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Headlines

- NCP, SPLM exchange blame over inevitable separation of the South (**ST**)
- Residents in Mayom fear a renewed fighting (**Al-Wifaq**)
- Khartoum and N'djamena agree to normalize relations, expel rebels (**Al-Sahafa**)
- US warns of "potential threat" to Uganda-South Sudan flights (**AFP, The Citizen, Miraya**)
- Taha, Machar to discuss southern parliamentary representation (**Al-Ayyam**)
- US pushes Sudan on election preparations (**Reuters**)
- Sudan dismisses warnings by activists of possible war (**Reuters**)
- UN "concerned" over flare-up of violence in south Sudan (**AFP**)
- Tens of displaced flee Jonglei violence to Upper Nile State (**Al-Raed**)
- U.S. lawmaker introduces bill that would bar and deport Sudanese (**ST**)
- Southern Sudanese minister involved in controversial nomination contest (**ST**)
- Uganda army outlines achievements on LRA fight (**ST**)
- Kuwait to host donor conference for eastern Sudan (**ST**)
- Interview: UNMIS Spokesperson (**Sutel-Umma**)
- Interview: Southern Sudan violence, experts' views (**AlertNet**)
- Analysis: Independent south Sudan must manage high expectations (**Reuters**)

Links

- The world must not let Sudan return to war (**The Financial Times**)
By Lt Gen (rtd) Lazaro Sumbeiywo and former US Special Envoy in Sudan John Danforth
http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c14c7b92-fbc1-11de-9c29-00144feab49a.html?nclick_check=1
- Sudan: Work for the Best, Plan for the Worst (**The Huffington Post**)
By Jennifer Smith, Sudan Advocate, Refugees International
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jennifer-smith/sudan-work-for-the-best-p_b_416142.html
- The axis of instability in Sudan: oil wealth (**The Guardian**)
By Rosie Sharpe, Senior campaigner, Global Witness
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/11/sudan-oil-peace-energy?>

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Highlights

NCP, SPLM exchange blame over inevitable separation of the South

Senior officials of the Sudan's ruling parties in both North and South marked the 5th anniversary of the 2005 peace deal with accusations and counter-accusations over failure to make unity attractive as the people of Southern Sudan are left with only twelve months to possibly vote for independence, ***Sudan Tribune website*** 10/1/2010 reported.

NCP and SPLM officials on Friday, 9th January, exchanged blame over what they saw as "inevitable" independence of the South in January 2011 referendum because the other party did not do enough to convince Southern Sudanese to vote for the unity of the country.

Addressing a political rally on Friday in the Blue Nile state's capital, Damazin, the SPLM deputy chairman and Governor of the state, Malik Agar, accused the NCP of failure to make the unity of Sudan an attractive option for southerners.

He said the current situation shows signs of separation between North and South, and also warned that secession of the South would lead to war if issues like border demarcation and oil were not resolved and also expressed fear of insecurity in Abyei and Nuba Mountains if the South separates.

To remedy the situation, Malik said the only path for unity is to apply confederation between North and South and better structures of decentralization.

However in a rare admission of the inevitability of the South becoming an independent country, the NCP has recently appeared to have given up on optimism to keep the country united and resigned to the pro-independence wind in South Sudan.

Al-Dardiri Mohamed Ahmed, a leading figure at the NCP, was quoted as saying that the separation of the south from the north became a "reality and inevitable" blaming the SPLM for this outcome.

"We should be realistic and talk about what is current and what should be. We in the NCP were keener than anyone else on unity, but the SPLM blocked that option for us, and we missed the opportunity" he said.

On the same day, the SPLM Deputy Secretary General for Southern Sector, Dr. Ann Itto, instead blamed the NCP for failure to make unity attractive.

Dr. Itto said the time to talk about making unity attractive has already expired and become meaningless, adding that what the party is looking towards to is the conduct of referendum in which the people of Southern Sudan will decide by themselves what they want.

Residents in Mayom fear a renewed fighting

Southern circles fear a new cycle of heavy fighting between the SPLA troops who are heading toward Mayom and the forces of Paulino Matip and Peter Gadid who are already stationed in the area, editor-in-chief of ***Al-Wifaq*** newspaper claimed.

