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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Convoy bombed by Israel was not smuggling weapons – Bashir

Local dailies and **websites** widely covered the visit of President Al-Bashir to Ethiopia yesterday leading a delegation for participation in the Sudan-Ethiopia Higher Committee meetings. According to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**, President Al-Bashir told local and international media in Addis Ababa that the truck convoy bombed by Israel near Sudan-Egypt border was not smuggling arms. He said since Israel regards Sudan as an enemy and continues to support any anti-Sudan activity, Sudan would also reciprocate.

"Regarding the weapons, they were only personal weapons carried by the people driving the trucks. They were not weapons to be smuggled," Bashir told reporters in Addis Ababa, according to **AFP**. "When this event took place, we were unaware of the identity of those who carried out this attack. We thought first about the Americans because of their ability to reach far places like Sudan," he said.

While addressing the Sudanese Community, the President said elections would take place on schedule and would be free and fair. On the INGO ouster, he said the expelled aid groups accounted for only 4.7% of the total aid delivery in Darfur, citing an accurate joint assessment conducted by the government and UN. On the CPA, He said the government was committed to its implementation and to making unity attractive, adding the government would respect the southern Sudanese choice. On Sudan-US relations, he said the Obama Administration's approach is different from that of its predecessor, citing talks conducted by US Envoy Scott Gration and Senator John Kerry.

Reuters reported Ethiopia greeted President al-Bashir with a full state reception yesterday at the start of his latest trip abroad in defiance of an international arrest warrant. He was received by the Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi at the airport, where a band played as he left his plane and Sudanese living in Ethiopia cheered his arrival. "Sudan is our immediate neighbour," Meles told reporters after talks with Bashir in Addis Ababa. "Our relationship is not affected by the indictment."

Meanwhile, **Sudan Tribune**, quoting several news agencies reported that some diplomats did not show up at the airport to receive Al-Bashir. According to **VOA**, only 20 of the more than 50 African ambassadors in Addis Ababa have attended the welcome ceremonies, along with envoys from China, North Korea, Cuba and Venezuela. The United States, the European Union (EU) and most other countries boycotted the event. The boycott extends to a lavish state dinner hosted by Ethiopia's president as well. One African ambassador at the airport described to **VOA** the turnout as "an ironic show of solidarity" for a man facing war crimes charges. The envoy, who asked not to be named, said it is ironic because many Africa leaders fear that if President Bashir can be prosecuted, they could be next.

President Bashir at the press conference dismissed the notion that the arrest warrant by ICC could restrict his travel and create negative influence in his country." We went to this summit to show those who said we couldn't travel outside Sudan that we can travel outside Sudan" he said.

Al-Bashir believes that the ICC decision has actually brought positive contribution to his country. "Unlike what people might think the arrest warrant has rather strengthen our bond with countries of African Union (AU), Arab league and also with international organizations" he said. "It also has strengthened the unity of the Sudanese people" Bashir underscored.

Ethiopia's prime minister to his side showed support to Sudan criticizing the ICC decision." The arrest warrant is over politicized and unacceptable" Zenawi said. "It is over politicization of the humanitarian issue and over politicization of the international justice" he added. Meles reaffirmed that Ethiopia remains to share the AU stand over the ICC row.

According to government sources a number of agreements will be signed on today between Ethiopian prime minister and the Sudanese president. He will fly to Ethiopia's northern Tigray region before he returns home later on Wednesday.

US proposal does not clash with Qatar efforts – Source

A high level government source dismissed claims of conflict between the US offer to mediate talks between Sudan Government and Darfur movements in Addis Ababa and the Qatari initiative, reports *Al-Khartoum*. The paper's source said the US proposal has yet to take shape but by the time it is clear a formula would be reached to sustain Qatar's considerable efforts. The source said Sudan government is hopeful of a role by the Obama Administration similar to that of Bush Administration towards the CPA.

In a related development, a high level delegation led by Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie arrived yesterday in France for talks on a range of issues. MFA Spokesperson Ali Al Sadiq said the focus on France is necessitated by the fact that France was the sponsor of resolution 1593, France influence in Chad and the presence of Abdul Wahid on French soil.

Meanwhile, *Al-Intibaha* reports MFA spokesperson Ali Al-Sadiq as saying that the two recent visits by the US Envoy Scott Gration and Senator Kerry revealed a desire on the part of the US to resume dialogue with Sudan Government. He said Khartoum had sensed a different approach on the part of the US in dealing with Sudanese issues especially that the two dignitaries did not focus on the ICC in their talks with the Sudanese officials.

