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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

President Al-Bashir rejects SPLM mediation with Darfur rebels

Local dailies 19/7/10 – President Al-Bashir has announced that the Government would not accept SPLM's mediation between it (Government) and the Darfuri armed movements. Presidential press secretary Emad Sayed Ahmed told reporters yesterday that the decision was taken on the assumption that the SPLM is part of the Government.

Sudan Tribune website 18/7/10 reported that SPLM deputy Secretary General Yasir Arman told reporters this week that GoSS President Salva Kiir would soon contact JEM and SLM leaders. Both groups are currently outside the peace talks underway in the Qatari capital Doha.

JEM welcomed the offer saying that Kiir is the right person for mediation given his understanding of the issues facing the marginalized population in Sudan...

Amnesty says Sudan security brutally suppressing opposition, activists

Sudan tribune website 18/7/10 - Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) is utilizing torture as means to suppress opposition figures and independent human right campaigners, rights group Amnesty International said in a report on Friday.

"Sudanese authorities are brutally silencing political opposition and human rights defenders in Sudan through violence and intimidation. NISS agents benefit from total impunity for the human rights violations they continue to commit."

"The NISS rules Sudan by fear. The extensive, multi-pronged assault on the Sudanese people by the security services has left critics of the government in constant fear of arrest, harassment or worse" the group said.

In a report entitled "Agents of Fear," Amnesty said that NISS uses a variety of torture methods including beating detainees who are being held upside down against a wall, whipping, sleep deprivation, electric shocks, kicking and stamping on detainees and beating them with water pipes.

One Sudanese doctor named Ahmed Sardop detailed account of his torture over an article he wrote speaking about rape in Darfur and criticizing the government's decision to expel humanitarian organizations from Sudan following the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for president Omer Al-Bashir.

"They leaned me over a chair and held me by my arms and feet while others hit me on the back, legs and arms with something similar to an electrical cable. They kicked me in the testicles repeatedly while they talked about the report on rape in Darfur" Sardop said.

Sardop filed a complaint with the police and was examined by a doctor who confirmed his allegations of torture. A few days later, he started receiving telephone death threats: "We will soon find you and we will kill you." He now lives in exile.

"The period from May 2008 to early 2010 saw extensive and renewed human rights violations throughout the country. Most were perpetrated by the NISS, whose agents are responsible for most cases of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment".

The Africa programme director at Amnesty Erwin van der Borgh said that the National Security Act must be reformed to address immunities bestowed upon NISS agents.

"All immunities should be removed. Allegations of human rights violations must be promptly and effectively investigated and those responsible prosecuted for the crimes they commit. Victims must be given reparations he said.

An African Union panel established last year and headed by former South African president Thabo Mbeki said that the government must remove "all legal and de facto immunities and other legal impediments to prosecutions, such as periods of limitation".

However, so far the Sudanese government has made no amendments to the laws governing immunities of security officers.

The NISS has renewed crackdown on dissenting voices, closing down newspapers and arresting journalists despite the country emerging from the first multi-party elections in 24 years.

This week three Sudanese journalists working at a paper belonging to the Popular Congress Party (PCP) were sentenced to jail on charges of attempting to destabilise the constitutional system.

While in jail, it was alleged that the journalists were being tortured and a photo was circulated showing one of the journalists Abuzar Al-Amin back, was sentenced to five years, with a large bruise. Al-Amin was arrested after authoring an analysis alleging that Iran had constructed a weapon factory in Sudan aiming to supply Islamists insurgents in Somalia and Yemeni Shiite rebels as well as Islamist Palestinian movement Hamas.

"The use of torture by the NISS is systematic. In a report to the UN Security Council, the UN Panel of Experts on Sudan stated that "Interlocutors interviewed by the Panel informed it that while ill-treatment or torture are not introduced as part of the curriculum prepared for officers undergoing NISS training, everyone in NISS is left with the impression that some physical violence is acceptable in the process of extracting information from suspects. According to a middle-level NISS officer the dilemma is obvious: "how else can I extract information from a criminal when I know that he's got it inside of him".

Amnesty said that women have also been harassed and intimidated by law enforcement agents and the NISS, and sexually assaulted while in their custody.

Sudan criticizes US stance on ICC's indictment of Bashir

Sudan Tribune website 18/7/10 - Two Sudanese officials today blasted recent statements by US in which they called on president Omer Al-Bashir to surrender himself to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Statements made by U.S. president Barack Obama and State department called on Sudan to cooperate with ICC, indicating that special envoy Scott Gration, who is currently in Khartoum, will convey this message to Sudanese officials as he did before.

However, Gration was quoted as saying that the recent ICC move against Bashir will complicate his mission given that the North controls the solution to crises in Darfur, South and counter-terrorism.

