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Referendum Headlines

- South Sudan rulers break independence vote deadlock (**Reuters/Dailies**)
- South Sudan Taskforce to organize voters in Diaspora for referendum (**ST**)
- Government's referendum campaign will be launched from South – Al-Bashir (**SUNA/dailies**)
- Preliminary census results put Southern Kordofan population at 2.5 million (**Miraya FM**)

Other Headlines

- GoSS rejects Russian request for release of Al-Falluj chopper pilots (**Al-Ahdath**)
- South Sudan economy in foreign exchange crisis-Finance Minister (**Reuters**)
- 25 SAF officers defected, joined SPLA (**Ajras Al-Hurriya**)
- Humanitarian affairs reviews aid policy (**Al-Sudani**)
- UN relief chief urges unfettered access for aid workers in Darfur (**UN News**)
- Humanitarian aid to IDP camps not priority – West Darfur State (**The Citizen**)
- Sudan government to establish \$1.9 bln development projects in Darfur (**Xinhua**)
- Burkina Faso willing to receive Darfur JEM leader- source (**ST**)

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Highlights

South Sudan rulers break independence vote deadlock

Reuters (Khartoum) 23/8/10 - South Sudan's ruling party said on Monday it would accept a northerner in a key post on the commission planning a referendum on the region's independence because having the vote on time in January was more important.

Senior SPLM official Yasir Arman said the party was focused on holding the vote on time. "The secretary-general is not the issue - having the referendum on time is," he said. "There's a deputy secretary-general so he can be a southerner."

Arman added that the SPLM had also decided that some of the timings outlined in the referendum law, such as completing voter registration three months before the vote, could be rearranged.

"It's about rescheduling - we are ready to reschedule things - the time is still enough but you can reschedule different operations," he said, adding this include registration.

Sudan Tribune website 23/8/10 reported that the breakthrough in the deadlock over the appointment of a secretary-general to the commission was brokered by US special envoy to Sudan, Scott Gration.

A source privy to the situation told *Sudan Tribune* yesterday on condition of anonymity that it was the US special envoy, Scott Gration who persuaded the SPLM's leadership to concede the position. In return, the source said, Gration had promised the SPLM that the referendum would be held as scheduled and that it would get the position of the commission's deputy secretary-general which will be based in the south.

Furthermore, the source revealed that officials of the UN and the International Foundation for Elections System (IFES), a body providing technical assistance to the referendum process, told Gration in a meeting on Friday, August 20, at a donor office in Juba that his estimates of holding the referendum on time were "legally impossible.", in reference to the timing constraints stipulated in the referendum act.

Meanwhile, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** 24/8/10 reports that 50 members of the Referendum Commission's higher committee in the ten southern states were sworn in yesterday in Juba in front of the Referendum Commission chairman Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil who reiterated the Commission's resolve to organize the process on time.

Commission Rapporteur Tariq Osman El-Tahir told *SMC* that the Commission Head and SRSG Haile Menkerios met with GoSS President upon arrival in Juba and that GoSS had reiterated its commitment to assist the Commission to accomplish its task.

Al-Ayyam 24/8/10 reports Commission chief Khalil as saying that voter registration for referendum would begin early next month.

In a related development, NCP leading figure Mohamed Mansour Al-Mahdi said his party would not heed to any local or international threats or pressure, citing SPLM threats with regard to referendum in Abyei. "If the SPLM wants a solution for Abyei it should sit with the NCP to address the contentious issues. Pressure will not change the NCP's position," he warned.

South Sudan Taskforce to organize voters in Diaspora for referendum

Sudan Tribune website 23/8/10 -The referendum Taskforce in Southern Sudan has resolved to organize Southern Sudanese in the Diaspora into referendum coordinating committees in their respective countries, particularly in the locations which the referendum law allows residents to vote, during the seven-day referendum. These countries include Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Egypt, America, Europe and Australia, during which their organizations into committees will be done in consultation with the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Liaison Offices.

The decision was confirmed during the meeting of the Referendum Taskforce Oversight Committee under the chairmanship of the Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar. It was also decided that a team from the appropriate committee(s) of the Taskforce will travel to the eight countries to educate and enlighten Diaspora voters on the process of the upcoming referendum...

Government referendum campaign will be launched from South – Al-Bashir

SUNA 23/8/10 - President Al-Bashir announced that the government campaign for the referendum would be launched from southern Sudan in accordance with the CPA which stipulated that the two partners of the agreement shall work for the unity of Sudan.

He affirmed the government pledge to provide all facilities for the campaign acquaint the southern citizen with the importance of unity and the risks of separation, stressing that the majority of the southerners are supporting unity.

Speaking at Iftar on Monday hosted by the Coptic Orthodox sect in Khartoum, President Al-Bashir called on the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) to make the referendum free and fair and to enable the southerners to vote in full freedom and transparency.

He said that the government had made peace a strategic factor in all its strategies.

"We have fully implemented the CPA to the extent that some believe the South has become an independent state," the President said, according to **Al-Ahram Al-Youm** 23/8/10, appearing optimistic that southerners will vote for unity. "I have toured the South and I can tell you the majority southerners are for unity," he said. "God willing, generations to come will inherit a united Sudan," he added.

