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Media Monitoring Report

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Referendum Watch

SSRC approves requests to monitor the referendum

Khartoum Monitor/ SUNA Khartoum, 12/12/10 – The head of the Protocol Department at the SSRC who also doubles up as the head of the department in charge of monitoring says the SSRC has approved requests by 62 local and 25 international civil society organisations to participate in monitoring the referendum. Saeed Saad said that the civil society has a major role in guaranteeing the credibility and transparency of the process.

He also revealed that the Commission has procured a modern and secure electronic data-entry system for the referendum.

Registered voters to be announced next week

The Citizen Juba, 12/12/10 - The Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB) says it is likely to announce the number of people who registered to vote in the referendum sometime next week.

Referendum voter registration ended on Wednesday, but the Juba bureau cited logistical challenges which are slowing down the process of collecting data from the counties in southern Sudan.

SSRB public outreach director, Abuk Nikanora Manyok urged the public to be patient as the bureau tallies the exact number of registered voters.

Sudan vote opponents spread confusion-poll chief

Reuters Khartoum/Juba, 11/12/10 - Opponents of a referendum on independence for south Sudan are threatening lawsuits and spreading confusion to try to disrupt the vote, the chief official running the plebiscite said on Saturday.

The accusation came at a time of heightened tension around the poll, due next month. A southern official for the first time said her party would openly campaign for secession, bringing a warning from the north's ruling party that it might refuse to recognise the result.

Mohammed Ibrahim Khalil, the head of the referendum's organising commission, told *Reuters* he had been flooded with spurious complaints and threats of lawsuits, all apparently from the same group.

Southern leaders have accused the north's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) of trying to find ways to disrupt the vote to keep control of the region's oil reserves.

"We have received complaints in identical terms from different parties very clearly instigated by one main source, all of them groundless ... The whole idea is to create confusion and give the idea that something serious is going wrong," Khalil, a northerner, said. He declined to say who he thought was behind the campaign of disruption.

State-linked media reported earlier that a group called the Higher Council for Peace and Unity had filed a "constitutional case" against the commission and the south's dominant Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), saying they had violated the law governing the vote.

Senior SPLM member Yasir Arman dismissed the new case saying it was "baseless and politically motivated by the NCP".

Separately, in the southern capital Juba, senior SPLM member Anne Itto said the party would

campaign for southerners to vote for independence, abandoning a legal fiction that the movement was neutral.

"Since unity has not been made attractive, we are promoting what our people choose ... If you have had your ears open, more than 90 percent of the people are already waving," she said, referring to the open-hand symbol for separation printed on referendum forms.

Asked what she meant by waving, Itto answered "separation".

Itto said she was speaking for the party's dominant southern sector. Arman, from the northern sector, declined to comment.

Senior NCP official Rabie Abdelati accused Itto of breaking the terms of the peace deal by coming out for independence.

"They (the SPLM) are now working for secession regardless of the result of the referendum ... The referendum will be nominal, illegal. I do not think that the NCP should recognise any process or any result that comes out of it," he said, adding his party had nothing to do with the legal challenges.

UN panel welcomes conclusion of voter registration for referendum

UN News UN, 09/12/10 - The registration of voters ahead of next month's referendum on the self-determination of Southern Sudan has been concluded, the United Nations panel monitoring the process said today, welcoming the peaceful and orderly conduct of the exercise.

Registration has, however, been extended in some out-of-country sites to accommodate the late start of registration in those locations, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Panel on the Referenda in the Sudan said a press release. "The Panel commends the performance of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) and the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB), who have been operating under heavy constraints with tight deadlines, and limitations in communications infrastructure, as well as financial and human resources," the Panel said. It lauded the decision to extend voter registration from 1 to 8 December, a move that allowed for further public awareness and gave eligible voters more time to enrol.

The Panel, however, voiced grave concern over the referendum process in Abyei, where no progress has been made in the preparations because of disagreements over voter eligibility. The dispute has prevented the establishment of the Abyei Area Referendum Commission. The Panel said that, in its view, the Southern Sudan voter registration process was "transparent and free from organized manipulation."

