



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

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Media Monitoring Report

16 April 2008

By Public Information Office

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# Highlights

## Main News

### GoSS to make its position public today on census

Today's papers report that First Vice- President Silva Kiir chaired a stormy meeting of the GoSS Council of Ministers in Juba yesterday (Tuesday), where they deliberated on the Presidency's proposed census date.

Reportedly, members of GoSS Cabinet are divided on the new census date. One group supported the Presidency's proposed date whereas another group opposed it, arguing that pending issues still need to be addressed.

According to *Akhbar Alyoum*, some GoSS cabinet members criticized Kiir for not consulting with the Council before approving the Presidency's decision and said they do not trust the presidency and the NCP.

GoSS Minister of Information Gabriel Changson Chang is to hold a press conference today to declare GoSS final position on the new proposed census date.

### GoSS asks GNU to delay Census

(Miraya FM) The GoSS minister of Information and Broadcasting, Gabriel Changson Chang announced the Southern Sudan Council of Ministers has decided the census can start on 22nd April provided earlier concerns are addressed. He however said it was 'highly improbable' that these concerns could be dealt with within seven days and called on the Government of National Unity to defer the census to a later date.

Last week, the GoSS Council of Ministers postponed the census which was due to start on the 15th of this month, citing insecurity, the slow pace of the repatriation of refugees and IDPs and the non-inclusion of ethnicity and religion in the census questionnaires.

### South Sudan accepts census date, says concerns remain

Wed 16 Apr 2008, 10:27 GMT

JUBA, Sudan (Reuters) - South Sudan's semi-autonomous government raised new concerns on Wednesday about next week's national census and said it should not be used to define how money and power would be shared out.

Census taking had been due to start on April 15 but was delayed for a week after objections from the south.

South Sudan's cabinet said today (Wednesday) following an all-day meeting that it would accept the new April 22 start date but warned that serious logistical problems remained.

"(We) will have no objection to the census going ahead but can these issues be resolved within seven days?" South Sudan's Information Minister Gabriel Changson Chang said.

"I think it will be very difficult if not impossible."

The southern government is concerned some Sudanese will be excluded from the count, among them millions of southerners who fled during two decades of civil war.

Chang said only about 5 million people in the south were likely to be reached, partly because early rains had made some areas inaccessible. He said southern enumerators had only 110 cars out of 400 needed, and that English and Arabic-speakers in the south might be sent census forms in the wrong language.

The south also wants questions on ethnicity and religion added to the questionnaire.

Chang said the results should not be used to determine Sudan's borders or the framework of a promised referendum on southern secession. The census should not be used "to determine wealth or power sharing, or ... the cultural identity of the country," he added.

Many Sudanese in the western Darfur region, where a separate conflict is entering its sixth year, also reject the census, as many areas there are inaccessible because of poor security.

The head count is a key part of a 2005 north-south peace deal that ended Africa's longest civil war, in which 2 million people died. It is intended to define how power and wealth will be shared and will help define constituencies ahead of democratic elections due next year -- the first in 23 years.

The decision from south Sudan means the census is likely to go ahead on April 22 but the results may be contested.

"We will have a very strong opinion on the general outcome ... and the usage of the results," Chang said.

A slow road to peace has created distrust between north and south. Last year, the former southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) withdrew from the national coalition government complaining the north lacked the political will to implement the whole deal, including democratic transformation

## [UN/Agencies](#)

[No proof to Sudan's allegations of peacekeeper misconduct in Darfur - UNAMID](#)

April 15, 2008 (NYALA) — The Darfur hybrid mission said tests failed to confirm allegations by Sudanese authorities that one of its officers committed immoral practices in the war-torn Darfur region.

An officer serving with the hybrid mission in Nyala, capital of South Darfur State, was detained by local authorities on 13 April 2008 on the charges of alleged misconduct inside a house in the quarter of Nyala airport.

In a press statement issued today the UNAMID said that medical tests undertaken at the request of local police "proved negative." However, the joint mission pledged to probe the case.

"UNAMID has initiated an investigation into this case and certainly will take appropriate measures should such allegations prove founded."

The officer was later handed over to UNAMID, as per the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed between the Government of Sudan and UNAMID.

"Peacekeepers are expected to respect the culture and traditions of the host country and show the highest standards of conduct at all times," the joint mission stated.