"We will shift our activity to the South to campaign for unity. This is our right since Sudan is still united. If some of our brothers in the South see otherwise that does not mean we will relinquish our right to the South," President Al-Bashir said, according to **Al-Rai Al-Aam** 24/8/10. "The CPA obliges the two partners to work for an attractive unity but even if our cherished goal is not forthcoming we will still pursue it by lawful

means," he added.

"The southerners have fought for equality not separation. Now the equality they fought for has been achieved," he said, according to *Al-Ayyam* 24/8/10.

Preliminary census results put Southern Kordofan population at 2.5 million

MirayaFM.org 24/08/10 - The head of the Census Committee in Southern Kordofan State, Ali Toro, has said that the preliminary results of census re-run tips the population of the state at about 2.5 million. Speaking to Radio Miraya, Toro said that the official results would be announced in Khartoum by the Central Bureau of Census and Statistics.

Other Highlights

GoSS rejects Russian request for the release of Al-Falluj chopper pilots

Al-Akhbar 24/08/10 – The Russian Embassy in Khartoum has requested the GoSS to release the Russian crew of the helicopter seized by the SPLA in Al-Falluj airfield over suspicions of ferrying some of renegade SPLA General Athor's forces. GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar said that those arrested in the Sudan Air chopper would be brought to justice and allowed to defend themselves before a court of law.

On his part, GoSS Interior Minister Gier Chouang revealed that the people arrested in the helicopter, including the Russian crew, are in good health. He said that the crew would be released once investigations into the incident are concluded.

South Sudan economy in foreign exchange crisis-Finance Minister

Reuters (Khartoum) 23/8/10 - South Sudan said on Monday that the central government had stopped paying its share of oil revenues in foreign currency, creating a foreign exchange crisis in the region ahead of a January vote on independence.

The semi-autonomous South Sudan government derives some 98 percent of its budget from oil revenues, making its economy almost totally dependent on the cash sent from the north.

David Deng Athorbei, the south's finance minister, said the decision to pay its oil revenues in local Sudanese pounds since July was a "sinister" ploy to unsettle the south's economy.

"This is a clear attempt to violate the CPA" Athorbei said. "It is an attempt by NCP to stifle the southern Sudanese economy."

He said the north had taken similar action in June 2008, but the dispute had been resolved through political dialogue.

The finance ministry in Khartoum was not immediately available to comment, but the Central Bank has suffered a massive depletion in foreign currency over the past year because of the global financial crisis.

Athorbei said the switch to local currency payments meant the south's central bank was unable to supply southern banks and foreign exchange bureau.

"Investor confidence in southern Sudan is eroded," he said. "(It) is starving the economy of southern Sudan of the hard currency it needs to operate."

Athorbei said the Sudanese pound had fallen sharply against the dollar since the change, dropping to 3.10 to the dollar in the south compared with the national exchange rate of 2.43.

"If the situation is not reversed it means southern Sudan cannot import essential commodities which are necessary for our development, like steel and cement," he said.

According to ***Sudan Tribune website*** 23/8/10, the Minister called for immediate intervention by GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit.

"This situation requires immediate intervention of the presidency because it is becoming political issue", he said...

25 SAF officers defected, joined SPLA

Ajras Al-Hurriya 24/8/10 – 25 SAF officers hailing from Unity state announced their defection from the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and joined the SPLA.

SAF spokesperson Lt. Col. Al-Sawarmi Khalid Saad did not deny or confirm the incident but said according to security arrangement it was up to the armed groups to join SAF or SPLA.

Humanitarian affairs reviews aid policy

Al-Sudani 24/8/10 – The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs has finalized drafting guidelines of a policy on aid work in the country during the forthcoming period. The guidelines are based on recommendations of a forum on humanitarian aid challenges concluded yesterday. The forum recommended the "sudanization" of humanitarian work by reducing foreign presence in the country.

UN relief chief urges unfettered access for aid workers in Darfur

UN News 23/8/10 - The top United Nations humanitarian official urged all parties to the conflict in the war-torn Sudanese region of Darfur to ensure that humanitarian workers are free of harassment and intimidation as they endeavour to help those in need.

In his last briefing to the Security Council as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes noted that the humanitarian situation in the area is steadily deteriorating this year due to resumed clashes between Government forces and rebels, as well as stepped up tribal fighting.

"The level of restrictions imposed on humanitarian operations, and of harassment, threats and violence directed at humanitarian personnel, is once again becoming unacceptable," he stressed.

“All this render the civilians we are trying to help even more vulnerable.”

Mr. Holmes pointed to the recent politically-driven deadly violence over the Darfur peace process in Kalma camp, one of the largest sites sheltering people uprooted by fighting.

“This situation was further aggravated when local authorities denied NGOs and UN agencies access to the camp for 15 days after 1 August, amid suggestions that they wanted to get rid of the camp altogether,” the official said.

