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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Government expects sanctions over refusal to deal with ICC

Local dailies report the Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail as saying that Khartoum anticipates imposition of political and economic sanctions if the government's rejection of the ICC persists but expressed Khartoum's readiness to negotiate with the western countries including those backing the ICC. Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Ismail did not rule out President Al-Bashir's participation in the UNGA if invited. He said, "The ICC Prosecutor will report to the SC in June and Sudan government will be requested to cooperate but it will not do that". "Consequently the SC will warn the government and that could be followed by economic and political sanctions". He said the Sudanese diplomacy would engage in dialogue with the ICC backers and that a Sudanese delegation would visit France to that end.

Ismail refuted claims that the anti-ICC demonstrations and marches had negatively impacted the state machinery functioning. He also denied that President Al-Bashir had refused to meet with the SG Ban Ki-moon or greet him in Doha. "Sudan Ambassador to UN has conveyed Ki-moon's desire to meet with Al-Bashir. The request was being discussed but the SG left Doha before a decision was taken," he explained.

Political Parties urges CPA Partners to endorse elections schedule

Ray Al-Shaab reports the "Political Parties and Associations Authority" has urged the CPA Partners (NCP and SPLM) to discuss and endorse the elections schedule suggested by the National Elections Commission. The Authority's chairman Abbud Jabir told **SMC** that the timetable fixed by the NEC allows ample time needed by the political parties to prepare for the exercise.

Reacting to the elections postponement, the SPLM SG Pagan Amum told **Ajras Al-Hurriah** that the SPLM "is ready to contest upcoming elections".

According to the **ST** and **local dailies**, the National Assembly has called on the NCP and SPLM to amend the constitution in order to extend its mandate until February 2010, the new date of the general elections.

Deputy Speaker Mohamed Al-Hassan Al-Amin asked NCP and SPLM to revise the article 216, saying the term "the end of the fourth year of the Interim Period" should be amended to "the end of the fifth year of the Interim Period."

The two partners need to submit the constitutional amendment before the third week of April in order to be approved by three-fourth majority of each chamber separately, he stressed.

Miraya FM reports the National Electoral Commission member Mukhtar el Asam as saying that elections will take place in vast areas of Darfur. He said the Commission has the right to interrupt elections in some areas based on security considerations. A delegation from the Commission headed by Abel Alier would visit Darfur next week to assess the security situation in the region, he said.

VP Taha meets Abyei Administration

Al-Sahafa reports VP Ali Osman Taha has directed the speeding up of implementation of developmental and services projects in the Abyei area. Taha made the statement at meeting with the Abyei Administration in presence of the federal Finance Ministry, Unity Support Fund chairman, Community Support Fund, Humanitarian Affairs State Minister Ahmed Haroun and representatives of a number of other related bodies.

Abyei Deputy Chief Administrator Rahma Al-Nur appreciated the Presidency's concern for and follow-up of the Area's issues, noting an agreement has been reached to address the issues of salaries and entitlements.

Meanwhile, **SMC** reports the Presidency endorsed an administrative structure for Abeyei area which included 1291 vacancies. The federal Ministry of Finance also released 3 million Sudanese pounds for Abyei.

Khartoum rejects US envoy's statements

Al-Wifaq reports Sudan government has criticized the US envoy Scott Gration's statement about the humanitarian situation in Darfur. "These statements are unacceptable and inappropriate," NCP official and media advisor Rabie Abdul Atti said.

Presidency to ask FM to account for statements in Washington

Al-Sahafa cites high level government sources that Foreign Minister Deng Alor is likely to be summoned by the Presidency upon return to account for statements he made in Washington where he called for the continuation of the ICC proceedings against President Al-Bashir.

US Congress pledges \$ 275 million for GoSS

Al-Watan reports SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum as saying the US Congress pledged \$275 million for GoSS to address budget shortfall resulting from the global oil price downturn. According to **Ajras Al-Hurriah**, the SPLM delegation requested military support and in response the US Department of Defence pledged to strengthen SPLA's air defence.

