



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

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Media Monitoring Report

23 April 2008

By Public Information Office

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# **Highlights**

## **Main News**

**Census kicks off, anti-census demonstrations in Darfur, partial boycott in Southern Kordofan (Al-Sahafa)**

**Abduction of Talodi Commissioner by armed men impede census in Southern Kordofan**

**SPLM in Nuba Mountains detains head of census team (Akhir Lahza)**

**SPLM's Southern Kordofan boycotts Sudan fifth census (ST)**

(Al-Rai Al-Aam/Al-Sahafa/Akhir Lahza/ST). Sudan 5<sup>th</sup> population census began on Tuesday all over the country with the participation of an estimated 60,000 census enumerators. Vice President Taha has received enumerators at his residence and seized the opportunity to appeal to all citizens to provide accurate information for census.

The exercise also began in Southern Sudan by firstly counting the First Vice-President Silva Kiir's family. Kiir said census was proceeding satisfactorily, pointing out that some areas were inaccessible. He called for repatriating the IDPs to the Southern States.

In Darfur States IDPs staged anti-census demonstrations." We reject this counting exercise because there is no peace and we do not trust the outcome of this census." IDPs Spokesperson told Sudan Tribune. "People want security and to return to their villages before census" He added. Students of El Fasher University set census office on fire.

The Census Director in South Darfur State Mr. Al-Magboul Abdallah said the census at Kalma, Alsalam and Kass IDP camps could not be conducted because of differences among camps' population over census.

In Southern Kordofan, SPLM boycott census that kicked off yesterday. SPLM Secretary General, Maj. Gen. Simon Kalu, in press release broadcast by local Radio said SPLM in the Nuba Mountains opposed census exercise and called on all SPLM supporters across the State not to give information to enumerators and monitors claiming that NCP refused to prepare questionnaires in English and to include religion and ethnicity.

Meanwhile a team of enumerators visited Um Sirdiba (South Kadugli) to conduct census but SPLA detained the head of the team Mr. Al-Nazir Abaker and held him in custody in the area of Kardi.

The residents of the village of the detained person reacted by detaining the Commissioner of Talodi Locality Mr. Awad Abdul Rahman who was on his way to Kadugli escorted by three bodyguards and driver of his land cruiser vehicle which was taken to unknown destination.

Deputy Governor of Southern Kordofan Maj. Gen. Daniel Kodi ordered the JDB and SPLA commanders to head to Um Sirdiba to ensure the release of the detained head of census team.

Government vehicles mounted with loud speakers toured Kadugli, Dalinj, Abu Jibeiha and Muglad towns urging residents to boycott census, which is reportedly completely failed on the first day of the exercise in the State.

On the other hand, census chief Dr. Yassin Al Haj Abideen said the detained head of census team and the commissioner would be released and the exercise would continue in the State.

### [UN/Agencies](#)

#### **At five-year mark, Darfur crisis is only worsening – UN aid chief**

(UN News Centre) 22 April 2008 – Five years after fighting first erupted in Darfur between Sudanese Government forces and rebel groups, the world has still not found a durable solution to the suffering of millions of people in the region, the United Nations humanitarian chief told the Security Council today, warning the situation will only deteriorate unless urgent measures are taken.

John Holmes, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, told a Council meeting that he was saddened and angry to inform them that the situation inside Darfur had only worsened in the past 12 months, despite the efforts of the international community.

“We continue to see the goalposts receding, to the point where peace in Darfur seems further away today than ever,” he said in a statement. “Further progress in the deployment of UNAMID [the hybrid UN-African Union peacekeeping force], equipped to protect civilians and improve security, will help.

“But only an end to all violence and concrete steps towards a political settlement will make the fundamental difference needed, as the rebel movements themselves above all need to recognize. Otherwise the reality is that the people of Darfur face a continued steady deterioration of their conditions of life and their chances of lasting recovery.”

Mr. Holmes said as many as 300,000 people are now estimated to have died in Darfur since early 2003, when rebels began fighting Government forces and allied militiamen. This figure includes deaths from disease, malnutrition and reduced life expectancy, as well as from direct combat.

Aside from the death toll, more than 2.7 million Darfurians have been displaced by the fighting, the vast majority still living within the arid region on Sudan's western flank. Around 260,000 refugees have had to flee to the east of neighbouring Chad.

In his briefing to the Council, Rodolphe Adada, the AU-UN Joint Special Representative for Darfur, said it was disturbing that while the region has remained near the top of the international agenda, this attention had not been matched with the necessary action to provide UNAMID with the means to accomplish the tasks assigned to it.

The Council authorized the deployment of UNAMID last year to take over from an under-resourced AU force, and the operation began work at the start of this year. But so far only around 10,000 of the roughly 26,000 uniformed personnel have been deployed.

Speaking to reporters outside the Council, Mr. Adada said that up to 80 per cent of the entire UNAMID force could be deployed by the end of this year if donor countries do more to help out, whether by providing troops or equipment.

He called on the Council to redouble its efforts to assist the mission and he also read out an update on efforts to broker a political settlement by the UN and AU envoys to the peace process, Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim.

