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(By Public Information Office)

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UN

Sudan rejects UN humanitarian official visit to Darfur

(*ST/ the local press in Sudan – 4th Apr. Khartoum*) Sudanese government has refused to the UN under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs, Jan Egeland, to visit Sudan's troubled region of Darfur, although he has the necessary visa, the United Nations said Monday.

“UNMIS regrets the decision of the Government of Sudan not to welcome the visit of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland”, a press statement by UNMIS said.

"I've been barred from going to south Darfur, west Darfur and also I have been told that I am not welcome in Khartoum," Egeland told Reuters during a visit to southern Sudan, reported Reuters from Rumbek in southern Sudan.

"I think it is because they (the Sudanese government) don't want me to see how bad it is in Darfur," he added.

Egeland's flight into Sudan was not given authorization to land in Sudan yesterday. In addition, the governor of South Darfur stated that he strictly opposes Egeland's visit.

The Sudanese Permanent Representation to the United Nations in New York further stated that Egeland would be welcome neither in Darfur nor in Khartoum where he had planned to have discussions with the authorities.

The UN official was scheduled to visit Sudan for the period of 2-6 April. He had notified the Sudanese authorities well in advance and discussed the upcoming visit with the Minister of Foreign Affairs during his visit to New York early March.

Egeland had planned to visit Sudan in order to assess the humanitarian relief operation in South Sudan as well as in Darfur, which amounts to approximately US\$1.5 billion annually. He, is the highest UN official responsible for this operation. He is presently engaged in efforts to raise additional international funds for humanitarian assistance for the people of Sudan.

UN protests Sudan's decision to bar official from Darfur

(*AP/STT – 4th Apr. Khartoum*) The United Nations on Monday protested what it said was a decision by Sudan to bar the U.N.'s top humanitarian official from visiting the capital and the troubled western Darfur region.

Jan Egeland, U.N. under-secretary-general for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief, said the government was trying to prevent him from seeing the deteriorating situation in the troubled Darfur region.

A Foreign Ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, denied that Egeland had been barred from visiting.

A statement from the U.N. mission in Sudan said Egeland's flight into Sudan was not given authorization to land Sunday and that Sudanese officials had expressed opposition to his visit.

Egeland had been scheduled to visit southern and western Sudan from Sunday to Thursday to assess relief operations.

He did visit southern Sudan, which is administered by the Government of Southern Sudan, a partner of the Khartoum government that has its own leadership.

Egeland said he was told that visiting Khartoum and Darfur, in the Muslim north of the country, would be too sensitive because publications in his nation, Norway, were among those that published offensive cartoons of Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

"They claim that my nationality is a problem because of the cartoons and me being a Norwegian. This is just an excuse," he told The Associated Press by telephone. "I can only believe that they don't want me to see how bad the situation has become for the civilian population in South Darfur, in West Darfur."

He noted that he had been barred from visiting Darfur in 2004 "when ethnic cleansing was at its worst."

Last month Sudanese authorities used similar reasoning to deny access to Darfur by a senior Swedish official.

The United Nations has described Darfur as the site of the world's gravest humanitarian crisis. The 3-year-old conflict setting the Arab-dominated government and militias against ethnic African tribes has left some 300,000 dead — most from disease and hunger — and displaced another 2 million from their homes. Sudan's government and rebels in Darfur have made little headway in peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria.

President Omar al-Bashir said in a speech to parliament Monday that resolving the Darfur conflict was his nation's top priority.

"The peace that we have received with joy (in southern Sudan) remains incomplete until we achieve a solution in Darfur," he said.

He said the government would work to end the suffering of civilians and reach a political settlement that included all parties involved in the conflict.

"There cannot be a solution that ignores the rights of anyone or suppresses anyone. A permanent solution is the one that embraces all and resolves all the problems of Darfur," he said.

Egeland said he had been supposed to bring more resources to humanitarian workers who, he complained, were finding it increasingly difficult to reach civilians affected by the violence.