#### [GoNU](#)

#### [SAF accuses SPLA of supporting elements in Darfur](#)

(Al-Sahafa/Al-wan) Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) Spokesperson Brigadier Osman Mohammed Al Aghbush said Tuesday that SPLM committed over the past few days a number of violations to CPA.

He added that SPLM supported elements currently on alert around Al Radom area in Buram Locality, South East Darfur, adding that the movement opened new administrative units by entering police elements at Al Niaam, Dkra, Dyok and Taj Alali of Abyei area.

Sources in South Darfur Capital of Nayala told (Al-Wan daily news paper) that these areas, which are bordering Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, late SPLM's Leader John Garang believed these area were part of South Sudan borders.

#### [Netherlands decides not to contribute troops to Darfur](#)

(Al-Rai Al-Aam) The Dutch Government announced it would not send troops and medical assistances to Darfur.

Dutch Foreign Minister said the decision was taken due to insecurity in the region and uncalculated risks.

#### [Messeriya delegation to visit Abyei today to familiarize themselves with the situation and open Meiram-Aweil road](#)

(Al-Watan) A delegation from the Messeriya comprised of Abyei Liberation Movement (ALM) leader Mohamed Omer Al-Ansari, Abdul Rasoul Al Nour and Mahdi Babu Nimir and a number of other Messeriya leaders will visit Abyei today to familiarize themselves with the situation and open Meiram-Aweil road.

### [Sudanese security block three papers-journalists](#)

KHARTOUM, April 15 (Reuters) - Sudanese security authorities stopped three independent newspapers from printing on Tuesday, stepping up a censorship campaign critics say violates the country's constitution, journalists said.

While Sudan's radio and television are state controlled, privately-owned newspapers are relatively free. Sudan eased press censorship after a constitution put in place at the end of a two-decade civil war between the north and south in 2005 guaranteed freedom of the press.

However, sporadic censorship of the dailies is reinstated at politically sensitive times.

"Today at about 0215 (2315 GMT) security officials told the printing press not to print our paper," Murtada al-Ghali, editor-in-chief of the paper Freedom Belt, said.

Journalists said security officials had been visiting the newspapers at night to take out what they deemed as sensitive material, but this week they had told them instead to bring copies to the security offices before printing.

"We refused. We said we cannot take our papers there and bring them back and work this way," Ghali said. Because of this, Freedom Bells, the independent al-Ayaam and the opposition Rai al-Shaab were all prevented from printing on Tuesday, Ghali and other journalists said.

Ghali said other papers, which did not take their copies to security offices, were allowed to print on Tuesday.

Security officials were not immediately available to comment.

Freedom Belt is part owned by members of the former southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), who signed a 2005 peace deal with the dominant northern National Congress Party. Its charter asserts the paper's independence.

But the road to peace has been difficult and created distrust between the partners, culminating in the SPLM withdrawing from the coalition government last year in protest at what they say was an unequal partnership.

Sudan's north-south civil war claimed some 2 million lives and drove more than 4 million from their homes.

The 2005 deal does not cover a separate newer rebellion in Sudan's remote western Darfur region. (Reporting by Opheera McDoom; Editing by Ibon Vilelabeitia)

## SPLM accuses NCP of censorship against the Sudanese press

(ST) April 15, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — The Deputy Secretary of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Northern Sector, Yasir Arman Saeed has accused the National Congress Party (NCP) of exercising a repressive censorship against the Sudanese press.

At a press conference, Tuesday held at the premises of Ajrass al Huriya (The Bells of Freedom) Arabic newspaper upon its suspension, Arman affirmed that the NCP is exercising a repressive censorship on newspapers through the security organs and it is to be considered as a political decision.

The NCP controlled Sudanese security service stopped on Tuesday three independent newspapers from printing: the newly issued Ajrass al-Huriya, al-Ayaam and Ray al-Shaab. Murtada El Ghali, Editor in Chief of Ajrass al-Huriya said the security officials told them to bring copies to the security offices before printing, instead of visiting the newspapers at night — as they used — to take out what they judged as sensitive material.

The transitional constitution adopted following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 putted an end to the censorship exercised by the Security services and guaranteed freedom of the press.

Arman who is also a member of the National Assembly said that NCP needs to create new methods of dealing with people. He also said that the NCP political leadership is investing in cultivating hatred and sedition amongst people. He criticized newspaper owners for having no clear vision on the freedom of press.

Arman announced his stand with the censored newspapers.