Mr. Adada said logistical challenges are one of the biggest problems, with the mission lacking the infrastructure at the moment to house the thousands of staff expected at full deployment.

He said UN and AU officials were working hard to try to accelerate deployment and to make the most of the available resources – including fresh water – in the parched and landlocked region.

### **Start of Sudanese census welcomed by UNMIS**

(UN News Centre) 22 April 2008 – The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has welcomed today's start of the African country's historic nationwide census, which aims to count all Sudanese people and households in preparation for elections scheduled for next year.

UNMIS commended the two parties to the 2005 comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) – the Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) – ending the long-running north-south civil war for ensuring that the census can take place.

Starting today, census enumerators are fanning out across the vast nation over the next two weeks to conduct interviews and record answers about the number, geographical distribution, social and economic characteristics on the population.

The holding of the census is one of the key elements in implementing the CPA and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement last week calling the event a milestone in the peace process, which is supposed to culminate in elections next year.

The January 2005 accord formally ended a conflict that claimed about two million lives and displaced some 4.5 million others.

### [GoNU](#)

#### **SC held closed session on Darfur, Sudan Ambassador discloses details of the meeting**

(Akhbar Al Yom) The UN Security Council convened Tuesday a closed session to debate on two reports presented by UN-AU Joint Representative to Darfur R. Adada and the UN Undersecretary-general of Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes on the situation in Darfur.

Sudanese Ambassador to UN Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamed said the report of the joint envoy dealt with the UNMID's requirements, explaining that the completion of deployment of UNMID's forces would not be finalized before 2009.

He indicated that the government recent attack in West Darfur was in retaliation to a previous assault launched by JEM, demanding the SC to reinforce UNMID's troops to achieve its mandate.

He said Adada's report, which was prepared by envoys Jan Eliason and Salim Ahmed Salim, revealed the failure of their mission.

On his part, Holmes hailed the cooperation of the government and the implementation of the humanitarian agreement signed in March 2007.

Mohamed reacted to the claims regarding the number of the people killed in fighting in Darfur calling on the media institutions not to rely on reports of organization, which had vested-interest in the continuation of the conflict.

"The exaggerated number given is to serve political ends," Mohamed said. "It is only to give the impression that the government is not doing much in the peacekeeping to save its own people."

"We should give priority again to the peace process, because even peacekeeping with the full deployment is not a substitute to the political process," Mohamed said.

#### **Interior Minister: Government finalized deal to buy Russian-made aircraft for police**

(Al-Sahafa) Minister of Interior, Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, announced that the Government finalized a deal to buy aircraft from Russia for the use of police forces. The aircraft will be used for rapid intervention, evacuation and rescue.

The Minister in an interview to the newspaper said the police was ready to secure voluntary repatriation in Darfur revealing grants from China, Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries for repatriation.

Asked about foreign presence particularly EUROFOR and Hybrid troops he said, “We oppose any role for EUROFOR at our borders with Chad and CAR. Hybrid came on the basis of an agreement”.

Asked about what should be done by the government to expedite the departure of these troops he said, “The Government of Sudan should address the security concerns for which these troops deployed on our soil. When that happened they should leave the country”.

### **Presidency to reshuffle SAF JDB membership**

(Al-Wifaq) The Joint Defence Board (JDB) agreed to SPLA JDB Representatives’ request to postpone JDB meeting to early May.

An informed JDB source speaking to the Sudanese Media Centre (SMC) attributed the JDB acceptance of the SPLA’s request for postponement to the ongoing census and the measures being taken by the Government of Southern Sudan to make the census exercise a success. Another reason was the fact that the JDB meeting agenda would not be affected by the postponement and it could be discussed whenever JDB resumes session.

According to the source, the Presidency was likely to issue a decree to reshuffle SAF JDB’s membership. The decree is expected to be issued by the end of this week or early next week.

The source said the change of SAF JDB membership was necessitated by the fact that a considerable number of SAF members in JDB have recently been pensioned off.

### **Sudan Ambassador to UN says NGO’s “will be unhappy” when Darfur crisis is over**

(ST) April 22, 2008 (NEW YORK) — A senior Sudanese official accused non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) working in Darfur of benefiting from the crisis that erupted five years ago.

Sudan’s ambassador to the United Nations (UN) Abdel-Mahmood Abdel-Haleem told reporters at the world body headquarters that the conflict “creates jobs” for these organizations.

“For some groups [NGO’s] the saddest day would be when the conflict is over because they are benefitting from it” Abdel-Haleem said.

“They will be very unhappy when it is over; I can tell you very frankly” he added.

The Sudanese diplomat was responding to questions on a statement by a top UN official on the death toll in Darfur.

John Holmes the UN Under-Secretary-General for humanitarian affairs told the UN Security Council (UNSC) that as many as 300,000 people died in the conflict. The official figures have not exceeded 200,000 through the conflict years.

Holmes said the new number he mentioned in his speech today is a “reasonable extrapolation” but acknowledged, “It is not a very scientific based figure”.

However, the UN official said that the original figure of 200,000 must have increased and is now “considerably larger” from when the World Health Organization (WHO) conducted the study on Darfur mortality figures.

