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Referendum Watch

Sudan reiterates border demarcation should be done before referendum

Sudantribune.com et al Khartoum, 31/10/10 – The National Congress Party (NCP) has denied reaching any deal with its peace partner the SPLM allowing to hold the southern Sudan referendum before finalising border demarcation.

Reacting to Kiir's statements, the head of NCP political secretariat Ibrahim Ghandour told reporters in Khartoum that the demarcation of border remains a very important issue. He further added that the presidency agreed only to complete the demarcation of the undisputed areas (Eastern Sector) but there was no agreement on the run of referenda before finalizing border demarcation.

Ghandour further pointed out that southern Sudanese would not be granted dual nationality in the north should the referendum result in southern secession, reports *Al-Ahdath*. Should the south separate, "the northerner would be a northerner and the southerner would be a southerner," said Gandour, pointing out that the issue of nationality has not been discussed so far because Sudan is still one country. He said that discussions on the nationality may take place after the referendum, should the south secede, and on the basis of the sovereign rights of each state.

A joint committee headed by Salah Gosh and Pagan Amum should meet on Monday to discuss the disputed border, he further said.

The Sudanese presidency said in a statement released following a meeting last Friday attended by the president and his two deputies it agreed to complete the demarcation of the Eastern Sector and to delimit the undisputed areas in the Central and Western Sectors.

FVP Kiir urges state governors to embark on voter registration campaign

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 30/10/10 - The President of the Government of Southern Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, on Friday urged state governors to immediately begin voter mobilization campaigns ahead of the south's self-determination referendum in January.

"I would like you to immediately embark on mobilizing our people in the states to register. It is also vital for them to understand the implications of registering and not turning up to vote," said president Kiir in a three page speech he made at the closing session of the annual Southern Sudan Governors' Forum.

"The referendum taskforce and MPs should step-up their activities to sensitize our people on the two options of unity and secession. The two sides must be permitted and facilitated to present their views equally," he adds.

The president also urged state governors to seriously give attention to security matters to enable a credible referendum to take place.

"We must as a matter of urgency address any security concerns in order to create a conducive environment for the conduct of a free, fair and transparent referendum," said president Kiir, adding that in order to ensure security, "our police must have the necessary support and facilitation to cover all areas of the state."

SPLM changes its point man at the border demarcation committee

Al-Akhbar Khartoum, 01/11/10 – The SPLM has replaced the head of its team at the ad-hoc technical border-demarcation committee, Riek Degoul. His deputy takes over as head of the SPLM team. Sources intimate that Riek had refused to carry out a recent Presidential directive on the border demarcation exercise.

The Commission would convene today to continue the exercise.

We have no hard currency reserves should the south separate – GoSS minister

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 01/11/10 – GoSS Finance Minister David Athorbei has expressed concern that southern Sudan may face a financial crisis due to lack of foreign currency reserves should the referendum result in separation. The minister said he expected southern Sudan to pass through a rough post-separation period either as a result of insecurity or lack of agreement on clear-cut mechanisms on oil-sharing. Athorbei said that the GoSS has formed a team to discuss means to address the challenges ahead in the government's quest to reap in non-oil revenue.

Meanwhile Gabriel Changson, GoSS Minister for Culture and member of a joint committee charged with discussing post-referendum oil-sharing arrangement, said that the GoSS and the federal government are yet to reach an agreement over post-referendum oil-sharing.

Delay of Abyei referendum is undesirable but may be unavoidable - RVI

Sudantribune.com Juba, 31/10/10 - A report by a research organisation says that January's referendum in Sudan's oil-rich border region of Abyei may have to be postponed until April due to severe delays to preparations.

With less than 70 days to go until voting is due to begin the Rift Valley Institute (RVI) report concludes that 'brinkmanship, delay and broken agreements – old traditions of Sudanese politics – threaten to turn the political and technical challenges of the referenda into a national disaster.'

"If the members of the commission to run the vote (who were due to be named in January this year) are not named within the next two weeks 'it will not be practicable to hold the Abyei referendum on time,'" the report says.

As things stand the report says that Abyei's poll is so far behind schedule that the legal requirements of the poll may not be met.

The report's author Aly Verjee argues that the best way to avoid the Abyei and southern referenda becoming a 'national disaster' triggering a third north-south civil war is a 'political fix' in form of a new deal or 'Comprehensive Peace Agreement II'. [The full report could be accessed from the internet at <http://www.riftvalley.net/resources/file/Race%20Against%20Time%20-%20Aly%20Verjee%20-%2030%20Oct%202010.pdf>].

Blue Nile State launches public consultation awareness campaign

Ajras Al-Hurriya El-Damazine, 01/11/10 – Blue Nile State has launched the first public awareness campaign on public consultations with the first campaign kicking off in Dar el-Salam village last Saturday.

Al-Sheikh Sheikheldeen, a representative of the local administration, lamented the lack of awareness of the CPA amongst the population.

