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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

On the Campaign Trail

NEC extends period for receiving applications for elections monitors

Following requests from civil society organisations, the National Elections Commission (NEC) has agreed to extend the period for receiving applications for elections monitors up to 30th March, **Al-Ahdath** reports. The paper quotes NEC's head of the elections monitoring division, Mohamed Abdel-Daiem, as saying yesterday that such an extension would guarantee a wider participation in the electoral monitoring processes and would enable monitoring bodies to conclude the requirements for accreditation including the issuance of an observer identification card.

Khartoum State geared up for the polls, interior ministry

The Khartoum State Government has announced it is fully prepared for the forthcoming polls, **Akhir Lahza** reports. The Ministry of Interior yesterday unveiled a 14,500-strong police force, the "Khartoum Strategic Police Brigade", that has just concluded training to provide security during the elections in the capital.

Addressing the graduation parade at the Strategic Reserve Forces' headquarters Khartoum State Governor Abdulrahman Al-Khidir said that the Brigade is part of a larger plan to enhance security in the capital. He promised to triple the number of policemen on duty by the end of this year.

The Governor warned of stringent measures against threats to the voters or the candidates. The police, he said, will not be lenient if the constitutional rights of the citizens were compromised.

Juba Alliance, SPLM hold talks over the elections

Farouq Abu-Eissa, the head of the Juba Alliance of opposition parties, said talks yesterday between Alliance and SPLM representatives focused on preparations for a meeting of the heads of the opposition parties in the next five days, **Al-Sahafa** reports. He said that the discussions also touched on the issues of the printing of ballot papers and of the opposition memorandum to the Presidency of the Republic.

Abu-Eissa said that the SPLM representatives at the meeting informed them that Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha made a request to FVP Salva Kiir that ballot cards be transported to their locations around the country by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). The opposition member said the government has turned down a UN request to assist in the transportation of such material and had denied entry visas to foreign pilots to that end. The request for SAF involvement in the transportation of elections documents were turned down by the FVP, Abu-Eissa adds.

SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum who was at the meeting told reporters later that SPLM officials head for Juba today to hold talks with FVP Kiir and other party leaders on the current political situation. They also hope to discuss the keynote issue of the local printing of ballot cards and share views on the NEC.

"The NEC," Amum said, "has proved it does not possess the capabilities to transport elections materials to their locations around the country." He said that the SPLM's is of the view that the SAF is not a neutral body that can be trusted with such a task because the incumbent, President Al-Bashir, is its Commander-in-Chief.

Umma Party criticises SPLM, DUP and PCP

In what he sees as lack of seriousness to contest at the elections, National Umma Party leader and presidential candidate Sadig Al-Mahdi has criticised the Popular Congress Party (PCP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP-Original) and the SPLM for fielding members other than their party leaders as their torch-bearers for the race for president, **Akhir Lahza** reports.

Speaking at a rally in Managil County, Al-Gazira State yesterday, he wondered how the elected President of the Republic would rule over the leader of his/ her own party.

NCP reports arrest of key members in Bahr-el-Ghazal, Jonglei and Pibor

The NCP secretariat for Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal has reported that some of their key campaigners in Bahr-el-Ghazal, Jonglei and Pibor have been arrested and their property seized by the SPLA "in an attempt to derail their campaign activities". Gabriel Rourick, the head of the NCP's Greater Bahr-el-Ghazal Secretariat, has called on the SPLA to desist from such practices that contradict the spirit of the democratic transformation that the SPLM espouses, **Akhir Lahza** reports.

Sudan's Bashir should face war crimes charge: opponents

Reuters Khartoum, 21/03/10 - Sudan's president should surrender to the International Criminal Court to face war crimes charges, an official from the junior government coalition party said on Saturday, raising tensions ahead of April elections.

It was the first time such a call had been made by a senior member of the SPLM and will likely send shock waves through the SPLM's governing alliance with Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP) which is already fragile due to delays in implementing the accord.

"Bashir has no option but to respond to what the (ICC) is putting up. He has to go. If he does not go up he will be taken there," Edward Lino, the SPLM's candidate to be governor of Khartoum and its veteran head of intelligence, told **Reuters** in an interview.

