

21 March, 2010

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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

On the Campaign Trail

NEC rejects calls by Carter Center for a slight delay in Sudan elections

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 19/03/10 - The Sudan National Elections Committee (NEC) has denied any intention to move up the elections in line with an advice from a US based polls watchdog.

"Logistical preparations are straining the limited capacity of the NEC," the Carter Center said in a public statement. "With a series of delays and changes in polling procedures, a minor delay in polling for operational purposes may be required."

The Carter Center said "it is increasingly unclear if the NEC can deliver a successful election on time," citing limited NEC and UN transportation capacity, the massive volume of materials to be deployed, the re-packaging of materials necessitated by changes in the planned number of polling stations, voters per polling station, and delays in ballots production

But Abu-Bakr Waziri a media adviser to the NEC told the **Al-Rai Al-Aam** newspaper that the newly printed ballots have arrived and on their way to the polling stations.

Waziri said that 31 tons of voting slips arrived at the NEC storage houses in Khartoum and will be distributed in the northern states immediately under tight security. He pointed out that the second batch will head to Juba on Friday to be transported to most of Southern states.

In its statement, the Carter Centre urged the NEC to make a decision as quickly as possible about any delay in the election date "so that all stakeholders have time to adjust plans." Given the onset of the rainy season in Darfur and South Sudan in the months after the April 11 polling date, however, only a minor delay may be possible or advisable.

No polls delay, says President Al-Bashir

Addressing a campaign rally yesterday in Al-Geneina, West Darfur, President Al-Bashir renewed the Sudan government's commitment to conduct the elections on schedule, **Akhbar Al-Youm** reports. He called on all political forces to actively participate at the polls in order to shore up the democratic processes and strengthen internal unity in order to face all the challenges the country faces.

Al-Bashir went on to assert that Doha will be the last forum for negotiating peace in Darfur. He called on all the armed movements to heed to the calls for peace.

Yesterday, Al-Geneina also hosted a landmark meeting of the Council of Ministers chaired by President Al-Bashir. The council agreed on the need to shore up efforts to close the IDP camps and assist their residents to resettle and be productive through the provision.

Authorities have reservations over polling in parts of North Darfur

The High Elections Committee in North Darfur told representatives of opposition parties at a meeting in Al-Fashir on Saturday that the state security committee had reservations over the conduct of elections in over 75 polling centres in 8 out of the 14 constituencies in the state due to security concerns, **Al-Sahafa** reports.

Ismail Kitir, the head of the National Umma Party in North Darfur, said that the opposition parties were outraged by this development on the grounds that neither the elections law nor the Interim

National Constitution stipulates that the security committees should interfere on the status of the polling stations. He pointed out that this only shows that the NEC is biased. Kitir further pointed out that the 8 constituencies are known to be local strongholds for the opposition parties. He said that barring polling in those constituencies in North Darfur would only deny a large number of citizens their right to vote.

Opposition ups pressures to postpone the polls

Opposition parties are giving the Presidency of the Republic a one-week ultimatum to respond to their petition for a postponement of the elections, *Al-Sahafa* reports. Their requests include a poll delay to November this year, the dissolution of the NEC and the revocation of laws that they say obstruct public freedoms. They say that a boycott of the polls remains an option should the Presidency not respond favourably to their requests. Opposition leaders are due to meet on Thursday this week to take a decision on these issues.

Police to launch unprecedented parade today

The southern reaches of Khartoum State (the Kalakala area and its environs) will witness today the largest parade in the history of the Sudan Police as the force marks the graduation of its Strategic Division trained to provide security for the forthcoming elections, *Akhbar Al-Youm* reports. The event would see a major show of military ware as the near 10,000-strong force will be rolled out and would be flagged off from the Central Reserve Forces' Square. This would also include an air show.

SPLM calls for all-round meeting on elections

The SPLM is calling on the Presidency to invite political parties to an all-round dialogue over a memorandum by opposition parties requesting a delay of the polls, *Akhir Lahza* reports.

"If we all sit down together, we will reach an agreement over the contentious issues," SPLM presidential candidate, Yassir Arman, told the press at the party's Arkowit headquarters.

He said that the way out of these differences is to either delay the polls or to rectify the technical and political flaws in the demarcation of the constituencies and the population census. Any party that is opposed to these options does not want stability in the country, he said.

Arman criticised what he said were NCP attempts to obstruct UN movement of ballot papers destined for different parts of the country in order to replace it with the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). He said that the UN should be the party responsible for transporting these boxes, not the army.

The SPLM candidate reiterated calls on the NCP to withdraw from the race for presidency in favour of the SPLM as a way out for resolving the issues of unity, Darfur, democratic transformation and the ICC. He said that they could then form a political partnership alongside other political parties after the elections.

Arman maintained that the current political situation does not favour the conduct of free and fair elections, *Khartoum Monitor* reports. He also expressed annoyance that the polling cards had been printed locally instead of in South Africa, Slovakia (sic.) and the UK as had been scheduled.

