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Media Monitoring Report

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Referendum Watch

SSRC approves requests for 25 international monitoring bodies

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 21/12/10 – The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) has revealed that registration figures from referendum registration centres in the US still continue. SSRC press officer George Makuer says centres in the US have so far registered 7,320 voters. Centres in Egypt have closed with the registration of a total of 3,359; another 15,500 have registered in Kenya, 13,260 in Uganda, 9,461 in Australia, 7,073 in Ethiopia and 654 in the UK. He pointed out that there have been no legal challenges to the registration process in these centres outside the country.

According to *Al-Raed* daily, the SSRC press official downplayed the legal challenges filed so far on the referendum registration process but pointed out that the legal department at the SSRC is preparing a response to the charges filed before the Constitutional Court on the voter registration process.

Makuer also said that the SSRC has endorsed applications for some 25 international civil society organisations to monitor the referendum and would be studying some more applications in the next few days.

Sudan court rejects one vote challenge, mulls two

Reuters Khartoum, 20/12/10 - Sudan's highest court has thrown out one legal challenge to a referendum on southern independence, but is considering two others that could derail the vote scheduled for next month, officials said yesterday.

Preparations for the January 9 referendum—which are already far behind schedule—have been disrupted by last-minute petitions to Sudan's Constitutional Court from groups citing a string of irregularities and calling for the organising commission to be dissolved and voter registration to be re-run.

An official at the Constitutional Court, who asked not to be named, said judges had thrown out one case and were looking into two other petitions. The official declined to go into the detail of the cases.

Two groups, called the Society Organisation Network and the Higher Council for Peace and Unity, have announced legal challenges.

The head of the referendum's organising commission Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil said the court had asked him to respond to points raised in one of the surviving legal challenges.

SSRC working on response to legal challenge before constitutional court

Reuters Khartoum, 20/12/10 - The South Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) said on Monday that it has received a formal notification from the Constitutional Court regarding two legal challenges filed before it that raised fears of a delay to the key vote that is due to take place in less than a month.

Sudan official news agency (SUNA) carried a statement attributed to the SSRC spokesperson George Makeur Benjamin saying that one of the two motions challenging the voter registration process was dismissed by the Constitutional Court. However, the judges asked SSRC to file a response to the other motion no later than Sunday December 26th. Omar Al-Farouk Shamina and

Al-Hassan Ahmed Saleh were assigned by the referendum commission to conduct the necessary legal research and prepare the response, the SSRC said.

The SSRC chief Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil downplayed the case against his commission suggesting it has no legal merits.

"From what I have seen so far there is absolutely no substance to these petitions. Some are ridiculous. One of them said that the CPA was unconstitutional," he told *Reuters* today, referring to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that set up Sudan's interim constitution and promised the referendum.

A handful of legal challenges were made against the SSRC and the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) alleging violations to the voter registration process for eligible Southerners.

Among the arguments put forward by the group that the referendum law stipulates that registering the voters and finalizing the lists should have been completed three months prior to the vote. Because the Sudanese national assembly has not passed any amendments to the current law and thus the voter registration process should be deemed unconstitutional.

Progress in some aspects of post-referendum talks - Amum

Al-Ayyam Khartoum, 21/12/10 – SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum has revealed that the joint committee charged with discussing post-referendum issues has reached agreement on issues pertaining to international conventions and is close to sealing a deal on the security arrangements.

On citizenship, the two sides have agreed on the basics such as the protection of southern Sudanese in the north and northern Sudanese in the south and have also agreed that no citizen would be without citizenship papers, he said. He further noted that what is remaining is to reach an agreement on the rights of northern and southern citizens who have lived on the other side for a long time.

Not much progress has been made on discussions over oil revenue because the SPLM is still waiting for information it requested on the oil produced from southern Sudan.

On security arrangements, he said that the two sides only need to reach agreement on the security arrangements in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan with regards to Popular Consultation.

