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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

Parliament convenes today

Al-Sahafa daily reports the National assembly's Secretary General Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir revealed that invitations were extended to political parties' leaders including the opposition and all candidates for President in 2010 elections to attend the swearing in ceremony of President Al-Bashir next Thursday at the National Assembly. Al-Tahir stated that today's session is a procedural one to appoint the Speaker and set the agenda for the Parliament.

Meanwhile the prominent figure of the Communist Party Suleiman Hamid denied receiving an invitation. "Even if we are invited, we would not attend because the elections were rigged," he added.

NCP-SPLM committee formed to determine ministerial portfolios

Local dailies report the NCP and SPLM formed yesterday a quadripartite committee headed by the SPLA Defense Minister Nhial Deng Nhial and Presidential Advisor for Security Salah Gosh to agree on the formation of the federal government.

Papers add the NCP Legislative Committee held a meeting Sunday evening and nominated Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir for the position of the National Assembly's Speaker, and General Adam Hamid Musa for the position of the Chairman of the Council of States.

New Government to be formed by end of May

Dailies report the Official Spokesperson of the National Congress Party (NCP) Fath Al-Rahman Sheila said the new government would be formed by the end of May. He added that the new government would address and resolve all the CPA outstanding issues. Sheila reiterated the NCP position on holding the Southern Sudan Referendum on time to ensure that southern Sudanese exercise their full right in expressing their views.

GoSS representative at the Border Demarcation Commission reveals disagreement over contentious areas

Al-Ayaam daily reports the SPLM Representative at the Border Demarcation Commission Eng. Riek Digol revealed disagreement between the members of Commission over the contentious areas. Digol stressed that the Commission would only submit a comprehensive report to the Presidency after agreement on those issues. He affirmed that the Technical Committee of the North-South Borders Demarcation started to set the necessary measures and identify the bodies to be tasked with laying borders' signs from the area of Goz Nabag up to the borders with Ethiopia.

Government starts indirect negotiations with kidnappers of aid workers

Al-Ayaam daily reports the State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs Abdelbagi Al-Jailani said the authorities had identified the kidnappers and the location of the abducted three aid workers. Al-Jailani informed the newspaper that the Government had entered into indirect negotiations through the native administration. He added that there is an American team that works with the authorities in Khartoum and Darfur in order to release the abducted aid workers.

DDR demobilizes 13,000 in Southern Sudan

Sudan Vision daily reports the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (DDR) in South Kordofan demobilized 13,000 from the Armed Forces, People's Defense Forces (PDF) and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

The Director of DDR Commission in the state, Abdalla Mohammed Ali, who arrived in El Obeid in an official visit, said the work comes in the context of the Commissions demobilization programme. He added that the DDR organized a training session in coordination with the United Nations Mission on collection of arms.

LRA rebels abduct more children in Western Equatoria's Nzara

Sudan Tribune reports the Ugandan rebels have abducted more three children in raids on one village in the Western Equatoria on Saturday night, a local chief said.

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels abducted three schoolchildren and plundered food items in an attack in Sangua payam, in southwest of Nzara town, 12 km outside Nzara town, Sudan Tribune learned on Sunday.

Narrating the ordeal of the attack, Chief Tartizio Bahu, told Sudan Tribune "Three young boys were abducted on Saturday night, LRA rebels raided several households in the Village, and looted food items, including cooking utensils."

Chief Bahu further disclosed that, "the marauding rebels, ordered the mother of the abducted boys to lie down, they undressed everybody who was in that house and ordered the boys to carry the looted food and assorted non-food items (NFIs)."

Parents are often beaten cruelly, and in some cases brutally murdered, when rebels fail to find children in their homes.

Apparently, as part of initiation into the rebel movement, abducted children are forced into committing inhuman acts, including ritual killings and mutilations. Those who have managed to escape do tell of how they were forced to club to death other children who were not 'properly cooperating' with the orders of rebel commanders.

The abduction of children and their use as combatants is a war crime and a crime against humanity.

