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Highlights

On the Campaign Trail

UNMIS rejects allegations on ballots printing in Sudan

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 14/03/10 - The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has dismissed as "unfounded" allegations levelled against it by the Umma Reform and Renewal Party (URRP) suggesting that the Mission's Chief Electoral Affairs Officer Ray Kennedy has been complicit in the improper process of granting bids to companies printing election ballots.

The URRP leader Mubarak Al-Fadil had expressed concern over an alleged switching of the process of printing voting slips from abroad to NCP-owned presses inside Sudan — a move he said would lead to duplicate papers and ballot box stuffing.

Al-Fadil said in a statement this week that the National elections committee (NEC) acknowledged this flawed process with the consent of Ray Kennedy, Chief Electoral Affairs Officer for the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).

"This requires investigation from the UN Secretary General on the actions of the UN official and his contribution towards fraud. We will submit a complaint to the UN Secretary General based on the response of the [NEC] commission memo"

Last week, the opposition parties submitted a memorandum of protest regarding reforming the rules set by the commission on the campaigning. The parties say that new rules published by the NEC meant that they have to give 72 hours notice for rallies held inside their own party premises — and had to ask police for permission to meet outside. It also brought up the issue of the voting slips.

The NEC dismissed the memo in a formal response asserting it's a neutral body counting an example where the government asked for breaking up the elections but they rejected it and when they overruled NCP challenges on drawing geographical constituencies.

The commission said a bid for printing the voting slips was advertised and two Sudanese companies secured it and that due to time constraints one set of the cards was diverted from a Slovenian company to a Sudanese one stressing that at each step this process was made with the participation of UNMIS elections office.

But UNMIS insisted that the decision on voting slips is one taken by the appropriate Sudanese agencies.

Opposition figures claim that the NEC is paying four times the cost to print the ballots through a Sudanese company as compared to the Slovenian company.

The general elections scheduled for April, will be the first multi-party polls since 1986 but opposition parties have already accused the NCP of seeking to rig the votes in its favour.

Advance team of AL monitors arrive in Khartoum

An advance team from the Arab League's observers for monitoring Sudan's elections arrived in Khartoum, SPLM official Mohamed Al-Mutasim, said, according to **Ajras Al-Hurriah**. The SPLM official said that the observers would be deployed all over Sudan and would be coordinating with their EU counterparts.

Al-Bashir in Renk renews calls for unity

On the campaign trail in Renk, Upper Nile State, NCP presidential hopeful Omar Al-Bashir renewed calls on southern Sudanese to work towards making unity the better option as southerners head to the 2011 referendum, reports *Al-Ayyam*. Addressing a mass rally in Renk after the inauguration of the Renk Electric Plant yesterday, Al-Bashir pointed out that the peace realised in southern Sudan will contribute tremendously to the provision of essential and necessary services in the region.

Al-Bashir reiterated his respect for whatever the outcome of the referendum may be but pointed out that a vote for unity does not mean that the achievements of the people of southern Sudan following the signing of the CPA would be looked down upon.

He called upon the people of Upper Nile to preserve their spirit of coexistence and make of the state a model to be emulated by others.

Disaster if Al-Bashir does not sweep the votes from round one – DUP figure

The Secretary-General of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) says a disaster will occur with the incumbent President Al-Bashir does not sweep the votes from the first round of elections, *Akhir Lahza* reports. Jalal Yusuf Al-Digeir pointed out that he supports Al-Bashir's re-election bid because none of the other contestants for the presidency have what it takes to lead the country at such a time. Al-Digeir pointed out that many of the political forces are not prepared for the polls and had expected the NCP to back their calls for a delay.

Salva Kiir orders crackdown on ballot fraud

GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit has issued instructions allowing authorities to apprehend people who forge the ballots, reports *The Citizen*. This measure follows recent reports of a spread of forged ballot papers in southern Sudan. Stomping the campaign trail at Malakal Stadium in Upper Nile recently, the GoSS leader also called on independent candidates to refrain from using the SPLM name and logo in their campaigns.

Al-Mahdi renews calls for poll postponement

Umma Party leader Sadig Al-Mahdi has warned of the possibilities of a "hostile separation" between the north and south of the country fuelled by regional and international parties along the "Ethiopia-Eritrean model", reports *Al-Ayyam*. He cited the border demarcation, Abyei, water, oil, the status of northerners in the south and vice-versa, and the issue of citizenship were among 12 points that he said constitute "time bombs" that have to be defused ahead of the elections.

