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Elections Special

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Highlights

Elections Special

“UN should not poke its nose in our affairs” – Nafie

Nafie Ali Nafie, Assistant to the President of the Republic, has issued a strongly-worded message to UNMIS, calling on the Mission to desist from interfering in Sudan's internal affairs, *Al-Intibaha* reports. He urged the Mission to “keep its mouth shut” and not to poke its nose in Sudan's internal affairs.

Nafie has expressed astonishment over statements by an UNMIS official who hinted the possibility of postponement of elections. “The call for postponement of the elections is surprising because it is consistent with voices from known political forces who are demanding the same”. Nafie made the remarks while launching the NCP's elections campaign in the White Nile State.

Salva Kiir begins campaign for GoSS president

Reuters Juba, 24/02/10 – Incumbent GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit toured the region's capital on the back of a pickup truck on Wednesday as he launched his election campaign with a pledge to stamp out corruption.

Kiir told a crowd of supporters he would eradicate corruption and the “culture of impunity” among southern officials. “If I am elected back, I think things will be different from what has been happening these last five years,” he said.

Many southerners have become frustrated at the slow process of development and perceived corruption in their region.

Kiir decided to run for the top position in the south, choosing a more junior member of the SPLM Yasir Arman to compete for the presidency for the whole of Sudan ... a move seen by many analysts as a sign the SPLM is more interested in consolidating its position in the south before an expected independence vote in the referendum than in taking on the whole country.

Kiir is widely expected to win the southern vote and supporters have covered Juba in campaign posters showing Kiir looking skywards next to the slogan “vision and mission”.

“(South Sudan's other political parties) have directly or indirectly supported my nomination...by not putting forward any nominee. Already they have voted for me,” Kiir said.

“I have only one challenger and I don't think that this challenger is from south Sudan's political parties,” Kiir said in reference to Lam Akol of the SPLM-Democratic Change (SPLM-DC) who is also contesting the same seat.

The SPLM-DC has been treated with suspicion by some southerners who see him as closely aligned with the north. Akol has said that his members have been harassed in the south.

Kiir also announced that the current vice-president of south Sudan, Riek Machar, will maintain his position if Kiir was elected president.

Traders, SPLA clash in Gudele market in Juba

Reluctant traders at Juba's Gudele market locked horns with SPLA soldiers who tried to force them to close their shops to participate at Salva Kiir's elections campaign launch yesterday, *Al-Raed* reports. A Juba resident who opted for anonymity said that the town was surprised when authorities announced on Tuesday evening that the next day would be a public holiday to enable

citizens attend the campaign launch.

Heavily armed SPLA soldiers manned the town's major streets yesterday ordering shopping outlets closed and citizens to participate at the campaign launch. Some citizens say they intend to protest through the NEC so that the elections "do not become another cause for the suffering of the people of southern Sudan."

SPLM candidate for president calls on NCP to withdraw its candidate

Yassir Arman has called on the NCP to withdraw its candidate for president, the incumbent President Al-Bashir, reports *Al-Akhbar*. Himself running for the post on the SPLM ticket, Arman pointed out that an NCP withdrawal from the race for president will be a "true equation that would bring about unity in Sudan," he said.

"The SPLM nominee, whoever he is, enjoys the confidence of the SPLM leadership and can bank on SPLM support to him for a voluntary unity," he said.

Arman called upon the NCP to draft a strategic plan that would hand the presidency to the SPLM candidate within the context of a national consensus with all political forces, in order to shore up unity.

PCP seeks elections postponement

Khartoum Monitor reports that Popular Congress Party (PCP) leader Hassan Turabi has welcomed the framework agreements signed between the government and the JEM and called for the inclusion of the other Darfur armed movements in the negotiations, in order to reach a comprehensive settlement. The party says it is of the view that the elections be delayed until after the rainy season to allow the people of Darfur to participate. He further called for consultations with southern Sudanese political forces in order to convince them to accept such a delay and hence the referendum.

To "address the power vacuum in case the polls are postponed", the PCP suggested the formation of a provisional national government that should be representative of all political parties with the incumbent president maintaining his position.

Opposition to march in protest over campaign regulations

Opposition parties (the Juba Alliance) are demanding that the NEC shelve the recently circulated regulations for electoral campaigns, reports *Al-Ayyam*. Kamal Omar, a member of the Popular Congress Party, said that the group intends to organise a march of protest to the NEC where they will present a memorandum of protest.

In the event of failure of the NEC to respond to their memorandum, the opposition parties would meet in early March to decide what posture they would adopt on the issues, said Omar.

