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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

US envoy submits proposals to Khartoum

Al-Sahafa reports the US envoy Scott Gration as saying that he felt Khartoum is willing to change the situation in the Sudan and promised the US Administration's assistance to that end. According to the paper's source, Gration submitted proposals to the government regarding the ousted INGOs and asked Khartoum for a feedback during his next visit within two months. According to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**, Gration told a press conference yesterday that Obama Administration would focus on Darfur and the CPA. "We want elections to take place and so does the South Sudan referendum," he said

Rising abduction threatens remaining aid groups – Ameera Haq

In a lengthy interview to **Al-Sahafa**, DSRSG Ameera Haq has expressed UN readiness to cooperate with Khartoum on humanitarian work but pointed out that the implementation of the decision at this point in time will affect the delivery of humanitarian aid as long time is needed to build the capacity of the national NGOs and IDPs would not wait for that. She said presently UN could not fill the gap left by the INGO ouster and warned that the remaining aid groups could also leave if insecurity persists. However, she ruled out that the INGO expulsion would affect the flow of donor support. "Donors have always been generous. Their support account for 70% of our needs," she said. Haq also revealed that IDPs in some camps agreed to cooperate with the national NGOs as they had received their food ration from the national staff previously working with the ousted INGOs.

Parliament awaits census results

The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Health and Population, Margaret Aro, said that the committee had notified the Speaker on their wishes to receive a briefing from the census monitoring body on the census results, **Ray Al-Shaab** has learnt. Reports say the technical monitoring committee will announce its final report covering the technical and procedural aspects of the census process next Saturday while the National Census and Population Council would announce the census results later.

Meanwhile, **Miraya FM** reports the Southern Sudan Census Commission has confirmed that all population census data have been put together by a special working technical group and are now before the National Population Census Council. The Chairperson of the Commission, Isaiah Chol, said that the process of releasing the results was ongoing but he did not specify the possible date when the results could be presented to the public.

NCP, SPLM agree on national security law

Al-Wifaq reports the NCP and SPLM have reached a final agreement on the national security law. According to a press release issued yesterday, subcommittees are also discussing other laws and that the national security law would be submitted to the Council of Ministers prior to its final approval by the Parliament.

Efforts underway to free abductors – Protocol Director

Al-Watan reports the Director of Protocol Ambassador Ali Yousuf as saying that the French

NGO abductees were still held by the abductors. He said negotiations were underway between the NGO and the abductors and that the government was also making efforts to ensure safe release of the aid workers. However, ***Al-Intibaha*** reports that official efforts to release the abducted French aid workers have so far been unsuccessful. The paper's source said the abductors transferred the two aid workers to West Darfur State and the matter was now out of the local government's control. According to the paper's source, the abduction was a reaction to the abduction of Darfur children by a French NGO from a refugee camp in eastern Chad and that the abductors intend to move the captives to Chad if the ransom is not paid for their freedom.

SPLM, NCP cooperating on humanitarian situation in Darfur

SPLM SG Pagan Amum said the two Partners were cooperating on the issue of the humanitarian situation in Darfur following the expulsion of the NGOs, ***Al-Rai Al-Aam*** reports. Addressing a press conference in Khartoum yesterday, Amum called on the NCP to identify the spies it claimed to have been working with the expelled NGOs and take them to court. He also called for a truce in Darfur to help improve the humanitarian situation on the ground so that all parties could participate in the upcoming elections.

Al-Sudani reports Amum also said the SPLM Politburo would meet next week to discuss the current situation in the country and SPLM's plans for the forthcoming elections.

According to ***Al-Wifaq***, Pagan Amum said SPLM would work for the return of the expelled aid groups so that the humanitarian situation in Darfur does not worsen. ***Miraya FM*** reported Amum described the visit of his movement to the US as successful.

Akhbar Al-Youm reports Pagan as saying he does not think that the deferment of the elections to February next year would affect the referendum for southern Sudan come 2011 but said it may affect the tenure of the government. He said that an SPLM committee will report to the SPLM Politburo meeting in Juba next week on preparations for the elections. He said that security continues to pose a challenge for the elections and may require that some parts of the country be excluded for some time from the process. He said the SPLM has called for truce in Darfur to allow for the elections and he called on the GoSS to provide security in southern Sudan. He left the doors open for possible coalition with some parties for the elections.

