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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article34462>

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Highlights

Sudan opposition demand probe into ballot printing

Reuters 17/3/10- Sudan's opposition yesterday demanded an investigation into how a government company won a tender to print ballots, raising fears of fraud ahead of April's presidential and legislative elections.

A source close to the procurement process told Reuters that the UNDP, which was charged with overseeing the tenders, had planned to award a contract to print the presidential and gubernatorial ballots to a Slovenian company but the NEC intervened and gave it to a local government firm.

"This has added to our fears that something has been cooked already," opposition presidential candidate Mubarak al-Fadil told Reuters, asking the NEC to publish details of its tender process.

The controversy is likely to be a major setback for the vote, with opposition parties increasingly complaining the NEC is biased towards incumbent President Omar al-Bashir's ruling party.

The opposition said they were concerned about possible corruption in the NEC's finances and that the government firm, which also prints Sudan's currency, could print illegal ballot papers.

They also criticised the U.N. mission in Sudan, which advises the NEC, for not reporting what they called irregularities in the award of the contract.

The United Nations in a statement denied any involvement in the award of the third contract. The NEC says the contract awards were a joint process with the United Nations.

UNDP did award two other contracts for printing ballots for the national and state parliaments to South African and British firms the source, who declined to be named, said.

Deputy Head of the NEC Abdallah Ahmed Abdallah told Reuters the Slovenian company could not print the papers in time if there was a second round of presidential elections.

If no one wins more than 50 percent of the vote, a second round will be held between the top two candidates three weeks after the results. He added there were checks to stop ballot box stuffing.

"Any ballot paper without the stamp of the officer in the centre and his signature will not be valid," he said.

The NEC's Abdallah said nine companies were shortlisted by UNDP including the Sudanese government company, a private Sudanese company and other foreign companies.

Al-Fadil said he had seen reports from the NEC that the government company's bid was as high as \$4 million dollars whereas the Slovenian company had bid \$800,000 for the contract. The NEC denied the numbers but could not provide other figures.

"We want a serious investigation into this matter," SPLM presidential candidate Yasir Arman

told Reuters. "They have given the sheep to the fox," he added.

Kiir criticizes NEC

FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit, at press conference in Juba yesterday criticized the NEC and wondered whether the Commission is functioning freely or it is working for the interest of certain entity, **Rai Al-Shaab** reports. He said the NEC did not care about the objections raised by political parties.

Elections ballots and boxes can not be forged – NEC

Al-Sahafa reports the NEC has said that tight measures were taken to ensure proper transportation and movement of elections ballots and boxes, adding the voting ballots can not be forged because they bear seal and signature and closed with ribbons bearing serial numbers. The Commission also announced the arrival of 4200 of 17,000 ballots boxes needed for the process, saying the rest of the material will follow during the coming days.

Meanwhile, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports NEC Information Adviser Abu Bakr Waziri as saying that the ballots printed inside Sudan would be used in the South and those printed in South Africa would be used in the North.

Police poised to secure elections process

Sudan's Interior Ministry announced that the electoral process could face numerous challenges during polling phase but said it would deal decisively with anybody who attempts to interfere with the exercise, **Al-Ayyam** reports. Elections Security Higher Committee Chairman Maj. Gen. Ahmed Imam Al-Tohami said a plan was in place to address any problem that may arise during voting adding that the plan would be regularly reviewed to cope with developments. Speaking at press conference yesterday, Maj. Gen. Al-Tohami said police forces are anticipating violence at all levels.

Meanwhile, **Al-Intibaha** reports the SAF and the People's Defence Forces (PDF) have announced their readiness to secure the upcoming elections. Representative of the Defence Minister Maj. Gen. Mirghani Akode who was addressing a ceremony yesterday to mark "Mile Forty Battle Day" said elections would take place smoothly.

Foreign Ministry welcomes elections observers

SUNA 17/3/10 - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has welcomed the regional and international observers to monitor Sudan's upcoming elections. MFA Undersecretary Mutrif Siddiq received yesterday an advance delegation of Arab League monitors. He thanked the League over its response to send observers. He briefed the delegation on the preparations for the coming process.

Al-Bashir calls on southerners to vote for unity

NCP presidential candidate Omer Al-Bashir launched yesterday a water station in Bor in Junglei state and announced the establishment of "Dr. John Garang Memorial University", **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports. Al-Bashir, who is in Bor for campaigning, called on southerners to vote for unity.