The Sudanese presidential assistant Nafie Ali Nafie was cited by state media as saying that the U.S. stance supporting the ICC is inconsistent with any positive American work towards Sudan and diminishes its feasibility.

"U.S. position towards Sudan concerning ICC issue is lacking credibility and the ethical stand in itself" Nafie told reporters following his meeting with Gration.

"The U.S. excluded itself from the jurisdiction of the ICC to protect its soldiers who are killing innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan and denying others their right to preserve security and sovereignty in Sudan" he added.

He said that U.S. State Department reflects the ethics of westerners and lack of principles adding that Washington is controlled by anti-Sudan lobbies.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese presidential adviser Ghazi Salah Al-Deen Al-Attabani also echoed the same sentiments in a separate meeting with Gration accusing the U.S. of exploiting the ICC against Sudan and warning that these "two faced policies" could impact bilateral ties...

Arab League affirms its Support to Sudan against the ICC

SUNA 18/7/10 – the Arab League asserted that the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) against President Al-Bashir came at an unsuitable time, reiterating its rejection of the Court's decisions.

The Arab League Special Envoy for Sudan Ambassador Salah Halima said in statement to SUNA that during this stage the focus should be on the support for peace efforts, pointing out that the Arab League has a principal and clear position and it does not deal with the International Criminal Court absolutely...

Enemies' recourse to the ICC futile – Al-Bashir

Al-Rai Al-Aam 19/7/10 – President Al-Bashir, at meeting yesterday with a delegation of the Sudanese Bar Association, said SAF have beaten the JEM which is now on the run at the Malha area. He said now the JEM has two choices: to surrender or to face SAF in the desert. "Whenever they notice that efforts to resolve Darfur are certain to succeed,

they will provide JEM with equipment and push it to fight the Government,” the President said. “The enemies’ recourse to the ICC would be counterproductive,” he added.

On referendum, the President said, “If the process is free, fair and transparent, the result will be unity”, stressing the need for demarcation of the border before the exercise takes place.

Sudanese Women Union sends cable to UN Secretary-General

Sudan Vision 18/7/10 - The Sudanese Women General Union has sent a cable of thanks and appreciation to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on the occasion of the establishment of women agency in the UN.

This was declared at a celebration which was organized by the union at the Sudanese Women Activities Center, Thursday in the presence of the representatives of the UN organizations and the leaderships of the women and the social organizations where the Chairwoman of the Union, Sara Alija, handed the cable to the UN representative to Sudan to convey it to the UN Secretary General.

The cable lauded the voting of the UN General Assembly in favour of women, affirming the role being played by the civil society organizations with regard to preservation of women rights and implementation of the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) concerning reduction of the mortality rate among women, combating poverty and improvement of girls' basic education.

Sara expressed hope that the establishment of the women agency would lead to providing equal opportunities for men and women depending on efficiency and justice.

SPLA denies reports of arrest of officer in Khartoum

Al-Ayyam 19/7/10 - The SPLA said it has no forces in Khartoum save for its contingents within the JIUs. SPLA Spokesperson Kuol Deim said that the person arrested in Khartoum over crime charges and suspected to be an SPLA member was in fact a member of a militia group that did not chose to join the SPLA.

Yesterday, local dailies carried the story of the arrest of an SPLA officer in possession of firearms and accused of conning a federal minister.

Sudan stops BBC transmission in the North

Al-Rai Al-Aam 19/7/10 – The Sudanese Government has informed the BBC (Arabic) that its license to transmit on FM in four northern towns – Khartoum, Port Sudan, Medani, Al-Obeid – is terminated with exception of southern Sudan.

Informed sources revealed that the decision was taken in the backdrop of seizure by local authorities of unauthorized transmission equipment hidden in a “diplomatic bag”.

Reportedly, a delegation from the BBC visited Khartoum in a bid to recover the equipment valued at a million sterling pounds but to no avail.

Sanaa Hamad, the State Minister for Information, described the development as administrative measure, saying the decision is not politically-motivated.

On his part, the head of the BBC's Khartoum bureau declined to comment on the decision, saying that he arrived in Khartoum late yesterday and is not yet informed of the details of the decision.

No justification for indefinite Doha talks– Ghazi

Al-Ahdath 19/7/10 - The head of the Sudan government delegation to the Doha talks, Amin Hassan Omar, said his delegation would return to Khartoum on Thursday but until then talks would continue in Doha at committees' level with the LJM delegates. He also said that Sudan and the mediators share the view that participation should be expanded for the talks in order to reach a solution to the crisis in Darfur, adding his delegation has not received note from the mediators as to when the next round of talks will take place but they will prefer their resumption some time in September.

Meanwhile, Ghazi Saluhldin who holds the Darfur dossier in the National Government said he sees no reason for the Doha talks to continue indefinitely. "All that had to be said has been said, the positions are clear and all we need is to find common grounds between the different views," he said.