A well-known Sudanese lawyer, and MP from the opposition Democratic Unionist Party, Ali Mahmoud Hassanein asserted that this censorship is denounced according to the transitional constitution and that he is ready to present a call for the Ajras al Huriya in the court to face this issue.

Ajrass al-Huriya which is owned by some SPLM members, issued its first edition on April 7, while Ray al-Shaab is issued by the Popular Congress Party of Hassan al-Turabi.

Both Ajrass al Huriya and Ray al -Shaab newspapers made statements concerning the matter which said that they will not take there newspapers to the security organ for supervision even if it will lead to suspension

The deputy chief editor for the independent Arabic news paper Al-Ayaam said that this is not the first time security services have been closing down the newspaper in Khartoum, he said that Al-Ayaam daily newspapers which was opened in 1953; closed down in 2004 for three month by the security services.

Observers in Khartoum say this mounting censorship campaign comes to silent the press over the census crisis. The television and the radio are totally controlled by the

National Congress Party. The Union of journalists also under the hands of the northern Sudan ruling party.

### [Sudan's Mahdi proposes tribal conference to ease Sudan Chad tension](#)

(ST) April 15, 2008 (PARIS) — The Former Sudanese Prime Minister and leader of the opposition Umma Party proposed to hold a conference for the tribal and traditional leader of all the ethnic groups disseminated between the Sudan and Chad.

The Chadian President, Idriss Deby received Sadiq al-Mahdi in the Presidential Palace on Monday April 14, 2008 to discuss a peace plan to defuse tension between the two neighbouring countries.

A Umma Party delegation led by Sadiq al-Mahdi proposed a plan to reconcile Khartoum and N'Djamena. A Chadian official, who requested anonymity, said the former Prime Minister suggested to hold a conference for the tribal leaders in the war affected areas in eastern Chad and western Sudan to reconcile them.

"Al-Mahdi proposed to convene this meeting for the traditional leaders because he believes that the solution should come from the ground" the source said.

The Zaggawa ethnic group, Al-Mahamiyed and Tama tribes are among groups concerned groups living in Chad and Sudan and involved in the internal conflicts in the two countries.

According to the Chadian Presidency website, Sadiq al-Mahdi told Deby he can not remain indifferent towards current conflict between Chad and Sudan, two neighbouring countries, linked by history. He further said that his plan aiming at re-establishing "peace and harmony between the two countries."

"The proposal will be discussed by the highest authorities in Chad who, I am sure, will give their agreement in principle," al-Mahdi said following the meeting. He further pledged that the Umma Party will do its utmost to achieve the objective he has set: reconciliation between Chad and Sudan.

Darfur region was considered as the most important popular base for the Umma Party before the 1989 Islamist coup d'état led by General Omer al-Bashir.

The meeting was attended by the Chadian Ambassador to Sudan, Baharadine Haroun, and two members from the Umma Party.

### [GoSS](#)

### [Uganda rebels abducted 55 Sudanese children- Machar](#)

(ST) April 15, 2008 (RI-KWANGBA) — The chief mediator in Uganda's peace talks accused rebels of kidnapping 55 children in south Sudan in recent weeks, casting doubt on the Lord's Resistance Army's commitment to faltering peace talks.

"I have reports that these youths have been abducted by the LRA," south Sudan's Vice President Riek Machar told Reuters as he left the remote Sudan-Congo border, where he had camped since Thursday in the hope of meeting LRA commander Joseph Kony.

"Why do they continue to do this and say that they are still committed to the peace process?"

Kony, who is wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, failed to appear for a planned signing ceremony — or even to talk to Machar by telephone.

"Through his officer on the ceasefire monitoring team, Kony sent me a message saying he is still committed to the peace process, only that some key issues were not well communicated to him," said Machar, who has chaired peace talks since mid-2006.

Kony had requested another meeting on April 26 in the frontier hamlet of Ri-Kwangba with Machar and religious and cultural leaders from the LRA's native northern Uganda, he said.

The 22-year civil war has killed tens of thousands of people and uprooted 2 million more in northern Uganda alone. It has also destabilised neighbouring parts of Sudan's oil-producing south and eastern Congo, which has large mineral wealth.

Speaking in the south Sudanese capital Juba on Monday, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni accused Kony of not being serious about the negotiations and hinted that his forces could resume operations against the guerrillas.

#### KIDNAPPING VILLAGERS

He also accused LRA fighters of resuming their tactic of kidnapping villagers from southern Sudan, Congo and Central African Republic who were then forced into the rebel ranks.