National Assembly endorses criminal code amendments

Akhbar Al Youm reports the National Assembly, in a stormy session yesterday, endorsed amendments to the Criminal Act 2009. The amendments include punishment for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide. *Al-Intibaha* reports SPLM MP Yassir Arman angered NCP MPs by calling for the repeal of the flogging and for review of punishment for an adultery offence. NCP MPs viewed Arman's remarks as an insult to Islamic Sharia.

According to *Al-Ayyam*, the National Assembly also yesterday unanimously endorsed the Human Rights Commission Bill 2009 and agreed by a vote to amend Article (6) relating to the appointment of the Commission members based on the FVP consent.

Government's witnesses in The Hague claim threat

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal yesterday heard testimonies of the government's witnesses who claimed to have been threatened not to travel to The Hague to bear witness for the NCP. The Court will continue its hearings today and on Thursday it will hear the final submissions of the parties. According to *Al-Intibaha*, the four witnesses who testified for the government yesterday were Dinka.

HAC Commissioner says Darfur humanitarian situation stable

Al-Sahafa reports HAC Commissioner Hassabo Mohamed Abdul Rahman as saying the

humanitarian situation in Darfur is stable. He said over 120 medical practitioners and physicians have been deployed in Darfur in addition to 65 medical practitioners from the Arab countries who are now working to improve the humanitarian situation in the region.

20 killed in SPLM clash in the Blue Nile

Al-Watan reports an outbreak of clashes last Monday between two SPLA groups left 20 killed. Reportedly, the reason for the fight was that the SPLA group from Adok felt marginalized by the SPLA group from the Angessana.

South Sudan girds up to launch TV channel

GoSS is preparing to launch its TV channel to focus on events in Southern Sudan, reports **Al-Intibaha**. According to GoSS Minister of Information Gabriel Chang, the TV will broadcast in both Arab and English.

Political parties to meet in Juba

Informed sources revealed to **Ray Al-Shaab** that the SPLM is in the process of inviting leaders of the Sudanese political parties for a meeting in Juba for discussion on issues of democratic transformation, referendum and elections.

Sudan Ulema bans organ donation by a death convict

Sudan Religious Authority issued a fatwa declaring "haram" (forbidden) the removal of an organ of a person convicted to death before the execution is carried out, reports **Al-Watan**. "When an organ of a person convicted to death is removed that person is sick and an execution can not be carried out against a sick person" chief of Fatwa Panel, Prof. Hassan Ahmed Hamed said.

Websites/International News Coverage

NEC waits for census results to allocate MP seats

Sudan Tribune website, 21/4/09 — The National Elections Commission (NEC) will not proceed with the delimitation of constituencies for the upcoming elections until receiving the result of the census, a Sudanese official said.

Mukhtar Al-Asam, NEC member said today they are waiting for the results of the fifth national census to determine what number of geographical and proportional constituencies should be allocated to each state. He said some states would get between 30 to 40 constituencies while others will have 10 constituencies, in accordance with the size of its population.

18000 armed elements to demobilize in Southern Kordofan

SMC 21/4/09 - DDR for Southern Sudan would start Monday the second stage for the year 2009 that targets demobilization of 18000 elements SAF and SPLM in Kadugli capital of Southern Kordofan state. Commissioner Sulafaldein Salih told (**smc**) that the operation represents big challenge for the commission because it is the biggest operation of its kind in terms of numbers and financial support. He noted that the DDR should provide a subsidy of 860 Sudanese pounds and 350 Kilogram for each targeted person for a period of five months. Sulafaldein said the chairman of DDR Higher Coordinating Council Gen Bakri Hassain Salih would attend the opening ceremony.

Demobilization targets 1000 children in south Sudan

Miraya FM 21/4/09 -The Chairperson of South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program (DDR), William Deng, confirmed that over one thousand (1000) child soldiers are expected to be disarmed in the upcoming months. Speaking to the press in Juba, Mr. Deng said that the DDR program will kick off by disarming specific groups including child soldiers. Mr. Deng said that the DDR exercise would officially commence in Central Equatoria,

Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile States.

UNMIS voices concern over Jonglei clashes

Miraya FM 21/4/09 - UNMIS expressed concern over the tribal clashes that took place in Jonglei earlier this week, which claimed the lives of more than 170 people.