NCP, SPLM to meet in Juba tomorrow for talks on Addis Ababa talks

Al-Akhbar Khartoum, 01/11/10 – The joint NCP-SPLM political committee convenes in Juba tomorrow to discuss the options available to overcome the deadlock over Abyei. Sources reveal that the two sides would also discuss border demarcation.

It is worth noting that the outcome of this meeting would be the basis for determining the date of the meeting of the two sides in Addis Ababa.

Pagan Amum outlines south Sudan's "ransom" to break Abyei deadlock

Sudantribune.com Nairobi, 30/10/10 - SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum has outlined what he termed as “the ransom” that south Sudan is offering to north Sudan in order to break the deadlock over the future of the contested oil-producing area of Abyei.

Speaking in an exclusive phone interview with Sudan Tribune, the SPLM's powerful figure has also warned that south Sudan could resort to other options to exercise the right of self-determination should the January 2011's referendum on the region's full independence from the north becomes “politically obstructed.”

Pagan Amum, who also serves as a minister for Peace and CPA implementation in the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), told Sudan Tribune that the NCP was holding Abyei hostage and demanding a ransom for its release. The trouble, according to Amum, is that the NCP is not seeking ransom only from south Sudan but also from the US Administration. He later explained that the NCP wants the US Administration to lift economic sanctions imposed on Sudan and normalize bilateral relations.

Pagan Amum said that the south would need to offer a development package to the Misseriya, one that includes guarantees to their rights in grazing as well as water resources and pasture in their homelands even after the area goes to the south.

He also revealed that the south would need to give the NCP a percentage of the oil produced from Abyei.

In response to a question on what option could south Sudan resort to if the referendum is hindered by the north, Amum said that if the south realizes that the referendum is being “politically obstructed,” the south would to article 1.3 of the CPA which says that the people of south Sudan have the right to self-determination through the referendum “among other mechanisms.”

According to Amum, one of those mechanisms is to exercise the vote through the South Sudan Legislative Assembly.

On the conduct of the referendum, Amum expressed confidence that the referendum could go ahead as planned in January 2011, adding that GoSS was doing everything in its capacity to assist the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC).

Amum stated that the Government of Sudan and the International Community have not yet fulfilled their pledges towards the referendum but said he was sure the UN and the international community is committed to supporting the exercise.

Pagan Amum stressed the importance of creating good relations between north and south Sudan even if the latter decides to form an independent state.

“Even if the choice of south Sudan people is secession, it should not be a secession that leads to

severing relations between the north and the south, but leads into a new era of cooperation whereby we expect to have continuation of relationship in the area of trade, movement of people, goods and services between the south and the north and cooperation in all fields.”

He later revealed that the south would continue to export its oil through the north’s pipelines even after secession.

“In the area of economy, the south will continue to export oil through the north, paying fees for the use of pipelines and other services including the ports” he said.

Amum went on to promise that south Sudan secession would not have a negative impact on northern or southern citizens residing in both sides of the country.

“All northern Sudanese who are working in the oilfield will continue to work in the oil field and all southern Sudanese who are working in northern Sudan will continue to work in north Sudan, and all northern traders who are working in southern Sudanese will continue to work and given residence.”

Concerning the tentative borders between north and south Sudan, Amum said that the two sides must be able to demarcate the borders as they stood on January, 01 1956, the date of Sudan independence from Anglo-British Condominium rule.

But according to Amum, the two sides “agreed that no dispute on borders will take us back to war.”

Furthermore, Amum stressed that south Sudan referendum is “not conditional” on the demarcation of north-south borders.

He explained that they would ask for the assistance of the United Kingdom in demarcating the borders “so the borders are demarcated without any conflict arising from territorial ambitions by from the north or the south.”

Pagan Amum said that south Sudan is in support for the deployment of UN peacekeepers along hotspots on north-south borders in order to prevent the two sides from sliding back to war.

“We don’t want return to war and it will be in the interest of both north and the south to station international UN forces between the north and the south and create a buffer zone and cooperate it is an important mechanism to prevent a return to war.”

North Sudan has ardently opposed the deployment of UN peacekeepers in borderlands.

“In this historical moment, our strategic objective is to ensure that we sustain peace and ensure that we enter Sudan into an era of just peace and good relations between the south and the north and avert a return to war” Amum concluded.

Other Highlights

Infighting in SPLA camp in Kurmuk

Al-Intibaha Khartoum/ Kurmuk, 01/11/10 – Kurmuk town in Blue Nile State was the site of violent clashes within the SPLA contingent in the JIU that left one officer dead and six others injured last Saturday. Sources report that disagreement between two groups in the SPLA contingent resulted in the shootout the continued for some four hours. The injured were said to have died while receiving treatment at Kurmuk hospital.

SPLA accuses SAF of ambush

Reuters et al Khartoum, 31/10/10 - Sudan's southern army accused soldiers from the north on Sunday of ambushing its men on its territory two months before a referendum that could see the south secede.

