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Highlights

New Abyei Administration appointed

Local dailies report President Al-Bashir has issued presidential decrees relieving Abyei Chief Administrator Arop Moyak and some other Administration officers from their posts. The President also decreed the appointment of Deng Arop Kuol as the new Chief Administrator. Deputy Chief Administrator Rahama Abdul Rahman Al-Nur retained his post.

In another development, **Sudan Tribune website** 5/1/10 reported that Edward Lino, a native of the oil contested region of the Abyei and a prominent member of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), said Abyei citizens and their politicians are not bothered by Messeriya cries over recently adopted referendum bill for Abyei.

"We are not bothered because CPA which is the basis of this adopted referendum does not recognize Messeriya as residents of area in reference to Abyei," he told Sudan Tribune.

"It only recognize their right to access water and grazing lands for cattle, he said adding it does not mention their rights to participate in local elections and referendum," he added.

Lino's statements came following calls made on President Al-Bashir not to sign the recently adopted referendum bill into law by members of the Messeriya community in the National Assembly.

On Wednesday December 30, Members of Messeriya community at the Sudanese parliament walked out of the house during hours leading to the passage of the bill claiming that the law did not mention their tribe.

The members of the Messeriya bloc in the assembly described passage of the law as flawed and a conspiracy against their existence.

However, Edward Lino today described Sudan Tribune from Juba their boycott as unlawful. "Messeriya do not have any single right to claim in the passage of Abyei referendum."

"Humans can compromise but will history really permit, he posed stressing that citizens of Abyei respects and will abide by the court ruling to allow Messeriya rights to access water and grazing areas," he said.

"We do not have problem having their goats and cows entering our region for water and grazing, he said revealing that they are already in the area."

He further said they are even defying provisions of the CPA to come without arms; they are now coming with arms and our local populations are arms free" "This is unacceptable and Messeriya through central government must show commitment to each of the provisions in the deal," he stressed.

Sudan rejects UN monitoring for elections

Sudan Tribune website 5/1/10 – The United Nations is barred by law from being monitor to the April 2010 elections, a senior NCP official said in press statements.

The political Secretary of the ruling party Ibrahim Ghandour speaking at the NCP headquarters said that the National Election Law has clearly determined the countries and the parties with authorization to participate in observing the elections.

Ghandour was reacting to remarks made by the Umma Reform and Renewal Party (URRP) leader Mubarak Al-Fadil yesterday following the announcement that he will run for presidency.

Al-Fadil called for “fair and free” elections that would be administered by the UN in a manner similar to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Afghanistan.

He added that this option is a “good one” to exit the current political crisis country and also criticized the “poor performance” of the National Elections Commission (NEC) saying that it has failed “miserably” in fulfilling its mandate.

Ghandour said the law excluded the UN on grounds that the world body is providing the funding and technical support to the NEC.

The election observers include the witnesses of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) such as the United States, several European and African countries, regional organizations and representatives of the candidates.

The NCP official called on those who make statements on the elections to read carefully the elections law beforehand.

A memorandum on the NEC website says that the elections monitors have freedom of movement and observing the process starting from voter registration through elections day and announcing the results.

Last month the secretary general of the NEC Galal Mohamed Al-Amin warned that some election monitors have ulterior motives during the upcoming 2010 elections other than simply watching out for the integrity of the process.

Al-Amin said that some observers coming from countries “with hostile attitude” towards Sudan may attempt to fuel ethnic tensions similar to Zimbabwe and Kenya and stressed that the law does not allow monitors to interfere in the technical work of the commission or make statements in the press adding that some political parties “made a hobby” out of complaining “to foreigners” on the unfairness of the elections.

National police undertake UN-backed pre-election training in Darfur

UN News 5/1/10 – Sudanese police officials have wrapped up a series of United Nations-backed security training sessions in the country’s war-ravaged region of Darfur in preparation for this year’s national election.

The three-day session focused on security issues, election rules and crisis management ahead of the general election, slated for April.

The training was conducted in all three of the region’s states by police advisers from the joint UN-African Union peacekeeping operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and officials from the Government of Sudan.

Some 120 police commanders and officers participated in yesterday's final session in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, which aimed at helping Sudanese Government officials guarantee the safety of voters.