On Darfur, Arman said that the international community should protect the civilians and speak up on what is happening in Darfur.

NCP's Nafei calls on electorate to "vote SPLM into extinction"

On the campaign trail yesterday in the Soba Aradhi suburbs south of Khartoum, NCP's Nafei Ali Nafei fiercely lashed out against SPLM presidential hopeful Yassir Arman for calling on his party

to withdraw from the presidential race. According to **Akhir Lahza**, Nafei (who is also an Assistant to the President of the Republic) pointed out that Arman would never have been in Khartoum were it not for the incumbent and NCP flag-bearer, President Al-Bashir.

“We defeated the SPLA in battle before agreeing to sign peace in order to end the bloodshed in the south,” he said. He accused “some people” of seeking to derail the implementation of the CPA.

Also addressing the rally, senior NCP member Mandour Al-Mahdi called on the masses to vote for the NCP candidate in order to preserve the peace. He called on them to serve the SPLM a defeat in the polls and thus vote it “to extinction on the political landscape.”

Peaceful post-separation relations a big farce – DUP candidate

Hatim Al-Sirr, the DUP candidate for President of the Republic, says talk about post-separation brotherly relations between north and south Sudan are a major farce as the facts on the ground indicate otherwise, reports **Al-Sahafa**.

Speaking on state television yesterday’s evening, Al-Sirr pointed out that the border demarcation process is far from over and major oilfields straddling these borders could be a cause of long wars to come.

“My party advocates for the unity of our country as we inherited it from our forefathers,” he said.

Kiir appeals to citizens of Central Equatoria to vote for him

Sudantribune.com Juba, 21/03/10 – At a campaign rally on Friday in Yei town, Central Equatoria State, SPLM candidate for GoSS President and the incumbent, Salva Kiir Mayardit, has called on the citizens of the state to vote for him during the upcoming elections.

He said he learnt that there were talks among the citizens of Central Equatoria state that they would punish him by not voting for him because he did not approve of their independent candidates.

Kiir’s former presidential advisor on Diplomatic Affairs, Afred Ladu Gore, tops the list of independent candidates in Central Equatoria State. Gore independently contests for the post of governor against the incumbent caretaker governor and official SPLM candidate, Clement Wani Konga.

Kiir defended the decision to disown over 300 independent candidates who were formerly SPLM officials, saying it was not his unilateral decision but a collective one reached by the party’s Political Bureau in Juba.

All the six states of Greater Equatoria and Greater Upper Nile regions have independent candidates contesting for governorship positions in addition to one state in Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal; namely Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State, making the governors’ elections in seven out of the ten southern states contested by independent candidates.

Sudanese security stab young anti-NCP activist, newspaper

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 20/03/10 - Sudanese security service beat and stabbed on Saturday a young member of a group of political activists campaigning to mobilize electors to vote against the dominant NCP.

Mahid Al-Fadil, 17 years, had been arrested by six members of the security service in Jabra, a Khartoum suburb. He was beaten and stabbed in the back before being set free.

The victim is a member of Girifna, a group that since November 2009 holds spontaneous meetings in the streets of the capital encouraging Sudanese to participate in the upcoming

election and to vote against the NCP candidates to achieve peaceful democratic transition in the country.

Other Highlights

"I feel safe in my country" says Al-Bashir

Sudantribune.com Washington, 20/03/10 - President Omar Al-Bashir dismissed any negative impact of the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against him. He told a German magazine that the ICC move has boosted his popularity ahead of the April general elections in which he is running against eleven other candidates.

In an interview with **Der Spiegel** released on Saturday Bashir rejected the notion that he risks arrest in 110 countries that are signatories to the Rome Statute which is the founding treaty of the ICC.

"The fact that a hundred or more countries have a [negative] position on Sudan is simply not true. Many African States call for [scrapping] the decision of the International Criminal Court, some countries are even threatening to withdraw from the tribunal," the Sudanese president said.

"I feel completely safe in my country. On the contrary the International Criminal Court has rendered me a service which I never would have dreamt of. My popularity has increased in my country ... by this warrant" he said.

President Al-Bashir to head Sudan delegation to Arab League summit

President Al-Bashir will lead the Sudan Government delegation to the Arab League Summit Meeting to be held in Sirte, Libya, next Saturday, **Akhir Lahza** reports. Nafei Ali Nafei, Assistant to the President of the Republic, said Sudan hopes that the meeting will end up in resolutions that would strengthen Sudan's efforts for national unity and the government's positions in the elections and the 2011 referendum.

Sudan rejects JEM's reaction against LJM framework deal

Sudantribune.com Doha, 19/03/10 - Sudan has rejected statements put out by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) criticizing the 18 March signing of a framework agreement with the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) on the grounds that the latter did not take part in the struggle for Darfur rights and has been involved in the peace process to falsify the will of Darfurians.