SPLM members may face torture in Western Equatoria, Caretaker Governor

Sudantribune.com Yambio, 25/02/10 - In yet another move to weaken the position of independent candidates in Western Equatoria State, moderate SPLM members who privately support the candidacy of Joseph Bakosoro face torture if found campaigning for the state's independent candidate for governor, caretaker Governor Jemma Nunu Kumba, warned during a workshop organised to sensitise SPLM members on elections campaigning.

"Take it from me, any SPLM member seen supporting the independent candidate shall be dealt with and smashed, this is the message I have carried from Juba, from the SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir Mayardit," Kumba told SPLM members during the ongoing 2-day workshop.

Reports say Kumba's apparent warning will no doubt compromise her message to supporters - many of whom are poor.

SPLM party loyalists in the state's legislative and executive branches of government remain divided over their choice of candidate.

The threats come after Yambio residents failed to turn up to welcome the caretaker governor despite numerous announcements by the state-owned local media when she flew in from Juba with a visiting presidential campaign team. Influential youth leaders in Yambio also reportedly face arrest and imprisonment for their alleged role in preventing the masses to welcome the governor.

Campaign agents for Col Joseph Bakosoro say Kumba's threatening rhetoric will not deter their resolve to win the April polls. Opinion leaders in Western Equatoria say the energetic and well organized campaign of Col Bakosoro is already pulling crowds at every appearance of the man his supporters call "the messiah or the Obama of Western Equatoria State.

On his part, independent hopeful Joseph Bakosoro has appealed to his supporters to run a non-violent and cordial campaign ... a call that has resonated well with local religious leader.

Ban campaigning in houses of worship - SPLM Gezira Chapter asks NEC

The SPLM's Gezira Chapter has called for NEC intervention to stop political forces from using houses of worship as a campaign forum. *Al-Ayyam* reports that the local party Secretary-General Jamal Hussein said that some *imams* (congregation leaders) have been using houses of worship and religious fora to call upon their audience to support the NCP candidates.

Such practices could tear apart the otherwise peacefully coexisting communities of Al-Gezira, he warned.

Armed men destroy SPLM-DC main office in Renk

Al-Intibaha reports that a group of armed youth attacked the SPLM-DC main office in Renk, Upper Nile State, burning it down to the ground. Dinka youth reportedly attacked the premises on the grounds that SPLM-DC has no presence in southern Sudan and is seeking to create insecurity in the region.

JEM leader again urges Sudan poll delay

Middle East online Doha, 24/02/10 – JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim has renewed his calls for a delay in the April 2010 polls, saying that thousands of displaced people would not be able to vote.

"Our position is to ask for a delay in these elections because there are numerous citizens of Darfur and (the western states of North, South and West) Kordofan who will not be able to take part because they are displaced," Ibrahim said.

He also urged the government to respect the ceasefire, which was to lead to talks aimed at reaching a peace deal.

55,000 soldiers trained to protect and monitor polls

The Ministry of Interior said 55,000 soldiers have been trained to protect and monitor the electoral process, *Al-Wifaq* reports. Ahmed Al-Tohami, the Ministry's official responsible for elections security, said the soldiers were still undergoing training within and abroad and would be graduated early March. He said there was full coordination and agreement with the NEC and the political parties on the need to prevent electoral violence.

Other Highlights

Sudan releases 57 Darfur rebels

AP Khartoum, 24/02/10 - Sudan released 57 Darfur rebels on Wednesday, including 50 who had been sentenced to death, under a new truce agreement between the government and the most country's powerful rebel group.

The leader of the most powerful rebel group promised that it, too, would release government soldiers it holds.

The prisoner release was an important confidence-building measure of the truce signed in Qatar Tuesday between the Sudanese government and the JEM.

Justice Minister Abdel-Basset Sabdarat told reporters that President Omar Al-Bashir ordered the prisoners freed. JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim said his group would release government soldiers it holds.

Sabdarat said those released represent 50 percent of the JEM members already tried and found guilty and that other prisoners would be released as the peace process progressed. Ibrahim's brother, a senior leader in the group, was not among those released. The rebel movement had no immediate comment.

Darfur war over, says Sudan's Al-Bashir

AFP El-Fasher, 24/02/10 – "The war in Darfur is over," Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir said on Wednesday in a speech in El-Fasher, Darfur, adding that 57 members of a key Darfur armed group, 50 on death row, had been freed.

Al-Bashir's claim of peace was contradicted by reportedly heavy fighting in Darfur between a hold-out armed group and government forces.

