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Media Monitoring Report

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Local news headlines

- NCP selects arbitrators for Abyei (Al-Rai Al-Aam)
- Appointment of a prosecutor for Darfur crimes futile – SLA (Ray Al-Shaab/Al-Sudani)
- Kiir meets Hamas leader (Ray Al-Shaab)
- AU official behind Ocampo (Al-Intibaha)
- I am not optimistic or pessimistic – Fernandez (Al-Sudani)
- Government and UN delegation visits Southern Kordofan (Khartoum Monitor)

Websites/International headlines

- NCP, SPLM to work together for Darfur peace and Sudan unity (ST)
- Sudan's defence minister visits Darfur to assess security situation (ST)
- Hunger kills 12 people in South Sudan (ST)
- Rivals of Sudan's president seek concessions for help in warding off prosecution (AP)
- Alleged killers of US diplomat in Sudan to stand trial (ST)
- From rebels to soldiers – the SPLA's transformation (IRIN)
- Life in Sudan limbo for Canadian with suspected Qaeda ties (AFP)
- Sudan-born runner to carry U.S. flag (UPI)

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Highlights

(Local Arabic and English language press)

NCP selects arbitrators for Abyei

Al-Rai Al-Aam reported that the National Congress Party (NCP) selected British and Egyptian firms for advice and guidance on Abyei arbitration in The Hague. NCP's Abyei official Al-Dirdiri Mohamed Ahmed said that NCP also selected two experienced arbitrators for assistance on Abyei issue. However he declined to elaborate, saying the names will be made public before 15 August. With regard to Abyei administration, he said consultations between the two partners were proceeding despite some difficulties. **Al-Sahafa** newspaper quoted informed sources as saying that a presidential decree on formation of Abyei administration will be issued within 24 hours.

Appointment of a prosecutor for Darfur crimes futile – SLA

Ray Al-Shaab stated that Abdul Wahid-led SLM said Sudanese Justice Minister's appointment of a prosecutor for Darfur crimes was a useless move. National Umma Party leader Sadiq Al Mahdi speaking to **Al-Sudani** newspaper said the appointment was "unfortunate" "It will give wrong signal to the International Community," he added. On the same subject, the Sudanese Communist Party leader Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud told the newspaper that "If it is not acceptable to the armed movements then it is of no use,"

Kiir meets Hamas leader

Ray Al-Shaab reported that FVP Salva Kiir met yesterday in Khartoum with Hamas Politburo chairman Khaled Masha'l. Kiir said the Sudanese people have united to deal with foreign challenges and to defend President Bashir.

AU official behind Ocampo's application

Al-Intihaba carried a report stating that Lebanon-based informed diplomatic sources confirmed that the reports of human rights abuses in Darfur have been reaching Luis Moreno-Ocampo from AU official (Sudanese) resident in Algeria. These are the same reports on the basis of which Ocampo requested arrest warrant for Al Bashir.

According to the sources, the AU Energy Commissioner Dr. Hussain Al-Haj, a well known Sudan Government's opponent, has provided UN and many other rights groups with reports about alleged human rights violations and genocide in Darfur. Dr. Hussain Al-Haj, a Darfuri, migrated to USA where he obtained Ph.D. in Energy and an American citizenship. Sources said Hussain visited Sudan in 2005 and is presently residing in Algeria, heading AU African Commission for Energy.

Sudanese Charge d'Affaires in Lebanon Mohamed Abdul Aal did not rule out that Hussain's reports were used by ICC. However, he said his government was not accusing any body. "We know that Ocampo used reports compiled by Sudanese in the opposition and anti-Sudan organizations," he said. "we know that Hussain is an opponent but we have no evidence of his correspondence with foreign circles," he added.

Hussain has declined to react to these accusations.

I am not optimistic or pessimistic – Fernandez

Al-Sudani reported that the US Charge d'Affaires Alberto Fernandez said the prospective US envoy's visit to Sudan was "very important". "All pending issues will be discussed," . Asked about his expectations he said, "I am not optimistic or pessimistic, I am a realistic," Sudanese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Ali Al Sadiq said Williamson's visit to Sudan tomorrow is an implicit recognition by the US Administration of the Government's efforts to address Abyei crisis.