Clashes renewed in Jonglei

Dinka and Murle tribesmen have used heavy artillery in renewed clashes in the Koschar area of Jonglei State, reports **Al-Wifaq**. The clashes left 30 dead 42 seriously injured and many others displaced. According to **Al-Intibaha**, yesterday's tribal attack launched by the Dinka and SPLA on the Murle left 37 killed and 40 injured.

State of emergency declared in South Darfur

South Darfur State Governor Ali Mahmoud told a press conference in Nyala yesterday that the government would not standby while tribal conflict continues to claim civilian lives, reports **Al-Rai Al-Aam**. Recent clashes between the Habbaniya and Fallata tribesmen have left 482 killed and 313 injured on the part of Habbaniya and 138 killed and 159 injured on the part of Falattah. The Governor said that the state was forced to declare a state of emergency in Wad Hajjam, Al-Tomat and Al-Nadheef areas and has formed a committee to follow up on cases of people arrested in connection with these clashes.

PDF to conduct advanced training

Al-Khartoum reports the People's Defence Forces commander Maj. Gen. Abdullah Osman Yousuf as saying PDF Mujahideen will undergo an advanced weapon and combat training. Addressing a graduation celebration yesterday, Osman said that the PDF was prepared to

defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Websites/International News Coverage

Two members of French aid group kidnapped in Sudan

Reuters, PARIS/KHARTOUM, 5/4/09 - Two expatriate staff members of Aide Medicale Internationale were kidnapped at gunpoint in southern Darfur overnight, the French medical aid group said on Sunday.

A U.N. source in Khartoum said unidentified men seized the two international staff and two Sudanese guards from their compound in Ed el Fursan just before midnight on Saturday night. The two guards were later released, the source said. Sudanese police surrounded AMI's compound on Sunday morning after the kidnapping was discovered.

The French foreign ministry said its crisis centre in Paris had been activated and the French embassy in Khartoum was in touch with the organization and with local authorities.

Land around Ed el Fursan, about 90 km (55 miles) south west of the South Darfur capital Nyala, has in recent weeks been the scene in an upsurge of fighting between members of the rival Habbaniya and Fallata tribes.

The clashes, rooted in long-standing disputes over land and other traditional rights, have escalated because of the supply of arms that has flooded the area during the six-year Darfur conflict.

UNAMID officials said they could not comment on the case while investigations were going on.

Aide Medicale Internationale said it had been operating in Darfur since 2004 in Khor Abache and Ed el Fursan, with a coordination centre in Nyala, supporting clinics and health centres in rural areas.

A spokesman for a faction of Darfur's rebel Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) denied his men, or any other insurgent force, was behind the kidnapping.

"It can only be government militias. They expelled 13 foreign aid groups last month. This is part of the same plan, to empty Darfur of all international organizations," said Ibrahim al-Helwu, from the faction controlled by Abdel Wahed Mohamed Ahmed al-Nur.

Aid groups have said they have faced growing antagonism in Darfur since the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Bashir and that they were worried that the kidnaps might mark the start of a new trend.

"We have had practically everything else - robberies, car-jacking, attacks," said one official. "But the kidnapping of international staff has never been an issue before.

Sudan Tribune quotes **SMC** as saying the captors want some 200 million USD to release the hostages and that the Sudanese Foreign Ministry official Ali Yousif confirmed the abduction.

According to **AFP** 6/4/09, Sudanese authorities are working to free two French and Canadian women aid workers who were kidnapped at the weekend in the increasingly dangerous war-torn region of Darfur.

"Efforts to free them are under way," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ali Yussef told **AFP**. "They are both women."

AMI said it "strongly deplores this kidnapping of members of its team who work daily to improve the health of the local population."

The group, which has been providing medical relief in Ed el-Fursan since 2004, was spared from Khartoum's decision last month to expel several non-governmental aid organisations from Darfur.

"We were continuing our programme, we weren't targeted," said Frederic Mar, a spokesman for AMI.

Canada's foreign affairs department said it was seeking information about the kidnapping.

"This is a very worrying new phenomenon," a source familiar with the security situation in Darfur told **AFP**, requesting anonymity. "This is a new trend towards humanitarian actors in Darfur."