Meanwhile, **local dailies** report that SRSG Ashraf Qazi has urged GoSS to investigate the violent incidents occurred in Southern Sudan over the last two weeks which reportedly claimed 150 lives in addition to a large number of wounded. Mr. Qazi also offered to send peacekeepers to assist in providing protection to civilians.

Khartoum and N'djamena agree to normalize relations, expel rebels

Sources said Sudan and Chad yesterday reached an agreement to normalize their relations, **Al-Sahafa** reports. The sources said that the military commission between the two countries agreed to deploy 1500 troops at 12 points along the border. Reportedly, the two countries also agreed to expel rebels on their territories.

Meanwhile, **local dailies** report that Presidential Adviser Ghazi Salah Al-Din will visit Libya today to brief the Libyan leadership on efforts to achieve peace in Darfur as well as ongoing efforts to normalize relations with Chad. According to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**, a delegation from Abdul Wahid faction left for Juba purportedly to congratulate GoSS on the passage of the referendum bill. A spokesperson of the movement Yahia Bolad said their movement wants to benefit from the SPLM's experience in the area of self-determination adding that the new strategy of their movement is to make self-determination for Darfur a top item on their agenda.

US warns of "potential threat" to Uganda-South Sudan flights

AFP 9/1/2010 -An Air Uganda flight to Sudan was diverted back to Kampala Saturday after the US embassy in Khartoum warned American travelers of a "potential threat" to commercial flights between Uganda and South Sudan. The plane had taken off from Entebbe airport and was on its way to Juba, the capital of South Sudan, when it was ordered to return as a precautionary step.

Ignie Igunduura, spokesman for Uganda's Civil Aviation Authority, said the plane had returned to Entebbe. "No captain would ignore a warning of this nature," Igunduura said. "We have heard this information before and we have been aware of this threat for some time.

"But any time there is renewed information, and this renewed information came from the US but also others, you don't start taking chances."

A warden's message published on Friday on the US mission's website said the embassy "has received information indicating a desire by regional extremists to conduct a deadly attack onboard Air Uganda aircraft" between Kampala and Juba. "While the capacity of these extremists to carry out such an attack is unknown, the threat is of sufficient seriousness that all American air travellers should be made aware. "Air travellers on any airline and route should maintain vigilance at all times, and should report any suspicious behavior to the proper authorities." The message gave no further details.

Sudan rejected any security threat as unfounded and criticized the United States embassy for not cooperating over the matter. "This threat is not serious, nothing supports these allegations," foreign ministry spokesman Moawiya Osman Khalid told **AFP**. "They did not inform us of this security threat, we learnt about it from the embassy's website. They did not ask for our cooperation, which they should have done before notifying the media," he added.

But Ugandan army spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Felix Kulayigye said the security threat had existed for some time. "We are surprised that the US embassy has issued this warning now, when they know very well that we have had this intelligence since early December," he said, adding that the threat is "most likely Somali-related."

Kulayige said the advisory was "unnecessary," adding that Uganda's military intelligence unit has been working for weeks with Air Uganda to step up security precautions on Juba bound flights.

The Citizen reports that Southern Sudan reinforced security at the Juba International Airport, with the Interior Minister spending most of his day there yesterday. GoSS Security Minister Fier Chuang Aluong also spent most of this day at Juba International Airport yesterday to ensure travelers' safety.

United Nations security has received information from a credible source Friday that a "known extremist" has threatened to attack Air Uganda, especially the Juba-Kampala route. Even though the terrorist is not named, UNMIS instructed its staff to avoid using Air Uganda immediately. "UNMIS section heads and heads of agencies are to review their staff on miss or lave and ensure that no staff member is using this airline while departing or returning to Juba", recommended a letter sent to the press.

The UN accessed the information on 8 January but the date of attack remains unknown. In the recommendation, too, UNDSS Khartoum is asked to review and suspend or change all flights of staff scheduled with Uganda Air.

