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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

Opposition figures arrested as Sudan bans rally

International news wires and **Sudan Tribune** reported early morning that SPLM SG Pagan Amum, his deputy Yassir Arman and Abbas Gumma, SPLM member and State Minister of Interior were detained by the Sudanese police in a crackdown against a planned protest in front of the National Assembly. Police had announced late on Sunday that the demonstration to push for reforms ahead of national elections and over a referendum on independence for southern Sudan was illegal. Security forces blocked roads leading to the parliament to stop protesters, with a heavy presence in key areas elsewhere in the capital, the reporter witnessed. "The security committee for Khartoum state has met and decided that the protest is illegal," senior police officer Mohammed Babikir said on state television. "Whoever takes part in this demonstration will be breaking the law," he said, shortly after Arman had told journalists he expected "thousands of our people" to take part.

Reuters reported that around 25 SPLM and opposition supporters gathered outside the parliament in the early hours of Monday and were surrounded by police armed with batons and shields. Yasir Arman scuffled with police outside the National Assembly and was driven away to a police station. Police officers beat demonstrators and onlookers with batons as Arman was driven away chanting "freedom".

Al Jazeera TV said that its TV crew was prevented from covering the demonstration and their tapes were confiscated.

Eyewitnesses who asked not to be named told **Sudan Tribune** that thousands of heavily armed policemen took up positions in the capital since early morning hours in an apparent bid to curb the protests. Yesterday Amum said that Monday will be a "historical day for the start of mass popular movement for freedom".

In an interview with **Al-Jazeera TV** (Arabic), Spokesperson of the Police, Mohamed Abdel Majeed, said today that Pagan was arrested because he attacked a Maj. Gen. adding that Yassir Arman got into the Police vehicle by himself. When asked about confiscating the cameras of Al-Jazeera TV crew, Mr. Abdel Majeed said he did not know about and would investigate.

Al-Jazeera TV also interviewed Yassir Arman, who confirmed that some MPs were beaten by the Police. On his part, Ibrahim Ghandour, the leading NCP figure, informed Al-Jazeera that he hoped an immediate release of the leaders arrested.

Al-Jazeera TV correspondent stated the situation is very tense and no TV or Radio could cover the situation in front of the Parliament. He said the Editor-in-Chief of Al-Tayyar newspaper, Osman Mirghani, and another journalist from Al-Ray Al-Aam newspaper were taken by the security. According to Al-Jazeera, the SPLM would continue peaceful demonstration and would not submit to the measures taken by the police.

Reuters reported that after the arrests, south Sudan's president Salva Kiir contacted president Bashir, who promised to release all prisoners, said SPLM member Anne Itto. No one was immediately available for comment from the presidency.

Southern protesters torch Sudan ruling party offices

AFP reported that protesters in south Sudan torched offices of the National Congress Party after the arrests in the capital according to a southern government official. Offices were set ablaze in Wau and Rumbek, two provincial capitals, the source said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media. "The National Congress Party headquarters in both Rumbek and in Wau are on fire," the official said. "The protestors are angry at the arrest of the SPLM secretary general and other leaders in Khartoum."

UN chief 'expresses support' to president Bashir – Sudan state media

SUNA reported that UN SG Ban Ki-Moon phoned President Al-Bashir to convey to him the nomination of the Nigerian diplomat Ibrahim Gambari as head of UNAMID. Bashir was quoted by *SUNA* as approving of Gambari and instructing all government agencies to cooperate with Gambari and facilitating his mission noting that the Nigerian figure enjoys deep and comprehensive knowledge of Sudan. This is believed to be the first contact between the two men since Bashir was indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes in Darfur last March.

SUNA said that Ban and Bashir discussed deployment of UNAMID as well as security and humanitarian situation in Darfur. The Sudanese president informed him of growing trend of voluntary repatriation that contributed to a return to normality in Darfur.

The UN Secretary General emphasized his support to president Bashir and "unrelenting backing" to him and Sudan to push the peace efforts, *SUNA* said, and also thanked him for securing the release of the two aid workers kidnapped last August.

Ban also voiced regret over the attack that killed five Rwandan peacekeepers in Darfur this weekend and Bashir assured him that his government is working diligently to arrest the attackers.

Khartoum State declares Monday official holiday

Daily papers report that the Governor of Khartoum State, Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Khidir, announced that Monday would be an official holiday. The Governor announced that the decision was intended to boost the democratic transformation and enable all citizens to register for the coming elections.

Minnawi calls for an extension on voter registration

Akhir Lahza reports that Sudanese Presidential Aide and leader of Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM)/Minnawi faction strongly urged the NEC to extend a second time the voter registration date to enable Darfur nationals to participate in the electoral process. Minnawi indicates that voter registration in Darfur face many challenges that would be rectified with an extended voter registration closing date.