Obama's envoy to Sudan arrives in Juba

Sudan Tribune, 5/4/09, (JUBA) — The US envoy to the Sudan, General Scott Gration and his aides arrived in Juba on Sunday.

Gration, who is on an official two day visit, will be meeting with the FVP and GoSS President Salva Kiir.

The meetings schedule, which begins Monday, includes also talks with GoSS VP Riek Machar Teny, as well as the Speaker of South Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) Hon. James Wani Igga, the GOSS Presidential Advisor on Human Rights and Gender, Rebecca Nyandeng De-Mabior and other senior GOSS officials.

Before returning to the United States, Gration will return to Khartoum on Tuesday to complete his meetings and talks with some Sudanese government officials and aid officials.

US envoy meets with SLM-Nur faction commanders in Darfur

Sudan Tribune, 5/4/09 (WASHINGTON) – The US special envoy to Sudan J. Scott Gration met today with commanders of a rebel group in Darfur and discussed their vision on ways to resolve the six years conflict.

Nimir Mohammed Abdul-Rahman, the military spokesperson of Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) headed by Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur told **Sudan Tribune** by phone from Darfur that the meeting took place east of Jebel Marra Mountains.

The SLA official said they emphasized to Gration that they want the "unconditional return" of all relief groups that were expelled by Khartoum last month after being accused of collaborating with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in its investigations.

He also said that they conveyed that their view of the conflict is comprised of a security, humanitarian and political aspect.

"We told the special envoy that our principles underscore the need for a secular Sudan and to achieve security in Darfur and throughout the country" Abdul-Rahman said.

“We are prepared to work with the US administration in terms of achieving security in Darfur for our people” he added.

Abdul-Rahman said that the SLA also raised the issue of expelling foreign tribes that resettled on lands belonging to the Darfuri population.

The newly appointed envoy arrived this week in Sudan on a visit that he described as a “learning” one.

The SLA spokesperson said that Gration expressed Washington’s willingness to work with them “for a durable peace and sustainable development”.

He also said that they stressed to Gration their “firm” position on cooperating with the ICC regarding the ICC arrest warrant against Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir issued last month saying the UN Security Council (UNSC) and its P-5 members should throw their full support behind it

Commentary

Sudan Elections: Rough road ahead

By Steve Paterno

Sudan Tribune, 5/4/09— The long awaited and anticipated Sudan’s general election is finally announced to take place seven months after its schedule time. The announcement came in the midst of long and deliberate delays in enacting legislations and establishing of required structures for conducting the elections. This election is a benchmark that signifies a crucial stage in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). As a benchmark, the elections will ultimately lead to referendum in South Sudan and other marginalized areas as stipulated in CPA. Besides, it is also a milestone for Sudan’s transition to democracy.

With the election calendar already publicized and fast approaching referendum in the horizon, there is bona fide urgency for certain measures to be accomplished and landmark legislations to be enacted in unmistakable short period—within less than ten months. The sheer urgency and the sensitivity of the issues involved make the process more difficult and treacherous.

One of the first measures to be taken is the immediate release of 2008 census results, which are necessary for determination of legislative constituencies. Unfortunately, the census results are hotly contested between the CPA partners; the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM). Sudanese population count has ever since been a sensitive matter even before it was conducted. After delays, postponements and more delays, the SPLM reluctantly accepted the census to take place. When the counting was finally conducted in 2008, it was a total mess, resulting into waste of time, resources and manpower. Just weeks after the census was conducted, none other than Salva Kiir, the chairman of SPLM and President of South Sudan who was to quickly doubt the results of the entire exercise and declared it “not fully reflect the real picture of the population of Sudan in general and Southern Sudan in particular.” Up until now, the results of the population of Sudan is not officially released. In play, are attempts by the NCP, which is in full control of the census results to manipulate the figures to suit its agendas. For example, in one of its computed figures, the population of South Sudan is reported to have been reduced into a mere three millions, less than what it was during the independence in 1956. The implications for such a figure when translated into legislative constituencies for the upcoming elections will under represent South Sudan in the national Legislative Assembly in Khartoum. Members of parliament of Khartoum

State alone at the national level will outnumber the ones from the whole of South Sudan region by nearly three times.