Acting Commander of the UNAMID North Darfur police force, Aliposo Vakuloloma, voiced hope that participants will use the knowledge gained to ensure fair and safe elections, and underscored the importance of an effective police force for the polling process.

Opposition parties to decide next week on elections participation

Sudan Tribune website 5/1/10 – The Sudanese opposition parties will meet next week to decide on whether they should take part in the upcoming elections scheduled for April 2010 or boycott it as they have threatened in September.

The meeting will be comprised of the political powers which took part in the Juba conference in September of last year including the Umma National Party, Umma Reform and Renewal Party (URRP), Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), Popular Congress Part (PCP), and other smaller parties.

It is not clear if the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) which hosted the Juba conference will take part in next week's meeting. The ex-Southern rebel group is the junior partner in the government of national unity.

Opposition parties have frequently complained that the political environment is restrictive in terms of press censorship, freedom of political assembly and intimidation by security services.

The Umma party led by former Prime Minister Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi issued a statement outlining the options with regard to the elections saying that there are six prerequisites for the polls; ensuring public freedoms, the commitment of state institutions and civil order not to use its influence, the media's commitment to a national approach away from taking sides to any party, ensure international and internal control at all levels, an independent judicial mechanism of accountability in relation to corrupt practices and deterring it.

Al-Mahdi stated that his party is faced with three choices, boycotting it which according to him would make it a "fiasco" with no democratic value, taking part in the elections under any circumstances or with minimum conditions but warned that this would give "false" legitimacy that would benefit those who are defrauding it in a clear reference to the NCP.

He also hinted that the Sudanese president Omer Al-Bashir could be protected from prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC) through a "reform package" that would balance justice and accountability which could be agreeable domestically then presented to the UN Security Council (UNSC).

The Arab, African and Islamic countries have demanded that the UNSC invoke its powers under Article 16 of the ICC statute to defer the warrant against Bashir for the sake of preserving peace but Western countries on the council resisted this move.

Al-Mahdi said that such a solution would require the NCP to make concessions but added that the ruling party has no interest in fulfilling.

A senior opposition official told Sudan Tribune who asked not to be named that the former prime minister believes that the Sudanese president should not run for re-election in return for

immunity from ICC.

SPLM finalizes nomination of candidates in Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 5/1/10 —The leadership of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) today confirmed ending of the nomination of candidates aspiring for parliamentary and executive seats as state governors across the country.

In an interview with the head of the SPLM national election strategy campaign committee, Mr. James Wani Igga, who wears another hat as Speaker of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, said SPLM nomination which has been on since December 01 ends today on fifth of January 2010.

"Our teams in various states and towns across the country stopped receiving new names from aspiring candidates on SPLM tickets," he said.

Asked about challenges encountered by team members in various states in Sudan particularly those in South Sudan, he said committees deployed to various states of Southern Sudan never reported lots of challenges.

Our teams in the field from various states and towns in the country officially wrote to SPLM headquarters and leadership reporting time limit as they were still getting candidates in huge numbers toward the end of last year but that was settled by granting additional five days which took them through first of January to fifth, he said.

After grant of the extension, there has never been any other concern apart from high competition among members, he adds.

But Igga said this was also settled by SPLM offices in various places through calling upon individual contestants to discuss and make decisions about who should allow who to run on SPLM tickets.

"Many cases have been settled through concession and we are glad most of the aspirants were able to concede contesting against another," he said.

He said the case in question was in Northern Bahr el Ghazal where an aspirant approached him this afternoon in Juba to share him decision he took while at home to concede position to other candidates.

"Such people show their allegiance to the party and as the party we will make sure they are given where to continue serving the party," he commented.

Igga also said SPLM political bureau, the highest body in the party hierarchy, will have to meet to decide names of those contesting on SPLM ticket in various states in the country and Southern Sudan in particular.

"Their names will be made public no later than 14 January 2010 after thorough discussions from political bureau," he said.

Earlier, Speaker Igga said, SPLM has formed Electoral College offices in each of the ten southern states. The electoral complex committee is made up of 25 members looking into all process of application procedures, he said.

This acts as first screening body without allegiance and bias before forwarding nominations to the national committee before submitting them for final screening to political bureau.

In the political bureau made up of only 27 members including Chairman of the party, he said SPLM members in the party looks into personalities, educational backgrounds, period of service in the SPLM, loyalties to the party and other criteria to select only one candidate for the state, he explained.