On criticism leveled on the SPLM by participants at the Kenana conference of southern Sudanese politicians and intellectuals, he said that those statements may be a prelude to discrediting the SPLM ahead of the elections. He said that the SPLM was not invited to the conference but the NCP was.

He agreed that the SPLM faces a problem of leadership in southern Kordofan and is not operating efficiently in that region. SPLM leaders in that region will report to the politburo and a quick decision will be made on the issue, he said.

Banking risks increased due to existence of two banking systems

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports the representative of Governor of the Bank of Sudan Mohamed Ali Al-Shaikh told a press conference on banking risks in Sudan yesterday that the presence of two banking systems in the country is negatively affecting the banking sector.

Doha talks to resume in 3 weeks

Amin Hassan Omar, a leading figure in the NCP, has revealed that a new round of peace talks on Darfur may resume in Doha towards the end of this month, reports ***Al-Raed***. However, he said the mediators are yet to fix a date. The NCP, he said, is willing to negotiate with any faction that would come to the talks.

GoSS institutes measures to curb effects of financial downturn

Al-Ahdath reports that an extraordinary meeting of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly

resolved on Tuesday to institute drastic measures to cut government spending and improve collection of non-oil revenue. GoSS Spokesperson Gabriel Chang said that the meeting also decided that GoSS should consult with the GoNU on means to guarantee remittance of the GoSS share in oil revenues. Also as part of these measures, GoSS will cut employee salaries by 5% and the GoSS will filter out “ghost workers” from government payrolls.

Polio re-emerges in Sudan

The Citizen reports that the WHO has disclosed that 25 cases of polio have re-emerged in Sudan – 21 cases in southern Sudan and 4 cases in the north.

Websites/International News Coverage

Darfur situation under control despite aid workers ouster – Deputy Speaker

SUNA, 8/4/09, Khartoum - National Assembly Deputy Speaker Mohamed al Hassan Al Amin said the humanitarian situation in Darfur is under the government’s full control despite the expulsion of a number of NGOs from the region. He made the remarks during a meeting with the ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sudan Rosalinda Masson in Khartoum. The Deputy speaker has stressed that these organizations have their own vested agenda and that they have been cooperating with the ICC.

Meanwhile, **Sudan Tribune website** 8/4/09 reported that the Russian special envoy to Sudan Mikhail Margelov said in Cairo that his government was not happy with the decision of the INGO ouster from Sudan but expressed Russia’s willingness to help any party wishing to deliver aid to Darfur. According to the **website**, the remarks are a rare criticism by Moscow of its African ally.

Asked whether Russia would veto any attempts in the UN Security Council to enforce the arrest warrant, Margelov said “it is too early” to determine a position on the issue.

Quoting the London-based **Al-Hayat** newspaper, the **website** also reported that US special envoy to Sudan J. Scott Gration laid down proposals during his talks in Khartoum which he said he expects a response to them within a month time. Gration has proposed to Khartoum to allow some of the expelled aid groups or replacing others with INGOs that possess the sufficient experience and can be trusted by donors. He also called for Khartoum to lift obstacles and red tape facing humanitarian work.

If Sudan accepts and implements the offer then Washington will resume dialogue with Khartoum on normalizing relations which was suspended last June under former US administration.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, the US official said he found situation in the IDP camps in Darfur “better than what he expected” though he said some camps are in desperate need of water and healthcare.

He urged Sudan to work hand in hand with the international community and NGO’s to find ways to improve life of Darfuri refugees and called for “creative” ideas in this regard.

Gration said the humanitarian situation in Darfur, ceasefire and repatriation of displaced population is a priority for Washington along with the implementation of the North-South Comprehensive peace agreement.

He called on all parties to work on creating a conducive environment for the upcoming elections in February 2010 and the referendum in the South scheduled for 2011.

The Sudanese presidential adviser said after his meeting with Gration, that he is hopeful that the US envoy's visit would be the beginning of fruitful dialogue between the two sides and vowed that his government will do everything possible to further bilateral ties.