He called the ban part of "an endless string of constant administrative obstacles to our work," saying non-governmental organizations trying to work in Darfur were finding it hard to receive work permits, fuel and other necessities.

"My biggest worry is that all our achievements and advances — in one of the biggest and most effective humanitarian operations anywhere in a war situation — are now being undermined," Egeland said.

NATO's chief diplomat said Monday that the alliance planned to increase support for African peacekeepers in Darfur, but he again stressed that the deployment of NATO troops was not an option.

Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said NATO was considering increasing training, planning and transportation support for the African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur, and a U.N. mission that may replace it in September.

"That can very much be done without speaking of a NATO force," he said. "It's the African Union, it's the U.N. which are the guiding organizations."

The U.N. mission's statement said the governor of South Darfur, one of the western states scarred by the conflict, had stated his opposition to Egeland's visit. It also quoted Sudan's representative to the United Nations in New York as stating that Egeland would not be welcome in Darfur or Khartoum.

Mission spokesman Khaled al-Hitti said it was "unlikely" that the Sudanese government would change its mind about letting Egeland resume his planned itinerary in Darfur and Khartoum.

US Criticizes Sudan's Rebuff Of UN Official

(*AP/ST* – 3rd Apr. **Washington**) The U.S. State Department criticized on Monday the refusal of Sudan to permit a visit by the U.N. top's humanitarian affairs official, Jan Egeland, calling the decision "deeply disturbing."

Citing the "crying humanitarian needs" in Darfur, spokesman Adam Ereli said it was hard to understand why Sudan rebuffed Egeland.

"This certainly sends the wrong signal about where the government of Sudan stands on the issue of humanitarian relief in cooperation with the international community to address the problem of Darfur," he said.

The U.N. mission in Sudan said Egeland's flight into the country wasn't given authorization to land Sunday.

Sudan denies barring UN envoy from Darfur

(*AFP/ST* – 3rd Apr. **Khartoum**) Sudan Monday denied barring the UN's humanitarian envoy Jan Egeland from the war-torn Darfur region, but instead asked his visit be delayed because of "popular sentiment".

"Egeland was not barred from visiting Darfur but was only asked to postpone the visit due to the growing popular sentiment against the UN for its plans of deploying foreign forces in Darfur," information ministry official Bekri Mulah said.

Egeland was to have started a visit to Darfur on Monday to inspect the dire situation facing people after three years of war before heading to Khartoum. But the UN announced earlier the Sudanese government had told him he was not welcome.

"Mr Egeland has been informed that he is not welcome in Darfur or Khartoum," said Dawn Elizabeth, the spokeswoman in Sudan for the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Mulah said the situation was similar to February when protestors had blocked Sweden's Aid Minister Carin Jaemtin from visiting Darfur in anger over the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed published in Europe.

At the time, Stockholm claimed Khartoum had blocked the delegation because of its support for UN-backed troops in Darfur.

Egeland, the UN's humanitarian relief coordinator, has in recent weeks stepped up his criticism of the Khartoum government for the worsening situation in Darfur, where the army and allied militia are fighting rebels from minority tribes.

Chinese peacekeepers leave for Sudan mission

(*Xinhua/ST* – 3rd Apr. **Beijing**) A 25-member squad of a Chinese detachment that is part of a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Sudan left here Monday, heading for Khartoum, the Sudanese capital.

China plans to send 435 peacekeepers in response to an appeal by the United Nations Security Council. They will be mainly responsible for rebuilding infrastructure facilities, destroying weapons, and assisting all peace-keeping forces in the area.

The Chinese detachment comes from the Jinan Area Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

EU, NATO stress help for UN in Darfur

(*AP/ST* – 3rd Apr. **Brussels**) NATO military experts are drawing up plans for increased support to international peacekeepers in Darfur, but the alliance's chief diplomat on Monday again stressed that the deployment of NATO troops was not an option.

Negotiations to resolve the Darfur conflict, which has forced more than two million from their homes and killed tens of thousands, revolve around how to share political power, economic resources and deal with the region's militias.