The chief said it is presumed the children have been taken to LRA bases in Congo used for attacks into Western Equatoria, and he is concerned for their safety. The chief, using Sudan Tribune has appealed to the UN Mission in Sudan to intervene in eradicating LRA from Western Equatoria.

No killing was committed, as many villagers took cover after learning of barbaric attack from the neighbourhood.

This is the fifth attack in a row carried by suspected LRA rebels in Western Equatoria; one of the attacks claimed the lives of three GOSS officials.

SPLA KILLS ONE REBEL ARREST THREE OTHERS

The Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) official spokesman Major General Kuol Deim Kuol, told Sudan Tribune they captured three LRA soldiers and one killed on separate in ambushes carryout in Western Equatoria on Friday by SPLA division two.

"On May 22, 2010, two company of battalion 138 of bridge eight of SPLA infantry division-two, killed one Lord Resistant Army (LRA) and three were captured in Ezo County of Western Equatoria," Kuol said.

He said they have intelligence that the LRA rebels were sent to southern Sudan from Central African Republic in order to loot and disturb southern Sudan civilians.

The SPLA official urged local population to observe instructions given by the army for their safety and security.

He disclosed the killing of an education director by the Ugandan rebels because he had decided to travel despite SPLA advise based on intelligence collected in the troubled county of Ezo.

Kuol officially appeal to all passengers travelling by land to observe SPLA instructions and to seek SPLA escort to accompany them to Western Equatoria.

"I'm appealing to all the vehicles that are moving to first wait SPLA convoy to accompany, he said. I want to ensure civilians that SPLA is your army and we are here to defend them".

Richard Ruati and Manyang Mayom contributed to this report.

SAF and SPLM deny recruiting child soldiers

Dailies report the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) denied having enlisted children as soldiers.

Speaking to Miraya, SAF spokesperson Sawarmi Khalid Saeed, said that the SAF punishes anyone who recruits children. He stated that recruits are all 18 and above and he challenged anyone who has seen any SAF soldier under 18 years old to come forward with proof. He pointed out that the SAF has no militias, does not support militias and fights militias.

Saeed dismissed any allegations of government militias and urged those who made the accusations to corroborate their claims.

Similarly, SPLA spokesperson, Kuol Diem Kuol confirmed to Miraya that there are no child soldiers within the SPLA. What the SPLA has, he added, are children who have been displaced as a result of the war and come to the SPLA for food and shelter.

The SPLA spokesperson said that there is a child protection sector in the SPLA headquarters and that sector is under his direct supervision. He stated that the sector deals with the protection and rehabilitation of children, adding that the unit is also collaborating with the United Nations.

Kuol added that allegations of the SPLA recruiting children are completely false.

Both the SAF and SPLA were responding to a report on Saturday by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon who for the first time in his report on Children and Armed Conflict, included a list of persistent violators for recruiting and using children in armed conflict. The report cited pro-government militias in Darfur and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Southern Sudan for recruiting children.

Rebel and militia fighters from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and the transitional government of Somalia, were also listed in the report.

The UN Deputy Spokesperson, Marie Okabe, said that the UN Secretary General has called on the Security Council to take stronger measures against violators and to use these measures in the mandate of all its sanctions committees.

The UN official said that the fluctuating nature of conflicts puts many children in the front line.

SPLM accuses Akol's group of killing Shilluk elder

The Citizen daily reports SPLM accused a group of Lam Ako, Chairman of SPLM-DC, for executing a plot for the assassination of A Shilluk elder and members of SPLM upon their return from the inauguration ceremony of the Upper Nile Governor day before yesterday. Secretary General of SPLM, Pagan Amum, told The Citizen yesterday that the incident constitutes a declaration of war on the Government of the South.

Eyewitnesses narrated that the incident took place in one location, resulting in the death of six citizens including the Shilluk elder Peter Oyat, an SPLM Officer, two SPLM youth cadres and a policeman who was tracking down the perpetrators while another officer was injured.

The eyewitnesses also revealed that a group affiliated to SPLM-DC forced the victims out of their car, shot them and set them on fire and consequently citizens could not identify the charred bodies.