Government and UN delegation visits South Kordofan

Khartoum Monitor stated that Southern Kordofan state 's Emergency committee, chaired by the deputy chairman of the Legislative Council, Sadiq Mansour, set up to resolve the problem of new localities, began a joint visit in collaboration with the four UN sectors in Kadugli to the border provinces of Taloda, Abu Jebaiha, Lagawa and Lahlos. The purpose of the visit is to familiarize themselves with the progress of amalgamation of the civil services, the police and the judiciary.

Websites/International headlines

NCP, SPLM to work together for Darfur peace and Sudan unity

(Sudan Tribune) — A joint committee between Sudan's peace partners today held its first meeting to implement a joint resolution to achieve peace in Darfur, unity and national reconciliation. Two delegations from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement headed by Pagan Amum and the National Congress Party led by Mustafa Osman Ismail met in the SPLM premises in Khartoum to establish a plan of action on the three issues.

The joint meeting agreed to form three committees to draw common grounds to reach peace in Darfur, make the choice of unity attractive for southern Sudanese and achieve national reconciliation.

The joint committee will put a plan to realise a comprehensive peace in Sudan particularly in Darfur and makes the unity attractive, said the SPLM Secretary General. He further added that "We have to reconcile between the state and the citizens, ensure a peaceful transfer of power and achieve equality between Sudanese."

A comprehensive peace deal was signed in 2005 to end more than two decades of war between the SPLM which aims at a secular state while NCP which had seized the power in 1989 to establish an Islamic state in Sudan. According to the CPA, the NCP and SPLM shares wealth and power and agreed to achieve democratic transformation in Africa's largest country. However, for three years, implementation of the peace deal has been hindered by conflict of ideological visions and differences in the interpretation of CPA provisions and mistrust. The south also has a right to vote on secession in 2011 under the deal.

NCP leading member Mustafa Osman Ismail told the reporters that the two parties count on this committee to find common ground on the three crucial issues. Ismail also said they agreed to form three committees to implement these objectives, adding they will establish a joint mechanism to carry out "social activities" between the two partners of the national unity government but also between the NCP-SPLM and the other political forces. The delegations agreed to hold another meeting soon.

Among the outstanding issues that the joint committee has to resolve that complete democratic transformation in Sudan would also require major legal reform elsewhere, such as media and

national security legislation. However despite the adoption of the elections bill last July the press and media law, the national security law remain unchanged.

Sudan's defence minister visits Darfur to assess security situation

(Sudan Tribune) – The Minister of Defence heading a high ranking delegation has begun a visit to the three states of the troubled Darfur to assess the needs and to study ways to restore security in the western Sudan. The delegation includes Engineer Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, Minister of Interior, General Salah Abdallah Gosh, director of the National Security and Intelligence Services, Hasabou Mohamed Abdullah Commissioner of Humanitarian Affairs as well as the Deputy Chief of Joint Staff and a number of officials from ministries of defence, interior and humanitarian affairs and national security service.

Delegation leader, Gen Abdel-Rahim Mohamed Hussein, told reporters in El-Fasher that he discussed with the security committee in the state ways to protect the roads between the three states and between them and the center as well as measures taken to ensure the movement of people and transportation safely within every state.

According to the Minister, they discussed the situation in IDPs camps and how to provide security to their camps as well as the issue of voluntary repatriation and peaceful coexistence. The delegation discussed the protection of the NGOs and international agencies working in the region and reviewed cooperation between the armed forces, other security forces and UNAMID. They also discussed needs of the different parties to ensure the efficient functioning and to enable them to implement the rule of law and to maintain the security in the three states. Similar talks are slated with concerned authorities in West and South Darfur states.

Hunger kills 12 people in Southern Sudan

(Sudan Tribune) — A global food crisis has taken its toll in Sudan's semi-autonomous south with 12 people dying from hunger in the past week as prices soar and deliveries are hampered by heavy rains, a local official said on Wednesday.

"In Gogrial East alone, it is reported that 12 people have died of hunger in the last week " said Kuot Deng Kuot, a member of parliament for the area. He said government efforts to deliver food had been stalled by heavy rains and floods that had cut roads. "The problem we are facing is that roads become impassable and airlifting of food is expensive" Kuot said.