Amin Hassan Omer, top negotiator of government delegation to Doha peace talks, said they are not concerned by statement published by JEM rebels adding the government takes into consideration the official position of the JEM as stated through the officials channels.

The government official was referring to the commitment of the powerful rebel group to continue the peace talks with the government despite the separate peace talks the government has with the LJM.

Sudan criticises advocacy group

The Sudan Government has rejected calls by the Collectif Urgence Darfour (Darfur Emergency Group) asking French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner to mobilize European allies and demanding an end to Sudanese government attacks on civilians in the Jebel Marra area,

reports **Akhir Lahza**.

Osman Nafei, the head of the Political Department at the Republican Palace, accused such groups of blowing the issue of Darfur out of proportion in order to achieve known objectives. He pointed out that the situation is calm in Darfur as attested to by UNAMID and the AU.

Misseriya accuses SPLA of 'ethnic cleansing'

MirayaFM 21/03/10 – Abdel-Rasoul Al-Nour, a prominent member of the Misseriya tribe, has accused the SPLA of perpetrating an 'ethnic cleansing' campaign against the Misseriya. Al-Nour claimed that SPLA launched an attack on Wednesday on the Misseriya in order to annex their areas to Southern Sudan.

In response, SPLA spokesperson Kuol Diem Kuol said that Misseriya tribesmen had violated an agreement that limits the number of arms they should carry while entering southern areas.

Last Wednesday, the SPLA clashed with the Misseriya tribe in Abiem-Nom County of Unity State. Eleven Misseriya tribesmen and two SPLA soldiers were killed during these clashes.

Sixty dead or injured in Rizeigat clashes with the Misseriya in South Darfur

The town of Kass in South Darfur woke up yesterday to the sound of heavy artillery fire as a group of Rizeigat tribesmen attacked a Misseriya village north of Kass leaving some 60 people dead or injured, **Al-Sudani** reports.

The Governor of South Darfur has described the situation as very bad and has called for intervention from the federal government.

Sources meanwhile report that every kind of heavy weapon with the exception of tanks and aircraft were used in the fighting.

Sudan denied 15 aid groups permits to work in Darfur: official

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 19/03/10 - The Sudanese Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs revealed that it has refused to allow 15 foreign aid groups to work in the western region of Darfur on the ground that the situation there has improved.

The government-affiliated **Sudanese Media Center (SMC)** website quoted the state minister for humanitarian affairs Abdel-Baqi Al-Gailani as saying that Khartoum asked these organizations to work in South Sudan instead.

Al-Gailani called on national relief groups to "play a strong and effective role" in the coming period to close the door in front of foreign groups "that come to work for unannounced goals".

Last year the Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir reacted with anger to the International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant issued for him for war crimes in Darfur, announcing expulsion of 10 international aid organizations.

Al-Bashir said that the humanitarian organizations were being expelled for "activities that were in contradiction to all regulation and laws" namely passing false information to the ICC. The ICC prosecutors denied these claims.

Later, the Sudanese president said he wanted local organizations to take over relief distribution within a year. However, the "sudanisation" decision was quietly reversed later on.

In a related issue, the former humanitarian aid commissioner Hasabu Abdel-Rahman denied reports that he was sacked over corruption charges stressing that he resigned voluntarily to run in the elections.

HAC unveils emergency package for drought-affected southern Sudan

The Humanitarian Aid Commission for southern Sudan has unveiled an emergency aid plan to help southern Sudan face the drought and food gap, **Akhir Lahza** reports. Kormaj Badong, the head of the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, said that the package targets some 204,500 needy people in southern Sudan.

He said that about 40% of the people of southern Sudan are facing severe food shortages as a result of environmental factors and conflict over resources as well as political factors that have all led to the displacement of a large number of people.

UNAMID to monitor cessation of hostilities between government and JEM

Mediators in Doha have yesterday drafted a schedule for talks between the Sudan Government and the Liberation and Justice Movement on the basis of the framework agreement the two sides are expected to sign by the end of this month, **Al-Ahdath** reports. UNAMID would monitor the cessation of hostilities to be agreed upon and the two sides would be obliged to cooperate with the joint mission for the implementation of the ceasefire.

Improvements to Wau roads offer new opportunities

Sudantribune.com Wau, 20/03/10 - Maintenance work has begun in earnest on the urban road connecting Wau, Western Bahr-el-Ghazal, to the motorway roundabout and the Tambura and Kwajok highways through Raga.

The project is just one of many infrastructure improvement projects being carried out by USAID's Sudan Infrastructure Services Project (SISP) to support peace and stability in Southern Sudan.

Re-grading the heavily pot-holed road, one of the worst in Wau Town, is an important first step toward complete rehabilitation of the road as part of the Wau Urban Road Improvement Project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Director of Roads and Bridges in Wau, David Jerome Udho, told the visiting USAID official that "The road maintenance program has ushered in hope among the residents of Wau town." He added, "The people of Wau are very grateful to the American people for maintaining one of the most deplorable roads at the heart of Wau town."

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