The people of south Sudan should know Uganda had the means to help them "solve some of these problems," Museveni said.

Ugandan troops battled the LRA across southern Sudan, but clashes largely stopped in mid-2006 after Machar started talks.

Kony was expected to sign a final peace agreement on Thursday. But he failed to show up, then fired his negotiator.

An LRA spokesman said Kony was ready to sign, but wanted guarantees of his safety and financial security first.

Rebel sources later said LRA infighting over the proposed deal killed at least nine people — including Okot Odhiambo, a top commander who is also wanted by international prosecutors.



Kony, Odhiambo and a third senior rebel, Dominic Ongwen, were accused by the ICC in 2005 of offences including rape, murder and the abduction of thousands of children who were forced to serve the group as fighters, porters and sex slaves.

Even if Kony does sign a peace agreement, the LRA says it will not disarm until the ICC indictments are scrapped. The Ugandan government has said it will only call for the warrants to be lifted after a final deal has been reached.

The world court says its warrants remain active, and that Uganda has a legal obligation to arrest the targets.

## Darfur

### US envoy holds rare direct talks with Darfur rebel JEM

(ST) April 15, 2008 (PARIS) — The US efforts to boost efforts in the war ravaged region of Darfur took an unprecedented turn Tuesday with a senior official holding a rare meeting with a rebel movement in France.

The US special envoy to Sudan Richard Williamson met with a high level delegation from Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) to discuss the resumption of peace talks and cessation of hostilities in Darfur.

JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein told Sudan Tribune from Paris that the meeting was supposed to include Khalil Ibrahim leader of JEM but said that “logistical difficulties due to his presence in Darfur” prevented him from attending.

However, Hussein disclosed that that Williamson had phone conversation with Ibrahim earlier today and that the latter will meet with the US envoy “very soon” to discuss ways of “bringing about a comprehensive and sustainable peace in Darfur”.

The meeting is the first of its kind since the US administration imposed sanctions on Ibrahim for his role and accused him of “activity aimed at further destabilizing the situation on the ground [in Darfur]”.

Last year a US state department official speaking to Sudan Tribune said that “Ibrahim’s agenda is that of Hassan Turabi, the head of the Popular Congress Party and an ex-ally of President Al-Bashir”.

The official elaborated by saying that it is clear to the US administration that Ibrahim is focused on Khartoum and not on the crisis of his people in Darfur.

The JEM delegation in the talks with the US envoy was headed by Dr. Mahmoud Abakar Tinawi, the vice chairperson of the general congress; Dr El-Tahir Adam El-Faki, the Chairman of JEM Legislative Council and Ahmed Hussein who is JEM spokesperson and in charge of relations with Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM).

The delegation also included Ahmed Tugud Lisan, JEM political secretariat and chief negotiator; Dr. Abdullahi Osman El-Tom, in charge of JEM Bureau for Training and

Strategic Planning; Jibreel Ibrahim, economic adviser and Sadiq Hassan head of JEM office in France.

The JEM spokesperson said that the US official “emphasized Bush’s desire to help Sudanese parties reach a peaceful settlement and ending the plight of Darfurian people”.

“He told us that the US is looking for ways to achieve peace in Darfur before the end of Bush’s second term and the pivotal role JEM could play” Hussein said.

The Darfur rebel group underscored to Williamson the need for the full deployment of UN-AU hybrid force (UNAMID) for a “constructive environment”. The US official raised the need for cessation of hostilities “in the coming period”.

JEM is thought to have the largest military rebel force in Darfur and has gained extra prominence in recent months through a series of clashes with government forces. But other groups, chief among the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) faction led by founder Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur, have huge support among Darfur’s displaced populations.

But Hussein said that the JEM delegation told Williamson that the movement “is not just a military power but managed to transform itself in many parts of Darfur and that many people look at them for hope”.

“We thanked the US and President Bush for helping the people of Darfur and his devotion to the problems facing Sudan” he added.

JEM expressed their willingness to negotiate “immediately” saying that peace “is a strategic objective”.

However, the delegation told the US envoy that there needs to be a mediation change and called for a sole mediator to replace the U.N.’s Darfur envoy, Jan Eliasson, and his African Union counterpart Salim Ahmed Salim.

The rebel group also expressed to Williamson their “skepticism of Khartoum’s seriousness in pursuing peace as an alternative to a military solution” and that any future negotiations should address the “root causes of the conflict”.

