

5 November 2009

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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

SPLM detains elections officers in Melut

Al-Khartoum quoted SMC as reporting that the SPLA has detained election officers of a voter registration centre in Melut as well as the NCP leaders in the area based on orders by the commissioner.

Also, **Al-Intibaha** reports that a group of SPLA soldiers (JIU) in the Blue Nile area crossed the border into Gissan locality where they attacked a voter registration centre, disrupting its work.

Meanwhile, **Rai Al-Shaab** revealed that serious irregularities have taken place at voter registration centres in El-Geneina, West Darfur state.

In a related development, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports NEC Secretary-General, Jalal Mohamed Ahmed as saying that Darfur, southern Sudan, eastern Sudan and Damazine are in the lead in terms of voter registration. The NEC has denied recent allegations by the Carter Centre of obstacles to voter registration, saying the permission granted to the Centre by local authorities has already expired. He added that the foreign ministry had requested the Centre to apply for an extension to continue its work.

According to **the Citizen**, local chiefs in southern Sudan have complained of a low turn out at the voter registration centres. FVP Salva Kiir visited some registration centres in Juba and was told by the chiefs that most of the people have not been adequately informed about the procedures for registration.

"I don't want that mistake of the census results to be repeated again ... people should turn up for registration," FVP Kiir urged. He said it is important that people register to have a chance to elect their rightful leaders for next year.

Al-Ayyam reports GoSS' elections protection committee has mobilized 4,000 police officers and 8,000 soldiers to protect voter registration centres in the southern states.

Gurtong 4/11/09 reported GoSS Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Dr Martin Elia Lomuro as saying that the voter registration exercise in the South is facing enormous problems similar to those of the last census.

"The information we have received in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is that the registration process is facing enormous problems similar to those South Sudan experienced during the fifth Sudan Population and Housing Census in 2008", Dr Lomuro said during a press conference in Juba today.

"We are reliably informed that enough enlightenment has not been conducted by the relevant authorities and that logistical, financial and security support is extremely inadequate", he added.

According to the Minister, the people of South Sudan are saying that they have no reason to register for the elections because they have not seen the services they had expected following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.

He added that others complain of the chronic failure of the government to pay their salaries in time and rampant insecurity in South Sudan, a reason they consider vital for their political and

moral motivation.

"We sympathize with some of the frustrations expressed by our people. But we Southerners must know that our government today is still a government of liberation and the struggle to extract ourselves from the bondage of slavery, political marginalization and economic deprivation", he affirmed.

"I appeal to all the institutions and groups to mobilise and encourage our people to register. Only when they are registered do they have the power to elect leaders whom they trust will pay salaries in full and in time", added the Minister.

The Minister said his Ministry will engage with the people to assist in the enlightenment process across South Sudan in the period ending 30 November 2009 to make the registration a success.

"So please, let us all work as a team to ensure that our people register so that they have the power and the control over their future and that of the generation of South Sudan to

"I ask everyone to register for the forthcoming general elections this time because if you have not registered, you will not have the right to vote even if you have a national identity card, work with the government, have big shops or even many heads of cattle", he said.

Southern region threatens poll boycott

All-Africa.com 4/11/09 - The government of South Sudan has threatened to boycott next year's presidential elections over rigging claims by the North.

The Head of Mission at the GoSS liaison office in Nairobi John Duku also sent a warning to the North that any attempt to interfere with the referendum in 2011 will be tantamount to declaring war on the South.

Mr Duku said the South was unimpressed with the way the North was conducting the voter registration exercise that started November 1 for 30 days.

The latest standoff between the North and South follows the release of names of ten countries by the National Elections Commission of Sudan where Sudanese in Diaspora can register as voters and also participate in the presidential election scheduled for April next year.

The list to all the Sudan missions abroad includes Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Sultanate of Oman, Bahrain, the UK, Belgium (for all Western Europe) and USA.

The South is questioning what it deems deliberate exclusion of the nine states that border Sudan especially Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo where Mr Duku stressed hosts many South Sudanese refugees.

"We were shocked when we saw the list and the question we are asking is why NEC excluded the five countries. Where are the sub-Saharan African states?" asked Mr Duku.

He called on the North to declare if the elections were only for the majority Arab North or the Southerners were going to take part too.

"If the elections are for the North alone then we have no problem but if the South is going to take part then these countries (Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Congo-Brazzaville and the Democratic Republic of Congo) must be included."

He observed that the action by NEC was a ploy by SPLM's northern partner National Congress Party of President Omar Al Bashir to rig the elections by isolating the South.

Graton defuses NCP, SPLM crisis

The NCP and the SPLM are expected to announce today their agreement on the pending issues including SPLM's boycott of the Parliament, **Al-Sahafa** reports. US envoy Scott Graton yesterday conducted a series of meetings at the Cabinet where he brought the two partners together to debate on the sticky issues. Sources said Graton succeeded in pushing the two partners to an agreement which defused the crisis.

However, GoSS Minister of Presidential Affairs Luka Biong said dialogue between the two partners was still underway and they are expected to reach understandings on the pending issues today particularly that the two sides are showing interest to overcome them.