Al-Mahdi who was speaking at the regular political forum of the General Sudanese Journalists' Union yesterday, warned against the influence of "pro-Israeli US rightist circles" that favour an NCP victory at the polls so that the south secedes. He renewed calls for the postponement of the elections until the problems in Darfur and southern Sudan are resolved. "If elections are not free and fair, a Kenya-like scenario can recur in Sudan," he warned.

SPLM presidential hopeful on the campaign trail in South Darfur

While thousands of Darfuris have gathered in Al-Da'ain and Nyala to receive SPLM presidential candidate Yassir Arman at the launch of his elections campaign in the region, local authorities barred thousands of IDPs and cut off electricity supply to block the rally, *Ajras Al-Hurriah* reports. Addressing the rally, Arman said he would support the legitimate demands of the people of Darfur. The paper reports that unprecedented large crowds turned up at the SPLM rally.

Al-Ayyam also reports that the SPLM candidate promised to resolve the Darfur problem in a comprehensive manner if elected president. He called upon the people of Darfur to vote for either the SPLM or Juba Alliance candidates.

"The SPLM had hoped that the Darfur problem be resolved before the elections but the NCP's rush for the elections has made it not possible," Yassir Arman told the rally after requesting them to observe a minute of silence in honour of victims of the conflict in Darfur.

SPLM-DC and others ally to defeat SPLM candidates

SPLM-DC has unveiled an alliance with independent (SPLM) candidates and a number of southern Sudanese political parties to defeat SPLM candidates at the polls, **Akhir Lahza** reports. Speaking to reporters following a closed meeting with independents and representatives of some southern Sudanese parties, SPLM-DC leader and flag-bearer for the GoSS presidential slot, Lam Akol, said that the alliance hoped to unseat SPLM candidates through the ballot box.

Akol accused the SPLM of violating the Code of Ethics on the conduct of elections. He also lashed out on South Sudan Television for not broadcasting his party's recent campaigning in Bentiu while it broadcasted Yassir Arman's campaign from the same area. He unveiled plans to tour some states in the south.

Security ready to curb any form of poll-related instability

"The people want the elections to take place and this will be reflected as they turn up at the polls," Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail told the press yesterday following a meeting of the NCP political bureau.

He assured reporters that the security authorities are ready to quell any form of polls-related chaos that may occur.

The NCP meeting was held to discuss requests by some political forces for a postponement of the polls. He said that proponents for a delay in the polls have disconnected themselves with the masses. Mustafa added that recent statements by US Special Envoy Scott Gration in support of the elections as per schedule confirm the good prospects for relations between Khartoum and Washington.

Southern Sudan party banned from holding political rally

Miraya FM (via *BBC Monitoring*) Juba, 14/03/10 - The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Democratic Forum (UDF), John Aurelio, has complained that authorities in Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal's Barmayan area have slapped a ban on UDF political rallies.

Aurelio clarified to **Radio Miraya** that this happened despite the fact that the party had secured legal documents from the State's Police Commissioner and Elections Committee.

The acting head of the Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State High Elections Committee Madut Wol Abiem said that they received a complaint from the UDF and that the committee has directed corrective measures be taken.

SPLA on maximum alert against possible Ugandan rebel attacks during polls

Al-Ayyam (via *BBC Monitoring*), 14/03/10 - The SPLA has announced that it has put its troops stationed in Western Bahr-el-Ghazal and Western Equatoria on 100% alert in anticipation of attacks by the LRA during the elections.

SPLA Spokesperson Kual Deim Kual said they have received reports of an LRA build-up inside the CAR in preparation for strikes on locations in southern Sudan during the elections. In statements to ***Al-Ayyam***, Kual affirmed that the LRA militia had set up camp in the Jabal Shawa area south of the Kafia Kanji area on the banks of River Kafwa. He said it was likely that LRA leader Joseph Kony is in this camp.

Kual said he expected the LRA would launch viscous attacks against the south, northern Congo and the CAR with the support of sides he did not name.

The Office of the Spokesperson of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) has however categorically denied these allegations pointing out that it was impossible for guerrilla fighters to adapt to fighting in desert areas.

Police chief requests candidates to notify authorities ahead of road travel

According to ***Al-Rai Al-Aam***, Khartoum Police head of Crimes Investigation Division, Moahmed Ahmed Ali Ibrahim, called upon candidates standing for elections to inform the police in ample time before they travel by vehicle on the campaign trail for fear of causing traffic problems. Speaking at a press conference in Khartoum yesterday, he advised candidates to choose an appropriate time for such travel such as holidays in order not to cause traffic jams.