Southern Agriculture Minister Samson Kwaje said the food crisis could threaten the peace deal if not checked. "While the soaring food prices are worldwide, fragile states and vulnerable populations like ours who purchase food daily from an unorganised market face greater risk of starvation and poverty," Kwaje said. He told parliament that food prices in the south had risen by 11 percent between February and June.

U.N. FAO official in the south, George Okech, said south Sudan was affected because it was importing large quantities of food from east Africa where prices have already increased. FAO had launched a project to support farmers in the south.

Rivals of Sudan's president seek concessions for help in warding off prosecution

(Associated Press): Rivals of Sudan's president are pressing him to make concessions at home and abroad in a bid to ward off international charges he ordered genocide in Darfur, a case they fear could wreck peace efforts and even plunge the country into civil war.

Many Sudanese worry an ICC decision to issue an arrest warrant for Omar al-Bashir could prompt a government backlash that would escalate violence in the western Darfur region and wreck the shaky peace between north and south Sudan. But in return for taking his side, al-

Bashir's opponents want him to make changes.

The strongest political force pushing al-Bashir for flexibility is the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the former southern rebel group that is now al-Bashir's wary partner in a unity government formed under a fragile 2005 peace deal. It wants al-Bashir to make concessions for peace in Darfur and give it a role in negotiating there, citing the south's ties to Darfur rebels.

The group also wants him to cooperate some with the ICC, with some members calling for him to hand over two top Sudanese figures charged last year, something they think may will persuade the U.N. Security Council to suspend the president's July 14 indictment.

And the southerners want to ensure al-Bashir sticks to promises made in the peace deal that ended decades of war between north and south Sudan. In particular, elections are to be held next year that southerners hope will win them a greater say in power and increase democracy.

"I think this ICC (indictment) is providing us more opportunities" for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and al-Bashir to work together, Luka Biong, a top SPLM official, told The Associated Press.

In a sign of its new boldness, the southern group announced days after the indictment that its leader, Salva Kiir, currently vice president in the unity government, would run for president next year. The idea of a president from the mainly Christian and animist south would be revolutionary in a country historically dominated by Arabized Muslim northerners. Indeed, the announcement angered some hard-liners in the north, who accuse southerners of trying to break away. But the southern group said a Kiir candidacy would prove it wants a unified Sudan.

Still, even though the president has sought his foes' support, concessions rarely come easily from al-Bashir, long worried over any sign of weakness in his sharply divided country. He came to power in a 1989 military coup, and his regime has been based on support from the military, northern tribal leaders and a ruling party with an Islamic fundamentalist ideology. Hard-liners in the regime oppose concessions in Darfur or steps that could lead to the south's secession.

Al-Bashir's top fear now is that an arrest warrant would encourage opponents or even members of his ruling party to attempt a coup, believing that would have international support, said Alex de Waal, a Sudan expert at the New York-based Social Science Research Council.

Al-Bashir has taken a tough line against the indictment, saying Sudan does not recognize the court in The Hague, Netherlands, and will never cooperate with it. But he has given new signs of willingness to make peace in Darfur and is promising to hold the promised national elections on time.

Soon after the indictment, al-Bashir made a high-profile visit to Darfur, meeting with peacekeepers and promising greater economic development in the region. He also created a panel to draw up a peace plan for Darfur, to be headed by one of his top opponents, Sadiq al-Mahdi, the former prime minister ousted by al-Bashir's coup and the head of the northern opposition Umma Party.

Umma and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement have urged the U.N. Security Council to suspend the prosecution of al-Bashir for 12 months, a demand also being pushed by the Arab League and the African Union. They fear they have as much to lose as al-Bashir from the indictment. Despite his longtime opposition to al-Bashir, al-Mahdi warns of disaster if the court presses ahead. Prosecution "will mean criminalizing the regime, and the armed forces," he said in a recent lecture. "This means they will defend themselves. It will create animosity with a mighty power."