Al-Ahdath reports GoSS VP Riek Machar as saying that the NCP has rejected a proposal by Graton to resolve the dispute over the referendum bill. Mr. Graton has reportedly proposed that the parties agree on a percentage between 62% and 66% of the registered voters to endorse referendum result but the NCP refused to move below 66%.

Meanwhile VP Ali Osman Taha said the NCP was ready to accept an extension of the voting duration from three to seven days to enable voters to vote.

South is ruled by "iron and fire" – Speaker

Local dailies report National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir as saying that the South is now ruled by the "Iron and fire" and the civilians lack legal, constitutional and governmental protection. According to **Al-Sahafa**, Al-Tahir hinted that the Parliament might not pass the security bill in the absence of the SPLM although, he said, it can do that and blamed the SPLM for delaying the bill.

Sudan's Bashir to visit Turkey despite warrant

Reuters 4/11/09 - Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir will visit Turkey next week for the first time since an international court asked for his arrest, Government sources said, in a test of Ankara's support for international justice.

Rights groups say Turkey, anxious to secure entry into the EU, is obliged to arrest Bashir when he lands in Istanbul for a summit of Islamic nations.

One presidential source in Khartoum said on Wednesday: "The decision has been taken. Unless there are last minute changes, he is going"

Ankara's Government, which has its roots in political Islam, has sought to deepen ties with Khartoum, putting it in an awkward position over the visit.

Asked if Turkish authorities would arrest Bashir during his visit, a Turkish Foreign Ministry official said on condition of anonymity: "No, there are no such plans"

A public outcry about Bashir's visit to Turkey could still cause it to be cancelled, which would embarrass Khartoum, one Sudanese analyst said.

Activists said there was sure to be opposition from civil society to the visit, adding Turkey had obligations to arrest Bashir as a U.N. member.

"We most certainly expect Turkey to show respect for this monumental decision by the ICC," said Ozlem Altiparmak from the Turkish Coalition for the ICC.

"Turkey could see a backlash in public opinion and from civil-society groups if it fails to act while he is here"

WFP airdrops aid to over 155,000 hungry people in the South

UN Centre 4/11/09 – The United Nations has begun to parachute food aid into isolated areas of conflict-ridden southern Sudan with the aim of reaching more than 155,000 people cut off from road access by heavy rainfall, the World Food Programme (WFP) announced today.

The airdrops, which began last week, are slated to continue for another two-and-a-half months, providing some 4,000 tons of food to people hit by conflict, high food prices and poor harvests in three of the 10 states in southern Sudan – Jonglei, Upper Nile and Warrap.

"We can't wait for food prices to drop or the roads to be passable again," said WFP Sudan country director Amer Daoudi. "Airdrops are the only way for us to reach them."

Taha and Nafie elected deputies to NCP chairmen

The NCP Leadership Office, at a meeting yesterday elected VP Ali Osman Mohamed Taha and Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie, as deputies to Chairmen of the NCP, ***Al-Rai Al-Aam*** reports. Taha is elected NCP Chairman for organizational affairs and Nafie is elected NCP chairman for political affairs.

Kenya, South Sudan cancel border meeting

Sudan Tribune website 4/11/09 - Border talks between Sudan and Kenya have been indefinitely suspended by the Kenyan government, disclosed Southern Sudan Commissioner for Peace and Reconciliation.

Speaking to Sudan Tribune today before his departure to Juba, Peace and Reconciliation Commissioner Lois Lobong Lajor wondered why the Kenyan government had suspended reconciliation talks at the last minute.

However, the organizers of the meeting said that the Resident District Commissioner of Moroto Naman Ojwe cancelled the meeting citing failure by the organizers to inform the Ugandan authorities about their agenda.

The meeting was slated to take place in Uganda after Sudanese officials declined to negotiate from Lokichoggio border town.

The Kenyan Broadcasting Cooperation cited unconfirmed reports that the Ugandan government was averse to welcoming the Sudanese nationals on its soil to protest the killing of three Ugandans in Eastern Equatorial region two week ago.

The southern Sudan official said the two countries share a lot in common since boundaries were imposed by colonial administration.

Commissioner Lajor further urged the Sudanese Toposa and Kenyan Turkana to refrain from fighting each other over water and grazing land, assuring that Southern Sudan and Kenyan governments will amicably find durable solutions to their needs, especially at time when their animals are dying of drought.

He also called upon the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to the two

countries.

The Sudanese First Vice President and President of Southern Sudan government was in Nairobi last week for talks on CPA implementation and border issue. He said that the Toposa can only be disarmed in a comprehensive disarmament process engaged by Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda for all the border tribes.

SLA impounds Gration's plane

Al-Sahafa reports Abdul Wahid-led SLA yesterday detained US envoy Scott Gration's plane for three hours at the town of Dirbat before it was allowed to take off. The plane was carrying a delegation determined to prepare for a unification conference of Darfur movements in the Jebel Marra's town of Dirbat (South Darfur). SLM spokesperson Nimir Mohamed Abdul Rahman said their movement detained the US plane and was permitted to take off only after an agreement was reached whereby the unification conference would not be held in Dirbat, warning that nobody, Gration in particular, would be allowed to enter their areas.