According to *Miraya FM*, the GoSS has reinforced security measures and beefed up the security presence at Juba Airport. The measures included the checking and screening of passenger luggage for inbound and outbound passengers and the deployment of guard dogs at the premises. GoSS Minister for Presidential Affairs, Luka Biong said that GoSS is coordinating with the US Administration in collaboration with the federal government with regards such national issues related to combating terrorism and airport security.

Taha, Machar to discuss southern parliamentary representation

GoSS VP Riek Machar has said he would meet VP Ali Osman Mohamed Taha this weekend to continue talks over the contentious issue of the census results as well as the possibilities of increasing southern Sudanese representation in the National Assembly to overcome differences over the census results, *Al-Ayyam* reports. Machar said that the two sides will also seek an appropriate forum for legislative reform through parliament.

US pushes Sudan on election preparations

Reuters 8/1/2010 - Sudan's leaders must redouble efforts to guarantee fair elections or risk plunging the giant African nation back into chaos and violence, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Friday.

"The parties in Sudan have a choice. They can revert back to a dark era of conflict or they can move forward together for a lasting peace," Clinton said in a statement marking the fifth anniversary of a fragile peace agreement that ended two decades of civil war between north and south Sudan.

Clinton expressed concern that violence was already on the upswing in the south and in the western Darfur region ahead of multi-party elections in April, the first in more than two decades, and an independence referendum for the oil-producing south next year. "In the months ahead, strong leadership will be even more essential, especially in light of setbacks that have already occurred in this pre-election process," Clinton said.

The White House, in its own statement, said recent setbacks including violent clashes in the south, passage of a repressive national security act by Khartoum, and the government's violent suppression of peaceful protests, "do not bode well for the region or the people of Sudan."

"Consistent with our strategy, the United States will continue to call to account those responsible for delays and deviations from the path to lasting peace," the White House statement said.

Clinton, while calling on all parties to deliver on promises of better governance, singled out the NCP as bearing greater responsibility for implementing the peace deal ahead of the elections.

"There must be no efforts to restrict freedom of speech and assembly, and there must be no prohibitions on peaceful protests," she said. The U.S. special envoy for Sudan, Scott Gration, said while some progress had been made, "there are things that need to be fixed" particularly in Darfur, where a counter-insurgency drive against rebels that began in 2003 created a humanitarian crisis that the United Nations says killed more than 300,000 people. Gration said he will visit Kenya and Uganda later in January before heading to Sudan in February. He added that U.S. diplomats also planned a review of the Sudan strategy to date.

"We're taking a look at those areas ... where there hasn't been progress, where we need to have more push and more pressure," he said.

Sudan dismisses warnings by activists of possible war

Reuters 9/1/2010 - Sudan on Saturday dismissed warnings from aid groups and activists that it was sliding back to war, as it marked the fifth anniversary of a faltering peace deal with the south and prepared for two divisive votes.

Drummers from Radiohead, Pink Floyd and other bands appeared in a "beat for peace" film to mark Saturday's anniversary, part of global events urging world powers to help prevent more bloodshed in the oil-producing state.

Aid groups and campaigners issued a series of reports in recent days warning there was a risk of fresh conflict as Sudan counted down the days to national elections in April and a referendum on whether the south should split off as an independent country, due in January 2011.

"The situation in southern Sudan is very far from what has been depicted...It is not all doom and gloom," Anne Itto, a senior member of the south's dominant Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) told reporters. Itto, speaking in the southern capital Juba, said the campaigners had failed to take into account significant improvements and development in the five years since the accord.

Sudan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement a report "from some foreign organizations...that the north and the south are doomed to go back to war, was not correct and was not backed by facts on the ground".

There was a need to tighten security in the south, ministry spokesman Moawia Osman Khalid told the state Suna news agency. But "war is no longer an option for the remedy of the situation between the north and the south, given the fact that the country has tasted the woes of the war and its repercussions," he added.

Saturday's "drum for peace" film, organized by Amnesty International and other pressure groups, featured Nick Mason from Pink Floyd performing a mass drum roll with percussionists from across the world.

