

30 March 2011

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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

Post-Referendum Watch

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Highlights

Parties to resume talks on pending issues Tuesday

Al-Sahafa 30/03/11 –Luka Biong, SPLM leading figure, said yesterday that the two CPA parties, assisted by the AUHIP Chair Thabo Mbeki, drew up a timetable to resume negotiations on outstanding issues in Addis Ababa next Tuesday, starting with a meeting of the security cluster including the North and South defence ministers to discuss the possibility of deployment of UN or AU troops along the joint borders after the end of the interim period. Biong called on the international community to take a position on the events in the South after it said the region is “on the brink of war”.

According to Biong, the AEC’s meeting yesterday focused on the security situation in the South, adding that the SPLM raised the issue of Khartoum’s support to militias in the South which, he said was dismissed by the NCP representatives.

On Abyei, Biong said a proposal is likely to be submitted to the two parties by the AU mediation after consultation with UN, US, Eritrea and Ethiopia, adding that the proposal might be submitted to the Presidency during the first half of April.

Five rebel groups unite against GoSS

Al-Ayyam 30/3/11 – Five southern rebel factions have united under the umbrella of “South Sudan Democratic Movement” with renegade General George Athor as its leader and the group would operate in four states. SPLA spokesperson Philip Aguer has downplayed the formation of the group and accused Khartoum of aiding rebels in the South.

However, the group leader, George Athor, has announced their readiness for talks with the Government of Southern Sudan but pointed out that the SPLA only understands the “language of war”.

“GoSS coordinates with Sudan’s enemies” - Peter Gadet

Al-Intibaha Khartoum, 30/03/11 – SPLA artillery commander Lt. Gen. Peter Gadet has accused the GoSS and the SPLM of “continued collaboration and coordination with enemies of the Sudan”.

A member of Gadet’s force told *Al-Intibaha* yesterday that the GoSS is “hiring foreign mercenaries” to fight the armed groups in the region. The source said Gadet has decided to form a united leadership for the breakaway factions.

Government accuses GoSS of training Darfur rebels

Al-Ayyam 30/3/11 – Presidential Adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail has accused the Government of South Sudan of providing training to Darfur rebels to destabilize the North.

“The South is aiding Darfur rebels and is accusing the North of supporting George Athor,” he said, adding “we have no interest in supporting George Athor”.

However, SPLA spokesperson Philip Aguer has denied the charge, saying “if Ismail knows the location of the training camps where Darfuri rebels are being trained let him mention them”.

SPLA commanders demand dissolution of the GoSS

Al-Rai Al-Aam commanders of SPLA’s South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) including Maj. Gen. Paulino Matip, Alfred Lado and Ismail Kony have sent a memorandum to GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit demanding dissolution of the government and gave Kiir an ultimatum of 24 hours to respond to the memo.

According to informed sources, the SPLA commanders’ memorandum stressed the need for comprehensive change in GoSS structures in the South, stamping out corruption, reform of state institutions and election of a government to run the region.

SPLA Deputy Chief of Staff missing

Al-Intibaha 30/3/11 – SPLA deputy chief of staff (operations) Maj. Gen. Moboto Mamor, accompanied by several army and police officers, have disappeared.

A source told the newspaper yesterday that the disappearance of the group might have a link to the recent changes and transfers within the army including the intelligence.

GoSS Advisor asks militia leaders to surrender

Gurtong.org Juba, 29/03/11 - Mr. Joseph Lagu the Special Advisor to the Government of Southern Sudan who is also the former Anyanya rebel leader has called upon all leaders of militia groups operating within southern Sudan to surrender their arms.

Lagu lamented yesterday that after last year’s elections, militia groups started threatening the lives of South Sudanese in the region.

“If it’s a matter of losing elections today, why don’t you wait for the next term? That is why the periods are definite. So, am appealing to them (militias rebelling against the Government of Southern Sudan) that it is not correct to take lives of your brothers and sisters simply because you want to be this or that,” Joseph Lagu stressed.

Lagu said that Anyanya gave birth to Sudan’s People Liberation Army /Movement, SPLA/M that eventually liberated South Sudan, he reminded the militias that it’s been a long struggle.

“My appeal to our other boys, who have chosen to take up arms, again, is to rethink their position. Take up arms for what? We took up arms to liberate ourselves from the colonial powers, against whom are they taking up arms?” he asked.

