the African continent, according to a new U.N. report.

"Underlying this trend (of expanding poverty) is the fact that the majority of people (in Africa) have no jobs or secure sources of income," says the

new study titled "Economic Report on Africa 2005: Meeting the Challenges of Unemployment and Poverty".

The 279-page study was written by the Addis Ababa-based U.N. Economic Commission for Africa.

(Africa has the) second and third highest unemployment rates, with the Middle East region experiencing the highest rate," according to the

study.

Max Lawson of the international relief agency Oxfam placed blame on policies laid down by the World Bank and the IMF, that leave local countries little leeway to act on their own.

"They should stop pushing African governments to pursue models that do not work," Lawson said. These governments should be allowed to

control their own economic policies, he added.

But for Kwame Akonor, director of the African Development Institute, the problem can be traced to African leadership.

"The onus for Africa's development failures, despite almost half a century of independence from European empires, lie primarily with its political leaders," he said.

Domestic spying sparks talk of sanctions

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offenses."

Lewis continues: "This executive order takes us back to the dark past when our government spied on civil rights leaders and Vietnam War protesters. Without obtaining the judicial authorization required to wiretap American citizens, the American people have no protection against the misuse of this program for illegal or vindictive means."

Bush adamantly defended the program, first disclosed two weeks ago by the New York Times. He said at a White House news conference, "I've authorized this program more than 30 times since the September 11th attacks and I intend to do so for so long as the nation faces the continuing threat of an enemy that wants to kill our American citizens."

The revelation of the secret domestic spying program has angered both Democrats and Republicans.

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he would conduct hearings on the warrantless monitoring of international phone calls, faxes and e-mails of U.S. citizens or residents since 2002.

"There are limits to what the president can do under the Constitution," Specter said on CNN's "Late Edition." "Whether it was legal is a matter that ought to be examined."

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) has asked why Bush failed to get the warrants from the court under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978, which set up an 11-member court to issue warrants to investigate U.S. suspects in national security cases. In recent years, the secret court has issued more than 4,000 warrants and denied less than a dozen requests by the administration.

"Why did the president choose not to use FISA?" McCain asked on "This Week," an ABC news show. "That's a legitimate question."

Meanwhile, a member of that court, U.S. District Judge James Robertson, resigned from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, apparently to protest Bush's decision to bypass special court.

According to the Washington Post, two sources familiar with his decision says that "Robertson privately expressed deep concern that the warrantless surveillance program authorized by the president in 2001 was legally questionable and may have tainted the FISA court's work."

Former Nixon White House counsel John Dean, a Republican who expressed deep concern about the revelation, has publicly described Bush as being "the first president to admit to an impeachable offense."

Dean was responding to a question from U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), the first lawmaker to bring up impeachment. She asked Dean and other legal scholars for their opinions of Bush's admission.

U.S. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, has introduced legislation to form a Select Committee with subpoena power to investigate alleged misconduct of the Bush administra-

tion related.

House Res. 635 would form the committee. But Conyers has also introduced House Res. 636 to censure the president and House Res. 637 to censure Vice President Dick Cheney for Iraqi war-related activities, which he says are also impeachable offenses.

Censure is when Congress or a governing body publicly reprimands, condemns or expresses strong disapproval of the actions of a leader. Allegations in such cases could lead to impeachment, which means the actual bringing up of formal charges.

Conyers' bills was in response to the release of a 273-page Investigative Status Report by the House Judiciary Committee Democratic Staff, a compilation of the alleged Bush administration war misconduct.

"They're all abuses of authority. There is how they connect up. This is the first report that documents all of the alleged abuses of this administration," says Conyers in an interview with the NNPA News Service. "The thing is out of the box now. People have had as much as they can stand. He has taken for himself more authority than any other president in the 20th century. I think censure will highlight the incredible number of mistakes, manipulations of intelligence, the encouraging of torture of prisoners, the surprising amount of retaliation that this administration has indulged in against its critics and how they determined to go to war before they had Congressional authorization. It may lead to consideration of articles of impeachment. For that reason we have formed a select committee to investigate all of these matters."

The controversy over domestic spying will no doubt become increasingly heated in various political forums in 2006 as raging debate over whether to re-enact the USA Patriot Act resumes in Congress.

Three days before Christmas, the Congress passed a short extension of the Patriot Act, just until Feb. 3. It was set to expire on Dec. 31.

With the backdrop of the domestic spying revelations, even arch Bush supporter Rep. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, fought some Republicans who wanted a six-month extension, revealing deep divisions even among Republicans over issues of investigations and privacy. President Bush had fought for full reauthorization of the act and implied that it was a partisan issue.

Human and civil rights activists and civil libertarians also continue to weigh into the debate.

"Law-abiding Americans deserve to know that their government will not secretly tap their phones, read their medical records, access their

library accounts or otherwise invade their personal lives, with no oversight or accountability," said Ralph Neas, president of the People for the American Way.

"Law-abiding Americans also deserve to know that when law enforcement can show an impartial judge clear evidence of criminal activity or a threat to national security, swift and decisive action will be taken to protect the public. That is the balance we must achieve."

A new website, www.censureBush.org has been set up to push Conyers' censure bills. The website has been set up by the After Downing Street Coalition, a group of more than 100 peace, veteran and political activist groups formed to expose what it calls lies that launched the war.

Both Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Vice President Dick Cheney have come to the defense of Bush, saying he had the right to spy on Americans without warrants.

On ABC's "Nightline," Cheney denied charges by former Sen. Bob Graham, (D-Fla.), that the White House failed to fully brief him on the extensive secrecy of the program when Bush administration officials briefed him as head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, in 2002.

"He knew," Cheney said. He claims Graham was fully briefed in his office by Lt. Gen. Michael V. Hayden, then head of the National Security Agency, now deputy director of national intelligence.

Cheney says the program was reviewed every 45 days by Bush his legal counsels and justice department officials.

Rice defended the president on "Meet the Press."

"I'm not a lawyer, but the president has gone to great lengths to make certain that he is both living under his obligations to protect Americans from another attack and to protect their civil liberties," Rice said.

"What the president wants to prevent is the use of American territory as a safe haven for communications between terrorists operating here, or people with terrorist links operating here, and people operating outside the country," Rice said.

Though no lawmaker has publicly stated that special surveillance programs are not needed to protect Americans from terrorism, many now scoff at the Bush Administration's repeated assertions that it engages in questionable operations in order to fight terrorism.

"The president must stop using the threat of terrorism and the tactics of fear to invade the privacy of American citizens," Lewis said. "President Bush and Vice President Cheney have said that the White House informed the leadership of Congress and ranking members of the intelligence committee about this questionable program. However, it



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