Members of the Panel, however, drew attention to some observations drawn by its monitoring teams, including concerns that eligible voters in some areas are making decisions on their future in a climate of political uncertainty.

The next phase of the referendum process is the exhibition of voters' lists starting tomorrow until 17 December. All registration centres are required to display a preliminary register for voters to verify their details and raise objections or seek corrections if they find errors. The Panel urged the Government of Sudan and the Government of Southern Sudan to make "prompt and full payment of their commitments towards the funding of the referenda processes."

Members of the Panel also appealed to the donor community "to fulfil their commitments," including ensuring that registration staff and security personnel involved in the process are promptly paid.

Lawsuits to be filed before Constitutional Court on referendum malpractices

The Citizen Khartoum, 12/12/10 – The Supreme Council for Peace and Unity has filed a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court against the SSRC and the SPLM, according to the Sudan Media Centre (SMC). Paul Layli, the head of the council, is quoted as saying that the SPLM controls the work of the SSRC on legal and procedural issues related to voter registration. He has accused them of inciting southerners not to register for the vote. He also claims that the SPLM would mobilise the SPLA to change the figures and thus the referendum outcome and called on the SSRC to urgently look into the challenges. Another senior member of the council has been quoted as saying that the SPLM and the IOM are blocking the registration process in the north and repatriating returnees to disrupt the registration process.

In a related development, *Al-Ahram Al-Youm* reports that over 50 persons representing various tribes of southern Sudan are determined to file a lawsuit at the Constitutional Court seeking an annulment of the voter registry and constitutional and legal reforms. They would seek such action on the grounds of irregularities of the process and SPLM intimidation.

Talks on post-referendum issues to resume Monday - AU

Radio Miraya Khartoum, 11/12/10 - The African Union High-Level Panel on Sudan has said that talks on the post referendum arrangements between the NCP and the SPLM will resume on Monday in Juba. In a press release, the panel said that the partners of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement will discuss economic issues, citizenship, security arrangements, and international treaties.

Panel chairman, former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, urged the partners to diligently commit to the negotiations which are critical for the people of Sudan. The panel expressed confidence that the SPLM and the NCP can reach comprehensive and constructive agreements on all the post referendum arrangements.

Al-Sahafa meanwhile reports that the parties to the CPA are due to meet later today to discuss Sudan's external debts with the participation of representatives from the World Bank, the IMF, the ADB and the donor community.

In this meeting, according to SPLM's Luka Biong, the IMF and World Bank will present information pertaining to Sudan's debt situation and options available for cancellation and participants would seek to reach a common vision on Sudan's external debts.

Biong said that the SPLM side enters the meeting with a specific strategy with regard to debts cancellation and the division of assets and is ready to adopt a common strategy with the NCP and the African Development Bank on debt cancellation.

Southern Sudan party to campaign for independence-official

Reuters Juba, 11/12/10 - A senior member of South Sudan's ruling party on Saturday said it would campaign for southerners to choose independence in a referendum, abandoning a legal fiction that the movement was neutral.

Anne Itto, from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), spoke to journalists from a podium decorated with posters bearing the referendum's symbol for separation.

"Since unity has not been made attractive, we are promoting what our people choose ... We choose to campaign for what people want ... If you have had your ears open, more than 90 percent of the people are already waving," she said, referring to the open-hand symbol for

separation printed on referendum forms.

Asked what she meant by waving, Itto answered "separation".

Itto said she was speaking for the party's dominant southern sector. Yasir Arman, from the party's northern sector, declined to comment.

NCP assures its Southern members of their citizenship status

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 11/12/10 - The ruling National Congress Party (NCP) announced this week that its members from South of the country will keep their citizenship in the North should the January referendum result in a new country.

NCP officials have warned that Southerners in the North will be immediately stripped of their citizenship right if the South picks separation. But those Southerners who are NCP members will not be affected, according to the party's senior official.