Williamson met with SLM leader Al-Nur on Monday and is will fly to Rome for a meeting with a Sudanese government delegation on Wednesday.

Presidential adviser Nafi Ali Nafi, foreign minister Deng Alor and Salah Gosh, the head of National Security and Intelligence Service, will head the Sudanese delegation. Sudan official news agency (SUNA) said the talks will tackle normalization of bilateral relations and that it will last till Saturday with a possibility of extension depending on the progress.

International experts estimate some 200,000 have died and 2.5 million have been forced from their homes in the five years of revolt in Darfur, which borders Chad.

Mostly non-Arab rebels took up arms in early 2003 accusing the central government of neglect. However, rebel divisions and the government's mobilization of mostly Arab tribal militia have created a mix of armed groups and a breakdown of law and order.

Washington calls the violence genocide, a term European governments are reluctant to use and Khartoum rejects.

#### [Darfur rebel JEM wants Western oil Companies to replace Chinese](#)

(ST) April 15, 2008 (LONDON) — A rebel official within a powerful group in Sudan's troubled Darfur region wants major Western oil companies to replace Chinese companies in the country, adding that new attacks were being prepared against them.

Offering better guarantees of oil revenue redistribution and environmental protection, "we would love to have Western companies," replace Chinese ones, Eltahir Abdam Elfaki, chairman of the legislative council of the Justice and Equality Movement, said in a recent interview with Dow Jones Newswires.

"We don't want China. We want to expel them. We have the means" to do so, he added. "We are preparing new attacks."

At risk is some of the half-a-million barrels of crude pumped daily in the troubled northeast African country, of which more than 200,000 barrels are imported by China, making Sudan its fourth-largest provider of crude.

Some rebel groups are unhappy about the Chinese government trading oil for weapons and its vetoing of U.N. sanctions on Darfur.

Last year, the Justice and Equality Movement, a powerful military faction fighting Sudan's Arab-dominated regime, attacked oilfields run by the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Co., or Gnpoc, which is 40%-owned by the China National Petroleum Corp.

Gnpoc and CNPC didn't return a request for comment.

Gnpoc, in which Malaysia's Petrolia Nasional Bhd., India's Oil and Natural Gas Corp. (500312.BY) and Sudapet of Sudan are also partners, produces more than 300,000 barrels of oil daily, or 60% of the country's output.

Through Gnpoc and other joint-ventures, CNPC has interests in the southwest province of Kordofan, where the attacks took place.

The head of the political section of China's embassy in Khartoum couldn't be reached on his cell phone.

Authorities in Beijing referred Dow Jones Newswires to recent comments made by at a press conference by China's special representative on Darfur, Liu Guijin.

"I do not think it is wrong to cooperate with Sudan on oil...the recent instability in the southern part and the northern border of Sudan has more or less influenced oil production, but it has no substantial influence."

Rebel forces, Liu added, expect western countries to pressure the Sudanese government.

The Justice and Equality Movement's Elfaki said last year's attacks had been conducted with a local tribe, the Misseriya, who had previously been fighting with the government in South Sudan but which is now dismayed at being demobilized.

He added that the movement was ready to resume operations against Chinese-run firms after helping the regime of neighboring Chad fend off attacks from allegedly pro-Khartoum forces.

Another faction, the Sudan Liberation Movement of Abdel Wahid al-Nur, has also threatened attacks on Chinese companies.

The U.S. government has been raising strong concerns over the situation in Darfur, where conflict has killed more than 200,000 people and displaced 2.5 million since February 2003.

The Justice and Equality Movement's leader, Khalil Ibrahim, is listed by the U.S. Treasury as an individual "contributing to the conflict in the Darfur region", a designation, Elfaki said, tied to Ibrahim's past association with Sudanese Islamist ideologue Hassan al-Turabi.

But the movement is now in favor of a secular, democratic regime in Sudan and "we really want dialog with the U.S.," Elfaki said.

Indeed, by supporting Chad - whose main oil project is the Chad-Cameroon pipeline operated by Exxon Mobil Corp (XOM) - the movement has "definitely" helped U.S. oil interests in the region, he added.

Though mostly Muslims, Darfur rebels have also sought support from Israel.

The Sudan Liberation Movement has opened an office in the country. Elfaki welcomed the move, saying Israel is "supportive of Darfur" and has hosted refugees from the region. The Hebrew state "is a democratic country" and "the Palestinians themselves are negotiating with Israel," he said.