Al-Bashir made the announcement a day after his government and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) signed a ceasefire and agreed to work towards a full peace agreement.

"The crisis in Darfur is finished; the war in Darfur is over. Darfur is now at peace," he said of the seven-year conflict that devastated the region.

"The combat of arms is over, and the one of development now begins," added Al-Bashir, the subject of an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes in Darfur.

"We need to make more efforts to develop Sudan and Darfur," he said.

JEM leader rejects separate talks on Darfur with other rebels

Sudantribune.com Paris, 25/02/10 – JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim rejected today the idea of separate talks between the government and another rebel group and has threatened to walk out of the Doha process.

Sudanese officials announced yesterday following the signing of framework agreement between the Government of Sudan and JEM they would hold separate negotiations with the Liberation Movement for Justice (LMJ), formed from ten rebel factions who had rejected to merge with the JEM.

"The two groups JEM and LMJ would not accept unity; so there will be separate negotiation with them only unless they agree to unite at any stage of talks and this may be determined by

mediation. The negotiations may end by one document or two documents. But we are seeking to reach one document accepted by all the parties," Ghazi said following his arrival to Khartoum from Doha.

"We do not accept having more than one venue for peace talks, in one issue, and with one mediation. This is unacceptable," said Khalil Ibrahim in an interview that airs on Thursday on **Radio Dabanga**.

He said these groups have no political or military clout. He also accused them of doing "business with the cause of the Darfur people".

Khalil further spoke about Tijani El-Sissi who is designated by the new rebel group as top negotiator, saying he had never been involved in the armed struggle for the Darfur people and is now "imposed to negotiate on their behalf."

Recent fighting leaves 1,500 displaced and without aid

UN News Service 24/2/10 – Over 1,500 people have been displaced by increased fighting in the Darfur region and very few agencies have been able to provide them with desperately-needed aid due to lack of security, the United Nations reported today.

The displaced people have sought refuge in Thur, West Darfur, after fleeing from nearby villages because of increased fighting in the Jebel Marra area last month, UNAMID said, after sending a humanitarian mission there earlier this week.

"However, following the Darfur Framework Agreement signed yesterday between the Sudanese Government and the JEM, it is expected that help will quickly begin to reach the areas affected by the recent clashes," UNAMID added.

"UNAMID is already finalising plans for other similar missions to the affected areas, in coordination with other humanitarian agencies."

AU Darfur panel gets low rating by Sudan opposition following failed summit

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 25/02/10 - Sudanese opposition parties are beginning to question whether an African Union (AU) panel headed by the former South African president Thabo Mbeki can produce any results in implementing recommendations it put forward last year as part of road map to resolve the Darfur crisis in the context of a global political agreement.

The AU High-Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD), later known as the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), placed emphasis on reaching a peaceful settlement of the Darfur conflict before the April elections.

AUHIP was tasked with implementing all aspects of the AUPD recommendations and assist the Sudanese parties in the implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and other related processes, as part of the democratic transformation of Sudan.

The Sudanese government while expressing reservations on the justice component has expressed support to the recommendations of the report and vowed to support the work of AUHIP.

But a failed attempt last week by Mbeki's panel to bring together the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and a handful of opposition parties underscored the challenges AUHIP will face amid deepening political tensions ahead of April elections and the 2011 referendum in South Sudan.

One of the opposition leaders who took part in the meetings with the panel has criticized it saying that it has so far "done nothing" since its establishment last October.

"We [opposition parties] have all expressed our unqualified support to Mbeki and his panel to

fulfill its mandate and help Sudan resolve its mounting political problems” the opposition leader who asked not to be named told Sudan Tribune in an interview.

He revealed that Mbeki has agreed to sponsor the NCP-opposition conference and has provided the parties with a written agenda to be discussed which included “challenges facing Sudan at this juncture; conducting fair and free elections with sub-items tackling code of conduct and voter civic education; post-elections arrangements; Darfur conflict”.

However, the agenda was trimmed down by Mbeki for unknown reasons to the surprise of the opposition leaders prompting protests from them.

“We told him that we came for the specific agenda he furnished beforehand to discuss serious issues particularly setting up the proper legal framework for the elections to be held in a fair manner. The NCP wants to cherry-pick what to talk about and Mbeki bent to their pressure. This is unacceptable,” the opposition leader said.

A preliminary meeting was held between the NCP and opposition parties at the request of the latter to assess “whether the NCP is serious or not then we can decide how to proceed”.

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