Abdel-Haleem slammed Holmes statements describing them as “not objective and unprofessional” and said that it is a “repetition of what Mr. Egeland [Holmes predecessor] used to say to the UNSC”.

The Sudanese ambassador stressed that total deaths figures in Darfur “do not exceed 10,000” according to his government’s official calculations. He further said that it does not include non-violent deaths “because in Darfur there are no epidemics or starvation”.

“The death of even a single Sudanese is something very regrettable and tragic,” Abdel-Haleem said.

## [GoSS](#)

### **Kiir counted, but confusion reigns**

(The Citizen) The First Vice President Salva was counted first in the south, as the census started amid confusion as people waited hours to be counted on the first day but to no avail.

“No one came,” said Mabior Cangjuk, an IT professional in Juba. “I waited and waited. People are complaining. They have not seen anyone”. he added.

Enumerators in Sudan’s fifth national population and housing census worked themselves into a sweat, starting in the wee hours of Tuesday, but people were left complaining that they had not been counted.

The same complaints came from people in Malakal, Upper Nile State, and Wau capital town of Warrap.

The confusion arose out of misconception that everybody would be counted on the first census day.

“Today is a public holiday, but it does not mean that everybody would be counted the same day,” Isiah Chol, the Chairman of the Census Commission told the correspondent who had hardly slept since the day before.

## [Darfur](#)

### **More violence can erupt if peacekeepers fail - Darfur’s exiled rebel chief**

(ST) April 22, 2008 (PARIS) — Darfur’s main rebel chief denied Tuesday that the United Nations has achieved any breakthrough in brokering peace talks for the war

torn Sudanese region, and warned that more violence could erupt if the new U.N. and African Union peacekeeping mission to Darfur fails.

Abdel-wahid al-Nur, who heads the Sudan Liberation Movement rebel group, said he told U.N. Security Council representatives in a meeting last month that no peace negotiations could take place before security has been restored in Darfur.

"Wrong negotiations will only complicate the matter and prolong the suffering of the people of Darfur," al-Nur said in an Associated Press interview in Paris, where he lives in exile.

Restoring security in Darfur is the role of the U.N. and AU peacekeeping force that launched in January, he said. But the mission so far only has about 9,000 troops and police on the ground out of the 26,000 that have been authorized.

Western officials have blamed the Sudanese government for delaying the provision of troops and key military equipment. Khartoum denies the accusations but has vetoed troop contributions from some non-African or non-Muslim nations, a position Al-Nur calls "racist."

"Contributors have to come from the whole world. It's the only guarantee that the force works on the ground, with neutrality," he said.

The U.N. and AU have tried for months to open new peace talks between the Sudanese government and rebel groups following the failure of a 2005 agreement to stem violence in Darfur. But most rebel chiefs are boycotting the negotiations, and security in Darfur has further deteriorated in recent months.

U.N. and AU peace mediators said last week they had undertaken an intense round of talks with the Sudanese government and rebel factions, and that all sides were willing to resume discussions.

But al-Nur said that his faction has already signed five peace agreements with the Sudanese government that were repeatedly violated.

"The international community shouldn't be trying to add yet another agreement to the waiting list that the government still has to implement," al-Nur said.

Al-Nur said he shared his views last month with delegates from the five permanent members of the Security Council and U.N.-AU mediators during a closed-door meeting at the French Embassy in Geneva.

"It was very positive to be able to meet face to face with the big five (countries)," al-Nur said, referring to Britain, China, France, Russia and the U.S.

He said "there was some intense discussions," with Chinese special envoy Liu Guijin, whose country is viewed as Sudan's main backer.



The French Foreign Ministry has confirmed it organized the meeting with al-Nur, an indication of how important Darfur's rebel chiefs are in brokering peace in the war-torn region.

Darfur rebels have fractured into multiple groups. Al-Nur doesn't head the strongest armed faction, but he is viewed as enjoying large support among refugees. His refusal to sign the 2005 peace agreement is viewed as one key reason why it failed.

More than 200,000 people have died and 2.5 million have been chased from their homes in Darfur since fighting broke out in 2003 when the SLM and other ethnic African rebels took up arms against the Arab-dominated Sudanese government, accusing it of discrimination.

Like U.S. President George W. Bush, al-Nur describes violence in Darfur as a government-sponsored "genocide" of ethnic Africans. The government denies the claim, as well as widespread accusations that it backs Arab militia known as the Janjaweed blamed for the bulk of the killing.

Elnur says he will agree to peace negotiations when the U.N. and AU peacekeeping force proves it can stop "the continued killing of civilians," disarm Janjaweed militias and drive out Arab settlers who are occupying the land of Darfur refugees.

He warned that the U.N. peacekeepers do not have much time to prove they can stem the violence in Darfur because civilians are increasingly frustrated with years of insecurity. He also said the SLM could call on refugees to "protect themselves" if it loses hope that international powers "are serious about ending the suffering."

He would not specify what measures he would then call for, but warned that: "I'm very afraid that if people lose all hope, they'll fight like devils."