Kiir says Angelina, others disrupt campaign rally in Unity State

The SPLM candidate for GoSS president has accused SPLM-DC elements and supporters of Angelina Teny (independent candidate for Unity State governor) of masterminding the chaos at his campaign rally at Bentiu Stadium last Monday, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports. Speaking at a press conference in Juba yesterday, Salva Kiir Mayardit said that the disruption of campaign rallies is an illegal act. He however attributed the incident to the "elections fever".

Six candidates for president agree to form committee to review NEC

Candidates for president who met late yesterday agreed on a number of issues including the formation of a committee to review alleged financial and administrative irregularities within the NEC, reports **Akhir Lahza**. The committee will report its findings to the candidates by the end of this month. The meeting was convened at the residence of independent candidate for president, Kamil Idriss. The SPLM, Communist Party and DUP candidates were not present at the meeting.

Other Highlights

Sudan and Darfur rebel group sign cease-fire

AP 18/3/10 - Sudan Government and a collection of Darfur rebel groups have signed a cease-fire, opening the way for political negotiations ahead of a full peace agreement.

Government representative Ghazi Salah Eddin Atabani and rebel leader Al-Tijani Al-Sissi signed the truce today in Doha, Qatar.

Al-Sissi's Liberation and Justice Movement is an umbrella organization that includes several small Darfur rebel groups that recently united to negotiate with the Government.

Last month, Sudan Government signed a similar truce in Doha with Darfur's most powerful rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement.

The Government refused JEM's demand that other rebel groups join the reconciliation process under its umbrella.

VP Taha travels to Doha to witness signing of an agreement with LJM

VP Ali Osman Taha traveled to Doha yesterday leading a Government delegation comprising more than hundred members to sign a framework agreement with Darfur's Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM), **Al-Sahafa** reports. Government delegation spokesperson Adam Rahama said today's signing ceremony of a declaration of principles and a framework agreement will also be attended by UN and AU representatives.

According to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**, while JEM has demanded the post of vice president of the Republic, the Government has offered him the post of presidential adviser.

JEM, five rebel factions agree to coordinate toward unity

Sudan Tribune website 17/3/10 — Twenty four hour before the signing of a second framework agreement between the government and another rebel group in Doha, the JEM and other five groups agreed to coordinate their positions and work for unity.

Besides JEM, the unity agreement is signed by the Sudan Liberation Movement Unity Command (SLM-Unity), SLM Juba-Unity, the United Revolutionary Forces Front, the Democratic Justice and Equality Movement and breakaway commanders from SLM- Abdel Wahid Al-Nur. These groups were part of Addis Ababa Roadmap group sponsored by the US envoy Gratton.

The signatories reiterated the need to reunite the resistance in order to get the rights of Darfur people and extended the invitation to all the forces keen to reach that goal, stressing no just peace deal can be reached without unity.

They further decided in a press release issued Wednesday to form a joint mechanism "seeking to achieve unity or close coordination". This "mechanism will be in permanent session, and will follow up and implement issues of mutual interest until the completion of the objectives," read the statement.

The deal negotiated in Doha, the venue of Darfur peace process, represents a concession from JEM rebels who in the past rejected coordinating with the other rebels saying only merger in one movement will guarantee the rights of Darfur people during the peace process.

JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein Adam told Sudan Tribune that the deal "constitutes another proof of JEM seriousness to bring together freedom fighters in one structure in order to achieve the aspirations of Darfur people".

He further added the move expresses the rejection of ongoing plot to falsify the will of Darfur people, stressing the need to postpone April elections to enable the ongoing efforts in Doha for a comprehensive peace.

Sudan re-arrests Darfur rebels

AFP 17/3/10 - Sudanese authorities have re-arrested 15 members of the JEM after releasing them following a truce with the Darfur group, their lawyer said on Wednesday.

The rebels were arrested when they went to Al-Fashir, the capital of north Darfur, Adam Bakr Hassab said.

The Khartoum Government, which fought a devastating war with Darfuri rebels, released 57 JEM members in February after agreeing to a truce and the framework for peace talks.

Sudan hangs two for killing Chinese oil workers

Reuters 17/3/10 - Sudan executed two people convicted of killing four oil workers, two of them Chinese, in one of the country's most energy-rich regions, state media reported on Wednesday.