Gration was briefed earlier by Sudanese armed forces on the security arrangements in Darfur as well as South Sudan.

The pro-government Sudanese Media Center (**SMC**) cited the deputy chief of staff Majzoub Rahma as saying that Gration requested the meeting to get current on the details of security protocols included in the CPA and the Darfur Peace Agreement signed in 2006.

The US envoy appeared to be taking a more conciliatory tone with Sudan since taking office and have said that he wants to work on improving the thorny relations between the two countries.

He said that he came "with my hands open" and hoped that Sudan's government will respond "with a hand of friendship," saying that "like all my American colleagues, Ana Ahib Sudan," or "I love Sudan."

The remarks signaled a shift in policy from the confrontational tone of the Bush administration particularly over the issue of Darfur.

Reuters, 8/4/09 reported that more than a month after Sudan shut down 13 foreign aid groups in Darfur, Khartoum has done nothing to fill the relief gaps, leaving 4.7 million people at risk, rights groups said on Wednesday.

Headed by international human rights watchdog Amnesty, 19 mostly African rights organizations urged Sudan to let back in aid agencies expelled after a Hague court indicted Sudan's President for war crimes.

"We are concerned that to date, more than a month after the decision to expel the organizations, the government of Sudan has not put in place measures to ensure that civilians will not die from thirst, hunger and disease," Mariam Kahiga, Amnesty International's Kenya coordinator, told a news conference.

The aid vacuum left by the expulsions now threatens to overwhelm the under-equipped international peacekeeping mission in Darfur, the rights groups said.

"If the decision to expel the aid agencies is not reversed, there is a risk that the African Union peacekeepers currently in Darfur with the joint United Nations African Union Mission for Darfur will be faced with the prospect of protecting a civilian population that is at the same time dying from hunger, thirst and disease," said Kanjetho Munagi of Kenya's Social Reform Centre.

"We consider it unacceptable that the government of Sudan responded to the arrest warrants by punishing the people of Darfur."

The rights groups urged the African Union and the U.N. Security Council to exert more pressure on Bashir's government to allow aid organizations to resume relief work.

New law for child rights to be celebrated in South Sudan capital

Sudan Tribune website, 8/4/09 (JUBA) – The President of the Government of Southern Sudan

is expected Thursday to officially launch the Child Act in Southern Sudan.

The legislation is being inaugurated after having passed through some contentious debates on issues like female genital cutting and child adoption – a matter complicated by wide-scale abductions carried out in some areas of the South.

But the director of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in Southern Sudan, Peter Crowley, ultimately voiced praise for the legislation, calling it “a major milestone in creating a protective environment in which children can enjoy their rights to health, education and other basic services, to access information, to express their views, and to be protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm.”

An independent Children’s Commission will be established by the law to investigate reported child rights violations.

The new law defines the child as any person under the age of 18 years and requires all levels of the Government of Southern Sudan to recognize respect and ensure the rights of children.

“Any member of the community who suspects that a child’s rights have been violated or are at risk, has the duty to report the case to local authorities,” stated UNICEF on the eve of the Act’s launch.

“In addition the law states that parents have duties and responsibilities to have their children’s births registered, to protect their children from neglect, discrimination, violence and abuse, to provide them with good care and guidance and to ensure that they receive full time education.”

The new law bans and criminalizes the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups, and also bans the torture and cruel treatment of children – including the use of corporal punishment in schools, jails and public institutions – as well as early marriage and other negative and harmful cultural and social practices, and the use of children for prostitution and pornography.

According to the legislation, children under the age of 12 can not be held accountable for criminal acts and no child under 12 years can be arrested and imprisoned. Furthermore the law establishes a restorative justice system for children above the age of 12 years accused of crimes, which allows for reconciliation, restitution and compensation without depriving the child accused of a crime of his or her liberty

For children living without parents, the law requires that those children are provided with alternative family care in their community, including care by relatives, or by foster parents or adoptive families.

The law recognizes that children who are victims of abuse, violence, neglect, injury, maltreatment and exploitation, including sexual abuse and exploitation, have the right to treatment and rehabilitation, according to UNICEF.