"Those who stayed with us and fought with us will enjoy the privilege of Sudanese nationality because they believed in the cause of Sudan's unity and the common fate between the north and south. The north will be very generous with them," said Mandoor Al-Mahdi who is the deputy NCP chairman in Khartoum state.

Al-Mahdi added that other Southerners in the North will enjoy rights "but not as citizens".

But the cabinet affairs minister and the leading SPLM figure blasted the remarks saying that Sudan is not a property of the NCP so that the latter decide who can get citizenship and who gets stripped of it.

Human right groups and other observers urged North and South to take measures to protect citizens irrespective of the referendum outcome.

Misseriya agree to an "internal political solution" with Dinka Ngok on Abyei

Al-Ahram Al-Youm Khartoum, 12/12/10 – The head of the Legal and Justice Department of the opposition alliance the National Consensus Forces intimates that the Misseriya Association has accepted their initiative for an "internal political agreement" with the Dinka Ngok and sit with them in consultation on Abyei. Kamal Omar said the opposition alliance unveiled the initiative to Misseriya representatives yesterday and intends to seek audience with Dinka Ngok elders on the same issue in the course of this week. Omar pointed out that their move comes following failure of the CPA partners and the international community to reach a deal on Abyei.

Misseriya elder Mukhtar Babo Nimir has welcomed the initiative and said his tribe is indeed prepared to sit with the Dinka Ngok.

Abyei Chief Administrator, Deng Arop, has meanwhile down-played the move and is calling on the NCP to abide by the PCA ruling on Abyei and the Abyei Protocol.

South Sudan accuses north of dropping 18 bombs

Reuters Juba, 10/12/10 - South Sudan's army accused the north on Friday of bombing its territory in the third reported air attack in a week, stoking tensions in the final countdown to a southern independence referendum.

No one was immediately available for comment from the northern army. The north has regularly dismissed southern accusations of air attacks.

"We can confirm that 18 bombs were dropped inside southern territory by northern forces. They hit southern villages," said southern army (SPLA) spokesman Philip Aguer.

He said the attack took place in Western Bahr al-Ghazal state, which borders north Sudan, on Wednesday.

Aguer said he had no reports of injuries but buildings were destroyed. "They are testing us to see what we will do but we will never retaliate, unless they come on the ground, then we will defend ourselves."

U.N. ceasefire monitors had visited the sites of the previous reported bombings but investigations were still in progress, said U.N. spokesman Kouider Zerrouk.

The north has also accused the south of building up weapons and troops close to their ill-defined, shared border.

SPLA heavy military ware positions near Abyei

Akhbar Al-Youm Khartoum, 12/12/10 – Sources report that a large heavily armed SPLA force has been sighted on its way to join SPLA soldiers stationed near Abyei and armed with heavy weaponry. The SAF could not be reached for comment.

In a separate story, *Al-Intibaha* reports that the leadership of the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) says it is prepared to put some 1.2 million fighters on the ready at the call of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). PDF Campaigns Director Adil Al-Sammani told *Al-Intibaha* that their forces did in fact participate at the recent battles with the JEM in Darfur and is ready to support the SAF in their campaigns in any part of the country in order to ward off threats. He pointed out that they are well-placed to do so since they have personnel in every state in the country, including along the 1.1.56 borders.

Al-Samani pointed out that the demobilisation by the UN in the wake of the signing of the CPA does not mean that they would not resurface if called by the military leadership to ward off threats to the country's security and stability.

9,000 Dinka Ngok families return to Abyei

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 12/12/10 – The Abyei Area Administration says it is working out plans with a number of humanitarian agencies to meet the needs of the near 9,000 returnee households of a total of 36,000 registered to return from the North.

Meanwhile Mohamed Abdalla, a prominent leader of the Misseriya, has warned the SPLM against taken any unilateral action on Darfur. Speaking over phone to *Al-Sahafa*, he warned that any attempt to impose a one-sided reality would impact on the implementation of the CPA.