CPA partners lock horns over Islamic law

Al-Ahram Al-Youm National Assembly, 21/12/10 – The NCP parliamentary caucus has brushed aside SPLM protests over recent statements by President Al-Bashir declaring Islamic law as the basis of legislature in a post-separation Sudan. NCP's Fathi Shila told reporters following the parliamentary session yesterday that the sharia'a has been and would remain the basis for Sudanese law. He said that the SPLM has failed to establish a secular system of government through its visions for a "New Sudan". Shila pointed out that the SPLM had already chosen the separation camp even before Al-Bashir declared the post-separation sharia'a-based legislation.

On the other hand, Ramadhan Laku (SPLM) pointed out that the NCP is thus formally declaring the establishment of two separate states ahead of the referendum. "The door has thus been closed before even those who think of advocating for unity," Laku lamented.

Flag, name and system of governance are major challenges –Luka Biong

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 21/12/10 – Federal Cabinet Affairs Minister and SPLM figure Luka Biong said the first five years of a separate southern Sudanese states would be challenging and would

not allow the nascent state to constitute radical structural changes. He warned of serious political and social consequences of any hasty change to the structures of the new state.

Biong says the flag, the official name, renaming of the SPLM/A and the system of government would be the main challenges the new state would face. He pointed out that while SPLM hardliners are pushing for complete deletion of the word "Sudan" from the name of the new state and proposed new names such as Nile state, Kush and Imatong, others argue that the word "Sudan" in the new name and proposed names such as New Sudan and South Sudan. He said he does not think the capital would be transferred from Juba.

EU to deploy 110 observers to monitor South Sudan referendum

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 21/12/10 - The European Union has announced it will deploy 110 observers for the southern Sudan referendum.

Speaking at a press conference at the Burj Al-Fatih Hotel in Khartoum yesterday, the head of the EU Elections Observation Mission (EOM) said that the EU would deploy a team of 110 observers for the southern Sudan referendum.

Veronique de Keyser, who is also member of the EU Parliament, further revealed that the team's line-up consists of 10 senior-experts and 32 permanent observers and 60 short-term observers who would arrive with the beginning of the referendum. She explained that they already have a team of 16 observers and 3 experts on the ground since last November.

The head of the mission said that the team's final report would be released as soon as the referendum process is over.

SPLA General threatens to attack Khartoum

Al-Sahafa/Agencies Washington, 21/12/10 – Mjr. Gen. Gabriel Jok Riak, who commands the SPLA's 10th Division with positions close to the north-south border, told the *Miami Herald* that his forces are prepared to attack Khartoum should the SAF decide to attack southern Sudan in the event of the latter's separation come the January 2011 referendum.

Riak boasts that the SPLA could overrun the capital and then establish a new governing alliance.

"Sooner or later they will try to disrupt it (the secession process), either during or after the referendum," the general said of the SAF. "Don't be surprised."

Deputy Chief of Abyei declares his views on the US' Abyei proposal

Al-Raed Abyei, 21/12/10 – The Deputy Chief Administrator for the Abyei Area, Rahama Abdulrahman, says the US proposal to the NCP and the SPLM on Abyei is a ploy aimed at splitting the region into two. He pointed out that his Misseriya tribe welcome the NCP proposal that the area be designated an area of integration between north and south of the country.

Kiir asks Museveni for military, diplomatic support

Sudantribune.com 21/12/10 - South Sudan President Salva Kiir rushed to Kampala at the weekend to drum up military and diplomatic support against Khartoum ahead of next month's referendum on secession.

Highly placed sources said Gen. Kiir briefed President Museveni about escalating war signs following bombing of some southern Sudan villages allegedly by Sudan Armed Forces.

The UN Mission in Sudan on December 13 confirmed Sudan Air force carried out strikes near

Kiir Adem Bridge in the contested oil-rich Abyei border region around mid-November.

These attacks, worsened by the weekend decree by President Omar Bashir that Sudan would turn into a puritanical Islamic state once the South votes to break-way, have stoked tension, triggering mass exodus of southerners resident in the north.

Diplomatic and military sources fear an influx of refugees into Uganda and worry that rogue elements in Sudan could infiltrate the fleeing group and cause harm from within Uganda.

Gen. Kiir, also vice President of Sudan republic, reportedly appealed to Mr Museveni who played a key role during the two-decade SPLM/A war, to weigh in to calm the tense situation.

The Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces has been put on high alert, although Gen. Aronda Nyakairima, the chief of defence forces, said last week it was in readiness for the February election in Uganda. Gen. Nyakairima also notified Khartoum that south Sudan's desire to secede will be enforced.

Sudan Parties, civil society groups discuss referendum code of conduct

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 20/12/10 - Representatives from different political parties and civil society organizations met in Sudan's capital, Khartoum to discuss a common code of conduct, developed to guide the referenda and popular consultations in the country.

The October 18 meeting was organized by the African Union High Level Implementation Panel on Sudan (AUHIP), the body which sponsored the development of the code in consultation with the Political Parties' Affairs Council and civil society organizations.

The code seeks to guide the conduct of political parties, civic and media organizations and other promoters of the referenda and popular consultations, and builds on the democratic principles that were adopted in the March 2010 Electoral Code of Conduct.

The 130 participants, according to a statement from the AUHIP, stressed the importance of adequate preparation and civic education for the referendum, citing peaceful referendum process and sustained peace during the post-referendum period as being essential.

"The participants pledged to promote a peaceful referendum process and to disseminate the code of conduct. They resolved to hold another meeting in January, before the referendum," the December 19 press release partly reads.

The AUHIP, however, remains optimistic that with the commitment political parties and civic organizations have demonstrated towards civic education and democratic values, both the January referendum and peaceful consultations will take place successfully.

Members of the panel, headed by former South African president, Thabo Mbeki also pledged to continue supporting all Sudanese stakeholders in their preparations for the referenda and popular consultations.

Other Highlights

Mubarak, Qaddafi visit will not change matters – SPLM Atem Garang

The Citizen Khartoum, 21/12/10 – While the Sudanese opposition parties have considered the visit of Presidents of Egypt and Libya, Mubarak and Qaddafi, to Khartoum as an expression of the regional concern and an attempt to impress upon the two partners the need for not returning to war, the SPLM affirmed that the visit would not change anything on the ground. The ruling NCP welcomed the visit.

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Atem Garang (SPLM) described the visit as a bid for sustainability of peace whether Sudan remained united or split, stressing that the case of the south is dissociated from diplomatic relations among countries, adding that it would not alter matters on the ground because there are several issues related to governance and enforcement of the transition to democracy that the visit can not change.

Sudantribune.com (on 20/12/10) reported that Egypt's minister of foreign Affairs Ahmad Abu al-Ghait has confirmed that President Hosni Mubarak will arrive in Khartoum on Tuesday to hold a summit with Sudan's president Omer Al-Bashir and the Libyan leader Muammar Al-Qaddafi as well as President of South Sudan Salva Kiir.

Abu Al-Ghait further announced on Monday that the summit would aim at bolstering efforts by Sudan's peace partners to reach solutions to pending issues in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)...

The Egyptian minister noted the crucial crossroad at which Sudan currently stands, adding that the summit also aims to emphasize the importance of holding the plebiscite in a transparent and free environment in a way that reflects the true will of south Sudan people.

He further disclosed that the summit would attempt to help the two partners to break the deadlock over post-referendum arrangements.

According to the Egyptian minister, President Mubarak would also discuss with the two partners means of establishing strong north-south ties based on common interests in sustaining peace and achieving economic development.

The Egyptian minister further pointed out that the summit would discuss ways of resolving Darfur problem through encouraging all rebel factions to join the peace talks currently underway in the Qatari capital al-Doha.

The high-profile visit by Al-Qaddafi and Mubarak is seen as linked to letters sent two days ago by US president Barack Obama to leaders in the region underlining the importance of ensuring peaceful conduct of the referendum in Sudan and peaceful settlement to Darfur problem.

South Sudan army clash with forces loyal to General Athor, 12 killed

Sudantribune.com Abyei, 20/12/10 - At least 12 people have been confirmed dead in what appears to be a surprised and renewed military confrontation between forces belonging to Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and armed elements identified as loyal to General George Athor.

Speaking to *Sudantribune.com* on Monday from his base in the extreme north-western part of Jonglei, in an area close to Malakal town, Capital of the Upper Nile State, Athor accused the SPLA of attacking his forces twice over the weekend.