Machar to sue some newspapers

GoSS Deputy President Riek Machar has dismissed reports circulated by some newspapers in Khartoum claiming that he was placed under house arrest or split from the SPLM, ***Al-Ahdath*** report. Machar accused what he described as enemies of peace and unity of an attempt to create mischief between him and GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit.

According to ***Sudan Tribune website*** 6/1/10, the office of the Vice President of Southern Sudan and deputy chairman of the ruling party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) has dismissed media reports alleging his plans to form a new political party.

A Khartoum-based media house on Tuesday published a story that the Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar Teny, had been planning for a move to form an alternative political party alleging that he was discontented with the current SPLM nomination criteria that blocks his chance to compete for presidency.

The allegations in particular cited as main reason the recently introduced rules of membership by the party which says only members who have been with the SPLM for at least the last ten years should qualify to contest for the position of the President.

The report further alleged that Machar in this regard held different meetings in Juba to finalize the preparations to announce the new political formation.

However, in a press release issued on Tuesday after consultations with him, the office of the Vice President strongly refuted the allegations describing it as an attempt by the enemies of peace to plant mistrust in the SPLM leadership.

"Today the enemies of peace [have] struck by spreading more fictitious news about the SPLM leadership again. Those that are yearning to divide the SPLM allegedly propagated erroneous reports about the resignation of the (...) leader of the SPLM. They will fail! Whatever objective they are trying to achieve by falsifying information to divide our party will further strengthen us," says the statement.

"To the SPLM members, people of the Sudan and the world, Dr. Machar is the Deputy Chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) carrying out SPLM's duties daily. While the SPLM's vision to democratically transform Sudan is in full gear, people should stay vigilant for those who are keen to divide the party and the people of Southern Sudan. They will always fabricate information at a time our unity is highly considerate," it continued.

The release also expressed disappointment over the continued publishing of fabricated news items by some media houses in Khartoum. "The report published by certain papers in Khartoum confirmed how unethical some media houses in Khartoum are, by publishing incorrect information without legitimate sources. Those tabloid papers carrying out SPLM's adversaries' agenda spreading baseless and unfounded information about the resignation of the SPLM

deputy chairman Dr. Machar should not be trusted."

About two weeks ago a pro-NCP Arabic newspaper, Intibah, also published a similar story in Khartoum alleging that the Vice President had resigned; a publication which later on turned out not to be true and was dismissed by senior SPLM officials as the work of the enemy trying to divide the party.

Dr. Machar joined the SPLM in 1984, about one year after its formation in May 1983. He split ranks with late Dr. John Garang after experiencing political differences over the objective of the war and formed his own movement in 1991 to pursue the right to self-determination for the people of Southern Sudan and in 1997 signed the Khartoum Peace Agreement with the current government which recognized the right of self-determination.

In the year 2000 his agreement was violated by the government which prompted him to return to the bush and in 2002 the two rebel factions finally resolved their political differences by harmonizing them and merged their ranks and file again exactly eight years ago on January 6, 2002.

The newspaper alleged that Machar eyes the position of the President in the Government of Southern Sudan and therefore sees the newly introduced criteria of ten years membership, which disregards his first seven years SPLM membership from 1984-1991, as a direct conspiracy to block him from contesting for the position since he is only eight years in the SPLM after the Nairobi merger.

Dr. Machar is currently in Bentiu, the capital of Unity state, observing the party's selection process of aspirants by the state Electoral College.

The party is racing with time to yet nominate its candidates for each and every political position across this vast country including its nominees for the position of the President of the Republic and another one for the President of the Government of Southern Sudan.

The chairman of the SPLM Elections Strategy Committee, James Wani Igga, has announced that the party's Political Bureau will soon meet to nominate the candidates and the names of the final candidates will be announced on January 14, including for the positions of governorship in the ten states.

It is also expected that some party members who aspire for such political positions and lose nomination by the Political Bureau may opt to compete for the positions as independent candidates.

Igga did not however specify a date for the party to declare names of its long awaited candidates for the presidency positions in Khartoum and Juba.

Sudan, in accordance with the 2005 North-South peace deal that ended 21 years of war, is set to hold its post-war general elections three months from now in April 2010.