Mohamed warned that police will not be lenient in dealing with parties that “use firearms in their political battles.”

Sudan’s Upper Nile youth on prevention of elections hostilities

Sudantribune.com 15/03/10 - As campaigns are underway for the general elections in Sudan and with polling day just over three weeks away, youth from Upper Nile State have organized themselves to play the role of ambassadors of peace, preaching for peaceful campaign and voting in their counties in order to prevent any occurrence of violence during the elections and after the announcement of the results.

In an initiative which they said would be expanded to include youth members from the other counties in Upper Nile state and beyond, over 200 eastern Jikany-Nuer youth held an awareness meeting in Juba on Sunday under the theme, “Election Hostility Prevention Forum”.

Church in voter education drive

A church of the Khartoum Catholic Diocese has drafted a comprehensive plan for voter education that would also highlight the importance of the period, ***Al-Ayyam*** reports. The church said in a statement that the plan aimed at encouraging Christians to lead an active life in society for the common good.

Imams warn citizens against the “New Sudan” project

Some Imams of mosques in Khartoum and Omdurman have renewed their attacks on opposition political parties and the SPLM, calling on worshippers not to vote for what they termed as “secular and blasphemous” parties, ***The Citizen*** reports. A mosque Imam in Omdurman said the “New Sudan project” is a threat to the country’s security and stability and described it as subversive and a means to disseminate the principles of Zionism and secularism. He also accused the Sudan Communist Party of spreading vice and atheism among the citizenry.

Darfur IDPs alienated from elections process - group

Sudantribune.com Washington, 14/03/10 - The approximately 5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sudan were under-counted and are under-represented on voter rolls,

especially in Darfur, claims an international advocacy group.

The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) boycotted the fifth national census and the counting operations in the three states of Darfur. Government officials and IDPs said census enumerators were not able to count the residents of the camps.

Census Director in West Darfur, Wafaa Hassan Mansur, at the time, said the Central Bureau of Statistics had decided to estimate the number of people in the camps and other "unsafe" areas based on information from humanitarian agencies working in Darfur.

"The alienation of the IDPs from the whole process of census, registration and elections is a result of their profound distrust of the government," the group said in a new report released this week.

IDP action highlighted three systemic flaws in the census and voter registration processes. First, millions of southerners living in or around Khartoum "will not have the voice within Parliament that their large numbers would warrant" because of under-registration. Khartoum State had the lowest percentage registration of any state in the country.

Second, the under-registration of IDPs in the in the south would keep them from power which could lead to increasing the fragility of the situation and the chances of violence.

Third, there is "strong evidence of falsification of census results and registration" in Darfur. On this point, IDP Action's report cited an IDP from Zalingei who suggested there may be elections in the secure areas of towns, but the IDPs in camps will not participate.

Jeremy Smith, the professional staff member listed on the IDP Action's website, stated in a press release that the disenfranchisement of IDPs pushes them further off the political radar in

IDP Action spoke by telephone to IDPs and others in El Fasher, Nyala, El-Geneina, Kabkabiya, Zalingei and the camps of Abu Shouk and Kalma. After these interviews, the advocacy group concluded that "the opinion was unanimous: IDPs knew that they would not be fairly represented in the elections."

Eritrea requests JEM to press for a delay of the Sudan polls

Sources quote JEM Information Secretary, Ahmed Hussein, as saying that Eritrea has asked the JEM to insist on a postponement of the elections as a pre-condition for peace talks with the Sudan government, **Akhir Lahza** reports.

The Sudan government delegation had pointed out to the mediators in Doha that there was no express reference to a polls delay in the framework agreement with the JEM. Furthermore, the government had said its delegation was not mandated to discuss issues related to delaying the polls.

Other Highlights

SPLM Spokesperson rejects post-separation visa requirement for southerners

The SPLM has rejected possibilities of enforcing a visa system for movement between the north and the south should southerners vote for separation, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports. SPLM Spokesperson Yien Mathew said separation is likely but that does not mean that ties between the south and the north will breakdown or the southerners in the north will be required to move to the south and vice-versa. He said their party would rule the Sudan, united or divided. He hoped north and south would maintain good relations in case of separation and that visas would not be a requirement for travel between the two regions.

