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Referendum Watch

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Highlights

“We will not accept results of flawed referendum” – NCP official

Al-Wifaq 21/11/10 – NCP Political Relations Secretary Ibrahim Ghandour expressed concern over possible emergence of an hostile state in the South after the referendum on self-determination, saying there were still a lot of differences over nationality of southerners after secession. He said his party would accept the result of the referendum only if it is not reflective of the will of the southern Sudanese but a flawed process would be problematic for both the North and the South.

In an interview to the London-based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (see summary below), he said secession seems inevitable because the GoSS is using available resources to promote separation choice.

Al-Sudani 21/11/10 reports Ghandour said that the NCP was now viewing secession of the South as an “inevitable development”, adding that secession of the South would be a “gain for the North”. He said his party would not rule the North alone after secession because doors would be open for political participation of other parties but pointed out that state institutions such as the Presidency, the Parliament, governors of states and legislative assemblies would remain.

He said the loss of 20% of southern employees would not be a catastrophe for the North but it would be a problem for the South because the same posts are not available in the region.

NCP and SPLM trade charges over registration obstruction

Local dailies 21/11/10 – The NCP and the SPLM, at two separate press conferences they held on Saturday, blamed each other for hampering the ongoing registration process.

Al-Ahram Al-Youm 21/11/10 reports while SPLM senior leader who is also National Assembly Speaker Atem Garang accused the NCP of lying to the people to prepare the North to reject the vote result, NCP leader Mandoor Al-Mahdi said the SPLM was hindering the registration process by preventing pro-unity southerners from registering their names.

“Actually what the NCP has been saying over the past days ... is irresponsible, baseless and full of lies and is meant to disorient the Sudanese people. We consider this veracity as NCP’s attempt to prepare the minds and feelings of the northern Sudanese to reject the results of the referendum in the near future if it is not in their interest. That is to say if the result is secession, they will reject it” Atem Garang said; according to *Khartoum Monitor* 21/11/10. Garang also accused the NCP of conducting parallel registration.

Sudan Tribune website 20/11/10 reported the NCP expressed its dissatisfaction with the voter registration process for the South Sudan referendum in the North saying there were clear violations that undermines the credibility of the process.

Mandoor Al-Mahdi alleged that SPLM members are present at polling stations to persuade Southerners not to register. He added that these incidents were reported to the SSRC to rectify the situation but no action was taken.

However, the SPLM made similar accusations to the NCP that it is seeking to pressure Southerners in the North to vote for unity through "citizens' committees" by collecting the phone numbers of those who registered.

The SPLM's Atem Garang said southerners were being told: "You must vote for unity when you come and vote next time."

"It is intimidation. It is against the law," Garang told a news conference in Khartoum. He also denied that they had asked Southerners in the North to boycott the registration process.

"The southern Sudanese, we never urged them not to register because we want them to be free. When we talk about a free and fair referendum, it means when you are going to registration you must be free. We did not talk to them to boycott the registration," Garang said.

Sudan Radio 21/11/10 reports that the NCP has accused SPLM elements of hampering registration in Khartoum by intimidating southerners to prevent them from registering their names. Governor of Khartoum state Abdul Rahman Al-Khidir told reporters yesterday that the organized forces had been ordered to deploy near registration centres and southern residential areas to remove the obstacles that prevent southern citizens from registering.

Reportedly, Al-Khidir directed the arrest of any elements carrying arms at registration centres and vowed that the state would track down those suspected of preventing southerners from registering for the vote.

"We will work for unity until the last hour and we will accept the result of the upcoming referendum only if the game is fair," Al-Khidir said in his briefing to southern leaders yesterday in Khartoum, according to *Al-Ahdath* 21/11/10. "We will not allow any elements, from the SPLM or the NCP, to tamper with peace" he said. Al-Khidir also revealed that they would hold a meeting with the SSRC today to raise registration concerns.

Meanwhile, *Al-Wifaq* 21/11/10 reports that the SSRC has denied that registration process in the North was being hampered.

SSRC Spokesperson George Makuer said registration is progressing in a good manner and attributed the low turnout and slowness of the process in Khartoum state to the fact that the process had coincided with the Eid holiday. He said the SSRC would consider seriously any charges relating to interference of partisan or tribal elements with the registration.

Al-Rai Al-Aam 21/11/10 reports NCP leader and Presidential Adviser Sheikh Beish as saying that the referendum result would not be recognized if the registration process is flawed.

SRSG visits registration centres in the South

Al-Tayyar 21/11/10 – SRSG Haile Menkerios arrived in Jonglei state as part of his visit to southern states to inspect voter registration process.

