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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Abyei Assembly passes SDG 240 million budget

Al-Sahafa reports the Abyei area Administration and Legislative Assembly have agreed to dispatch a joint committee to discuss with the Presidency the issue of compensation for victims of the incidents occurred in May.

Meanwhile, the Abyei Assembly approved a budget of SDG 240 million, 80% of which will be earmarked for development. Assembly Speaker Charles Abyei said the issue of compensations and security guarantees is an obstacle impeding the return of IDPs. "Compensation for victims should be individual and the issue of returns should be a budget priority," the Speaker stressed.

President Bashir extends Press Council

Local dailies report President Bashir issued a decree yesterday to extend tenure of the National Press and Public Council until the end of the current year.

Elections Commission faces budget constraints

Khartoum Monitor reports the Deputy Chairman of the Elections Commission Abdullah Ahmed said after the commission meeting yesterday that future tasks would include geographical and proportional distribution as well as formulation of voting regulations and electoral rolls. "These will take time, as they are not easy tasks," he added, noting the commission has started its job by reviewing relevant documents, including the constitution, the CPA, elections law and the Commission's budget.

UN to hand over mine duties to Juba and Khartoum

The Citizen reports UNMAO completed a series of workshops as part of plan to give Juba and Khartoum full ownership of mine action programmes by 2011. UNMAO oversees all mine action activities in Sudan, with an annual budget of \$7.3 million.

Warrap collects 15,000 arms

Al-Ahdath reports Warrap State Government collected over 15000 arms from civilians. Four containers have been handed over to UNMIS Sector II as part of disarmament efforts.

NISS DG addresses officers' graduation ceremony

Local dailies report NISS DG Gen. Salah Gosh yesterday addressed graduation ceremony of batch 32 of NISS officers in presence of President Bashir, Presidential Assistant Musa Mohamed Ahmed, Defence Minister, DG of Police and a number of Ministers. Gosh declared NISS commitment to freedoms, the constitution, the law and the democratic transformation process.

SPLA kidnaps NCP official in the Blue Nile

Al-Intibaha reports an SPLA group kidnapped the NCP chairman in the Jam area in the Blue Nile State and has taken him to an unknown destination. An informed source told the paper yesterday that the SPLA group led by Captain Al-Sharif Al-Mansi broke into the residence of NCP official Saleh Hamad Toto in Damazin and took him in away in a Land Cruiser.

Sudan oil revenues reach \$ 608.76 million

Al-Ahdath reports Finance Ministry Undersecretary Al-Tayeb Abu Ganaya said Sudan's oil revenues for October reached \$ 608.76 million and that total export revenues amounted to \$ 415.14 million for the same period.

Govt. rejects HR claims of continued attacks on Darfur civilians

Ajras Al-Hurriah reports the Sudan Government rejected human rights groups' claims of attacks on civilians, harassment of relief workers and continued impunity for perpetrators of war crimes. "The human rights groups which issued the report are warmongers that benefit from continuity of war," Sudan Ambassador to UN told **Reuters**.

In Khartoum, MFA spokesperson Ali Al-Sadiq said the government's commitment to a ceasefire does not mean it would stand by while some armed movements continue military operations.

According to **local dailies**, SAF spokesperson office yesterday rejected the HR claims of continued attacks on civilians. "Until yesterday evening there was no fighting on the ground. SAF is committed to the ceasefire declared by President Bashir," the office said.

SLM will not participate in talks until Darfur is secure and stable - Nur

Ray Al-Shaab reports SLM's Abdul Wahid Mohamed Nur said he would resist international pressure to participate in negotiations in Qatar and pledged to boycott all negotiations until pro-government militias are disarmed and attacks stopped.

Websites/International News Coverage

Rights groups say Darfur situation dire as Ocampo prepares to brief SC

(Sudan Tribune website) 2/12/08, NEW YORK, (**AFP**) - The situation in Sudan's Darfur region is deteriorating with violence on the rise despite claims to the contrary by the Khartoum government, a coalition of rights groups said Tuesday in a report.