Thus far, as a resolve, the SPLM has indicated that they will reject the census results if it compromises on the populations of South Sudan. The SPLM officials warned the citizens of South Sudan to prepare themselves for a row over the results of the census. This, however, puts the SPLM in a box and in a precarious situation as far as the elections is concerned. The catch is that by accepting the elections to take place; the SPLM also by virtue are forced to agree on the outcome of the census as a prerequisite for elections. The other remote alternative and possibility is that unless the SPLM and NCP agree to compromise in using other population projections and standard mechanism as a fair form of representations to substitute the population representations in the elections based on the failed census. Otherwise, this will have serious negative repercussions on the conducts of free and fair elections if left unresolved.

Equally important and related to the populations as well as to elections is the demarcation of the borders which at the end of the day determines territorial constituencies for holding elections. The implementation of borders demarcation is remotely behind schedule and the delays have largely been for two major reasons. First, the South North borders are highly disputed between the SPLM and the NCP. At stakes are deposits of oil flowing in the border region and also the possibility of discovering more of such natural resources in the region, which both parties lay claims on. Secondly, the border region provides strategic military advantages with the deployment of the troops as stipulated in the CPA. Therefore, both parties are willing to stake claims to the region for the deployment of their troops. Without arbitration on the status of Abyei and clear demarcation of borders, it is going to be highly difficult to conduct elections in environment where territorial constituencies can never be determined. Immediate demarcation of borders must be enacted in the event that elections are to take place and in this case, this must be done within ten months.

In order to have free and fair elections, the creation of the atmosphere conducive for expression of opinions and thoughts, especially through media must be put into laws. Since the signing of the CPA, the efforts to pass legislations dealing with freedom of press and opinion have been frustratingly difficult as both the SPLM and NCP cannot agree on the framework of the legislations. In Sudan, freedom of expression has been a distant dream. The press is heavily censored and citizens are denied their rights to express their opinions and thoughts in a free environment. According to the Freedom House report released in 2009, Sudan ranks among the 'worst of the worst' among the world in abusing freedom of its citizens. Such can only add into hurdles already making the conducts of free and fair elections difficult.

The enactment of Sudan's National Security Act, which will abolish arbitrary arrest, stop detention without due process of law, and curb on powers of security organs, has been bitterly disputed between the CPA partners. Today in Sudan, the security organs are still exercising absolute power of brutality. The security has even grown more deadly in the recent months, particularly in the aftermath of International Criminal Court (ICC) issuance of arrest warrant against President Omar al-Bashir. The chief of security in Khartoum Salah Gosh is irresponsibly issuing public warnings against citizens and the security apparatus are stepping up illegal arrests of the citizens they deemed threats. This of course, if allowed to continue will not create conducive atmosphere for free and fair elections.

The Referendum Act is already supposed to be passed into law, however, since it is not yet enacted, it is high time that the act becomes law now. Not only the CPA stipulated that it is passed, but the current parties to the CPA hold better chance to guarantee its passage as oppose to leaving the fate of such milestone legislation to the uncertainties of the next members

of Legislative Assembly who may after all not be keen to maintain the CPA, especial the notion of entertaining self determination for South Sudan. Anything can happen in the upcoming elections, including hostile parties to the CPA swiping into power. The other reason why the legislation is a matter of urgency is that the next Legislative Assembly will not have enough time to enact any meaningful laws before the referendum takes place. By the time the scheduled elections take place, the referendum will be only months away, not even a year to spare.

In conclusions, these hurdles including others not mentioned here, will potentially not only impede fair and free elections, but negatively reflect into the highly sought out and heavily priced referendum of South Sudan and other marginalized areas as stipulated by the CPA. If these important benchmarks measures and landmark legislations are not prioritized in the manner of their urgency, the future of entire Sudan is in jeopardy as the next events will ultimately mark the end to the CPA and a possible resumptions of an all out South North war. The delays in holding elections have already shaken the fate of referendum and any slight move in wrong direction may as well push it down the cliff. As they say, Sudan is at the 'crossroad,' and indeed it is.