"What worth does he hold to demand that President Al-Bashir surrender to the ICC," NCP stalwart Nafei Ali Nafei reportedly lashed out in response to Lino's statements.

According to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**, Nafei asked reporters to go to Lino and tell him that he, Nafei, asks of what value is Edward Lino to southern Sudan, Abyei or the whole of Sudan to demand that Al-Bashir surrender to the ICC.

SLM-AW may supporters not to vote for Yassir Arman

The Abdulwahid faction of the SLM may call upon its supporters in the IDP camps in Darfur not to vote for SPLM candidates and especially its candidate for president, Yassir Arman, **Al-Intibaha** intimates. This follows the recent arrest of 5 SLM-AW members at the hands of SPLA intelligence in Juba.

The paper quotes an SLM-AW source that opted for anonymity as saying that the movement may send a request next Thursday to its supporters in Darfur not to vote for the SPLM.

Other Highlights

UN holds talks with Sudanese officials on southern referendum

Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Mutrif Sidig appraised yesterday an UNMIS assessment mission led by Ian Martin on the referendum arrangements, **Akhir Lahza** reports. He noted that the referendum law has been passed, the chairman and deputy chairman of the referendum commission have been appointed and the remaining members of the commission will be brought on board by May this year.

Sidig pointed out that the Referendum Commission would oversee all levels of the referendum for southern Sudanese self-determination and will benefit from best practices of similar exercises around the world.

It is worth noting that Mr. Martin was among the UN officials that supervised the referendum for Timor.

Darfur donors raise \$841 million, less than half target

Reuters Cairo, 21/03/10 - A donor meeting for Darfur held in Cairo on Sunday raised less than half the targeted \$2 billion for development in Sudan's violent western region after several countries refrained from pledging over security worries.

Despite the shortfall, Sudan said it was not disappointed by the results of the one-day meeting, which officials said raised \$841 million for projects such as cement plants, roads and villages for displaced people in Darfur.

"What is more important is that the international community has pledged support to the Sudanese government in order to achieve peace in Darfur," said Abdel Malik al-Naeem, media adviser for the Sudanese delegation.

Countries including the United States, Canada, Norway and Britain did not pledge at the meeting, saying the region was not secure enough for the proposed work.

Qatar, which in recent weeks oversaw the signing of two ceasefire deals between rebel groups and Khartoum, pledged \$200 million in a further move to fashion itself a leading role in resolving the Darfur crisis.

The Gulf Arab state had already pledged \$1 billion to a separate fund for Darfur and suggested donations from the conference be directed through that fund.

Egypt said it would consider the proposal and recommended forming a committee that included major donors to look into where the bank would be based and other details.

The Islamic Development Bank of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which backed the meeting, said it would give \$355 million.

Turkey said it would give \$60-75 million from now until 2015 for water, education and agricultural projects, and the European Union pledged \$95 million collectively.

Sarkozy invites Sudan's Bashir to France-Africa summit

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 21/03/10 - French president Nicolas Sarkozy has extended an invitation to his Sudanese counterpart Omer Hassan Al-Bashir to take part in the 25th France-Africa summit that is scheduled for next May at the Riviera city of Nice.

Sudan's official news agency (**SUNA**) said that Bashir received a written message from Sarkozy dealing with bilateral relations between the two countries and included within it the invitation. He

also reiterated his gratitude to efforts exerted by Bashir to secure the release of French aid workers.

The Sudanese president on his end promised that his government would fulfil the invitation without saying if he would personally participate.

SPLA threatens use of heavy weapons against Misseriya

The SPLA says it may be compelled to use heavy weapons if Misseriya tribesmen “supported by parties whose shadows we can only see” do not desist from attacking SPLA soldiers, reports **Rai Al-Shaab**. SPLA Spokesperson Kuol Diem claims the attacks by the Misseriya are politically motivated.

Referring to the SPLA demand that Misseriya herders leave behind their “excess weapons” when they trek south, a prominent member of the Misseriya tribe pointed out that they would not accept constraints to their movements in search of pasture.