Other Highlights

Police seek source of video showing girl being flogged

Al-Ahdath Khartoum, 12/12/10 – Police are looking for the source of a video posted on You Tube showing a girl being flogged by some policemen. Acting Director of Police, Al-Adil Ajib, told a meeting yesterday that the video goes back to July last year and the perpetrators were at that time dealt with. He pointed out that the police have formed a committee to find out who posted the video on the internet.

Ajib wondered what the motive behind that video was since the posting was timed to coincide with celebrations of World Human Rights Day.

Foreign organisations cause food gap in IDP camps of North Darfur

Al-Wifaq Khartoum, 12/12/10 – The government of North Darfur has managed to cover the food gap created by foreign aid organisations that have turned to carrying out other activities than food aid in the IDP camps.

The Information Minister for North Darfur State, Hafiz Omar, said that the government has managed to cover the food needs of these groups with the assistance of local NGOs and the Humanitarian Aid Commission. He called on foreign aid groups to carry their mandated roles instead of focusing their concern on issues that are not to the interest of the IDPs.

Opposition forces to hold conference in Khartoum late this month

Khartoum Monitor Khartoum, 12/12/10 – The National Consensus Forces says it will convene a comprehensive conference before the 24th of this month in Khartoum. Sidig Abdul-Jabbar, who heads the group's Information Committee, said yesterday that the conference is scheduled to discuss issues related to the realisation of a comprehensive democratic transformation, promotion of the option of voluntary unity on a new basis, the just settlement of the Darfur issue, curbing the rising cost of living and the realisation of social peace and peaceful coexistence.

Zambia says Sudanese president should not fear arrest on its territory

Sudantribune.com Washington, 11/12/10 - The Zambian government today announced that the Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir is free to attend a regional summit on its territory without having to fear being arrested.

“There is no question of whether Mr. Al-Bashir will be arrested or not, Zambia is a member of the African Union and the AU says he has not been found guilty on those crimes so he will not be arrested,” Lieutenant General Ronnie Shikapwasha, who is also Minister of Information and Broadcasting told Hot Fm news in Lusaka today according to the ‘Lusaka Times’.

Shikapwasha urged all organizations and media institutions that still wanted to make further inquiries on the matter to write to State House.

‘Zambian Watchdog’ website said that a number of African leaders confirmed their attendance at the summit but it was not clear if Bashir was one of them.

Al-Mahdi any attempt to topple the government would open doors of hell

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 12/12/10 – Umma Party leader Sadig Al-Mahdi has warned that any attempt to change the current regime by force would open the door of hell on Sudan. He pointed out that the regime has to be changed he rather favoured a change from within.

With regards the ICC Al-Mahdi said that neglecting the ICC would not solve the problem. He suggested dealing with the ICC in a manner that would help maintain justice and stability of the country.

Sudanese army carry out more attacks against Minnawi in Darfur

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 11/12/10 - Sudanese army carried out attacks during the last two days against troops loyal to the former rebel leader who signed Abuja peace agreement the UNAMID said today.

These attacks come after the Sudanese army announced a first attack on Thursday 9 December on Minni Minnawi fighters saying they were attempting to join southern Sudan.

In statements released on Saturday UNAMID said the Sudanese army attacked for the second day Minnawi troops in Khor Abeche, a village in South Darfur, located 80km northeast of Nyala.

Five civilians were injured during the attack, three among them are in critical condition and will be transferred from UNAMID clinic in the area, the mission said.

The head of the peacekeeping operation said deeply concerned by the attack. He also "demanded the government at the highest level for the attacks on the village to cease".

Some 500 civilians fled the village to UNAMID's nearby camp seeking to be protected by Darfur peacekeepers

"However, the number has now been revised to between 200 to 250 individuals," UNAMID further said.

SLM leader Mini Minnawi has meanwhile confirmed that SAF forces did bomb three of his army positions on Friday. He told *Radio Miraya* that SAF forces attacked Khor Abeche, Hijeri and other areas south of Nyala town. He urged the UN to investigate the incident and protect SLM members in the area.

The SLM leader denied reports that his movement had joined the JEM.

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