UK Special Envoy arrives in Khartoum today

Al-Rai-Al-Aam reports that British Special Envoy to Sudan Michael O'Neal has arrived in Khartoum today to begin a five-day visit to consult with high-level officials from the Government of National Unity (GONU) and the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) on latest political developments in Sudan as well as the Darfur issue.

Rebels kill 17 Sudanese troops during fresh attack in Darfur

Sudan Tribune reported that SLA/AW rebels in Darfur said today they killed 17 government troops when they repelled an attack by the Sudanese army against their base in Tourain Tawrah in West Darfur. "Some 500 soldiers and Janjaweed militia attacked early this morning our position in Trourain Tawrah. The assailants arrived in vehicles, camels and horses," Nimer Abdelrahman, the SLA-Aw military spokesperson told *Sudan Tribune* on Sunday. The rebel official said they killed 17 army troops and militiamen, adding they destroyed three vehicles and captured two others; besides killing five camels and 15 horses. The attacker who arrived from Kass meant to "take the control of our base there. It is part of their efforts to put pressure on our movement to join the peace process," added the rebel official.

Controversial bills to be tabled before parliament today

Sudan Vision reports that NCP has decided to table National Security, Trade Unions, Referendum bills before the parliament today to be endorsed before the end of the current

round of session on the twenty-second of December, 2009.

President Bashir meets Al-Mirghani and Al-Mahdi

SUNA and daily papers report that President Bashir reiterated his concern and commitment to bolster the comprehensive reconciliation process and to achieve national unity in the country. This came when President received the Chairman of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani, at his office at the Republican Palace Sunday.

President Al-Bashir appreciated the national stances of Al-Mirghani and his keenness to boost the unity, peace and stability of the country.

Al-Ray Al-Aam reports that President Al-Bashir agreed to Al-Mirghani's appeal of organizing an urgent and comprehensive conference for the all-Sudan-people to discuss national issues.

Al-Ayaam daily reports that Al-Mirghani would meet with the FVP and GoSS President Salva Kiir.

Sudan Tribune reports that Al-Mirghani, who boycotted the Juba conference, told reporters afterwards that Sudanese issues cannot be handled only between the NCP and the SPLM.

Al-Ahdath daily reports that the Chairman of the National Ummah Party (NUP), Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi briefed President Al-Bashir on the Elections Code of Honor on elections proposed by the NUP. The paper adds that the President said he would consider the code and respond as soon as possible. The NUP Chairman stressed the importance of political parties' commitment of the code in order to prepare the ground for free and fair elections. Meanwhile, Al-Mahdi denied the information on his candidacy to the Presidential elections.

Sudan must explain Darfur peacekeeper killing – Rwanda

Reuters reports that Rwandan President Paul Kagame said yesterday that Khartoum had some explaining to do over two deadly attacks on Rwandan peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur region.

The governor of north Darfur, Osman Kebir, told Sudan's state *Suna* news agency that a number of men suspected of the first ambush had been arrested that had been taken to north Darfur's capital El Fasher where they would "be presented before a court to receive punishment for their heinous act". Referring to both attacks, Kagame called on Khartoum for an explanation. "I'm not suggesting that Sudan is actually targeting UNAMID," he told a local radio station. "We'll wait and see but I'm also suggesting the possibilities that the government may have responsibility, or have some explaining to do to us about how this has happened twice in a short period of time close to their positions."

Kagame said he would wait for an investigation before any steps were taken, adding that relations between both nations had not yet been affected by the attacks.

No one was immediately available for comment at Sudan's Ministry of Defence. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign affairs and army declined to comment.

Abyei administration facilitates return of over 1834 returnees

(Sudan Tribune) December 6, Khartoum — Ayom Matet Ayom, head of Education, Health and Social Service in Abyei, today, said Abyei administration has this week facilitated return of one thousand eight hundred and thirty four returnees.

"The administration speeded return of those who had showed interest in returning home so that they reach voter registration scheduled to close tomorrow Monday 7," he said in Khartoum's suburb of Amarat.

The official who is currently visiting Khartoum said turning of such a huge number of people wanting to return shows that everybody is ready to go home, he adds.

"I am told this number was never looked for as it used to be in the previous years, there were no meetings held like in the past," he said stressing that they came themselves.

This is encouraging, he adds saying his administration is determined to commit resources to support returnees to go home for referendum.

Commenting on issues of security which scare majority to return home, he said security

situation in the region is under control adding that there are Joint integrated Units and Joint integrated police in the area.

"These units get technical supports from UNMIS in term of training and daily monitoring of the security related concern of the town and are capable of providing adequate security to the local population in the area in case of any eventualities," he said.

Bol Monychok Wol, an official from humanitarian affairs commission in Abyei acknowledged receipt of 1834 returnees on Thursday 3 December. Thirty five vehicles carrying returnees have arrived and have been dispatched to their locations.