SPLM to demonstrate over slow pace of north-south border demarcation

The Citizen intimates that the SPLM is planning a peaceful demonstration over the dragging north-south border demarcation exercise. SPLM Deputy Chairperson James Wani Igga reportedly said in Juba yesterday that the plan is to create awareness in the international community and stakeholders. He equated the border demarcation exercise to the referendum,

re-deployment of the SAF and the census results contested by his party.

Jonglei declares famine; Kiir cautions of looming hunger

The Agriculture Minister in Jonglei State, Isaac Ajibba Ochang, said that Jonglei is being hit by famine due to lack of rain this season. Speaking to *Miraya FM*, Ochang said the state is also facing food insecurity.

Meanwhile, GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit has warned of imminent food insecurity in southern Sudan this year and has urged the people to double their efforts in agricultural production.

"There is going to be food insecurity in 2010 and we need the government and the citizens to work together to avoid a looming disaster. It is not that much serious but people must have to wake up now", said Kiir while delivering his New Year's Message.

He urged the international community to help South Sudan combat food insecurity and other disasters.

"We have programmes for food production in the New Year so instead of waiting for food from outside we should also use the land so that we produce our own food that is sufficient for all of us", said President Kiir.

SPLM considering US proposals to delay referendum

Al-Intibaha reports that the SPLM is preparing a written response to the US Administration's proposal to postpone South Sudan referendum. Reportedly, while some sources say the SPLM split on the proposal, other say FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit will visit Uganda for consultation with US experts on the proposal.

SPLA military intel boss hospitalized, rumours of death false

Sudan Tribune website 4/1/10 - The Southern Sudan army's top military intelligence officer, who was rumoured to have died in a Nairobi hospital on Sunday, was found alive on Monday hospitalized due to serious chest pain.

Last year Colonel Marial Nuor was flown out from Juba to Nairobi to undergo medical treatment in Nairobi after he complained to his bosses of chest pain. The powerful spy commander has served extensively as a military intelligence officer in the department of operations of the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

Rumours of his death hit various SPLA barracks and communities in South Sudan, particularly Rumbek. It was first said that Marial Chanuong had died and later in the day it was shifted to Marial Nuor.

"Colonel Marial Nuor is alive and still on a Nairobi hospital bed — it is a great lie for those who spread bad news that Marial had died; Col. Marial Nuor is still alive he will be released tomorrow or after tomorrow at Nairobi hospital," said Kuol Deim Kuol, SPLA Official Spokesperson.

Also denying the rumour, Southern Sudan Director of Military Intelligence Major General John Lat Zechariah, who is the boss of Colonel Marial Nuor, said that he had a contact with Marial in Nairobi and they last talked at 9:30 a.m. morning Monday. He also talked to the colonel's wife in Nairobi who confirmed that Marial's treatment was going on very well.

SPLM-DC applauds release of members held in Yei Town

Sudan Tribune website 5/1/10 – Four members of SPLM-DC, the breakaway faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, were released after several days of detention in Yei, Central Equatoria State.

Three party members reportedly had been detained on 30 December in Yei while taking part in SPLM-DC candidates' nominations discussions. These were: Rev. John Malesh of the Pentecostal Church of the Sudan, David Cons Mawa, and Tabu Emmanuel.

A fourth, Shallah Aggrey, joined the detainees on 31 December 2009, according to an SPLM-DC official. "When Mr. Shallah Aggrey appeared at the security station to show them official registration credentials of the party, he was also arrested and detained with the others for the next three days," SPLM Secretary General Eng. Charles Kisanga recounted in a written statement to Sudan Tribune.

Eleven members had initially been reported detained, but some either " managed to escape or got freed later," according to Kisanga.

Mr. Aggrey explained that they were only released when the SPLM security forces read the news of the arrest in the newspapers and especially Khartoum Monitor. The security forces rushed with a copy to Shallah Aggrey and accused him of lying to his Secretary General and the press by saying that they were arrested and detained by SPLA security forces. The security men wanted the detained members also to explain how they had leaked the news out since their cell phone had also been seized. The security officer called simply Lual Deng then gave them the copy of the newspaper and told them to go and not to go around spreading such damaging news as written about them in the paper.