"We are already seeing a grave increase in inter-ethnic violence in the south and violence continues in Darfur," said the Deputy Director of Amnesty's Africa Programme Tawanda Hondora in a statement.

"The coming year poses serious threats to human rights in Sudan that can be prevented if governments act now."

Oxfam and nine other aid groups warned on Thursday that "a lethal cocktail of rising violence, chronic poverty and political tensions has left the peace deal on the brink of collapse."

UN "concerned" over flare-up of violence in south Sudan

AFP 9/1/2010 -The United Nations is concerned over the flare-up of violence in southern Sudan that has cost at least 150 lives over the past two weeks, a senior UN official said on Saturday.

Ashraf Qazi, head of the UN mission in Sudan, urged the south's regional government "to investigate these incidents and to redouble their efforts to help de-escalate the rising wave of violence in southern Sudan."

Clashes between rival tribes over cattle raids in the southern state of Warrap claimed at least 140 lives around the turn of the year, a UN official in southern Sudan said earlier this week.

"The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) today expressed concern over the escalating violence in southern Sudan over the past couple of weeks where over 150 people have been reportedly killed and many more injured and displaced," said Qazi in a statement.

"UNMIS sent a team of peacekeepers to defuse tensions and help prevent reprisal attacks" in Warrap, he said.

"The team also has representatives of humanitarian agencies to initiate a humanitarian needs'

assessment on the ground especially for those who have been displaced due to the violence," he said.

"Thousands have been reportedly displaced but these figures as well as those concerning the victims of the attacks still need to be verified."

Another 24 people were killed in clashes between civilian and southern Sudan soldiers in Lakes state in late December and early January, according to the UN mission.

"UNMIS offered to send peacekeeping troops to be present to help protect civilians during the rotations of SPLA companies that were involved in confrontations with civilian cattle-keepers" in Lakes, said Qazi.

He said UNMIS had helped to deliver government-provided humanitarian aid to Jonglei state after an attack in which several more civilians were killed.

Tens of displaced flee Jonglei violence to Upper Nile State

Tens of civilians have fled fighting in parts of Jonglei State to Upper Nile State, reports *Al-Raed*. To allay fears expressed by some of the displaced that the SPLA may track them down, the Governor of Upper Nile State visited some of the displaced and assured them they could stay in the host state as long as they wished without fear of the regional army.

U.S. lawmaker introduces bill that would bar and deport Sudanese

Sudan Tribune website 10/1/2010 – A US lawmaker this week declared his intention to reintroduce a bill he originally submitted in 2003 that would bar citizens of five countries from receiving immigrant and non-immigrant visas.

Congressman J. Gresham Barrett from South Carolina said that his proposed legislation will cover nationals from countries designated as state sponsors of terrorism along with Yemen.

The US State Department lists Cuba, Iran, Sudan and Syria as state sponsors of terrorism, a designation which already subjects visa applicants from these countries to special processing measures in consulates abroad before they are allowed to enter the country.

Gresham justified the move by the failed bombing attempt on Christmas day aboard a Detroit-bound U.S. airliner blamed on a Nigerian man who U.S. officials believe was trained by al Qaeda in Yemen.

Furthermore, he cites the case of Major Nidal Malik Hasan, 39, a Muslim born in the United States of Palestinian immigrant parents, who were charged with murdering the 13 victims of the November 5 rampage at Fort Hood, the world's biggest military facility.

"While President Obama may have declared an end to the War on Terror, it is clear our enemies did not get the message. Twice in the past two months, radical Islamic terrorists have attacked our nation and the Administration has failed to adapt its national security and immigration policies to counter the renewed resolve of those who seek to harm our citizens" Gresham said in a statement posted on his website.

"More disturbingly, the President stands by his decision to close the terrorist detainee facility at Guantanamo Bay despite reports that released prisoners were behind the Christmas Day bomb plot".

The bill would also prohibit the transfer of terrorist detainees from Guantanamo Bay to US soil.

The Republican legislator said that individuals from these countries seeking political or religious asylum or emergency medical treatment may be exempt from these provisions "only after an extensive federal screening".