"That can very much be done without speaking of a NATO force," Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said. "It's the African Union, it's the U.N. which are the guiding organizations."

He told reporters that the military were considering increasing training, planning and transport support to the existing African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur and a U.N. mission that may replace it in September.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called de Hoop Scheffer last week to request additional NATO support for the mission as the AU prepares to hand over to a U.N. force.

NATO has said it is willing to extend its existing back up to the African force _ including airlift, training for officers and planning _ but not sending European or North American troops.

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana held talks at NATO headquarters to discuss how the two organizations can cooperate to help end the violence in Darfur.

"We are very, very, very concerned with the situation," Solana said. He added that the EU would aim to boost peace talks between the Sudanese government and Darfur rebels in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

"The Abuja talks have to be not only a place where we spend hours and hours and days and days, but they have to come through with a road map, with an end that will allow the international force to be deployed," Solana said.

CPA

SPLM threatens to draw Abyei issues before parliament for discussions

(*AlAyaam* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum**) As parliament resumes after recess, the SPLM caucus at the National Assembly is still debating whether or not to table the Abyei issue before parliament.

Other issues likely to be on the SPLM list are the plight of southern Sudanese refugees in Cairo, the issue of the Other Armed Groups that split from the SSDF and remain aligned to the SAF and a timeframe to flush out the Lord's Resistance Army from Equatoria.

On his part, the head of the National Congress Party caucus in parliament, Dr. Ghazi Salahuldeen, said the NCP sets as its priorities the legislatures pertaining to the implementation of the CPA particularly the establishment of the commissions, federal relations regulating the distribution of power and wealth and other legislature regulating political activities.

SPLM prepares for withdrawal from Hamesh Khoreib

(*AlRai AlAam* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum**) The SPLA dispatches today 10 of its top military figures to eastern Sudan to flag off the redeployment of SPLA forces there.

Bior Ajiang, the official spokesperson for the Joint Defence Border and also a prominent SPLA figure said that the operation will be carried out in three phases and will cover redeployment to the south of SPLA forces from 10 positions in eastern Sudan, Hamesh Khoreib included.

SPLM proposes draft constitution for Khartoum State

(*Khartoum Monitor/ST* – 3rd Apr. **Khartoum**) The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) today presents its draft constitution for Khartoum State at Khartoum Legislative Assembly. It is hoped that this will lead to resolution of the conflict over the state of Khartoum as national capital.

Head of the SPLM parliamentarian bloc in Khartoum Legislative Assembly Bol Riing yesterday outlined the general feature of the SPLM draft constitution, as stipulated in article

152 and 158 of the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of Sudan, provided in chapter 10.

He said that the SPLM draft constitution should be a reference for Khartoum State to implement the Human Rights chapter. He added that the SPLM draft constitution is based on articles 27 and 48 of chapter two of National Interim Constitution.

Bol pointed out that the SPLM draft constitution has highlighted the issue of cultural, racial and religious aspects for human rights in the national capital, regardless of religion or race.

He went on to say that the draft constitution has stipulated the formation of legislative, executive and judicial organs to reflect the cultural diversity and safeguard of human rights and freedom of worship. The draft also constitution contains the principles of transparency and guarantees that any people shall have the right to go to a court of law.

The draft constitution has enshrined the rights of children and women and stresses attention to education and health, in addition to delegating more powers to the legislative assembly to oversee the performance of executive organs. The legislative assembly shall have the right to summon and question any state ministers.

South Kordofan MPs suspend assembly

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum**) A joint delegation of SPLA and the National Congress Party (NCP) at the South Kordofan Legislative Assembly will on Thursday head for the eastern states to explain the suspension of the assembly's sessions.

The head of the SPLM caucus at the assembly said the suspension came about due to differences over the interpretation of the CPA and also over programs and priorities.

He blamed the NCP for the dispute over the chairmanship of the legislature because, he adds, the NCP believes that it has a free hand in dealing with matter omitted in the agreement by employing its majority while the SPLM believes in a rotating chairmanship

He argued that the GoNU should take a positive role instead of remaining passive on making the parties in South Kordofan abide by the CPA.