Khartoum infuriated by SPLM’s Arman call for keeping sanctions on Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 29/3/11 - The Sudanese government has reacted angrily to reports that the secretary-general of the opposition SPLM-northern sector, Yasir Arman, called on the US Administration to keep economic sanctions imposed on Sudan until the government there demonstrates commitment to democratic transformation.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, the official spokesman of Sudan’s foreign ministry Khalid

Moussa said that Arman's statements constitute "a breach of national agendas and principles".

Moussa added that Arman's call for sustaining hardships of the Sudanese people was actuated by "party agendas violating the regulations of national and political work."

He warned that the SPLM northern sector must repudiate and correct these statements since the sanctions are directed against the Sudanese people.

It was reported that Arman suggested during a visit to Washington last week, where he met with a host of senior US officials, that the administration of President Obama should not reward Khartoum for separating south Sudan but rather for giving freedom and democracy to Sudanese people.

He went on to urge the administration not to lift economic sanctions imposed on Sudan since 1997 over alleged support to terrorism and later over the situation in the western region of Darfur until Khartoum demonstrates commitment to democratic transformation.

Speaker says southern MPs will attend opening session

The Citizen Khartoum, 30/03/11 – Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir said in a press conference yesterday that southern MPs would attend the opening of the new parliamentary sessions on 4th April. "We will let southern deputies to come in and join the session but their presence will only be symbolic," he said.

"99.9% of southern Sudanese voted for separation and why should they want to decide on the political and legislative affairs of the north?" he asked.

On the other hand, Deputy Speaker Atem Garang told *Al-Khartoum* daily that the southern Sudanese MPs "are not tourists here to come and attend the opening session of parliament then leave after that." He said that they believe that all institutions that were established by virtue of the CPA should remain in place until 9th July and that the National Assembly would remain a national institution for the whole of Sudan until that date.

"We will however meet and take a decision on the issue ahead of the 4th April opening of parliament," he said. He also warned that many other institutions would have to be scrapped if they are forced out of parliament.

Carter Centre praises voter turnout, says more challenges ahead

The Citizen Khartoum, 30/03/11 – The Carter Centre welcomed in a press statement yesterday the completion of the voter registration process in Southern Kordofan saying that the process was conducted in a generally peaceful environment and without major problems reported. The Centre did however note several shortcomings that harmed inclusiveness and integrity of the process and resulted in low turnout including the failure of the NEC to devote sufficient registration teams to conduct a comprehensive voter registration.

Opposition should wait for response over demands for NCP suspension

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 30/03/11 – Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie says the opposition parties have the right to request the Political Parties' Affairs Council to suspend NCP political activities for what the opposition described as the use of force to clamp down on protests.

Nafie told a press conference yesterday that the opposition parties however have to wait for a response to their requests.

Sudan says no visa denied to Ugandan peacekeepers

Sudan Tribune website 29/3/11 - The Sudanese foreign ministry denied reports that it has refused to grant visas to Ugandan policemen serving as part of United Nations - African Union mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

'The Monitor' newspaper based in Kampala said that Uganda was in the process of rotating 108 police officers in Darfur but due to the visa issue, it asked for the United Nations permission to instead extend the tenure of the existing officers.

According to the report, in a February 21 diplomatic note, Sudan's Foreign Affairs Ministry informed UNAMID that requests for visas for new police peacekeepers "are NOT approved", because "efforts should be directed towards increasing Arabic-speaking police as agreed".

The foreign ministry spokesperson in Khartoum Khalid Moussa said that such an action would be inconsistent with agreements that stress the African nature of the UNAMID force.

However, he acknowledged that Sudan insists that the units serving in Darfur need to be fluent in Arabic to interact with the local population.

Moussa also noted that any visa requests are made through the UN and not the individual countries...

South Sudan landmines threaten aid convoys - UN

AFP 29/3/11 - Rebels in south Sudan have laid landmines, jeopardising relief efforts in the impoverished region soon to be recognised as an independent state, the UN peacekeeping chief said on Tuesday.

"There has been a laying of landmines in a pattern capable of taking out convoys of vehicles," said David Gressly, who heads the southern section of the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).

Fighters loyal to renegade southern general George Athor are accused of laying the explosives in northern Jonglei state, Gressly told reporters in the southern regional capital Juba. UN deminers were travelling to investigate and support clearance, he added.