SPLA dismisses reprisal clash with civilians in Upper Nile

Sudan Tribune reports Major General Kuol Deim Kuol, Spokesperson of the Sudan People's Liberation Army has on Sunday dismissed reprisal engagement of forces allegedly loyal to Southern army with local population in southern state of Upper Nile, at Panyikango County in the Shilluk Kingdom.

This came following reports alleging that reprisal attacks on local population in the village of Obay, between Malakal town, capital of Upper Nile and Panyikango County, were orderly carried out by armed groups purportedly identified as SPLA forces angered by the death of a Paramount Chief named as Oyath who got killed by groups of unknown gunmen.

In an interview with Sudan Tribune from Juba, General Kuol said he does not have any

information that SPLA forces have conducted a reprisal attack in the area in protest of the death of paramount chief.

"I do not have any information that our forces have clashed with civil population anywhere in Upper Nile state. The only information we have is that a paramount chief known to have been a strong supporter of the SPLM in the area has been killed by unknown gunmen yesterday on Saturday while returning to his home village from Malakal," General Kuol said.

The deceased paramount chief, who is believed to have had strong relations with SPLA forces in the area as well as key leaders in the SPLM leadership, is reported to have been killed with eight others who were accompanying him in a vehicle described to have been a Toyota double-cabin Hilux allegedly given to him by the SPLM-led government of Southern Sudan.

These relations with SPLA forces and key leaders of the SPLM leadership were however misconstrued and interpreted differently as betrayal of the Shilluk traditional and cultural beliefs hence reportedly warned not to collaborate with what his foes described as enemies of Shilluk existence.

As paramount chief of the area, he was involved in local mobilization against holding illegal arms and appeared to have favored voluntary disarmament. This engagement met with resisting voices from those who accused him to have led a betrayal mission.

His involvement in this peaceful and voluntary disarmament by identifying individuals holding illegal arms was equally taken as betrayal for he was implementing administrative orders from the regional government circulated to all chiefs to actively participate in the civil disarmament.

The untimely death of the traditional Shilluk chief has been received with anguish by most military and political leaders in the regional government hence prompted fear from local civil local to flee the scene.

However, General Alfred Akuoch, a key figure from the area who reportedly lost elections to SPLM-DC candidate alongside General Oyai Deng Ajak among others in the Shilluk Kingdom urged against fear of reprisal.

"The false information being speculated that SPLA forces will carry out an attack in the village where the incident has taken place are manufactures of enemies of peace and Shilluk as a tribe," General Akuoch told Sudan Tribune from Sudan.

Dismissing and describing them as "dreadful allegations", he said the government of southern Sudan in collaboration with Upper Nile state government will form a fact-finding committee to investigate the killing instead of allegations of a reprisal attack.

Lawyers petition to reverse National Security's closure of Rai Al-Shaab newspaper

Miraya FM reports a group of lawyers have submitted a petition to the Supreme Court in an attempt to reverse a National Security Service decision to shut down Rai Al Shab newspaper. Sati Al-Haj, one of the lawyers, told Miraya that closing the newspaper violates the Interim Constitution which guarantees freedom of press and expression.

He cited article 39 and 48 of the Sudanese constitution, saying that the security organs' sudden closure of the daily violates the law.

He further cited other violations: clauses 27 and 19 in the Civic and Political Rights Declaration which was passed in 1976 and ratified by the government in 1986.

He added that the security organs should have followed legal procedures rather than assume it was above the law.

Al-Ahdath daily reports the quadripartite mechanism formed of the journalists Union, the Press Council, newspapers' representatives and the National Security announced the end of the pre-print censorship imposed on some newspapers. The mechanism stressed that the case against Ray Al-Shaab should be handled by the judiciary.

Al-Watan daily reports in a recent development on the arrest of the PCP leader and the closure of Ray al-Shaab daily, three of the detained members of the party were transferred to the attorney of crimes against the state. The paper adds the Security Services filed a criminal case

under article 139 of the Criminal Code against Abu Zar Ali Al-Amin who fought with one of the officers causing severe harm to the officer.