Sudan's North-South partners discuss economy, border security

Sudan Tribune website 18/7/10 - A recently concluded North-South general conference involving adjacent or "intermingling" states has resolved to step up development projects in the South in order to boost the economy of the semi-autonomous region, as the clock ticks fast towards the referendum on independence due in less than six months.

The National Government and the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) held the joint conference this week from 14th to 15th July, in Aweil, the capital Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, and mainly discussed economic and security issues, among others.

A high level delegation from the National Government, which included federal ministers and five governors from northern states, led by the Vice President of Sudan, Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, and GoSS delegation, which also included ministers, governors and chiefs, led by the Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar Teny, converged in Aweil town where the two leaders co-chaired the gathering.

In the final communiqué produced after the two days deliberations, the two parties reaffirmed their commitment to maintain security and promote peaceful co-existence between the neighbouring states. It also reaffirmed the commitment to implement development projects in the South under the Unity Support Fund initiative...

Civil aviation promises free transportation of newspapers to the South

Al-Sudani 19/7/10 – The Civil Aviation Authority yesterday promised to transport daily newspapers to the southern Sudan free of charge to be sold at the same price as in Khartoum and that in coordination with the Air Transportation Chambers. Head of the

National Press and Publication Council Prof. Ali Shumu said the step is part of efforts to outweigh unity choice. Mr. Shumu attributed the low distribution of daily Arabic newspapers in the South to the rising cost of air transportation.

Wednesday Aug. 11 first day of Ramadan

Dailies 19/7/10 – Sudan's renown astronomer Dr. Muawia Hamid Shadad announced that Wednesday 11 August will be the first day of Ramadan.

Khartoum residents concerned over reports of heavy rains

Akhir Lahza 19/7/10 – residents of Khartoum state are reportedly worried over the announcement by the meteorological authorities predicting heavy rains and storms today Monday in various localities of the state. Although the authorities issued further predictions ruling out hurricanes, they confirmed the heavy rains.

Pre-referendum Watch

CPA partners to hold negotiations in Juba today

Al-Akhbar 19/7/10 – The two partners' negotiations on post-referendum arrangement are set to commence today in Juba and will continue for two days. Special envoys to the Sudan, AUHIP Head Thabo Mbeki, AEC Head Derek Plumbly, Arab League representative and several experts are expected to participate in the meeting.

SPLM SG Pagan Amum told the newspaper that their movement is ready for the talks, ruling out emergence of differences over the issues on the table, but pointed out that the two partners reached a deadlock on Abyei.

Referendum Commission to hold consultations with Gration and SRSG

Local dailies 19/7/10 – the Referendum Commission will hold today important meetings with the SRSG and the US envoy to the Sudan for consultation on the technical and financial arrangement for the Commission's work. Commission Rapporteur Tariq Osman Al-Tahir said the Commission is preparing for a simultaneous launch of its work in both the North and the South and has made considerable progress towards that end, adding that the Commission in Juba would begin its work after being sworn-in before the Chairman of the Referendum Commission next week.

Referendum Commission says process well behind schedule

Sudan Tribune website 18/7/10 - The head of the body tasked with preparing the country for South Sudan referendum warned that they have little time left before the key vote takes place in January 2011.

Earlier this month and after much delay, Bashir swore in the members of the South Sudan Referendum Commission headed by Mohammed Ibrahim Khalil.

Khalil told the pro-government Al-Rayaam newspaper that lack of time remaining to prepare for the referendum is a "major problem" but affirmed that the commission will make necessary efforts to discharge its mandate.

He noted that the constitution gives the commission twenty-four months but that it only has six months at its disposal.

The commission chief stressed that providing security and the environment for conducting the referendum is the responsibility of the NCP & SPLM. He pledged to carry out his duties impartially without any attempts to influence or distort the wishes of Southerners.

A report released by a coalition of two dozen international NGO's this month have warned that North and south Sudan could go back to war unless they reach agreement on sharing oil revenues and other issues.

They also warned that Sudan is "alarmingly unprepared" for the referendum despite insistence by the NCP & SPLM that it should be held as scheduled even as they still negotiating post-referendum arrangements.

Gosh warns of “unfair referendum”

Al-Sudani 19/7/10 – Presidential Adviser Gen. Salah Abdullah Gosh has stressed the need for the conduct of a free and transparent referendum which will reflect the will of the southern Sudanese, warning of unfair exercise which might lead to future conflict and problems between the North and the South. Gosh made the remarks at a meeting yesterday with US envoy Scott Gration.