Speaking to Radio Miraya in Malakal, the SRSG said the NCP and the SPLM had confirmed that there would be no return to war, adding that voter registration process in the South was progressing in a normal manner.

Food merchants flee South Sudan before Jan. vote

AP 19/11/10 - People living near Sudan's internal north-south border could soon be facing a food shortage.

In less than two months Southern Sudan is set to hold an independence referendum that is widely expected to see the creation of the world's newest country. For towns on the north-south faultline, communities of northern Arabs and southern Christians and animists have co-existed mostly in harmony.

But many northern traders say they are starting to feel like foreigners, and say they are leaving town for their own safety.

The World Food Program has already prepositioned 75,000 metric tons of food in 100 hubs throughout the south in anticipation of wider food shortages.

Standoff over Abyei dominates discussions between peace partners

Sudan Tribune website 18/11/10 – consultative discussions between the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) are being dominated by a standoff over the oil producing region of Abyei on the north-south border, according to Barnaba Marial Benjamin, minister of information and broadcasting services.

The two parties have yet to agree on post referendum arrangements including citizenship, resources (oil and water), division of national assets and economic debt.

Minister Marial, who serves in the SPLM dominated Government of Southern Sudan since 2005 said on Thursday that discussions with Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) were making "good progress."

In Khartoum, VP Ali Osman Taha confirmed Marial's statements today saying that the NCP and the SPLM have reached a framework agreement on the outstanding issues, except Abyei. However he showed optimism that the next week presidential meeting may conclude a deal on the disputed area.

Dhieu Mathok Diing Wol, a senior SPLM member, expressed concern that deadlock over Abyei could trigger a return to north-south civil war, the most recent of which lasted over two decades.

"There has been very little progress on agreeing the arrangements for the vote in Abyei. This has raised a lot of concerns and worries in the run-up to January vote. The issue of Abyei is one of the sticking points still being discussed between the two parties and we want to see much more focus from international community. There needs to pay focus so that the risks of this region becoming a triggering point returning the country back to war are minimized," said Mathok.

The senior official of the south's ruling party says their partner in the CPA is attempting many bargaining tactics to get the best deal it can before the likely breakup of the country.

"Officials from the National Congress Party are trying their best. They are knocking all doors in attempt to bargain with interest that we split the national debts, share oil resources as stipulated

in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement even if the south secedes," he explained.

He also accused the NCP of attempting to draw the north-south border so that more of Sudan's oil is north of the as yet un-demarcated border.

"They are also trying to ensure that north-south borders are drawn in their favor so that it brings more oil into the north and continue removing oil in the north from reservoirs that run into the south," he explained.

The former senior member of the NCP, who defected to the SPLM in 2007, says all eyes of his former party are fixed on Abyei because of its oil.

"The cause of all stalemates is Abyei. The NCP sees Abyei as nothing but wealth. This is why they have not been able to reach [a] compromise with our team involved in discussions over the issue of this region because they know Abyei is their last pocket. They fear economical collapse," said Mathok.

The official, who became part of the regional government in September and comes from southern state of Northern Bahr el Ghazal which shares a territorial boundary with Abyei, said there are a lot of people along that border.

"We share a lot of things with the people of Abyei not just because of being of Dinka. We share common border with them as we are along the north-south borderlines and they are real brothers and true south Sudanese," he said...

Juba authorities accused of arresting unity campaigner

Sudan Tribune website 20/11/10 - Northern Sudan ruling National Congress Party (NCP) has accused the Southern Sudan authorities of arresting one of its senior officials leading a campaign in favor of Sudan's unity in greater Upper Nile states.

Zuhair Hamid Suleiman is the deputy secretary of the NCP Youth committee and chairman of the youth subcommittee at the higher committee for the support of unity established by President Omer Al-Bashir on 7 November.

He was arrested Saturday at Juba airport and taken to unknown destination, said Abdel Mutti Mohamed Kheir, an official at the NCP Youth Secretariat, today in a statement released in Khartoum. He further said that Zuhair is supervising the NCP campaign in the greater Upper Nile states.

The detainee was heading to Bor from Juba, the NCP official added.

The NCP and SPLM trade accusations of intimidation and pressures on southerners to participate in the registration process which started on 15 November and expected to end within ten two weeks.

The higher committee for the support of unity is chaired by President Bashir while Salva Kiir and Ali Osman Taha are appointed as vice-chairmen.