Darfur rebels say release 63 government soldiers

Reuters reports Darfur rebels said they released on Sunday 63 government soldiers captured during recent fighting, the latest in a wave of clashes which have dimmed hopes of reviving peace talks.

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes in Darfur, charges he denies. The United Nations says the rebellion and Khartoum's counter-insurgency campaign drove 2 million from their homes, sparking one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

The army said it had received 44 prisoners from the International Committee of the Red Cross on Sunday but denied they were from last week's clashes or that any were injured.

The ICRC confirmed they had received 44 prisoners from the militarily powerful rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) on Sunday but declined to give further details.

"We released 53 prisoners of war today to the ICRC and 23 of them were wounded -- 10 others were handed over to (tribal) leaders," senior JEM official al-Tahir al-Feki told Reuters.

Quatri mediation recalls for Darfur peace talks resumption

Sudan Vision reports The Qatari Mediation has reiterated the call for the two parties to Darfur issue to resume peace negotiations this Friday.

Reports disclosed that there were endeavors, led by the AU-UN Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassolé and Qatar State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Bin Abdallah Al-Mahmoud, for convincing the Justice and Equality Movement Chairman, Khalil Ibrahim to reverse his position rejecting resumption of talks. Bassole arrived in Libya for backing up Tripoli efforts in that regard.

Through a forum in Khartoum, Darfur National Organizations Network urged the local community to assume their duty and obligations towards the internally displaced people, calling on collaboration of efforts on the ground for supporting voluntary organizations undertaking the tasks of restoring security and peace in the region.

Meanwhile, the UNSG Deputy spokesperson reported that the World Organization would dispatch its senior representatives in the Sudan, UNMIS and UNAMID Chiefs, Haile Menkerios and Ibrahim Ghambari respectively to attend President Al Bashir's inauguration ceremony set for Thursday May 27th.

UNSG Deputy Spokesperson Marie Okabe stated that in their capacities as the highest UN officials on the ground, they were in continued contacts with the host country in connection with issues related to proper implementation of their tasks and resolution of problems of mutually concern.

Editorial

Troubled waters (Arab News)

May 23, 2010 - Egypt and upstream countries must try to resolve Nile dispute in a peaceful manner

The recent agreement signed by four upstream countries, which aims to redistribute the River Nile waters and excludes Egypt and Sudan, is being viewed in Egypt as life threatening to a nation that has long been described as "the gift of the Nile." The move throws the future of Nile Basin cooperation into uncertainty, raising the potential of drawn out litigation, if not worse.

Signatories Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania are demanding what they call an

equitable water-sharing agreement that would allow for more irrigation and power projects. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Kenya, while they did not sign up, are nevertheless not on Egypt's and Sudan's side.

Egypt's position is that the new agreement breaches its rights, established under two previous treaties. Since the new agreement removes Egypt's right to veto the use of water upstream, the Egyptian quota of the river's water, set by previous agreements at 55.5 billion cubic meters, is now under threat.

Even when taking into consideration Egypt's claim that the unilateral accord by upstream countries is not binding on Egypt, that it has been signed outside the framework of the Nile Basin initiative and lacks international legitimacy, Cairo doesn't seem to have a whole lot of options. Either it signs the agreement or challenges it. It can also act as if the agreement doesn't matter, although it is now clear that the countries involved are serious about developing water resources upstream without consulting Egypt.

It is not clear what they expect Egypt and Sudan to do about the latest signing. Cairo insists it will stick to diplomatic measures in settling the dispute. It seeks to pressure upstream countries by entering into negotiations with donor states and international agencies in an attempt to persuade them to withhold funds for projects on the Rive Nile that might affect the downstream countries' share of water.

Should the current differences persist, Egypt may have to file a case with the International Court of Justice. Should upstream Nile Basin countries refuse to go to international arbitration, Egypt and Sudan can resort to international organizations including the UN and the Security Council.

For the time being, Egypt must try to contain the conflict in a reconciliatory manner. But to do so, it will have to explore ways of making life better for upstream nations. Egypt needs to make upstream countries see the value of cooperation, as well as the perils of conflict.