Police concerned with increase in crimes involving impersonation

The head of Khartoum Police's Crimes Investigation Division reports a recent rise in crimes involving people posing as members of the regular forces, reports **Al-Rai Al-Aam**. Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Mohamed Ahmed Ali Ibrahim said that most of this happens for the purposes of blackmail.

Biemnom MP assassinated in Juba

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 14/03/10 - Bol Deng Kot was slain by unidentified gunmen in military fatigues on Wednesday, March 10, sparking condemnation by authorities and the citizenry of Biemnom County of Unity State.

Bol Deng Kot was a member of parliament in the regional legislative assembly in Juba, representing Biemnom constituency as an SPLM member.

During the selection and endorsement process of official party nominees in January 2010, Hon. Bol Deng Kot's name never appeared though he had reportedly been selected by the state electoral college. He then chose to run as an independent candidate. But his popularity in the area compelled SPLM leadership to promise him a parliamentary seat from among the 40 seats allocated to SPLM after the latest negotiations with the ruling National Congress Party.

Last Wednesday at 2 a.m., a group of armed men allegedly entered his accommodation at Jebel Kujur, west of Juba town, fired bullets indiscriminately to scare family members and relatives living in the same compound and forcefully made their way into his room.

According to his wife, five strong armed men in military uniforms with automatic rifles and pistols wrapped her up and muzzled her mouth to stop her from making loud noise then shot her husband to death.

Other gunmen were said to be outside the house. All the family members and relatives including the brother of the MP were confined to their living rooms as they had no guns. The group left and were never traced as they vanished into the mountains.

The government is quiet about whether it is launching any investigation procedures. Relatives say they brought Bol Deng Kot's body to Bentiu awaiting transportation to his village of birth for burial.

Mbeki's panel flirting with failure in Sudan

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 14/03/10 - The former South African president and head of the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) Thabo Mbeki sent a letter to leaders of Sudanese parties this week informing them of an indefinite adjournment of a summit that was to bring them together to discuss a number of thorny issues primarily related to the upcoming elections in April.

"The panel had twice to postpone the meeting at the request of some of the parties. This is because these parties wanted that various issues should be resolved before the meeting convened...the panel respected this request and convened a number of meetings with the parties concerned to enable them to resolve the matters they have raised" Mbeki said in a copy of the letter seen by **Sudan Tribune** dated March 8.

"Regrettably, in the end, all the numerous efforts of the panel to facilitate a resolution of these and other matters failed. It therefore became obvious that in the light of this negative development it would not be possible for the summit meeting to achieve what the panel had considered would be its historic result, namely the adoption of the Electoral Code of Conduct and the Declaration of Common Commitments".

The downbeat-toned letter said that convening the summit under these circumstances "would only serve further to foul the atmosphere in the country by exacerbating the divisions among the Sudanese political leadership".

Mbeki said his panel "gained a deeper understanding of the prevalent and most unfortunate mistrust which has so far made it impossible to organize an open and frank encounter among all Sudan's political leaders to discuss all major national challenges, which we are certain all these leaders desire". The new development highlights the challenging environment AUHIP had to grapple with only months away from April elections and the South Sudan 2011 referendum vote.

Government investigating UNAMID violations

Al-Intibaha reports Presidential Adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail has said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in coordination with the concerned authorities are investigating all violations allegedly perpetrated by UNAMID peacekeepers including the incident in Jebel Marra where weapons of a UNAMID patrol were seized by rebels. He said an appropriate decision would be taken based on the findings.

Kidnapped French aid workers freed in Darfur

AFP 14/3/10 - Two French aid workers abducted in the Central Africa Republic and held for four months were on Sunday freed in Darfur.

Olivier Denis and Olivier Frappe were working for a French charity, Triangle Generation Humanitaire (TGH), when they were kidnapped in November 2009 in the Central African Republic, across the border from Sudan's Darfur region.

They arrived late on Sunday in Khartoum, where Denis spoke of how the pair had feared for their lives at the start of their ordeal.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy expressed "delight that they have been freed" and also called for freedom for ICRC worker Gauthier Lefevre who was abducted in Darfur last October.

US Congress mulls sending troops to smoke out LRA

Al-Intibaha reports that the US Congress is now taking practical steps to send troops to smoke out the LRA from southern Sudan. AfriCom Commander, William Ward, has reportedly requested a US military deployment to fight the LRA in southern Sudan.

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