Kiir repeatedly pledged to facilitate the conduct of a free referendum campaign. Different SPLM officials, who promote separation of southern Sudan, also said committed to not prevent unity supporters from campaigning as they are keen to obtain a credible vote in favor of a new state in the semi-autonomous region.

High turnout in Juba center as officials run out of registration materials

Sudan Tribune website 19/11/10 - Hundreds of eligible voters who had turned up for registration at a Juba referendum registration center located at Dr. John Garang de Mabior mausoleum had to queue for hours, after registration materials ran out.

The center, code numbered 0902011, is the same one that registered South Sudan President, Salva Kiir Mayardit at the start of the process on Monday.

Each registration center, Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB), has voting material meant to cater for only 2,000 eligible voters. Overall, South Sudan has over 2,630 registration centers, while the north has 165.

When Sudan Tribune visited the mausoleum on Friday morning, many potential voters said they were frustrated and disappointed with the delays to the registration process.

Achier Deng, the SSRB Commissioner for operations confirmed to Sudan Tribune that the said registration center had run out of materials, but added that a team had been dispatched to the warehouse to secure more materials so that the process could resume.

He also told a press conference later that the bureau was impressed with the high levels of voter turnout recorded in the first five days at registration centers in centers Juba the regions capital.

According to the SSRB official, all countries earmarked for Diaspora registration have began full operations, with the exception of centers located in Egypt. Earlier reports had indicated that registration in Uganda had been suspended or boycotted, but the bureau has denied such claims.

The SSRB Commissioner for operations has appealed to men not to deter their women from participating in the ongoing voters' registration, following reports of alleged low turnout recorded among the women in most states of South Sudan including Lakes state.

Lifting US ban on computers “acceptable step” – Government

Al-Sudani 21/11/10 – The Sudanese Government has welcomed the lifting of ban by US Administration on export of computers and accessories to Sudan describing it as an “acceptable step”.

Spokesperson of Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Muawia Khaled said the Government would not downplay any step taken to assist the conducting of a free, fair and timely referendum.

AFP 19/11/10 reported that US President Barack Obama on Friday lifted a ban on US aid and government assistance for Sudan to allow computers to be exported into the country ahead of a key referendum.

In a presidential memorandum, Obama said he was waiving a section of the Trade Sanctions

Reform and Export act banning US assistance and financing for commercial exports to Sudan, saying it was in the "national security interest."

The waiver would "allow export assistance to be made available for the export of computers and related equipment that enables the United Nations to facilitate the referendum in Southern Sudan," the memorandum said.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton offered Sudan "dramatically" better relations with Washington if Khartoum sticks to its side of the 2005 peace accord with the south and holds the referendum on time...

Summary of Ghandoor interview to Al-Sharq Al-Awsat

Unofficial translation of the text as published by Akhir Lahza 21/11/10

Q. Do you expect the referendum to be organized as scheduled?

We are committed to the CPA and decisions taken by institutions established thereby. We accept the decisions and timetables set by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC). In addition, we are engaged with our CPA partner, the SPLM, in discussions to resolve remaining issues whether through the AUHIP headed by Thabo Mbeki, US mediation led by Gration, Obama's envoy or through direct talks between us.

Q. Do you think the process may be delayed or may not be conducted in the required manner?

The CPA contains issues with specific time schedules such as the elections and the referendum. Such events could only be amended under agreement between the parties to the CPA. We are committed to the CPA and therefore to the organization of the referendum although things have been rushed. Registration onset coincided with the Eid holiday that resulted in low turnout for registration in North Sudan centers. Many things could have been organized in a better way. We wanted the CPA to be implemented precisely for the peace to reign in our country. The CPA was signed to restore peace in the first place.

Q. Even if this lead to secession of South Sudan?

If South secedes and we live in peace it will be better than the war.

Q. Would you accept results of a referendum that has been rushed?

We will accept the results of a referendum that reflects the will of the South Sudan population. What we would not accept is an unfair referendum where reality is manipulated through pressures and interventions as it happened during the last legislative elections and witnessed to by international monitors such as Carter Center and many Southern Sudanese political parties. A flawed referendum would mean a problem for both the north and the South.

Q. Do you anticipate recurrence of the unrest witnessed during the past elections?

We hope that our partners in the South are aware of the consequences of an unfair referendum. We are confident that the referendum commission, through the controls it put in place, would

conduct a fair referendum. We are also sure that monitors would not allow any intervention which may put the process in jeopardy.

Q. Your party shares the responsibility with SPLM, what is the role of the NCP to ensure a fair referendum?

We are actively participating in the referendum. The NCP and other opposition parties in the north have formed a national body to support unity. This body is conducting intensive work both in the South and the north.