In turn, children are responsible for respecting parents, guardians, superiors and elders. They should also serve the community, preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity, uphold the positive values of their community and maintaining positive relationships with fellow citizens, says the law.

Commentary

Don't welcome Sudan's tyrant

The Guardian (UK). Khaled Diab 04/08/2009.

By showing solidarity with President Omar al-Bashir, Arab and African nations are cheapening the value of their own lives

If Arabs want their concerns about other nations' war crimes to be taken seriously, they should not be welcoming Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir to their countries and summits.

With the way Omar Hassan al-Bashir has been jetting around the Middle East and Africa, you might be excused for thinking he was not a wanted man. In recent weeks, he has visited half a dozen countries, including Eritrea and Egypt, both of which are signatories (pdf) to the International Criminal Court but have not yet ratified the Rome Statute establishing it.

The world's most wanted head of state topped it all off with an Arab summit in Doha which reiterated "our solidarity with Sudan and our rejection of the measure of the ... International Criminal Court against his Excellency". Bashir explained his decision to attend the summit as "a message to the western world that Sudan will not be isolated".

Perhaps trying to show he is at peace with his conscience or as a secret plea for divine intervention, the first sitting head of state to be indicted for war crimes flew to Saudi Arabia to perform an umra, or mini pilgrimage. He even defiantly said that he was willing to attend the annual UN general assembly, if he was invited.

Many Arabs and Africans see Bashir's indictment as a manifestation of racism, western imperialism under a different guise, especially given the fact that the only cases currently before the ICC are all against Africans.

Some will dismiss these concerns with a glib assertion that justice is blind and that Arabs and Africans are being hypocritical in their defence of a war criminal. But there is a strong whiff of – if not hypocrisy – double standards and of picking a soft target in the ICC's decision to pursue the Sudanese president. For instance, I recently outlined the strong arguments for indicting George W Bush for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

So why has the ICC not started similar proceedings against the former US president? Because the US has not signed up to the ICC and so the court has no jurisdiction over Americans? Well, the same applies to Sudan which, like the US and Israel, has also indicated that it will not ratify the Rome Statute. The answer is, of course, obvious: justice may be blind, but she has a sixth sense that tells her not to mess with the big guys.

Just like many Arabs are outraged that the ICC should indict Bashir, many Americans get furious at the mere suggestion that their own leaders might be criminal mass murderers. After the publication of my Bush article, one furious American, who called me a "moon worshipper" without explaining what that meant, emailed me to ask how I dared question the intentions of the "great" George W Bush, and to inform me that his only regret was that the former president had not killed more Arabs.

What this proves is that making exceptions for your own side is not exceptional and that hypocrisy knows no national or cultural boundaries. But if the west wishes its moral stances to be taken seriously by its former colonies, where some of the world's most serious crimes against humanity are committed, then it has to be seen to be pursuing justice whether it involves friends or foes.

"How can an ordinary citizen in the Arab or Muslim world believe that the international community applies international law [impartially] and is concerned about the welfare of Muslims in Darfur... at a time when the rights of millions of Arabs and Muslims are violated in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and other places?" asks Hassan Nafe'ah, an Egyptian expert in international law. "We don't object to trying Bashir and any other Arab tyrant, as long as they are preceded by Bush and Olmert and others of their ilk," he concludes.

Pointing fingers at western hypocrisy is, in itself, not a sufficient defence, since double standards are duplicity whether practiced by the powerful or the weak. If Arabs wish their concerns over atrocities committed by the US in Iraq or Israel in Gaza to be taken seriously, they need to apply similar standards to their allies. That does not mean they have to hand Bashir over to the ICC, especially given their fears that it could destabilize Sudan, but, at the very least, they should condemn his two decades of terror and ostracize him for the crimes he has committed against his own people.

Bashir's two decades ruling Sudan have been a constant chain of conflict and war – from the civil war between north and south to the more recent conflict in Darfur – in which the total body count is unknown but could be anywhere between two and three million.

There is a widespread belief that, in the ugly balance of reality, African and Arab lives are worth less than western ones. But by expressing solidarity with a known mass murderer, Arabs and Africans are also cheapening the value of their own lives.