"The SPLM-DC Secretary General applauds the quick release of the four detainees and also thanks the media for their role in fighting for freedom and democracy. The SPLM leaders should now show courage and good will for democracy by swiftly releasing all political detainees in Southern Sudan especially the four SPLM-DC local leaders detained at Wau Mapel SPLA barracks and then open the SPLM-DC offices in Wau and Bentiu without delay," said Kisanga's statement of today.

Two of the detainees, Rev. John Malesh and Mr. Aggrey, have resolved to stand for legislative seats. Mr. Aggrey, who is the SPLM-DC secretary for Central Equatoria, has now arrived to Juba and is carrying SPLM-DC's list of nominations from Yei and surrounding counties.

Big U.S. fund group divests over Sudan

Reuters 5/1/10 - TIAA-CREF has become the first large U.S. fund complex to sell stakes in a group of Asian energy companies over human rights concerns in Sudan.

The sales of shares of China's PetroChina Co Ltd, CNPC Hong Kong and Sinopec, and Oil and Natural Gas Corp of New Delhi totaled about \$60 million, TIAA-CREF said on Monday.

The stakes sold were just a small slice of New York-based TIAA-CREF's assets under management, which stood at \$402 billion at the end of September, and a tiny percentage of the oil companies' market capitalization.

Still, the move could put more pressure on the companies over their business ties to Sudan's government, which is widely accused of war crimes.

The move by TIAA-CREF, which provides financial services to nonprofits like hospitals and universities, also marks a milestone for rights activists who have tried for years, mostly in vain, to line up the influential fund industry behind its social agenda.

"We hope this could send a strong message to the companies," said Hye-Won Choi, TIAA-CREF's head of corporate governance. She said her firm had sold the shares only after talks with the energy companies went nowhere.

India's ONGC said it was concerned about TIAA-CREF'S move but the firm's business in Sudan would continue.

ONGC, which leads India's hunt for foreign petroleum assets, entered Sudan about seven years ago, buying a 25 percent stake in the Greater Nile Project, from which Canada's Talisman Energy Inc exited under pressure from human rights group.

Talisman had said that political risks, which had pressured the firm's stock price, outweighed impressive financial returns, but such concerns have not deterred ONGC, which also bought stakes in Sudanese blocks from Austrian energy group OMV

"This will not impact our investment decision in Sudan," ONGC Chairman R.S. Sharma said, reacting to TIAA-CREF's move.

"Our operations area is away from any disturbed activity area. Secondly, we are very much conscious that we do not support suppressive activities. Any investor group withdrawing support causes pain and concern," Sharma told Reuters.

"We always believe engagement is far more effective than divestment," Choi said, noting that TIAA-CREF did not sell shares of companies doing business in South Africa in the 1980s, the last major public effort to promote divestment.

"However, in this situation, engagement was not effective, and we believed the gravity and magnitude of the situation in the Sudan required a different response," she said.

The companies are among those whose royalty payments activists blame for propping up Sudan's government. The International Criminal Court has charged the nation's president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, with crimes against humanity and war crimes stemming from the ongoing conflict in the country's western Darfur region.

Asked about the sales, a Sinopec spokesperson said: "Investors make rational judgments based on value. If some sell, others will buy." The other companies were not immediately available for comment on Monday.

Many U.S. universities, state pension funds and other organizations have sold shares of the companies, hoping to put pressure on the central government in Khartoum.

However, large mutual fund firms, including Fidelity Investments, Vanguard Group Inc and American Funds' parent Capital Group Cos, have resisted calls to do the same. Some said their investments could create leverage to improve conditions in troubled countries.

TIAA-CREF blazed a trail when it said in March it would seek meetings with the four companies and Petronas over their Sudan dealings. It had threatened at the time to divest shares unless

the companies began a progressive dialogue.

Only Petronas has met those terms, TIAA-CREF said, adding that the Malaysian state oil company's chief executive, Hassan Marican, met in Kuala Lumpur over the summer with leaders who included the fund complex's CEO, Roger Ferguson Jr.

"They acknowledged this was an issue of concern," Choi said, adding that other executives have held discussions since then on exactly what policy changes might improve the situation in Sudan. As of last week TIAA-CREF said it held \$4.7 million worth of shares in two Petronas subsidiaries, Petronas Gas and Petronas Dagangan.