The bill does not contain any exception for diplomats who are travelling to the US on official missions.

Southern Sudanese minister involved in controversial nomination contest

Sudantribune.com Juba, 11/01/10 – A controversial nomination contest involving the South Sudan minister for SPLA Affairs and his opponent threatens occurrence of violence in Tonj South County of Warrap state. The fierce competition for party nomination over a parliamentary seat in Juba between the Minister of SPLA Affairs, Lt. Gen. Nhial Deng Nhial, and his challenger, Madhel Malek Agei, has threatened to cause violence as the latter claimed that the former has resorted to cheating in the selection process.

Agei who claimed to have won the nomination by the 25 member Electoral College in Warrap State, said Lt. Gen. Nhial Deng's group have forged a letter purportedly written by the community of Tonj South County voicing their choice for Nhial Deng.

He said the issue has brought confusion in the County's nomination process, arguing that the letter was forged and written by an individual - not the community - and warned that it may create confusion and possible splitting of SPLM and inviting insecurity in the constituency. Agei claims he is more popular and is the people's choice.

Meanwhile, the SPLM is in a race to beat a January 14 deadline for nomination of its candidates across the country. Each state selects 25 members to an Electoral College that in turn nominates a number of candidates for each seat and sends the nominations to the SPLM Political Bureau in Juba for the final selection.

Uganda army outlines achievements on LRA fight

Sudantribune.com Kampala, 10/01/10 – The Spokesperson for the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UDF), Lt. Col. Felix Kulayigye has said that "the military operation against Joseph Kony and his Lords Resistance Army (LRA) rebels in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan has been a huge success in 2009 and will continue in the New Year.

Kulayigye says that despite the failure to capture Joseph Kony, the army has managed to kill and capture a number of LRA rebels in the past one year.

He says Uganda commends the efforts by the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army, DR Congo forces and UN Security Council among other partners in ensuring the restoration of peace in northern Uganda.

The Ugandan army has killed 305 Lord's Resistance Army fighters since it launched a joint military offensive on the rebel bases in Garamba in eastern Congo and southern Sudan a year ago. Sudan Tribune has learned from the Ugandan Army.

In a document obtained by Sudan Tribune listing the UPDF's achievements since Operation Lightning Thunder was launched to flush out the LRA in mid December, 2008, the Ministry of Defence said another 41 rebels were captured while 52 fighters defected.

Over 513 abductees were rescued in the operation that was jointly conducted with the armies of Southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The UPDF also rescued 69 children now undergoing reintegration program in northern Uganda, adding that, "twice that number from DRC, CAR and South Sudan have been rescued.

The Ugandan army revealed that several commanders were either killed or captured, while others defected to UPDF reception points in the war zone. The first day of the New Year started on a high note for the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) with the killing of senior LRA commander 'Brigadier' Buk Abudema.

Kulayigye said the rebels' command structure was depleted and they have run out of combat

weaponry. "The LRA's capacity to create havoc is no more. That's why the alleged threat of Christmas attacks on the Congolese, as announced by some NGOs, was empty," he commented.

"They are looking for a safe haven where they can train, re-organize and start to create terror again."

He however, acknowledged that some of the objectives have not been achieved: "the failure of the elusive rebel leader to ink the agreement and stoppage of LRA carnages on civilians though it has scaled down."

Kuwait to host donor conference for eastern Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 10/1/2010 – The oil-rich state of Kuwait will host donor conference for the reconstruction of eastern Sudan scheduled for March 2010.

On October 14, 2006, Sudanese government and East Front rebels, composed of the Beja Congress and Free Lions, signed a peace accord that was negotiated with Eritrean help and is aimed at ending a 12-year armed conflict.

Eastern rebels share the complaints of their counterparts in Darfur in the west and in southern Sudan that Khartoum fails to develop the regions while exploiting their natural resources. The drought-stricken east has some of the highest malnutrition rates in the country, yet is home to Sudan's largest gold mine, its main port and a major oil pipeline.

Kuwait was selected to host the Donors Conference for Support to Peace in East-Sudan because it is a friendly country that supports Sudan aspirations and acceptable to the donors said Abu Obeida Duj, the Secretary General of the Fund for Support to Rehabilitation in East Sudan.