Gressly said that peacekeepers had now gained access to almost all areas blocked during the fighting in recent weeks.

"We have gained access to many areas where access had been curtailed," he said, adding that there were at least four rebel groups operating in pockets in the neighbouring states of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity.

However, he admitted a few areas remained difficult to get into -- some due to the risk of landmines, others due to restrictions by southern army field commanders.

"We will work through each of these issues as we encounter them," said the UNMIS chief.

Analysts have warned that security will pose a major challenge for the Juba authorities in the run-up to international recognition in July.

Other Highlights

Sudanese president issues Republican decree on referendum on Darfur status

Xinhua 29/3/11 - Sudanese President Omar al- Bashir on Tuesday issued a Republican Decree on conducting a referendum to decide the permanent administrative status of Sudan's Darfur region, reported official SUNA news agency.

The decree stated that "the permanent status for Darfur will be decided via a referendum to be conducted simultaneously in three Darfur states. The referendum will be on two options whether the region should remain on its current status or should it be united as one Darfur region," the report said.

The decree mandated the National Elections Commission to conduct and supervise the referendum and set its regulating procedures. The decree, however, did not mention the date of the referendum.

UNSC advised to impose tougher arms embargo on Sudan, Chad over Darfur

Sudan Tribune website 29/3/11 -The UN Security Council (UNSC) should amplify and widen the scope of an existing arms embargo on Sudan's western region of Darfur to include all sales or supply of military equipments to the country's government as well as to that of its neighboring Chad, a UN-mandated panel of experts recommended in a report released this month.

A five-member panel of independent experts tasked by the UNSC's Committee on Sudan to assess the situation in Darfur concluded in its final report that the arms embargo "remains without discernible impact," citing several cases of violations as well as arguments used by the Sudanese government to justify increases of its army's troopers and deployment of new military aircrafts in Darfur.

The panel's recommended that the embargo be clarified and expanded to include the sale or supply of military materiel to the Sudanese government, "whether the materiel is for use in Darfur or not," as well as to the government of Chad, adding that the embargos should remain in place until both countries provide "verifiable proof" against their involvement in transferring arms to the region.

The recommendation has been made in view of the panel's finding that arms, and especially ammunition, produced after the imposition of the embargo in 2005 had continued to leak to various belligerents responsible for insecurity in the region.

According to the panel, which maintained a continual presence in Darfur since February until mid-August 2010, most documented cases of ammunition bore markings of manufacturers from China while two documented samples of arms, attributed to use of rebel groups, were confirmed to have been exported by Israel to Chad.

China, the largest investor in Sudan's oil sector, confirmed to the panel that it had exported ammunition to Sudan in recent years but said these exports had been conditional on "end-user certificates" in which the Government of the Sudan explicitly committed itself not to transfer the materiel to Darfur or any third party.

"The embargo should remain in place until the Government of the Sudan provides the Committee with verifiable proof that materiel documented in the hands of Government forces in Darfur was not transferred to those forces in violation of the arms embargo and/or in violation of end-user and end-use undertakings given to the State(s) from which the materiel was imported," the report said.

The report further recommended that the UNSC "should impose an embargo on the sale or supply of military materiel to the Government of Chad. The embargo should remain in place until the latter has provided the Security Council with a satisfactory explanation of how materiel imported for its armed forces found its way into the hands of rebel groups operating in Darfur and with reasonable assurances that materiel imported or already held by the armed forces of the Government of Chad will not be diverted to belligerents in Darfur in violation of the Security Council arms embargo."

Chad, which borders Darfur region, wrapped up a long history of mutual hostilities and backing of rebels with Sudan when the two sides signed a normalization agreement in early 2010 and established joint forces to monitor shared borders.

The panel also said that the UNSC "must clearly set out the exemptions that exist which do not require prior approval by the Committee and those which require such approval," recalling that the Sudan claims that the embargo only pertains to materiel that is transferred to Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) for purposes of engaging armed groups.

Separately, the panel noted that Sudan had failed to take "concrete actions" to implement the sanctions imposed against four individuals designated by the UNSC's resolution number 1672 as "impeding the peace process in Darfur", in reference to alleged Janjaweed leader Musa Hilal and retired army general Mohamed Al-Hassan.

The panel also said that the situation in the region remains "precarious" despite claims of improvement, citing wide-spread violations of international law and human rights as well as cases of attacks against humanitarian workers.

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