Whether TIAA-CREF's actions will spark similar moves by other fund companies remains to be seen.

New human rights expert on first official visit to Sudan next week

Independent human rights expert for Sudan, Mohamed Osman, is set to start his first official visit to Sudan this week-end, *Rai Al-Shaab* reports. The independent expert hopes to collect information for a report he is expected to present to the UNCHR in June this year.

Sudan to protest "French spy satellite" over Darfur

Al-Intibaha reports that the Sudan National Telecommunications Corporation has formally requested the Geneva-based International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to provide detailed information on a French satellite reportedly released last month to spy on Darfur. National Telecommunications Corporation head, Mustafa Abdulhafeez said that the Corporation plans to file a formal complaint to the ITU once it receives enough information on the grounds that such an act by France is a violation of sovereignty.

Sudan's new year of fear

By Ros Wynne-Jones

The Guardian 5/1/2010 - On Saturday, there will be exactly a year left to prevent the return of a conflict that was once the longest-running in Africa – Sudan's north-south war, which claimed about 2 million lives. With elections due this year and 365 days left until the crucial referendum on independence for the south, concern is growing among analysts, advocacy groups and NGOs working in Sudan that the spectre of widespread conflict is once again a reality.

The comprehensive peace agreement that ended the 22-year civil war between north and south Sudan has its fifth anniversary on 9 January. Anyone who visited the south during those years, the camps of displaced people in the north, or the refugee camps that sprang up along the Ethiopian border, will know how important it is to prevent the re-ignition of that war.

Of the millions killed, hundreds of thousands were burned to death in their southern tribal villages, with women and children captured and taken to the north of the country. Entire communities were eradicated from the map in a country whose remote vastness hid the atrocities from the eyes of the world.

This week sees the launch of Sudan365, a global campaign, as well as a major joint-agency report – Rescuing the Peace in Southern Sudan – which warns that a cocktail of rising violence, chronic poverty and political tensions has left the peace deal on the brink of collapse. Next Monday Daniel Deng, the archbishop of the Episcopal church of Sudan, and Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, will meet Gordon Brown to discuss the growing crisis. A new Chatham House report urges the international community to re-engage with Sudan; and Glenys

Kinnock, the minister for Africa, is travelling out there this week.

By comparison with past casualties recent skirmishes seem minimal. But with the inter-agency report recording 2,500 lives lost in a single year – a serious spike – the ceasefire is in open crisis. Meanwhile, 350,000 people have been displaced from their homes.

Analysts note that both sides of the divide are now moving into a potentially explosive endgame. And even as trouble grows in the south, in the western region of Darfur and in neighbouring Chad millions continue to suffer daily in refugee camps – seven years after the Darfur conflict erupted. People there are unsure whether their fate is worse than death. Militias surround these supposed places of safety, and women are raped walking for firewood; rations are meagre; and the hope of returning home diminishes with every passing year.

Further complicating the global picture, Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, is wanted by the international criminal court for war crimes including genocide. He has since taken his revenge by throwing several aid agencies out of Darfur – precisely where humanitarian needs remain critical.

I visited Sudan many times during the war, and have since been to Chad to see those desperate people living in a raging heat surrounded by little more than sticks and earth. In southern Sudan every child had their own story of atrocity, whether the loss of a parent to the swipe of a machete, the burning of their home and their crops by horseback militias, or the long walks across barren nothingness with no food or water.

The lines are blurred by many complex factors, one of which is oil. While the country remains intact, the preferred method of extraction by the northern government has been to burn the tribal peoples from their land. But should the country be partitioned in two, some 87% of oil revenue would be held by the south. Will Khartoum really let those oilfields go?

The consequences of a return to war will be dire not just for Sudan. The northern government is backed and armed by China, which exploits many of the oilfields, while the south is backed largely by the US and other western countries. Meanwhile, the north was home to Osama bin Laden, who lived in Sudan from 1992 to 1996.

With a year left to act, a lasting peace for Africa's largest country may yet be a possibility, but campaigners will have to shout loud to be heard when there are conflicts where western soldiers are currently engaged. Many Sudanese now feel it is time for Barack Obama to earn his Nobel peace prize. After all, it is not peacekeepers or sanctions or soldiers that the civilian population is seeking. The Sudanese understand that only dialogue can now prevent a return to war.

We're on the Web!

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