EU pledges support for the 2011 referendum

The Citizen 19/7/10 - GoSS Minister for Peace and CPA Implementation Pagan Amum said the EU pledged support for the 2011 referendum for southern Sudan. Speaking to the press in Juba yesterday following a four-day visit to Brussels, Amum said that the EU has agreed to support preparations for the conduct of the referendum to ensure that southern Sudanese achieve and benefit from the exercise in a free and fair atmosphere. He said however that the EU is awaiting a formal invitation from the National Government in the Sudan to send a delegation early enough for preparations for the exercise.

“They are ready to send in an observer mission as soon as they are invited by the National Government,” Amum affirmed. He also said that the EU has donated \$120 through UN agencies in Sudan to support referendum activities.

Sudan criticizes activist US group “Enough”

Sudan Tribune website 18/7/10 - The Sudanese Embassy in Washington strongly criticised an opinion piece co-authored by John Prendergast, the founder of the U.S. based campaigning group Enough over his assertion that the referendum on southern secession due to take place next year would be delayed or not recognised by the government.

In a letter to the *New York Times* published on July 18, the Embassy said that Sudan's government, “is not only prepared to recognize the outcome, but has also called on the international community to witness and engage in the process to ensure a fair and

transparent exercise.”

The original opinion piece by Prendergast and author Dave Eggers, ‘In Sudan, War is round the corner’ claimed that, "all signs indicate that the Khartoum government will undermine the voting process or not recognize" the results of the referendum on southern independence due to take place in January 2011.

"The ruling National Congress Party has stalled on virtually every pertinent part of the peace agreement, and the national and local elections in April — which most international observers agree were stained by fraud — are a foreboding precedent," the article said.

"If January comes and goes without a referendum, or if the results are manipulated, then fighting will break out. Both sides have been arming themselves since the peace agreement, so this iteration of north-south violence will be far worse than ever before. And if war resumes in the south, the conflict in Darfur, in western Sudan, will surely explode again"...

VP Biden says US working to avoid “failed state” in Sudan

Sudan tribune website 18/7/10 - The number two official in the U.S. said that his country does not want to see a "failed state" in Sudan ahead of a key vote by Southerners which could lead to the world's newest nation.

"We're doing everything in our power to make sure this election on the [South Sudan] referendum is viewed by the world as legitimate and fair," Vice President Joe Biden said at an interview with ABC television broadcasted on Sunday.

"That's why we have been pushing the UN, that's why we have been pushing [South Sudan president Salva] Kiir, that's why we have been working with [African Union panel chief Thabo] Mbeki, that's why we have been working with [Egyptian] president [Hosni] Mubarak. All of who have significant influence in this," Biden added.

The senior U.S. official described as legitimate concerns by many Sudan activist groups and NGO's on whether the referendum can be held in a fair manner to prevent any return to war between the North and South.

Biden said that the referendum "must be viewed as credible to keep that country, that region, from deteriorating. The last thing we need is another failed state in the region."

"I am still hopeful. We are on it full-time and I believe that we'll be able to pull — they'll be able to pull (it) off, with our help and the UN's help, they'll be able to pull off a credible election," he added.

The US Vice President met last month with Kiir in Nairobi and at the time called for "ensuring that all necessary measures are in place for a peaceful outcome that is internationally recognized, and offered US political, financial, and technical support to that end".

Preparations for the referendum are well behind schedule said the head of the body responsible for overseeing the process. The Southerners have warned that they will not agree to any delay in holding the vote even if it means that negotiations on post-referendum items such as oil, nationality national debt and citizenship have to be discussed after January.

Sudan's NCP accuses SPLM of stalling border demarcation

Sudan Tribune website 18/7/10 - The ruling National Congress Party (NCP) blamed the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) for the delay in completing the border demarcation process, a crucial step in the run-up to the South Sudan referendum scheduled for January 2011.

Qutbi Al-Mahdi the secretary for organizations at the NCP told reporters today that his party's position is clear which is that no referendum can be conducted without completing the border demarcation.

Al-Mahdi said that the SPLM is responsible for the delay because it did not name its representatives at the border commission emphasizing that the NCP wants this completed as soon as possible.

He further dismissed allegations that the NCP is dragging its feet on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) referring to the case of Abyei where he said that his part is working in completing the required steps in a manner that accommodates the aspirations of the people and prevent recurrence of violence in the area.

UN will be involved in the south and Abyei referenda – Thabo Mbeki

Khartoum Monitor 19/7/10 - The AU High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) on Sudan has disclosed that the UN would be involved in helping the South Sudan Referendum Commission conduct the 2011 referendum. Speaking to reporters in Khartoum last Saturday following the conclusion of an international consultative meeting on Sudan, AUHIP Chairman Thabo Mbeki called on the partners to the CPA to "act as recommended to move on the establishment of the Abyei referendum commission."

"Concerning the South Sudan Referendum, the meeting accepted that the UN, as requested by the Parties and within the context of the mandate of the UNMIS, indeed should extend necessary support to ensure the success of the South Sudan Referendum," Mbeki said.