"The SPLA forces from Khorliet and Khorwac launched two attacks on our forces on Saturday and Sunday, he said.

"This was part of an organized attempt to execute orders (given by Juba) that some of my senior commanding officers and I should be captured alive and killed at the meeting we had recently with a delegation sent by president of the government of south Sudan to meet me," he stressed.

However the plot failed because he had been already informed about it before the meeting took place, he claimed. "We were already getting enough information about this plan. We had the information of when and where they would initiate and launch an attack which they had planned to advance to the venue of the meeting," said Athor

Athor accused individuals he did not name of being behind the attack on his forces, a charge some of the senior members of the southern ruling party were quick to deny and accused him of spreading unfounded allegations.

Biar Atem, an official from the government of south Sudan, in an interview with *Sudantribune.com* from Juba described the statement as "incorrect and backtracking statement".

"Nobody had the plan to arrest or kill George Athor. Everybody supports the peaceful dialogue initiated by South Sudan president, so he should stop giving out unnecessary and incorrect statements to the media," said Atem in a seemingly angry voice.

However, Abiel Riing Majak, a member of the delegation representing General Athor in the ongoing discussions refuted Atem's statements adding they have information that minister of internal affairs in the government of south Sudan, General Gier Chuang Aluong and incumbent governor of Jonglei State, Kuol Manyang Juuk were behind the recent attack.

"We are told that Gier Chuang Aluong was in Atar when the SPLA forces launched two consecutive attacks. It was him and Governor Kuol who were organizing these attacks through SPLA command forces in Juba to the local command."

Majak went to say that the two officials who are from Jonglei state had planned to capture Athor during a meeting with the delegation sent by Salva Kiir. He also accused them of attacking another rebel officer, David Yauyau who is in Pibor. He said SPLA forces in Khorliet were part of the plan launched an attack on Saturday while forces in Khorwac reinforced the second attack on Sunday. Some 12 SPLA soldiers were killed and eight others wounded during the weekend attacks.

"We have reports that none of our soldiers has died in the attack. No one has been injured as well but 12 people on the side of the SPLA were killed and eight others sustained injuries and are currently in Malakal town," he said.

Colonel Philip Aguer Panyang, official spokesperson of the SPLA in an interview with *Sudantribune.com* from Juba confirmed the clash and described it as "sad and unfortunate development"

"Yes, I have heard of the clash. It is sad and unfortunate development and I cannot give out any detail now because I do not have enough information, said senior military officer," adding that he was out of the town.

"I have just returned from a trip. I was out of the town so give me some time to gather enough information about this incident," Aguer told *Sudantribune.com* from Juba.

The clash occurred three days after the South Sudan delegation comprising archbishop of Episcopal Church of Sudan, Daniel Deng Bul and Roman Catholic Bishop of Wau Dioces; Rudolf Deng Majak met and held talks with General Athor in his base.

Gabriel Tang threatens to expel SAF from Malakal

Akhir Lahza Khartoum; Malakal, 21/12/10 – General Gabriel Tang who recently flew back to Malakal from Juba, is encouraging youths from the Nuer tribe of the area to join the SPLA. He reportedly pledged to clear Malakal of the presence of the SAF.

Sources intimate that Gabriel has failed to convince some of his soldiers from leaving the SAF.

UNAMID symbol of Africa's ability to resolve own problems – Al-Bashir

Al-Sahafa Khartoum 21/12/10 – Addressing the inaugural session of the conference of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services in Africa (CISSA) yesterday, President Al-Bashir has pledged, together with all partners, to see the Darfur peace process through to its conclusion. He praised UNAMID's role in the process which he described as a demonstration of Africans' ability to resolve their problems. He also commended the role being played by the CISSA in achieving security and stability in the African continent.

Sudan gives ultimatum for Doha talks

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 21/12/10 – Sudan has given the joint mediation and the Darfur armed movements until 31 December 2010 to sign a peace deal. Amin Hassan Omar, the head of the Sudan government delegation to Doha, said on arrival in Khartoum yesterday that the government delegation was expecting the mediators to present a framework agreement but this did not happen. He said however that the mediators may still be working it out but warned that his team would not be in Doha beyond 31 December.

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