The report rejected Sudanese government statements that conditions were improving in war-torn Darfur and accused authorities of waging war, obstructing humanitarian aid and trying to persuade the UN Security Council to suspend an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court against President Omar al-Bashir.

The rights groups, including New York-based Human Rights Watch, the Save Darfur coalition and Human Rights First, issued their report titled "Sudan: Rhetoric versus Reality in Darfur" ahead of tomorrow's scheduled briefing of the Security Council by the ICC prosecutor.

"The international community has an unfortunate record of judging Sudan by its words rather than its actions," said Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch, in a statement announcing the report. "The Security Council must not allow itself to be hoodwinked by Khartoum into handing Bashir impunity in return for empty promises," he said.

The report rejected comments from President Al-Bashir that conditions in Darfur were normal, saying civilians were being displaced by violence and sometimes cut off from aid.

"Millions of people are living under daily threat of violence and are dependent on humanitarian aid that is hindered or entirely blocked by ongoing insecurity and endless bureaucratic hurdles," said Julia Fromholz, director of the Crimes Against Humanity Program at Human Rights First.

Sudanese government bombing and fighting from July to October had forced 90,000 people to flee their homes, the report said. And after the government's declaration of an "unconditional ceasefire" in November, the Sudanese army kept up the bombing of villages in North and West Darfur, the report said.

The report says Khartoum "continues to obstruct the delivery of assistance through bureaucratic constraints and harassment of humanitarian staff," adding that 170 aid workers have been abducted and 11 killed since January.

In response to the accusations raised today by the report, MFA Spokesman Sadiq said the government is committed fully to the declared cease-fire, but that most of the rebel movements had not announced a similar response. He noted that the government's commitment to the cease-fire does not mean standing idly by when some rebel movements conduct security and military operations.

The rights report, based largely on UN and media reports, states, "Between July and October 2008, government bombing and fighting in North Darfur led to the displacement of some 90,000 people. In October, government forces and allied militia carried out attacks on at least 13 villages near Muhajariya, South Darfur, in which at least 44 civilians were reportedly killed. Even in November, following the government's declaration of a 'unilateral, unconditional ceasefire,' the Sudanese army continued to bomb villages in North and West Darfur."

"Once again, the Sudanese government is talking peace with diplomats and journalists while waging war in Darfur" said Save Darfur Coalition President Jerry Fowler. "And once again, civilians are bearing the brunt of the violence."

But Sudan's foreign ministry spokesperson said that the government has a clear policy for transparent and open dialogue on any human rights subject. He added that the government does not allow the use of human rights as a pretext to interfere in the affairs of the country, and this is what some organizations seek to do. Also he denied that some organizations have been harassed in their relief operations.

Finally, Spokesman Sadiq cited the MOU signed between the Government and the UN in the area of humanitarian operations, and indicated that through the meetings of the tripartite mechanism, which also includes the AU, most problems facing humanitarian operations had been addressed.

UNAMID sends team after Darfur clashes between IDPs and militia

(UN News Service), 2/12/08, - UNAMID peacekeepers are working to calm tensions in South Darfur after violent clashes on 1 December between Janjaweed militiamen and residents of the Hissa Hissa IDP camp. Two militiamen armed with one rifle quarreled with IDPs, according to UNAMID, which dispatched staff today to verify reports of an incident. One militiaman was severely beaten and later died, while an IDP suffered a minor injury. The other militiaman was arrested and taken into custody by Sudanese police. UNAMID reported that at least 10 armed men started shooting at a water pump near Hissa Hissa today, and later set fire to the pump and five camp generators. The UNAMID team continues to monitor the situation.

JEM holds talks with Qatar over Darfur peace process

Sudan Tribune website, 2/12/08 (DOHA) — JEM has started a series of meeting with Qatari officials to exchange views over the peace process Doha intends to sponsor between Khartoum and the Darfur rebel movement.

A delegation composed of Tahir Al-Faki, Jibril Ibrahim, Ahmed Hussein Adam and Khatab Widaa arrived in Doha with a message from JEM chairman Khalil Ibrahim for Qatari Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al Thani.

JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein Adam told Sudan Tribune from Doha that the message deals with the JEM vision on the peace process. The delegation handed it over to the Qatari State Minister for Foreign Affairs on Monday and will again meet with him on Wednesday.

When the Qatari State Foreign Minister met with the JEM leader close to the Chad border on 6 November last, Ibrahim pledged to send a delegation to Doha to discuss mediation but cautioned that this would not signify that JEM was willing to negotiate with Khartoum under Qatari sponsorship.

"We are here to discuss the Qatari mediation and to exchange views over the process but yet we have to take our decision," the JEM spokesperson said from Doha. "Khartoum has to stop IDPs harassment as well as bombardment of civilians; also the authorities should stop hindering the activities of aid workers." Adam said. The spokesman added that the JEM delegation had also met the joint mediator, as well as the French and Norwegian envoys to Darfur who are in the Qatari capital.

Sudan partners disagree over national security bill

Sudan Tribune website, 2/12/08 (KHARTOUM) — The SPLM has said it has reached agreement with the NCP on the Press and Publications Law, but confirmed that it has differences with its GNU partner on three points in the National Security bill.

At a Khartoum press conference Monday, Michael Makuei Southern Sudan Minister of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development, chairman of the joint legal committee, outlined the SPLM's position on the National Security Law, the Press Law, and the Land Commission and Human Rights Commission.

He told reporters that the two partners reached an agreement on the Press and Publications Act which gives the Press Council powers of control and accountability on the press, provided the Council is elected by journalists and publishers.

However, he acknowledged differences between SPLM and NCP on the National Security Act with regard to the appointment of the National Security Service Director and his deputies, plus the power to arrest.

Makuei said the SPLM believes that the President should appoint the Director of National Security after consultation with the First Vice President and approval by the General Prosecutor whereas the NCP views this position as interference in the president's exclusive authority.

The second point of divergence is that the SPLM has proposed the appointment of only one deputy to the Director of National Security, while the NCP is demanding a number of deputies.

On the third issue, the power to arrest, the SPLM insists that only the prosecution has the right to arrest while the NCP maintains that the National Security Service can also exercise this power.

SPLM is expected to discuss the disputed issues when its political bureau meets in Juba on Wednesday.

Sudan sees '09 oil revenue down 44% on global crisis

Reuters, 1/12/08 (KHARTOUM) - Sudan expects its oil revenues to fall 43.7% in 2009 as the global financial crisis continues to bite, according to the country's annual budget passed by parliament on Monday. It forecast oil revenues of 7.9 billion Sudanese pounds (\$3.6 billion) in 2009, down from the 14 billion Sudanese pounds the country earned in 2008.

State Finance Minister Tarek Shalabi told Reuters he was still hoping oil prices would bounce back in the coming months, but said government spending would remain restrained. "The oil price has been nose-diving and that puts a lot of pressure on to our system," he said. "I think that prices will go up," he added. "But there will be pressure on government departments to manage their resources very carefully"

The Ministry of Finance budget document predicted oil would make up a smaller share of total revenues, dropping to 43.2% in 2009 from more than 60% a year earlier.

Shalabi said the government would make up some of the revenue shortfall through an increase in some taxes. Those included 20% VAT on telecoms and communications services, up from 15% in 2008, and a new 5% "development tax" on some imports.

"Imports of raw materials for development will be exempted ... We are really trying to target luxuries," he told Reuters by phone. He said the budget also focused on developing areas of Sudan's economy outside the oil sector, particularly agriculture, an industry that still employs a large part of Sudan's population.

Sudan says it currently produces 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude. The country's mining and energy minister last month said it would raise that figure to 600,000 bpd in 2009.

Oil is down by almost two-thirds from a peak of more than \$147 a barrel in July. A global economic slowdown that has tipped a growing number of countries into recession has caused sharp falls in oil demand.

Last month, SPLM threatened not to support the budget unless President al-Bashir's party agreed to enact measures promised in the 2005 north-south peace deal. But SPLM officials said they had reached an agreement with the NCP to approve the budget on time and so it was passed.