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, David Gressly, has said that the mission has received reports about attacks carried out by armed groups targeting residential areas during the incidents in Jonglei.

During a Press Conference held today in Juba, Gressly described the situation in the area as deteriorating, pointing that the UN Mission sent a team to evaluate the situation.

Earlier this week, renewed clashes between the Murle and the Lou Nuer tribes in Jonglei State left 177 dead.

UNSG, rights chief hail adoption of anti-racism document

UN News 21/4/09 - Top United Nations officials welcomed yesterday's adoption of an outcome document, emphasizing the need to address all manifestations of intolerance with greater resolve, on the second day of the world body's anti-racism Durban Review Conference.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he was "heartened" that all States at the five-day gathering in Geneva adopted the text by consensus, signaling the international community's rejuvenation of its commitment to implement the landmark Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) agreed on by nations in 2001.

Today's adoption gives "hope to the millions of victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance around the world," he said in a statement issued by his spokesperson.

Mr. Ban underlined that "the fight against racism is a continuous process," voicing hope that Member States not taking part in the current event – including the United States and Israel –will "rejoin the international community soon in the fight against the scourges of racism and racial discrimination."

Navi Pillay, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, hailed today's development as good news, stressing that it is the culmination of a lengthy process by nations.

The document, she said, contains valuable elements, calling on States to take effective, tangible and comprehensive measures to prevent, combat and eradicate all forms and manifestations of racism, and urging countries which have not yet done so to create and implement national plans to combat intolerance, among other steps.

Further, it highlights the increased suffering since 2001 of many different groups of victims of racism and reaffirms the positive role of freedom of expression while deploring derogatory stigmatization of people based on their religion.

Ms. Pillay stressed that, contrary to media reports, today's document includes no reference to the defamation of religions.

The adoption comes on the heels of yesterday's address to the Conference by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which was strongly deplored by both the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner

The Iranian leader's remarks were intended to "accuse, divide and even incite," Mr. Ban said, while Ms. Pillay characterized them as "grandstanding."

Protesting Mr. Ahmadinejad's remarks, delegates of several nations left the conference hall, a move that both officials said they regretted.

The gathering is "too important for anyone to remain outside this conference hall," the Secretary-General said, while the High Commissioner said that although she was "shocked and deeply saddened" by the Iranian leader's speech, his behaviour did not "provide any justification for any other Member States to walk out."

INGO expulsion impeding peacekeeping, relief efforts - Ban

UN New 21/4/09 - The expulsion of humanitarian and human rights agencies from Sudan following the issuance of an arrest warrant for the Sudanese president for war crimes is thwarting the United Nations' efforts in peacekeeping and humanitarian aid, Secretary-General Ban K-moon said.

Mr. Ban characterized the Government's decision to eject 16 humanitarian and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), following the indictment on 4 March of President Omar Al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court (ICC), as an "extremely negative" development.

"While joint United Nations-Government of the Sudan efforts can address some of the most critical gaps in aid delivery in the coming weeks, the cumulative effects over time of the removal of such a large amount of humanitarian capacity puts well over 1 million people at life-threatening risk," he wrote in his latest report to the Security Council on the deployment of the hybrid UN-African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in the war-torn Darfur region.

The start of the rainy season next month could exacerbate the already dire situation, he added.

The Secretary-General called on authorities to urgently "re-establish an atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence with the humanitarian community," stressing the importance of cooperation to fill the most immediate gaps.

The impact of the expulsions on the work of the UN-AU mission, known as UNAMID, cannot be underestimated, he said. "A significant disruption in the provision of humanitarian assistance will almost certainly lead to a serious heightening of tensions among internally displaced persons [IDPs], particularly in the larger camps for the displaced."

As a result, the risk of violence could rise, complicating UNAMID's ability to carry out its protection mandate, Mr. Ban underlined.

He also voiced concern over continued insecurity – including clashes between Government forces and armed groups, the recurrence of tribal fighting and the build-up of troops along the Chad-Sudan border – which has impeded the mission's ability to visit locations to assess the impact of bombardments on civilians.

The Secretary-General wrote that the security of UN and associated personnel is also a critical issue, with vehicle hijackings and compound invasions growing increasingly deliberate in nature.