GoNU

Sudan says committed to peaceful solution to Darfur crisis

(*Xinhua/ST* – 3rd Apr. **Khartoum**) Sudanese President Omer al-Bashir reiterated on Monday his government's "full commitment" to a peaceful solution to the country's Darfur conflict.

Addressing an inaugural session of a second meeting of the National Legislative Authority, which comprises the National Assembly and the Council of States, al-Bashir said that the Darfur issue was still on top agenda of the government.

He highlighted in his remarks the necessity to support the African Union's (AU) peacekeeping mission in Darfur.

"We believe that the African role in Darfur guarantees the realization of a peaceful solution to the conflict," said the president.

Meanwhile, he reaffirmed his government's commitment to all items of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which was signed in January 2005, ending 21-year long civil war between the north and the south.

Appreciating the country's economic improvement, the president said that his country has maintained an average 8 percent economic growth rate in recent years, a remarkable achievement by Khartoum.

He also praised continuous stability of Sudanese currency's exchange, attributing it to the decrease of inflation rate, which is around 9 percent for now.

The exportation revenue in 2005 reached 182 million U.S. dollars while direct taxation imposed on industry decreased to 10 percent from 30 percent, said the president.

Darfur/ Abuja talks

Norwegian NRC must leave Darfur refugee camp

(*ST* – 3rd Apr. **Oslo**) Sudanese authorities have refused to extend the mandate of the Norwegian non-governmental organization Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which heads the main refugee camp in Darfur sheltering some 100,000 people, the organization announced Monday.

The NRC "fears for the security, the lives and the health to the extent that all humanitarian aid destined for 100,000 children and adults will be deprived of management and coordination," Jens Mjaugedal, head of the organisation's international division, said in a statement.

"We have not received an explanation why our presence is no longer desired," he said.

Although other NGOs will remain in the camp, NRC's departure will cause coordination and supply problems for medicines and food, Mjaugedal said.

NRC, whose mandate ends on Tuesday, said that despite worsening conditions in recent months, it had hoped "to fully continue its work but now is deprived of this possibility."

It called on the Norwegian government and the United Nations to put pressure on Sudan to facilitate the work of aid organisations.

NRC is one of Norway's largest NGOs, with 1,300 people working for refugees and displaced persons.

13 southern Sudanese families return to Bileil IDP camp in Nyala

(*AlAyaam* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum**) The administrator at the Bileil IDP camp east of Nyala town reports that some southern Sudanese IDPs families that left the camp earlier to return to different areas in North Bahr-el-Ghazal are coming back to the camp.

He said that 13 IDP families that left the camp about two weeks ago due to security concerns have returned to the camp and cite lack of services as the cause for this return.

Southern Sudan/GoSS

SPLM convention slams SPLM over views on Darfur and eastern Sudan

(*AlRai AlAam* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum**) The ongoing meeting of the SPLM political bureau in Rumbek is expected to come to a close later today with a number of resolutions being issued pertaining to the restructuring of the SPLM, the SPLM views on Darfur and eastern Sudan and setting a date for its general convention.

A committee charged with drafting an SPLM position on Darfur and eastern Sudan presented a report yesterday on the issue but was strongly criticised.

It is worth mentioning that the committee consisted of foreign minister Lam Akol, health minister Tabitha Boutrous, Presidential Advisor Mansour Khalid and Yassir Erman who heads the SPLM caucus at the National Assembly.

Ugandan rebels attempt to rally Congo insurgents

(*New Vision* – 3rd Apr. **Kampala**) Joseph Kony, the commander of the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels, is using his presence in the Garamba National Park in the DR Congo not only to hide but to make fresh alliances to ensure his survival, reported the Kampala based New Vision.

The Congolese Revolution Movement (MRC) rebels in Congo's Ituri region yesterday said the LRA had approached its leaders asking for cooperation. MRC rebels, now battling the UN Observer Mission in Congo and the Congolese army, said an LRA officer who identified himself as Shaban telephoned MRC's chief of staff Col Mathieu Gunjolo on Monday 27 March.

