

21 January 2010

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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

Secession may lead to a new form of unity, says President Al-Bashir

Speaking to southern Sudanese supporters at a rally in Khartoum yesterday, President Al-Bashir pledged commitment to the implementation of the CPA and promised there would be no return to war in southern Sudan, *local dailies* report.

“Those people who talk of a possibility for renewed fighting have never tasted war and have been living in hotels,” he said.

Al-Bashir also called for unity but said that the people of southern Sudan would be the ones to decide through the referendum whether it is unity they want or secession. “If secession happens, we will reunite again with the people of southern Sudan on the basis of a new foundation,” he said.

The president went on to assure southern Sudanese residing in Khartoum that they would be free to remain in Khartoum even if the south chooses to secede.

Al-Raed reports that Nafei Ali Nafei, Assistant to the President, said that the rally called for by Al-Bashir’s southern Sudanese supporters is “... a strong message to the colonial states that established the unjust European court of injustice to recolonise Africa and to the disillusioned northern Sudanese residing abroad.”

Sudan says will welcome Human Rights Independent Expert

Rapporteur of the Advisory Council on Human Rights, Abdul Moneim Osman Mohamed, has said the Justice Ministry would table before the Human Rights Expert all controversial laws, including the National Security Law, *Al-Ahdath* reports. He noted that the Independent Expert’s itinerary for Sudan has been agreed upon by the Advisory, UNMIS and the UN Human Rights Council. He also assured that the expert would be given unhindered access to meet with opposition parties, civil society organisations and others and is expected to visit Abyei, among other areas.

“We hope that he would have a scientific approach in his assessment of the facts on the ground,” he added.

National Security advisory body form joint mechanism with the Cabinet

The National Security Advisory Council and the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers have established a joint mechanism of coordination on key issues of the period such as the elections and the referendum among others, *Al-Raed* reports.

National Security Advisor Salah Goush has revealed that the joint mechanism will also be looking at the establishment of infrastructures in different institutions within the framework of a united or divided Sudan as would be dictated by the referendum results.

NEC extends nomination period

National Elections Commission (NEC) today extended the deadline for nominations after requests made by several parties who argued that they did not have sufficient time to complete the paperwork.

The Sudan News Agency (*SUNA*) quoted Jalal Mohamed Ahmed Al-Amin, the secretary general of the NEC as saying that the nomination period will end on Wednesday, January 27 at six pm.

Originally the nomination was set to expire on Friday.

The NEC deputy chairman, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, said the decision has been taken for many reasons among which the demand made by different political parties to extend the nomination period to meet requirements of nomination.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) headed by Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani and other political formations complained to the commission about the short time given to collect the signatures needed for registration while others say they received the nomination forms late.

"They wanted 15,000 signatures (for a candidate) to be nominated and that from 18 states with a minimum of 200 in each state," Abdel Aziz Khaled, a presidential candidate told **Reuters** on Wednesday.

The head of Sudan Alliance Forces (SAF) said he had met the requirements but that after decades of north-south war it would be difficult for many independent, mid-level or new political parties to garner support in both the north and south within the original tight timeframe.

"They are making it difficult because [President Omar Hassan] al-Bashir doesn't want many candidates to run because this will divide the vote and affect him in the first round to not get 50 plus percent," Khaled said.

If no presidential candidate gets 51 percent, it will force a second round between the two leading candidates.

The major presidential nominees so far include Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) deputy secretary general for northern sector Yasir Arman, Popular Congress Party (PCP) deputy leader Abdulla Deng Nhial as well as Umma Reform and Renewal Party (URRP) leader Mubarak Al-Fadil.

The DUP and Umma Party have not decided on their presidential candidate.

Meanwhile, Representatives of slum dwellers, who have little access to information and no electricity or running water, told Reuters that ruling NCP officials were using threats and bribery and also telling people the SPLM was supporting the NCP so they should vote for Bashir.

"This will not be a way for a free and fair election," said SPLM spokeswoman Keji Roman. "They are offering money or even threatening them...this is what makes it illegal and immoral."

The NCP has routinely dismissed the allegations for fraud and directed similar accused at the SPLM.

Committee for voluntary returns suspends operations in the south

The Higher Committee on Voluntary Return of IDPs to southern Sudan has announced the suspension of voluntary returns operations, reports **Al-Intibaha**. Kormaj Chol, the GoSS Voluntary Returns Coordinator in northern Sudan, revealed that the decision was taken because of the lack of UN funding coupled with the high cost of returns and some humanitarian concerns.

New UNAMID chief to arrive on Friday

Sudantribune.com *Khartoum, 20/01/10* — The new Joint Special Representative of the African Union –United Nations Mission in Darfur is due to arrive in Khartoum on Friday to assume office at the head of UNAMID.

UNAMID Spokesman, Nouredine Mezni, pointed out that Professor Ibrahim Gambari will hold a series of meetings with Sudan government officials before leaving for Darfur on Monday.

He is also expected to travel to Addis Ababa at the end of this month to meet with AU Commission leadership and attend the upcoming AU summit.

Asked by Sudan Tribune to comment on UNAMID expectations from the new JSR, Mezni welcomed on behalf of the Mission's leadership and the entire staff, Professor Gambari who "will bring along a rich international experience and a great knowledge of the African affairs, which certainly help him to consolidate UNAMID achievements on the beginning of its third year of operations," he said.

He added that the new envoy will continue to play a constructive role in the overall search of an enduring stability and a lasting peace in Darfur.

Mezni paid tribute to former JSR Rodolphe Adada who laid a solid foundation of the first ever AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur and to the Acting JSR Henry Anyidoho who ensured, with the support of UNAMID leadership and the Mission's staff, a smooth interim period since last September.

Sudan says ceasefire in Darfur tops Doha agendas

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 21/01/10 — Sudan has expressed readiness to peace talks with Darfur rebel groups saying the ceasefire agreement will top the agendas of the next round of talks in Doha scheduled for January 24.

Amin Hassan Omer, a state minister for culture and information and member of the government delegation to Darfur peace talks made his remarks after a meeting chaired by Vice-President Ali Osman Taha to discuss the preparations for the upcoming peace talks.

The cease-fire is one of the most important agendas at the forefront of negotiations to come before to engage the second phase to discuss outstanding issues, the Sudanese official told the semi-official SMC.

Amin also stressed that the government does not accept any preconditions from any party, adding they would negotiate with those who attend from Addis Ababa or Tripoli groups or Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

He was alluding to JEM's demand to exclude the other factions – formed in Tripoli and Addis Ababa — and to limit the negotiations to JEM and the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdel Wahid Al-Nur (SLM-AW).

In a recent meeting held in Ndjamená organized by the Chadian President with the participation of the chief mediator Djibril Bassolé, JEM gave the Sudanese Presidential Adviser a position paper asking to resume talks with the two rebel groups that had been involved in Abuja peace talks.

Sudan has started a normalization process with the neighboring Chad and the two countries will deploy patrols to control their border. Also rebel presence in any side would not be tolerated.

The Sudanese government also said it would negotiate with the rebels based on the resolutions of a consultative conference held last year to end Darfur conflict.

It is not clear whether JEM delegation, currently in Doha, will take part in the talks or would only attempt to convince the mediation with its position. However, the SLM-AW seems reluctant to join the process presently.

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