The current situation in the camp is reported to be calm, Mr. Holmes said, largely due to around-the-clock patrols carried out by UNAMID.

“This underscores the vital importance of UNAMID’s mandate on the protection of the civilian population and of the close cooperation between the humanitarian community and the mission,” he said, adding that the situation is tense and fragile, with Government talk of moving IDPs out of Kalma and dismantling the camp ongoing.

“In this environment, it is important that we insist on strict adherence to basic humanitarian principles by all parties to the conflict,” he stressed.

“All concerned need to understand that humanitarian action is carried out by independent and neutral actors to alleviate human suffering, that assistance is provided impartially, based on humanitarian needs alone, and that the humanitarian community in Darfur is committed to upholding these principles in every aspect of its work.”

Humanitarian aid to IDP camps not priority – West Darfur State

The Citizen 24/08/10 – Authorities in West Darfur State said that humanitarian aid to IDP is not one of the state’s priorities for the upcoming stage despite the drop in food aid for IDPs. West Darfur State said it would focus on equitable development.

A meeting held between government representatives with UNAMID chief Ibrahim Gambari underlined the need for urbanising IDP villages and the improvement of services and infrastructure such as roads, health, education and empowering women in the area.

Sudan government to establish \$1.9 billion development projects in Darfur

Xinhua 24/08/10 - The Sudanese government on Monday decided to establish development and service projects in the Darfur region at a total cost of 1.9 billion US Dollars.

"These are basic projects that will contribute to overcoming the service and development problem which was considered an essential part in causing the rebellion in Darfur," Ali Mahmoud, Minister of Finance and National Economy, told reporters on Monday.

He said the proposed projects include completion of the Western Salvation Highway, establishment of sub-roads in Darfur, establishment of an electric carrying line,

rehabilitation of the railway line, establishment of water supply networks and health centres, rehabilitation of schools, expansion of the traditional agricultural schemes and improvement of animal production.

Meanwhile, **VoA** 23/08/10 reported JEM Spokesperson has dismissed as a “mere” publicity stunt a government plan to establish development and service projects worth \$1.9 billion in Darfur.

Ahmed Hussein Adam said President Omar Al-Bashir’s government has consistently demonstrated that it is not interested in resolving the ongoing conflict in Darfur.

“This is not a serious initiative from the side of the regime because we are not (at) the process of peace-building stage because, right now, there is a conflict going on there. Instead of doing this kind of thing, let them stop the violation against the IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camps. Let them stop the atrocities in Kalma camp. Let them do that,” he said.

The JEM Spokesperson said the development project is yet another attempt by the Government to divert attention from the atrocities being committed in Darfur.

“They are not serious about the development of Darfur. If they are serious about the development of Darfur, let them have the political determination to achieve peace first and then we can go together to the state of peace building efforts,” Adam said.

Burkina Faso willing to receive Darfur JEM leader- source

Sudan Tribune website 23/8/10 -The government of Burkina Faso told Sudan that it is prepared to receive the leader of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) Khalil Ibrahim, a diplomatic source told Sudan Tribune.

The source who spoke on condition of anonymity said that the Sudanese government was seeking to find a country to receive the rebel chief after leaving Libya where he currently resides.

Ibrahim, who was denied entry to Chad last May following a thaw in relations between N’djamena and Khartoum, has been forced to accept a Libyan offer to host him. The rebel movement at the time slammed the Darfur mediation team accusing them of conspiring with the Sudanese government to prevent Ibrahim’s return to Darfur.

Sudan has been pressing hard over the last few months to have the JEM chief expelled but the Libyan side brushed the requests aside saying they are maintaining “an equal distance” from all parties to the Darfur conflict. However, they promised to rein Ibrahim and prevent him from making political statements or issuing orders to his troops.

The Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir said earlier this month that he received assurances from Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi that JEM leader will be expelled “within days” but did not elaborate. A similar assertion was made by the director of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) Mohamed Atta Al-Moula last June.

The diplomatic source told Sudan Tribune that Al-Moula made a trip recently to Burkina Faso where he discussed with officials there the possibility of hosting Ibrahim. However, the source could not confirm whether the JEM chief would actually take the offer.

He suggested that Libya, Chad, Qatar and Sudan are on agreement over the choice of Burkina Faso adding that other options were floated during discussions including Uganda and Senegal.

Khartoum wants to keep JEM leader away from any countries bordering Sudan for fear that he may attempt to sneak into Darfur, the source added.

The JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein denied any intention on the part of the Libyans to expel Ibrahim describing it as "government propaganda".

"If Dr. Khalil is to leave Libya it will be to the field [in Darfur] and not anywhere else," he told Sudan Tribune.

"The Sudanese government is scrambling to do a damage control after what [president] Bashir said on having Dr. Khalil expelled within days. This put them in a corner and they now want to save face" Hussein added.

The JEM official stressed that the Libyan government is dealing with Ibrahim as a "leader of a movement with a just cause" adding that authorities there are in regular contact with him.

"There is a new Libyan initiative on Darfur and it makes no sense for them to expel Dr. Khalil as he is a crucial part of any solution," he said.

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