UN WFP and other agencies are providing them receptive services including three months rations, he said

The remaining issue in Darfur is the return of IDPs - SRSG Radhika Coomaraswamy

Al-Watan newspaper reports that Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, said the security situation in Darfur was better than what she had witnessed during her previous visit two years ago. The paper adds she informed Sudanese Media Center (SMC), in an exclusive statement, that violence in Darfur had remarkably decreased and the only issue remained was the return of IDPs to their villages. She called on armed movements to respond to the calls by the international community and participate in the next round of talks. Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy called on the Government to develop the conditions of IDPs in the areas voluntary return and improve the conditions of children particularly in conflict zones. She added that she would convey a good image of Sudan describing the government as being cooperative especially in allowing the international community to transparently monitor the situation in Darfur.

Terror of the child snatchers of South Sudan

(AFP) POCHALLA, Sudan, December 7 – Girls and boys in south Sudan do not need bogeyman scare stories to make them behave: the child snatchers are real.

"They come with guns and steal our children, then kill the rest of us," said Aballa Abich, a tired-looking mother waiting for food aid deliveries in the troubled state of Jonglei.

"Day or night they can attack. We are frightened to let our children out of our sight," added Abich, who comes from the Anyuak people of Pochalla, one of several peoples in the ethnically divided region.

Hundreds of children have been abducted into slavery in a series of bloody clashes between rival groups -- including Abich's five-year-old nephew.

"They took him two years ago when he was out hunting in the bush," Abich said sadly. "There has been no news since, only attacks taking more children."

Clashes between the Anyuak's cow-herding neighbours in south Sudan erupt frequently, often sparked by cattle rustling, disputes over grazing or in revenge for previous attacks.

But the small-scale battles have grown in frequency and size in the remote and swampy region which remains awash with automatic weapons from the 22-year civil war between north and south Sudan, which formally ended in 2005.

A series of bloody raids this year has left many people in shock, and there has been a sharp increase in attacks apparently deliberately targeting women and children.

At least 370 children have been snatched in southern Sudan during inter-ethnic violence this year alone, the United Nations estimates.

But other officials warn the total could be far larger.

"The numbers of children taken over the years could go into thousands," said Kuol Manyang, the governor of Jonglei, one of the hardest-hit areas. "Often there are over 200 children abducted every year."

Boys are stolen to herd the cattle, while girls are valuable for the future dowry of cows they will earn, the communities say.

Some grieving parents even fear the gunmen might include their own children, snatched years earlier and now used as expendable foot soldiers.

"Sometimes, when they attack us, we wonder. Are our sons among those who come to fight us now?" asked Mary Ojulo, a mother in Pochalla, a simple settlement of thatched huts on Sudan's eastern border with Ethiopia.

The civil war ended in January 2005, but two decades of conflict bequeathed a legacy of bitter ethnic divisions between those who fought for the south's splintered rebel factions, and those used as proxy militiamen by the north.

Some two million people died and four million were left homeless in a conflict that often shattered traditional hierarchies of authority.

"The chiefs are not being respected by the young," said Manyang, who controls a region the size of Austria and Switzerland combined, but where the few dirt roads are closed for much of the year because of heavy rains.

"Most people are armed... they have few jobs, but don't want to go back to the old way of life." However, the young men who grew up in conflict still want the herds of cattle they need for their marriage dowry.

"If you don't have cattle you can't marry, and the amount the families demand has been growing higher since the war ended," said Othow Okoti, a youth leader in Pochalla.

"So the easy way is to abduct children, then sell them on for cows," he added, shaking his head in disgust.

Authorities recently freed 29 children and jailed four men for abducting them.

"I was forced to work with the cattle for four months," said Omot Ochalla, a 12-year-old boy grabbed in a cross-border raid in the Gambella region of Ethiopia.

"I was not treated well," he added quietly, now safe in a child trauma centre in Juba, the capital of semi-autonomous south Sudan, waiting with others for their families to be traced.

Often they are too young to tell authorities where they have come from, hampering efforts to return them home.

"These processes take time -- to track and trace the families," said Hilde Johnson, deputy executive director of the UN Children's Fund.

Some people accuse the Murle tribe of leading the abductions, claiming that members of the warlike but marginalised group are infertile because of sexually transmitted diseases, a myth based on ignorance and fear rather than evidence.

But officials warn the practice is spreading to other groups, in a worrying spiral of revenge attacks.

"The Nuer are now taking the children of the Murle, because they think that will make the Murle release their children back," said Manyang.

"We are working to stop this, and we will launch a disarmament campaign to take the guns out of the hands of the people."

Many fear for the future, with security concerns ahead of elections next April and a referendum for the south's potential full independence slated for January 2011.

Some accuse former civil war enemies in the north of destabilising the south by renewing support for proxy militias and provoking existing ethnic divisions, claims that are dismissed by the Khartoum government.

More than 2,000 people have died and 250,000 have been displaced in inter-tribal violence across the south this year, the United Nations says.

It is a higher rate of violent deaths than in Sudan's war-torn western region of Darfur.

"We have survived war and hunger for many, many years," Mary Ojulo said. "But taking the children is the worst thing someone can do."