"The latest security developments highlight, once again, the fundamental challenges that UNAMID continues to face while operating in an environment where the parties show no intent to give up the use of force, and further underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive settlement to the Darfur crisis," he said.

In spite of the challenges UNAMID faces, Mr. Ban said that the mission has "been able to make a difference on the ground."

But the report called on Member States to provide critical equipment, especially military helicopters, to increase UNAMID's mobility and operational impact.

Darfur aid workers' captors urge swift deal

AFP 21/4/09 -The kidnappers of two foreign aid workers in Darfur said on Tuesday that they were in talks with Chadian mediators for a deal for their swift release, but N'djamena denied the claim and accused Khartoum of manipulation.

One of the kidnappers told **AFP** by telephone that the Chadian government was acting on behalf of the French authorities and that the kidnappers wanted a swift deal as the health of French hostage Claire Dubois was deteriorating.

"There are negotiations between us and the Chadian government, which is negotiating with us on behalf of the French government," said the kidnapper, who did not give his name.

"We are now looking for a quick solution, especially considering the medical situation for the French hostage, because she is sick and has no medicine or healthy food or drink, and her situation is worsening," he added.

"But we have not reached a solution yet and we want guarantees for us as people and the cause for which we have done what we have done."

The Canadian hostage, Stephanie Jodoin, had told **AFP** by telephone last week that Dubois was suffering from a fever.

However Chadian Communications Minister Mahamat Hissene swiftly denied any role by N'djamena in efforts to broker the hostages' release.

"The Chadian government has no contact with this group," Hissene, who is also government spokesman, told **AFP** in N'djamena.

The two aid workers have been held since April 4 when they were seized from their office in the South Darfur state capital Nyala, about 100 kilometres (65 miles) from the Chadian border.

A Sudanese foreign ministry official said the kidnapper's comments could signal the hostages would be released unharmed.

"If what they say is correct, it means that we are close to a peaceful ending," said ministry protocol chief Ali Yusef.

"The government always wanted a peaceful solution to this matter. That is what we agreed with the French authorities."

But the Chadian government spokesman accused Khartoum of trying to manipulate the pair's ordeal.

"Once again Sudan is trying to embroil us in this affair," Hissene said.

The kidnapping of the two aid workers was the second such act in Darfur since the International Criminal Court issued a warrant on March 4 for the arrest of Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

Darfur rebel group rejects new peace talks bid

AFP 21/4/09 Darfur's most active rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement, on Tuesday rebuffed Qatari efforts to broker new peace talks with the Sudanese government.

The head of the JEM delegation, Jibril Khalil, charged that Khartoum had failed to honour a confidence-building deal brokered by Qatar in February that had been intended to pave the way for peace negotiations.

"We maintain our position to not sit down with the government unless real and clear progress is achieved on the ground, in terms of prisoners, displaced people, and especially after the ouster of humanitarian organisations," Khalil told AFP after meeting the Qatari state minister for foreign affairs.

JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein Adam had made clear ahead of the meeting with Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmud that the rebels' participation was not a sign of their readiness to resume talks with the Khartoum government.

"Our presence in Doha does not mean a continuation of the negotiations, but we came to discuss alternatives we can follow as a continuation of peace," Adam told reporters.

"The circumstances that have led to ending the negotiations still exist," he said, adding that February's confidence-building deal "had been breached on many levels."

He cited in particular Khartoum's expulsion of 13 foreign aid organisations from Darfur last month and death sentences handed down against 10 JEM rebels last week over an unprecedented assault on the Sudanese capital last year.

Chadian official denies deadly rebel raid

AFP 21/4/09 - Chadian rebels claimed Tuesday they had killed about 15 soldiers in a battle near Birak in east Chad over the weekend, but a government official denied there had been any such clash.

Abderaman Koulamallah, spokesman for the Union of Forces of the Resistance (UFR), told AFP they had killed about 15 government soldiers in the clashes.

"We had one dead and three wounded," he added.

"A UFR brigade intercepted Chadian army vehicles that were chasing men who were trying to join the resistance.

"We destroyed two vehicles with RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades). The incident was inside Chadian territory." But an official in the Chadian capital Ndjamena denied the report. "This is false. There was no clash on that date. Nothing happened."

The UFR is the main rebel alliance in Chad, an alliance of the main rebel factions there who linked up at the start of 2009 into a movement with a single political and military command.

Gathered close to the border in west Sudan, the rebels frequently carry out incursions on to Chadian territory.