Duj said that the coming days will witness intensive diplomatic work so as to receive the contributions of the donor countries.

Interview: UNMIS Spokesperson

In a lengthy interview by **Sutel-Umma** newspaper, UNMIS spokesperson Ashraf Eissa said UNMIS mandate is to assist the two partners and to facilitate the CPA implementation. On elections he said UNMIS deployed personnel across the country to assist the NEC in the conduct of elections but pointed out that monitoring and assessing elections and referendum is not part of the Mission's mandate. Asked about the Mission's role toward differences between the two partners he said UNMIS is Chapter VI Mission and it would intervene only if the two partners so desired. Asked about UNMIS 2010 strategy, he said "UNMIS stands ready to assist and to provide its good offices so that the CPA is implemented"

Interview: Southern Sudan violence, experts' views

AlertNet 7/1/2020 - It has been five years since Sudan's government and southern rebels signed a deal to end more than two decades of north-south civil war, but a sharp rise in ethnic violence threatens to further undermine the fragile peace.

In the latest attack in south Sudan, armed Nuer tribesmen killed at least 139 members of the rival Dinka tribe, an official said on Thursday.

The news broke on the same day 10 aid agencies warned that rising violence, chronic poverty

and political tensions had left the 2005 comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) on the brink of collapse.

Their report, titled "Rescuing the Peace in Southern Sudan", was issued ahead of national elections planned for April -- Sudan's first multi-party vote in 24 years -- and a southern referendum on independence in 2011.

Many Sudanese are concerned that these two events could serve as flashpoints for more violence in a country which still struggling to emerge from a war that killed some 2 million people, drove 4 million more from their homes and destabilised much of east Africa.

AlertNet interviewed three experts on what action should be taken by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's ruling National Congress Party (NCP), the former rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the international community and aid agencies.

The experts were: Edward Thomas, a historian and analyst specialising in Sudan for UK-based thinktank, Chatham House, Richard Poole, director of International Rescue Committee in South Sudan, and Stephan Goetghebuer, the director of operations in Sudan for Médecins sans Frontières (MSF).

What should northern and southern leaders do?

Edward Thomas: The leaders of northern and southern Sudan have shown a great skill for doing these audacious, last-minute deals. But they have not addressed fundamental causes of the conflict. The CPA offered an opportunity to revisit these causes but that has not been done. The parties have been pre-occupied with high politics and neglected the ordinary people. It is important, in this coming year, for them to start investing in ordinary life and at the same time, come up with historical decisions for their people.

Richard Poole: I have a profound affection for the north and the south and I have lived there for many years. I think there is an enormous amount of goodwill to try and resolve this in a respectful manner. The process needs supporting and monitoring. It's a miracle that the CPA was signed in the first place. It's a miracle that the process is still on track and that there is a possibility of a favourable outcome of the referendum process. If the referendum does not go ahead we can expect a return to civil war.

Stephan Goetghebuer: As MSF, we don't make political comments but we want the parties to the conflict to make sure that everything they do there must be civilian protection who are the victims of war and violence. There is also a problem of access to the north and this is specific to the north, where we have visa problems and access to people in need of aid. They can facilitate more humanitarian response to make sure people don't suffer more.

What should the international community do?

Edward Thomas: U.S. engagement is going to be constructive and useful in bringing the elites together. The U.S. pays a lot of money in aid to Sudan and it does have a lot of capacity to change things. China and India are the other countries with huge investments in Sudan. They should invest in stability. They need to never think of investing in instability but a government more accountable to the people. The alternative to a freer and fairer Sudan is a very volatile and unfair Sudan and that is not going to be in their interest.

Richard Poole: The U.S. and the Europeans have not paid as much attention to the world view

of fundamentalist Islam as they should have done, in relationship with the government. As a consequence, some of the policies have not been relevant. It was perfectly clear they (Sudanese officials in the north) felt they were not being respected by the international community. There was not respect for their values and their attitude was dismissive. If the international community enters into dialogue in a respectful manner, as the Obama administration is doing, we think they will have a positive outcome.