"LRA is asking for our troops to merge in exchange for arms and ammunition. They (LRA) are also worried that MRC is still sympathetic to Uganda and asking us not to have anything to do with Uganda," said Justin Lobho, MRC's spokesman.

But MRC has turned down LRA's offer. Lobho said, "We cannot ally with a terrorist group like LRA which has no cause for its war. Unlike LRA, we are a pro-people group with a cause."

The UPDF says Kony has ordered his chiefs in Sudan and Uganda to gather his fighters and bring them to Congo. "Kony has also ordered for unearthing of arms buried in various areas in Sudan," said UPDF's northern region spokesman, Lt Chris Magezi. The task of unearthing of arms has been assigned to Commander Lapal-Piny.

Sources said about 70 of the fugitives who escaped from Arua Prison in February and entered Congo completed a two-week training programme with the LRA in Garamba.

JIU technical chief says government must expel Lord's Resistance Army

(*Khartoum Monitor* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum**) The chairman of the JIU Technical Commitee Mjr. Gen. Elias Wai says the Lord's Resistance Army will not stall development and the implementation of the CPA in the south. He said government should be responsible for driving the Lord's Resistance Army out of southern Sudan.

"The government should take diplomatic measures to ensure that the Lord's Resistance Army will not receive any regional or international backing," Wai stated.

He pointed out that fresh returnees were terrorised into leaving their villages and seeking refuge in big towns for fear of marauding Lord's Resistance Army militias.

Underlining the need to unite to expel the Lord's Resistance Army, he called upon political forces possibly backing the Lord's Resistance Army to immediately stop their support.

Eastern Sudan

Beja Congress report the arrest of three of its members in Kassala

(*AlAyaam* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum, Kassala**) The Eastern Front reports that authorities in Kassala state arrested yesterday a number of their key member. The Front describes the move as a step to dissuade from talks on eastern Sudan.

The Eastern Front called for the immediate release of these political detainees.

It is worth noting that authorities had earlier arrested some adherents of the Eastern Front who were later released following pressures from different quarters.

Other Developments

Grenade found in the middle of Khartoum

(*AlAyaam* – 4th Apr. **Khartoum**) Khartoum State Police found a grenade on the ground in the centre of Khartoum (the crowded area north of the Grand Mosque in central Khartoum).

The police quickly sealed the area and notified forensics.

The news spread fast causing panic amongst the people who rushed to evacuate the area.

This incident has raised eyebrows as to the security measures in the capital especially following fatal incidents that occurred earlier as a result of illegal possession of firearms.

These earlier incidents were different in that they occurred in the regions or outside the city centre but this incident of a grenade in the centre of Khartoum calls for serious questions.

Eritrea to appoint ambassador to Sudan

(*ST* – 3rd Apr. **Asmara**) Eritrea said Monday it would soon appoint an ambassador to Sudan in what it called a sign of the improving relationship between the two neighbors after a decade of frosty ties.

"We will appoint an ambassador to Sudan and he will arrive there in the near future," Eritrean Information Minister Ali Abdu said.

"It is a step forward, the beginning of the process of normalisation between the two countries," he said.

Eritrea and Sudan withdrew their ambassadors and closed their common border in 2002 after Khartoum accused Asmara of supporting an offensive by Sudanese rebels on its territory and both sides traded steady streams of invective.

Officials at the Sudanese embassy in Asmara were not available for comment, but other diplomatic sources said Khartoum was also expected to appoint soon an ambassador to Eritrea.

Over the last decade, relations between the two countries have been strained by mutual accusations that each was harbouring rebel groups hostile to the other.

Rebels from eastern and western Sudan still have offices in Asmara, but Eritrea says it only provides them with political support, and has denied previous accusations from Khartoum that it gives them military aid.

But following implementation of a January peace deal that ended Sudan's 21-year north-south civil war and as Eritrea stepped up saber-rattling rhetoric with Ethiopia, Asmara and Khartoum agreed to resolve their differences.