

AU, UN condemn Shabaab attack as militants claim they killed a 'huge' number

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The United Nations and African Union have condemned the Tuesday Shabaab assault on peacekeepers in Somalia, even as the militant group claimed to have killed more people than officially communicated.

Militants on Tuesday attacked an AU base housing Burundi peacekeepers near Eel Baraf, a village about 160 kilometres northeast of the capital Mogadishu.

The Burundian government on Wednesday said 10 soldiers under the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) were killed in the raid on their camp, but the militants suggest that the number of peacekeepers killed is much higher than the Burundi government is reporting.

East African could not independently verify the number of people killed in the attack.

Burundi officially said 10 soldiers were killed and dozens injured, adding that its troops also killed at least 29 Shabaab fighters.

Burundian President Evariste Ndayishimiye condemned the attack, on his Twitter page.

“There are no words strong enough to condemn the terrorist attack against the Burundian contingent of ATMIS,” the presidential statement stated on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 1081st meeting said the attack on Sector 5 of ATMIS was

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“barbaric and cowardly.”

“[The] Council stressed that the AU remains resolute in working with the Federal government of Somalia to eliminate the Al-Shabaab menace and continue to promote effective peace, security and stability in Somalia,” it said in a dispatch.

“[The] Council underlined the importance of preserving the gains thus far registered in Somalia, as well as the current momentum in the fight against Al-Shabaab by enhancing the capacity of ATMIS, including by availing the Mission with all necessary human, material, technical and financial resources, including force enablers and multipliers, in order to enable it to more effectively discharge its mandate.”

It came as reports indicated that the attack by Al-Shabaab fighters started with a suicide bombing followed by an assault by fighters from different directions in the early hours of Tuesday.

The camp, part of Sector 5 of ATMIS, had fallen under the control of the Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists and later the group ordered the locals at Eel Baraf village to enter the camp to loot after troops vacated following the ambush.

Later, aircraft were brought in as reinforcements to support ground troops from ATMIS and the Somali National Army.

The United Nations, the African Union and the Federal Government of Somalia have all condemned the Shabaab assault, calling it “cowardly”.

The Chairperson of the AU Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat issued a statement on Wednesday condemning the attack, and paying tribute to

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the Burundians who lost their lives helping to bring peace and stability to Somalia.

“The chairperson extends his sincere condolences to the bereaved families, the Government and the people of the Republic of Burundi, and wishes a speedy recovery to the wounded as a result of the attack.

“I join with all of Africa which has just lost sons and daughters fallen on the field of honour to console the hard-hit families.”

The Spokesperson of Executive Director of the Intergovernmental Agency on Development (IGAD), Nur Mohamud Sheikh, in a Twitter post, condemned the attack on the AU peacekeepers in Somalia.

Sheikh quoted remarks by the IGAD Executive Secretary Dr Workneh Gebeyehu as saying, “This criminal act will not deter the determination of IGAD and partners to support the people of Somalia in their search for lasting peace and stability.”

ATMIS has replaced the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) whose term lapsed at the end of March 2022.

Source: AGENCIES

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