Fears of new war in Sudan's troubles Nuba Mountains

AFP 4/11/09 - Air raids may no longer target the highlands of central Sudan, but heads still turn sharply to scan the skies at the sound of an aeroplane engine overhead.

The Nuba Mountains -- once a key enclave of rebels battling the government in Khartoum -- saw some of the heaviest fighting of Sudan's 22-year civil war between north and south.

However many people living in the green hills and wooded valleys at the geographical heart of Africa's largest nation fear fresh conflict is looming.

"The government bombed the school here in 2000, blowing 18 children and their teacher into nothing," said Younan Albaroud, a guerilla fighter turned politician, standing at the foot of a simple memorial at the rebuilt school.

"Peace was signed five years ago, but we worry of trouble ahead," Albaroud added quietly, speaking in Kauda, the former rebel headquarters for the Nuba region.

A 2005 peace deal ended Africa's longest-running civil war, fought by southern rebels against the Arab-dominated north over resources, religion and ethnicity.

Some two million people were killed and four million fled their homes in a war separate from the conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region.

The peace deal saw the largely Christian and black African south win regional autonomy under the former rebel leadership -- the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) -- with a referendum on its potential full independence slated for January 2011.

But that vote will exclude the Nuba.

The mountains -- some 48,000 square kilometres (19,000 square miles) of scattered green peaks and rain-fed farmland rising from the arid plains of Southern Kordofan state -- are isolated pockets of southern support within the Muslim north.

"We are not part of the referendum under the peace deal," said Albaroud, the SPLM chairman for Kauda, one of several zones still controlled by the former fighters.

"But the SPLM still runs this region. The Sharia (Islamic) law of the north is not imposed here."

Instead, the future of the Nuba -- and the other contested area of Blue Nile state -- will be decided by "popular consultations".

But that process is ill-defined, and without set steps for either autonomy or potential secession from the north that many say they want.

"We are frightened we will be abandoned," said Bashir Kuku, a farmer drinking a bowl of home-brewed sorghum beer beneath a tree at Kauda's weekly market.

"If the south splits in the referendum, we will be left alone to face the north.

"In the war, we in the Nuba fought for equality in a unified Sudan -- we call it the New Sudan' -- but the south now wants independence alone."

Historically the highlands provided refuge for those fleeing slave raids, and the Nuba peoples -- some 50 mainly black African ethnic groups -- have much in common with those of the south.

But analysts warn the wider region of South Kordofan is a volatile mix of rival different Arab and African groups, where old enmities from the war are exacerbated by pressure on grazing land.

The International Crisis Group think tank warned last year the state could spiral into the "next Darfur," with people "polarised and fragmented along political and tribal lines."

"Some of us are Christians, some are Muslims, and some follow our African beliefs -- but we live as one," said Ezekial Elamin, another farmer.

"But without the south, the northerners will take the land off us, force us to the ways of Sharia law and we will fight that."

Critics in the Nuba say the 2005 peace deal sold out key supporters of southern secession, with many in the south already itching for independence.

A September study by the Washington-based National Democratic Institute found "unwavering support for political separation" among those it questioned in the south.

"The Nuba people fear the breakaway of the south because they will be left as an isolated minority in the north, and will also be on the front line of any future north-south conflict," said Peter Moszynski, a long-time Sudan analyst who began working in the mountains during the war.

"They would prefer that the country remain united, but this option appears less and less realistic."

It is an issue many fear makes the region -- already awash with automatic weapons -- a likely future flashpoint.

Many Nuba fighters joined the southern army, and it is not clear where their loyalties would lie if the south separates.

"Many of the ordinary people are not yet aware that they do not have a referendum, which may be a further source of conflict when they do finally find out," wrote analyst John Ashworth in a September report from the Pax Christi advocacy group, warning the situation "could easily

trigger fresh violence."

Security is already a problem in the underdeveloped region, where rule is complicated by a parallel system run by the former rebels.

"There is no development, no security, no happiness, because people see the peace implementation has not been going well," said Kamal al-Nur, a former rebel colonel, and now commissioner of the SPLM-controlled Heiban County.

"There are many militias who once fought for the government, and they are still strong with many guns."

Tensions are mounting ahead of elections due in April 2010, with reports of the reorganisation or rearming of civil war-era militias on both sides.

At the end of a wooded valley dotted with thatched huts and small farms, around 80 SPLM members cram into a rare solid brick building -- the party's Political Leadership Training Institute for the region.

"We are preparing the party for the coming elections," said Ibrahim Khatib, who is running a series of 35-day courses for supporters across South Kordofan.

"We provide information on voting and campaigning -- as well as lessons on the equality of religion, the importance of human rights, and the history of the oppression this region has suffered."

Some were enthusiastic that the vote would create a better future.

"The elections are our chance to elect a leadership that reflects the people of Sudan," said Nugud Yusuf, leader of a women's group.

"Perhaps we can solve things through the elections," said trader Adam Arbab. "But I sadly believe the time for the gun will come again."