It is one thing to defend Egypt's legal rights and another to persuade upriver countries that they have ways of developing without encroaching on the water quotas of downstream nations. Egypt has made it clear that the Nile River countries should cooperate to get the maximum benefits of its water, particularly as significant water loss occurs along its path.

Nile water agreements should be as sacred as border agreements. As such, Egypt and Sudan should take whatever action they deem is necessary to safeguard their share of the Nile water. It is, in the end, every country's right and duty to preserve its national security.

Egypt has a population of close to 82 million people, a hot country with little rainfall. Nile water is a priceless commodity, a life and death issue.

Opinion

Negotiation only way out of the Nile Basin controversy (Daily Nation)

By JOE NUGI

May 23 2010 - Tension is building over the utilisation of the waters of River Nile, Africa's longest river, whose flow affects the interests of nine countries in the eastern, central and northern parts of the continent.

Ten days ago in Kampala, four of these nations signed a new deal creating a permanent commission to manage the flow of these waters, putting them on a potential collision course with Sudan and Egypt. Those who signed were host Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Late last week, Kenya also signed the accord. Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are expected to sign within the 12 months allowed by the accord, perhaps hoping that more diplomatic efforts will help defuse the potential crisis. Last Tuesday, Egypt insisted it can block dams and other projects built upstream the Nile.

A more ominous development, though, was the inauguration by Ethiopia of a new hydro-power

dam on the source of the Blue Nile river — the Tana Beles.

Ethiopia contributes 86 per cent of the Nile water. The words used by Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi at the launch was unequivocal: The Tana Beles marks the realisation of Ethiopia's 100-year effort to utilise its resources on the Nile.

The Nile Basin treaties are another relic of the cavalier attitude adopted by Britain towards its occupied territories in Africa during its imperial days. The agreements signed in 1929 and again in 1959 between Britain and Egypt had little regard for the interests of the other riparian nations of the Nile.

The treaties were so lopsided as to beggar belief. Even Ethiopia, then a sovereign state, was not consulted. Under the 1929 treaty, Egypt and Sudan were entitled to 55.5 billion cubic metres a year, the lion's share of the 84 billion cubic metres of water flowing through the Nile.

The 1959 treaty stipulated that the Sudan would also be allowed to undertake a series of Nile development projects, such as the Rosieres dam and the Jonglei Canal. In exchange, Egypt would be allowed to build a huge dam near the Sudanese border, which would regulate the flow of the river into Egypt and provide water during droughts.

The treaty also formed a joint committee, which would be in charge of supervising and directing all development projects which affected the river's flow. This was a bilateral agreement between Britain and Egypt and did not include any of the other riparian countries of the Nile, and no water was even allotted for future use by any of these upstream countries except Sudan.

Even more telling was a provision that Egypt had to approve any major developments on the Nile, meaning that a sovereign state would have a resource within its national borders sanctioned by another state —not through negotiations, but through imposition of arbitrary force.

Some sources have it that Egypt has intimated she will "be willing and able to intervene militarily in order to maintain the status quo; meaning the arbitrary treaties. After the Kampala meeting — which Sudan and Egypt boycotted — Egypt's Water Resources minister Mohammed Nasreddin Allam said Egypt would take all legal and diplomatic measures necessary to maintain its water rights.

"Any unilateral agreement signed by the upstream Nile basin countries is not binding to downstream countries, Egypt and Sudan, and lacks legitimacy," he said.

It's worth noting that the Nile is not the only major river in the world that traverses various national boundaries. We have the Rhine and the Danube in Europe, and the Amazon in South America, to name but a few. The utilisation of their waters and free passage is facilitated through negotiations. This is the way to go for the Nile Basin countries.

There is a soft spot for Cairo in the hearts of the nations involved in the controversy over the role that Egypt played in the African liberation struggle, and a special liking for the towering figure of the late President Gamal Abdel Nasser. It would be tragic if at any time in the future, all these countries were to be at daggers drawn over an issue they can resolve in a conference.