Stephan Goetghebuer: The international community has put so much pressure on the parties to fulfil their political obligation. But they also control the funding mechanism of the development response for Sudan. They need to channel resources to the emergency needs from increasing political violence in southern Sudan. At the moment the direct impact of the violence and the level of need are not matched with the level of resources.

What should aid agencies do?

Edward Thomas: Aid agencies need to deal with the local political crises that erupt into this terrible violence. These are partly to do with the economies not working out and the way people are being ethnicised. Development resources, aid and the petrol money must support the people to emerge from a terribly traumatic war.

Richard Poole: If the CPA falls apart, the humanitarian crisis will be on a scale that is unprecedented. Aid agencies should put contingencies in place.

Stephan Goetghebuer: Humanitarian actors should develop emergency response mechanisms and intervene more (to deal with) the impact being caused by the violence in the south. Most aid agencies are still in development mode when increasing violence is creating a humanitarian crisis.

ANALYSIS: Independent south Sudan must manage high expectations

Reuters 8/1/2010 - After decades of war fought for freedom from repression, south Sudan will vote in one year on independence, but analysts fear a choice to separate will bring long-simmering problems in the south to the boil.

Tribal divisions, lack of security outside towns, inexperienced government, corruption and signs that the semi-autonomous authority in the south has showing signs of repression have raised fears that an independent south Sudan may not end the problems faced by its people.

"The post-independence period -- when the common denominator of self-determination is gone -- could be marked by significant infighting and increased conflict on tribal lines," Zachary Vertin from the International Crisis Group think-tank said.

Sudan watchers fear that without the unifying goal of an independent south to fight for, discontent may grow over the government's poor provision of basic services, corruption and bad behaviour by the south's ill-trained army.

Delayed and reluctant implementation of the 2005 peace deal between north and south, which promised democratic transformation, power and wealth sharing, elections and the prized referendum, has led many southerners to say they will vote to separate on Jan. 9, 2011.

The former rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which fought the Islamic northern government over ideology, religion, ethnicity and oil and which dominates the south's government, was kept busy ensuring the deal was implemented, leaving unresolved tensions under south Sudan's surface.

Ethnic disunity was highlighted in 2009 when 2,500 lives were lost in inter-tribal violence. Many of the dead were women and children killed in ruthless, apparently highly organized attacks on large villages.

Southerners have accused Khartoum of arming rival tribal groups -- as they did during the war - but have been unable to provide conclusive proof. Some believe rivalries among southern politicians and a security vacuum outside urban centres are to blame.

"Political jockeying is likely to intensify as elections and the referendum approach," Vertin told Reuters. "A high degree of cooperation is necessary if they are to forge a new and viable state."

It has been a bloody process to disarm a people bristling with weapons after decades of civil war which has claimed 2 million lives and driven 4 million from their homes.

"Many communities have doubts about the (army's) capacity to protect disarmed communities," a report by the independent U.S. Institute of Peace said. "Disarmament efforts have often been perceived as biased ... and asymmetrical."

The massive army, whose salaries the south has struggled to pay, has seen infighting and is accused of human rights abuses.

"In general (it) is not a united army, but rather a collection of former militias and ethnic groups, and a constant balancing act is needed to keep them together," a report by the non-governmental Dutch organization IKV Pax Christi said.

Foreigners, especially tens of thousands of east Africans who form a vital part of the nascent economy, complain of rough treatment with five Kenyans shot last month. Most northern Sudanese have left the south after attacks on their businesses since 2005.

Some political parties have complained of harassment. A splinter group led by former SPLM Foreign Minister Lam Akol are petitioning the constitutional court after saying the south Sudan government has arrested their leaders and shut them down.

And journalists have sometimes faced harassment they say contravenes press freedoms enshrined in the constitution. Many worry about a proposed media law's tough licensing requirements.

"Certainly, licensing would be used to control or refuse renewal to independent media outlets that are seen to be either critical of government or posing threats to vested interests," said Hakim Moi of the Association of Media in South Sudan.