Alleged killers of US diplomat in Sudan to stand trial

(Sudan Tribune) – The Sudanese authorities decided to press charges against two individuals

in connection with the killing of a US diplomat in Sudan last January. The pro-government **Al-Rai Al-am** daily newspaper quoted that Sudanese attorney general Salah Abu-Zeid as saying he rejected an appeal filed by the defendants and will send the case back to court.

From rebels to soldiers – the SPLA's transformation

(IRIN) - At the new headquarters of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), some 10km north of Juba town, signs mark the finance, administration and operations directorates.

Laminated name plates with Southern Sudan's official colours line the desks in the new air-conditioned offices. Laptops and internet service are coming soon. It is a new look, and a new way, for the former rebel movement that fought for liberation in the forests of Southern Sudan for two decades.

"When we started as guerillas, we walked from Sudan to Ethiopia, carrying food and ammunition on our heads," said Col Kamilo Tafeng of the SPLA's new directorate for political and moral orientation. "Now, with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the SPLA has been transformed into a conventional army ... There is a tremendous change."

The 2005 peace deal between the Southern rebels and the Sudanese government recognised the SPLA as the official army of a semi-autonomous Southern Sudan. Since then, the SPLA has been transforming itself, not only in appearance, but also in attitude.

Commanders and alternate commanders have taken on more conventional titles: colonels, brigadiers and generals. Uniforms have been standardised and a literacy campaign is encouraging all soldiers to go to school. "During the war, we were thinking of fighting. Now we are thinking of human resource development," Tafeng said.

Last week, the first batch of SPLA senior officials graduated from an eight-week course on international humanitarian law, which covered human rights, good governance and the role of a transformed army in peacetime, said Col Awur Maweil, coordinator of the SPLA's colleges directorate. The army, he added, is to create a new child protection unit in the coming weeks to ensure that no children are part of the SPLA's ranks. Pointing to new bookshelves in his office, Maweil looked around the well-furnished room: "This is what we have been dreaming of. It was difficult. It was hard, but we are on that track."

Military restructuring and reform in southern Sudan is largely funded by the southern government's share of oil revenue, but external sources of funding include the US government - which has earmarked some US\$41 million in 2008.

However, there are challenges and progress is sometimes slow. "I was a rebel for 21 years," said SPLA spokesman Maj Gen Peter Parnyang, wearing a dark green uniform and beret, red collar tabs denoting his new rank. "Transforming people is not a simple job." Observers speak of a continued "war mentality" that results in aggressive behaviour among soldiers and officers.

"There are repeated reports of a lack of discipline by certain members of the SPLA," David Gressly, head of the UN team in Southern Sudan, told IRIN. "This is well-known within the SPLA and senior leadership as well, and something they would like to bring better under control. They need to move away from a situation where some people fear either the police or the army." Gressly said the army was also struggling to pay its soldiers on time and to disarm excess forces that were absorbed by the SPLA as part of the peace deal. The command and control system needed to be strengthened, he added.

"In the West they say Rome was not built in one day," the SPLA's Tafeng said. "For 21 years, the SPLA has been a guerilla army. You can't expect it to change in six years [since the interim peace agreement]."

The political wing of the former rebel movement, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), is also re-branding itself as it vies to be a national political party. In three years, a government of Southern Sudan has been created from scratch, complete with a legislative assembly, ministries and departments.

"That alone ... to be achieved within three years is really incredible," said Malick Ceesay, who has worked for the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) for three years. "They really deserve a pat on the back."

The party has said it would contest every position in the 2009 elections, including the presidency. Speaking to IRIN in November 2007, Southern Sudanese Vice-President Riek Machar said: "We want to win the election of 2009 as Sudanese and capture power in Khartoum through elections."

Ceesay, however, warned that both the SPLA and the SPLM needed continued support. "There is still a lot of work to be done," he said. "[They] need capacity-building and capacity-strengthening, in order for them to realise their dreams of being a full-fledged functioning government."

Life in Sudan limbo for Canadian with suspected Qaeda ties

(AFP) - Abousfian Abdelrazik is angry, broke and wants to go home. But the father-of-four is holed up inside Canada's embassy in Sudan and cannot, banned from flying as an alleged Al-Qaeda affiliate.

