

10 March 2010

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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

Elections Special:

NEC sets up 26,500 polling stations across the country

Local dailies report NEC official Al-Hadi Mohamed Ahmed as saying that the Commission has announced that 19,500 polling stations have been set up in the northern states and 7,000 in the southern states.

Sudan's electoral board welcomes 50 EU observers

Sudan Tribune website 9/3/10— The NEC Chairman Abel Alier met yesterday with Veronique De Keyser, the head of the EU Observation Mission to Sudan.

The NEC deputy Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah said that the meeting tackled joint cooperation between the two sides and that De Keyser and her delegation listened to a detailed briefing on the preparation for the elections and the phases completed so far.

Abdullah said the Mission's Chief Observer will stay in Sudan till next Friday and will return to join her team in the last stages of the elections. On Thursday the team will officially launch their mission at a press conference in Khartoum.

90% of police personnel trained to secure elections

Al-Raed reports Director of Social Services Maj. Gen. Taha Jalalueldin as saying that the police forces were ready to secure all phases of the forthcoming electoral process, adding that 90% of police personnel has been trained for the purpose. Gen. Jalalueldin made the remarks at a meeting yesterday with police forces to brief them on how to deal with security threats so that the electoral process is successful.

Presidency directs media to be accessible to all candidates

Al-Sahafa reports that President Al-Bashir yesterday directed State Minister for Information and Communication Kamal Obeid to ensure that all the political parties' candidates are granted opportunities in the media for campaigning.

Russian envoy arrives in Khartoum for talks on elections and Darfur

Sudan Tribune website 9/3/10 — The Russian special envoy to Sudan, Mikhail Margelov, arrived in Khartoum for talks with the Sudanese officials on preparations for the general elections in April. He is also expected to discuss the implementation of the Darfur framework agreement signed recently between the Government and the JEM.

Margelov told journalists upon arrival that Russia supports the electoral process in the country and efforts to settle Darfur crisis.

The Russian envoy will meet with Presidential Assistant, Nafie Ali Nafie, Presidential Advisor in charge of Darfur file, Ghazi Salah Al-Deen, the leader of the Umma party, Sadiq Al-Mahdi, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani, the chairman of the National Elections Commission, Abil Alier, the head of UNAMID, Ibrahim Gambari, and the acting UN Representative for Sudan.

Margelov will also visit Juba on Friday for similar talks with GoSS officials.

The Russian businessmen who are part of Margelov's delegation will discuss the participation of Russian leading companies in projects for production and processing of oil and gas in Sudan.

Al-Bashir will win 80% of votes first day – campaigns manager

NCP presidential candidate's campaigns manager Abdul Rahman Suwar Al-Dahab expects Al-Bashir to win 80% of votes in the first leg of upcoming polls, *Al-Rai Al-Aam* reports. According to Al-Dahab, chances for Sudan's unity are greater, warning that separation would complicate matters, particularly sharing of the Nile water resources.

SPLM-DC members released after alleged detention in South Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 9/3/10 – SPLM-DC announced yesterday that a number of its members were freed in South Sudan after the Party's Secretary-General complained about the detentions on Sudan Television.

Five SPLM-DC supporters were reportedly arrested by security forces in Bahr el Ghazal on February 28 while transporting elections material. This incident is among a number of other harassments alleged by SPLM-DC including arrest of party operatives in Juba and tearing of posters in Malakal.

SPLM asks NCP to stop campaign at shrines

SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum has called on the NCP to stop electoral campaigning at shrines and other religious forums, *Ajras Al-Hurriah* reports. Amum said campaigning at places of worship would undermine the social fabric, calling on the NEC to intervene to halt the practice.

No American prisons in Sudan – Justice Minister

Justice Minister Abdul Basit Sabdarat yesterday dismissed reports about the existence of CIA's secret prisons in 66 countries including Sudan, *Al-Sahafa* reports. Sabdarat considered the claims as part of campaign to undermine elections in the Sudan.

IGAD to deploy monitors in Sudan

Ajras Al-Hurriah reports IGAD summit called on the CPA partners to speed up the demarcation of the North-South border, the Abyei border, form commissions for human rights and referendum and to complete the remaining CPA benchmarks. The summit also promised to provide technical support for border demarcation, hold an international donor conference to support referendum and to respect the choice of the Southern Sudanese. Reportedly, IGAD has decided to deploy elections monitors by the end of March. According to *Al-Sahafa*, Kiir stressed that upcoming referendum should not be affected by any delay in elections.

50 European electoral observers arrive in Khartoum

An EU team of observers for monitoring Sudan's elections arrived yesterday and held lengthy meetings with state officials including with Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie who told them that elections would take place on schedule, *Al-Ahdath* reports. The team is looking forward to meet with all the political parties' leaders and will hold a press conference tomorrow in Khartoum to elaborate on their role.

Sudan polls a sideshow to referendum - southern leader

AFP 9/3/10 – Self-determination is South Sudan's absolute priority and no delay in national elections should affect the January 2011 referendum, the South's top leader said Tuesday.

FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit told the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development which brokered the 2005 peace deal that southern Sudanese took the referendum more importantly than the polls set for April.

"The conduct of the elections is not a pre-requisite to the conduct of the referendum," Kiir said during IGAD's gathering in Nairobi, its first on Sudan since the inking of the CPA.