The two were found guilty in 2004 of killing the workers and looting their vehicle in Heglig in Sudan's South Kordofan state, state-run SUNA reported.

The report did not give further details of the incident but said the workers had been employed by a Chinese oil company.

Foreign interest in Sudanese oil has pushed workers into some of the country's most remote and insecure corners.

Three Sudanese working with the Yemeni HTC oil company were killed after they were ambushed while traveling between Heglig and Mayom County in South Sudan's Unity State in October 2008.

Earlier the same month, gunmen abducted nine Chinese oil workers from South Kordofan and later killed four after what China said was a failed rescue attempt.

Suna said the executions took place in the federal prison in El Obeid, the main town in Sudan's North Kordofan state.

Heglig oil field is currently operated by the Greater Nile Petroleum Operation Company, a consortium led by China's CNPC that also includes Malaysia's Petronas and Sudan's state-

owned Sudapet.

Brutal murder of Sudanese activist shocks and saddens many

Sudan Tribune website 17/3/10 — The British police arrested an unidentified man for suspicion of involvement in the murder of a Sudanese anti-torture group lawyer at his home in South London this weekend, the BBC reported today.

Earlier this week the police issued an appeal to the public for information about the killing of Abdel-Salam Hassan, 56 who died after being stabbed repeatedly in his stomach, legs and torso. The Guardian said that it appeared that the victim put up a fight with his assailant before falling dead.

A political motive behind the killing has not been ruled out by Scotland Yard though his neighborhood is said to be a relatively unsafe one.

The EXPRESS newspaper said that a neighbor walking her dog found his body at 7am on Saturday after seeing the door ajar.

Hussein had been the victim of repeated criminal incidents in the months before his death, including burglaries, antisocial behavior and harassment, the newspaper reported.

"We are looking at every aspect of his life, including his work as a human rights lawyer," said one police source. "He was quite a vulnerable individual as he walked with two sticks and weighed 22 stone and there were issues with where he lived."

"This was a brutal attack on a defenseless man, made more tragic as Abdel had devoted much of his life to combating abuse of human rights upon others" detective Chief Inspector Damian Allain from the homicide and serious crime command at Scotland Yard said.

The naturalized British citizen worked for Redress, a rights organization which helps torture victims around the world. He also previously worked for Human Rights Watch and Justice Africa.

The group's director Carla Ferstman said that "there was a lot of concern here about his personal safety".

"He talked to us about what had been going on a great deal. He had been burgled and broken into several times. He talked to his colleagues about it a lot, he was not happy where he was living and his colleagues were concerned for him" Ferstman said.

"The work he did for us involved him working with civil society and the government in Sudan to promote law reform. But he was involved in the much more sensitive work of helping individual victims of torture to seek redress" she added.

Redress website showed condolences from Abdel-Salam's peers and friend who hailed his work and efforts in the area of human rights. Many of them have last seen him at a conference in Uganda few weeks ago.

Alex de Waal, an Africa expert at the Social Science Research Council in New York wrote in his blog that Abdel-Salam "possessed a vivid curiosity about the complexities and paradoxes of their country".

"He was an unflinching advocate for human rights with a keen sense of the social and political

context for making those rights real. He studied Islam deeply and mocked both the excesses of Islamist zealots, and those who were intimidated by them" De Waal said.

Food aid flows to E. Equatoria state as hunger bites

Gurtong 17/3/10– The body in collaboration with the Southern Sudan Rehabilitation and Relief commission (SSRRC) in Eastern Equatoria started a full-scale distribution of food to hunger-stricken areas last Friday.

The state has been hit by famine following a two –year consecutive crop failure due to failed rains in the region.

The Eastern Equatoria State SSRRC Director Charles Rex Olum told Gurtong yesterday the exercise would run for a week.

A UN official said acceptable international standard formula of food distribution ration per head will be applied, adding that WFP will reach out to 284,356 registered beneficiaries in the state in a bid to rescue them from the current biting hunger.

The official, who preferred anonymity, said that food distribution plan runs from March to September this year but the first round which has already commenced will end in April because of the forthcoming general elections.

“The 4,599 metric tonnes of food aid will be distributed to the beneficiaries at the end of each month starting from March”, he said.

Among the food items being distributed are cereals, pulses, vegetable oil and salt.

The SSRRC official, Olum, revealed that the registered beneficiaries were estimated to be 284,356 and are distributed across the counties. ..