Q. Do you think the southerners alone will be responsible should acts of unrest occur?

We hope no unrest will occur. Our participation is meant to reduce any interventions.

Q. What are the major constraints?

Short time allocated for the registration and campaigns and the separatist trends of the SPLM which make many unionist southerners fearful to speak their minds. We hope that southerners are given the opportunity to express their views. Situation in the north should not be portrayed in such a way that southerners living in the north could face violence. During the war time southerners used to seek safety in the North rather than seeking refuge in the neighboring countries.

Q. Reports stated that low turnout for registration in the North is due to southerners' exodus to the South?

According to UN reports, only five thousands left to the unity state bordering the north where they have faced difficult situation. Some of them are thinking of returning to the North. UN reports also stated that southerners whose number is more than those who left the North are fleeing the South to neighboring countries fearing possible violence following the referendum.

Q. What are the expected scenarios?

Secession is the most likely scenario however unity still has a chance as politics in our region is unpredictable. Another scenario is secession of the South and the creation of an hostile state and that is what we, with the African Union and other partners are striving to avoid through a framework agreement for cooperation in case of unity or secession.

Q. North Sudanese politicians stated that the southerners would be deprived from their Sudanese nationality in case of secession?

The question of nationality is a complicated one and it is still under consideration. However, there will be agreement on a dual nationality. No nation could give its nationality to population of another country. We have agreed on free movement of population across the border.

Q. What will be the fate of Southern Sudanese students in northern schools and colleges?

Although the government did not adopt a certain policy with regard to this issue but I assure you that students from the South will continue their studies in the North. We will not dismiss any of

our relatives from the South for any reason.

Q. Is there any solution looming in the horizon for Abyei question?

The question of Abyei has been referred to the Presidency to reach an agreement on the issue. However, any solution that may deprive the northern Misseriya tribe from their rights in the area will not be acceptable. We want to implement the Abyei Protocol in a manner that grants the Misseriya the right to vote in Abyei referendum. Any solution which does not consider the rights of the Misseriya will mean continuation of tension. We should not end a conflict and start another one.

Q. Would the South be a failed state?

Our aspiration is unity. In case of secession we wish the South to be a stable state as problems in the South will spill over to the North. Leaders of the South Sudan may look for an outside enemy to cover up their problems and they will only have the North. Stability in the South means stability in the North therefore a failed state in the South is not an option for us. We want to see a good government in the South that represents all southerners. What we fear is a government formed from specific tribe, which will lead to conflicts that will affect both the North and the South.

Q. Will the NCP rule the North alone in case of secession?

Existing elected institutions will continue to the end of their terms and new elections will be conducted as scheduled but the door will be open for political participation of other parties.

Other Highlights

Sudan has to provide evidence of supporting JEM rebels - Uganda

Sudan Tribune website 20/11/10 - Sudan has to prove that Uganda trains fighters from the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), an Ugandan diplomat said this week denying accusations of supporting Darfur rebel.

Sudanese authorities accused Kampala of harboring JEM rebels who fight against the government army in the troubled region of Darfur since more than seven years accusing Khartoum of marginalizing their region in terms of development and wealth-sharing.

Khartoum says the rebels, since the implementation of security arrangements and closure of Chadian border earlier this year, are sending troops to Uganda and southern Sudan where the government of the semi-autonomous region is also accused of backing Darfur rebels.

James Mugume, permanent secretary of the Ugandan foreign ministry denied any support to the Sudanese rebels and further disclosed contacts with the Sudanese government on this regard saying they asked without success the Sudanese government to come to Uganda to discuss their claims.

"Absolutely there is no truth in it. We have asked these people to come, we are waiting for them," said Mugume, in statements to the Chinese Xinhua last Tuesday.

Ugandan ambassador to Sudan Betty Akech had been summoned twice by the Sudanese foreign ministry to protest over the support of his government to Darfur rebels, the Daily Monitor reported.

Uganda accuses Sudan of supporting the rebel Lord Resistance Army (LRA) since the years of civil war in southern Sudan.

Last month the Ugandan army spokesperson said LRA leader Joseph Kony has left Central African Republic and currently hiding in the restive region of Darfur which borders the CAR.

"We cannot pronounce ourselves on whether Kony receives any support from the Sudanese authorities but what we can confirm is that (the Sudanese) are aware of his presence on their territory and they've not done anything to chase him," said Felix Kulayigye, Uganda's defence ministry spokesperson.

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