"The people of southern Sudan attach more importance to the referendum than the elections. For them the right of self-determination is one of their biggest political achievements in the CPA and they will defend it at any cost," he added.

"I ardently appeal to you all that the CPA is fully implemented and as per its timetable." I urge you all to recognise and respect the choice of the people of southern Sudan during the 2011 referendum," he added.

Leaders of the six-nation IGAD east African body met in Nairobi to assess the implementation of the CPA ahead of the two landmark events in Sudan.

"While we re-affirm our unequivocal commitment to respect the choice of the people of southern Sudan, we clearly state that our vision and hope that unity of Sudan will be the free choice and outcome of the referendum," said Ali Osman Taha, Sudan's second vice president.

IGAD Secretary-General Mahboub Maalim urged the bloc's leaders to carefully consider the events before and after the two key political events.

"For the elections... we must ponder its seriousness and the implication in regional security, the CPA as well as the general welfare of the people of Sudan," he told the gathering.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, Djibouti's Ismail Omar Guelleh, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki attended the meeting.

The leaders called on the Sudan Government to "ensure the removal of obstacles to a free and fair election," according to a statement.

Africa presidents call for free Sudan polls

Daily Nation 9/3/10 - Seven Heads of State and Government on Tuesday pressurised Sudan to ensure free and fair elections during its first democratic polls in 25 years, scheduled for next month.

President Kibaki led his counterparts from the Inter-Governmental Authority and Development in also calling on President Omar Bashir's administration to fast track and fully implement the peace deal that ended 21 years of war in the country.

The IGAD leaders were joined by former President Moi, Burundi's former President Pierre Buyoya, South Africa's Foreign Minister Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, the African Union and the Arab League in restating that the polls were crucial in Sudan's democratic transformation and peace and stability in the region.

The leaders included Ethiopia Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Uganda President Yoweri

Museveni, Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh, Somalia Prime Minister Ali Sharmarkel, Sudan First Vice-President Salva Kiir who is also Southern Sudan's President.

Also present were Kenya Prime Minister Raila Odinga and Vice-President Kalonzo Musyoka, and President Obama's special envoy on Sudan Major General Scott Gratton.

Sudan second Vice-President Ali Mohamed Taha however said Sudan was confident the April polls and self-determination referendum set for January next year would be conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner.

"Elections are true exercise of democracy. We are confident they will be fair, transparent and peaceful," Mr. Taha said, contradicting Mr. Kiir who had urged the international community to intervene and ensure the polls were done well.

Other Highlights

Some two million displaced back in South Sudan - agency

AFP 9/3/10 - Just over half of about four million people who fled the civil war in South Sudan have returned there after the 2005 peace agreement, the IOM said Tuesday.

About two million people died in the 22-year war between SPLA and the Government in Khartoum, according to the United Nations, in a conflict fuelled by religion, ethnicity, ideology, resources and oil.

"Since the signature of the peace accords in January 2005, more than two million people have returned to south Sudan," International Organization for Migration spokesman Jean Philippe Chauzy told journalists.

He said the pace of return slowed significantly after more than 1.47 million went home during the first two years, with just 160,000 going back in 2009.

There had been signs of a pick up in returns in the first weeks of this year, ahead of the country's general elections in April, he said. Sixty percent of returning families were headed by just one surviving parent, he added.

Sudan belittles US decision to allow web tech exports

Sudan Tribune website 9/3/10 – Muawiya Osman Khalid, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "has downplayed the effect of the step adopted by the US Administration for lifting the restrictions imposed on Sudan with regard to benefiting from the services offered by Google and Microsoft," the state-run Sudan News Agency (SUNA) reported.

The Sudanese Foreign Ministry Spokesman said that this step will not have a big impact, adding that Sudan will only accept "full and unconditional lifting of the economic sanctions and the restrictions that were imposed by the US Administration on Sudan"

He also suggested that the step was adopted mainly to "remove any sort of embarrassment that would occur inside the United States" should the ban on the Internet be regarded as a "direct violation of human rights and breach of the right of knowledge."

Gaddafi invites Al-Bashir to participate in Arab summit

Local dailies report that President Al-Bashir has received an invitation from Libyan leader Gaddafi to participate in the 22nd Arab summit scheduled for 27-28 March in the Libyan city of

Sirte.

News SRSG due in Khartoum today

The new SRSG to the Sudan, Haile Mencarios is due in Khartoum today in his first visit since appointed by the UNSG to succeed Ashraf Qazi, **Akhir Lahza** reports. He will hold meetings with several state officials and the Russian envoy.

Double tragedy hits African football

CNN 9/3/10 - African football has been left reeling following the tragic deaths of two players in two days over the weekend, both while appearing for their clubs.

On Saturday, Nigerian striker Endurance Idahor collapsed on the pitch and died on his way to hospital while playing for Al Merreikh against Al Amal in a Sudanese league match.

The 25-year-old fell to the ground after a minor collision with a rival player and local media later reported that the player had suffered a heart attack.

Idahor finished as top scorer during his first season in Sudan and scored 118 goals in 176 appearances for Al Merreikh.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, teenage central defender Bartholomew Opoku collapsed while playing for Ghanaian side Kessben in their league clash with Liberty.

The 19-year-old was rushed to hospital but passed away on Monday, with the cause of death still unknown.