Members of Abyei Community in the UK criticise the SPLM

At a recent meeting with foreign minister Deng Alor in London, members of the Abyei Community criticised the SPLM for not meeting its vows on Abyei, **Akhir Lahza** reports. They pointed out that Abyei has received less than \$10 million dollars of its oil shares as stipulated in the Abyei Protocol. They also accused the SPLM of allowing foreign tribes to resettle in the Abyei area and called upon the movement to stop the issuance of any new oil concessions in their area until after the referenda.

Deng Alor promised to convey their message to the SPLM leadership.

Egypt hints at supporting a North-South confederation for Sudan

Sudantribune.com Cairo, 21/03/10 - Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Aboul-Gheit suggested that Cairo wants its southern neighbor to consider the option of a confederation rather than separation ahead of a key vote in January 2011 by southern Sudan on whether its citizens want their own state.

"This referendum will not necessarily be on separation as there would be many options before the southern voter including the establishment of an independent southern state," Aboul-Gheit was quoted by Egyptian official news agency (**MENA**) to reporters during the Darfur reconstruction donors' conference.

"Egypt wishes [for] Sudan all the best and to keep Sudan united in some form.....not necessarily the old-fashioned way. There is [currently] a Southern government and a President for the South and armed forces for the South and we hope to reach at this moment the option to continue the partnership between the North and South, supported by the people and that everything is done in stability and peace because we do not accept acts of violence between the north and south because this is against the nature of those good people" he added.

Many countries in the region as well as western states are uncomfortable with the idea of having a new state which would be marred by tribal violence and instability under a weak government. There are also concerns that this precedent would encourage secessionist sentiments in the continent.

Don't break away from Sudan, West tells South

Donor circles want Southern Sudan to drop its bid for independence in the referendum next January, as concerns grow that a rushed secession could trigger turmoil and instability beyond

Sudanese borders.

The EastAfrican has learned that key Western democracies and institutions, fearing that independence for the South in its present state could see the area slide into anarchy, have quietly urged President Salva Kiir's government to go slow on secession.

"Independence for the South should be put off for a few more years primarily because of lack of capacity in the South to run a stable and secure state," said a source privy to Western analysis of the evolving situation in Sudan.

He added: "There is no institutional infrastructure to support a state, so there is a high chance that the country will degenerate into a Somalia-like situation. This would open a 'corridor of terror' across the region that could be infiltrated by Al Qaeda and its associates to create instability that would run counter to Western interests."

The West is spooked by the prospect of sudden independence for a fragile state — with a corrupt and fractious national leadership, a nearly non-existent civil service, a poorly established local police and professional military — immediately disintegrating into a civil war.

Other fears revolve around the fact that the South is far from homogenous and united, with a real risk that it could spiral into uncontrolled violence as the different regions jostle over

This could draw the international community into a costly intervention to rebuild a state that few countries want to underwrite in the current economic climate.

Villagers flee hunger, violence in Terekeka

Villagers are abandoning their homes in Terekeka County, Central Equatoria State, because of hunger and recent cattle raids from neighbouring counties, **The Citizen** reports. Local authorities report that at least 60 people, mostly children and the elderly, have died of acute hunger in the region. The death toll, they say, may rise if preventive measures are not taken in the near future.

In a separate development, residents of Terekaka are accusing SPLA night prowlers of raping women and girls in their villages.

Ghazi, Khalil to resume talks in Ndjamena

Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salahuddin and JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim are due to resume talks in Ndjamena, Chad, tomorrow, reports **Al-Sahafa**. Talks between the two sides are expected to focus on implementation modalities of the Doha framework agreement, ceasefire, POWs and the elections.

Over 5,000 flee West Darfur fighting

The Government of West Darfur has confirmed that fighting has ceased in the Jebel Moon area but warring factions of the SLA continue to battle it out in the Jebel Marra, reports **Al-Ahdath**. Mohamed Al-Hassan Al-Khawad, the Humanitarian Aid Commissioner for the area, said yesterday that some 5,700 households fled into Zalingei from the fighting in these areas and an additional 123 families have taken refuge in Nerititi.

He revealed that the state government has formed a committee to help put an end to the fighting between the Misseriya and Nawaiba tribes of the Jebel Marra area.

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