The two armies agreed last week to try to defuse escalating tensions after tit-for-tat accusations that each side was massing troops along the disputed border area that includes the oil-producing Abyei region.

"They came into the territory of Upper Nile (state) and ambushed our soldiers ... at 0900 (0600 GMT)," said SPLA spokesman Kuol Diem Kuol.

"They clashed with about 10 of our soldiers and wounded one officer and then they ran back to their base."

He said Saturday's clash was a violation of the 2005 peace deal signed by the former north-south foes to end Africa's longest running civil war.

Al-Sahafa quotes Kuol Diem as having said that the SPLA has tabled letters of protest before the JDB on the incident and on what they perceived as non-compliance of the SAF Spokesperson to the agreement that the two sides cease making hostile remarks on the media. The SPLA Spokesperson described the site of the clash as an area around the border areas of Upper Nile and White Nile State, describing the incident as a "gross incursion of the borders" from the part of the SAF.

He said that a joint committee from the Joint Defence Board has been dispatched to the site to investigate troop activities around the sensitive areas of Gok Bar, Joda and the areas east and north of Al-Renk. Kuol pointed out that in its note to the JDB, the SPLA also noted that the SAF has established a new base in Gok Bar since 26 October but the SPLA has called for restraint from its forces.

Sudan's northern army spokesman denied they had any troops south of the border. "There has been a joint committee formed to look into these allegations and we will wait for their report," al-Sawarmi Khaled said.

A UN official who declined to be named said they had heard the reports of the skirmish and would be investigating.

Student group challenges Southern Kordofan census results

Ajras Al-Hurriya Khartoum, 01/11/10 – The Nuba Mountains General Students' Union has described the outcome of the census re-run for Southern Kordofan State that has recently been endorsed by the Presidency as a 'unrealistic'. The students' body claims that the actual population could not be less than 4,700 000 and not the 2,508 000 figure announced.

In a statement circulated yesterday, the students' body pointed out that this "erroneous" figure will cause difficulties in the delimitation of geographic constituencies.

EU allocates €17m for humanitarian needs in Sudan ahead of referendum

Sudantribune.com Juba, 31/10/10 - The European Commission has approved an additional package of €17 million (over \$23 million) to support the advance preparation of essential humanitarian provisions in Sudan's western Darfur region, the south and other transitional areas ahead of the referendum, expected in January 2011.

The Commission's decision, according to its press release, brings to €131 million (\$183 million), the total amount of support directed for humanitarian aid in Sudan.

"The humanitarian needs in several parts of Sudan are considerable. We need to boost our response to avoid the looming breakdown in food assistance programmes. We also need to provide support to our partners so that they are prepared, thus preventing a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation threatened by violence which could surround the referendum of 2011", Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva said in the press release.

The additional funding is aimed mainly at providing food and nutritional supplies, as well as non food items such as medical kits, seeds and tools.

According to the European Commission, the humanitarian community should be prepared for any unrest or displacements that may result from the referenda in south Sudan and that in the oil-rich Abyei region.

Constitutional post holders to suffer pay cuts in the new fiscal year

Akhir Lahza Omdurman, 01/11/10 – The Federal Minister of Finance has announced that his ministry would implement the plan to cut down on pay for all constitutional post holders "without exception" as soon as the draft fiscal budget gets the parliamentary nod. He revealed that discussions are underway to ease customs charges for some commodities and to limit the importation of commodities that do not directly affect consumers.

Governor mulls expelling SLA-MM forces from West Darfur

Ajras Al-Hurriya Khartoum, 01/11/10 – West Darfur Governor Al-Shartai Jaffar Abdel-Hakam says he is determined to order all movements that are signatories to peace agreements with the government out of the state. The governor has accused these movements of causing tension and of hindering the free movement of citizens. He said that his government has already sent note to the Minnawi faction of the SLM requesting the movement to take its troops to the assembly points set forth in the DPA.

Arrests in Khartoum against human rights workers from Darfur

Radio Dabanga Khartoum, 31/10/10 - The Sudan National Security arrested on Saturday afternoon a number of Darfuri human rights activists in Khartoum after they attended a Youth Forum in the Al-Khatim Adlan Center. Five of their names have been confirmed, three other names are so far unverified. The Youth Forum was about issues concerning social development and peace in Darfur.

Sudan starts oil exploration in South Darfur

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 31/10/10 - Abdel-Hamid Mousa Kasha, Governor of South Darfur state announced Sunday that oil exploration has started in the eastern part of the troubled state.

Oil exploration has started in three locations in the eastern parts of South Darfur, precisely Addilla Barbar, Um-Radm Al-kori and Zarqa Um-Hadida, said Kasha today in a speech delivered at the inauguration of the Commercial Real Estate Bank branch in Nyala.

The governor also said that local authorities have secured the area ending activities of "armed gangs" referring to rebel groups.

However he did not disclose the name of the firm working in the areas.