"I'm not violent. I'm an ordinary decent guy who wants to go home," said the 46-year-old Sudanese-Canadian by telephone. "I just want to be free."

Born in Sudan, Abdelrazik trained as a machinist and left in 1990 to build a new life in North America. His dream ended, he said, when he visited his sick mother in Sudan in 2003. When he tried to return to Canada, he discovered his name was on an international no-fly list and he has been unable to leave ever since.

Five years later and after two stints in tough Sudanese prisons from August 2003 to July 2004 and November 2005 to July 2006 -- despite no charges against him -- he is still waiting to return to his family.

Abdelrazik is accused of links to Abu Zubeida, a lieutenant of Al-Qaeda mastermind Osama bin Laden. In 2002 and 2003, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service also examined his alleged ties to Ahmed Ressay, an Al-Qaeda operative jailed for trying to bomb Los Angeles airport in 1999. The two had met at a mosque in Montreal, where Abdelrazik lived for 13 years.

Although he has never been charged, Abdelrazik remains on a United Nations blacklist. He dismissed his alleged links to Ressay. "None of it is true," he said. "I'm just a Canadian citizen wanting to go back to Canada where my children are. They are growing up without me." Abdelrazik has four children and has never met his youngest daughter, who was born after he left for Sudan.

In April he sought temporary refuge at the embassy because he feared his life was in danger in Sudan because of the allegations against him. He claims he was tortured and repeatedly beaten with rubber pipes in Sudanese jails.

Three months later he remains trapped in a diplomatic limbo, not daring to risk leaving the haven of the compound. "If I leave the embassy even for a few minutes they might not let me back in, so I have to stay here," he said. "Once out there, I am very scared they will arrest me again, straight away. I am terrified."

During the working day he sits in the embassy's waiting room and reads newspapers. He eats buffet meals provided by the embassy and at night sleeps on a poolside sun-lounger he drags into a changing room.

Outside the embassy's high razor-wire-topped walls life goes on. "They treat me OK here, but this place is still like a prison to me," Abdelrazik said.

Requests to meet him inside the embassy are referred to Ottawa, where permission is politely refused. But Abdelrazik is allowed to make two phone calls a day to his lawyer and family in Canada, and at night he can be reached by mobile phone, speaking under the gaze of security officers in the guard house. "I want to get on with my life," he said.

Yavar Hameed, Abdelrazik's Ottawa-based lawyer, is filing a repatriation application in a Canadian federal court. "He has no charge against him anywhere in the world," Hameed wrote in an email to **AFP**. "There is also no specific indictment against him as justification for him being on the UN travel ban."

The UN sanctions list is compiled by a committee from names provided by governments, and critics say few are challenged. To remove a name is complicated, and several countries including Germany, Sweden and Switzerland have complained the procedure is too difficult.

A federal court judge has ruled that the Canadian government is not liable for Abdelrazik's legal fees and he scrapes by on a 100 dollar-a-month government loan.

The Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail* quoted classified documents saying that Canadian intelligence warned against allowing Abdelrazik to return over fears it could upset US officials, who also have him on a no-fly list. The daily said Washington labelled Abdelrazik a threat on July 20, 2007 -- the same day he was released from Sudanese custody.

His family, including his wife whom he divorced after their long years apart, have made emotional appeals for his safe return and for the travel ban to be lifted. They also demand that Canada give him an emergency passport, since his previous documents have now expired.

A Canadian foreign ministry spokesman said "consular assistance" would continue to be provided. "Services include medical and financial assistance, facilitating communications with family and lawyers, as well as providing 'temporary safe haven' at our embassy in Khartoum," the spokesman said. "As this matter is currently under litigation, we cannot comment further on the situation."

Meanwhile Abdelrazik continues to hope. "Waiting and waiting, it's all that I can do," he said.

Sudan-born runner to carry U.S. flag

(UPI) -- Sudan-born Lopez Lomong, who will compete in the 1,500-meter run in the Olympics, has been selected to carry the U.S. flag during Friday's opening ceremonies. U.S. team captains representing each Olympic sport voted and selected Lomong, who became a U.S. citizen in 2007, for the honor. Lomong was born in Sudan and fled the country when he was 6. He lived as a refugee in Kenya for 10 years.