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Media Monitoring Report

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Local News Headlines

- SAF ready, agents “lick their elbows” – President Bashir (**Al-Quwat Al Musalaha**)
- Sanaa group calls on SC to refer Gaza to the ICC (**Al-Ayyam**)
- The crime continues, UN silent, US blessing (**Sudan Vision**)
- Mahdi condemns Gaza aggression, lauds Jazeera TV (**Sudan Vision**)
- Assembly Speaker receives UN SR on Disability (**the Citizen**)
- Parties timing is decided by State authorities – Prosecutor (**Al-Rai Al-Aam**)
- Demonstrators burn US, Israeli flags in Khartoum (**Al-Rai Al-Aam**)
- Qatar not familiar with Darfur issue – Minnawi (**Al-Rai Al Aam**)
- SPLM boycotts Parliament (**Ajras Al-Hurriah**)

Websites/International Headlines

- Sudanese opposition figure briefly detained over ICC support (**ST**)
- UNAMID officer dies after car-jacking (**UN News Centre**)
- Accused denies helping Darfur war crimes court (**Reuters**)
- Wife of Sudan Islamist leader accuses officials of corruption (**ST**)
- South Sudan budget discussion postponed (**ST**)
- 600 Sudanese refugees return from Ethiopia – IOM (**ST**)
- Ugandan LRA “in church massacre” (**BBC**)
- Presidential Adviser hails ESPA implementation process (**SUNA**)

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

SAF is ready, agents “lick their elbows” – President Bashir

“SAF is ready. Those for peace are welcome. Agents should try to lick their elbows”. SAF C-in-C Omer Al Bashir declared at the Military Colleague yesterday, according to ***Al-Quwat Al Musalaha*** newspaper.

Sanaa group calls on SC to refer Gaza to the ICC

Al-Ayyam reports the Sanna Group Executive Committee meeting called on the Security Council to refer the case of Gaza massacres to the ICC. It also called for establishing an international centre to combat piracy in the Mediterranean Sea as well as to resolve the border crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea and that between Eritrea and Djibouti. Sudanese Acting Foreign Minister Ali Karti said piracy in the Horn of Africa would affect trade and economy in the region and the world. He urged coordination of efforts by regional countries and cooperation with the international community to end the phenomenon.

The crime continues, UN silent, US Blessing

Sudan Vision reports Israeli bombardment of the Gaza strip continued for the third consecutive day, with Palestinian sources indicating the death of more than 300 and over 1000 injured. Hamas Political Bureau Head Khalid Misha'al, now residing in Damascus, called for a new Intifada against Israel while Hamas Chief Ismail Hania described the Israeli attacks as a heinous massacre.

Eight Arab League countries have agreed to an emergency summit to discuss conditions in Gaza.

Mahdi condemns Gaza aggression, lauds Jazeera TV

Sudan Vision reports Umma National Party leader Al-Sadig Al-Mahdi has called on the international community to help the people Gaza, to open the crossings and deliver urgent humanitarian support to the Palestinian nation. He commended Al- Jazeera for its live coverage of the situation.

Assembly Speaker receives UN SR on Disability

The Citizen reports the Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir received the UN Special Rapportur on Disability, Sheikha Hissah Bent Khalefa Al Thani yesterday. She is currently on a visit to familiarize herself with the situation of the disabled in Sudan.

New Year Party timings a matter for State authorities – Prosecutor

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports the Community Security Prosecutor as clarifying that it is up to Khartoum State authorities to decide when New Year parties should end and not his office as had been reported by newspapers yesterday. The Community Security Prosecution role is to ensure discipline and good conduct at such parties, he said.

According to ***Al-Khartoum***, Police commanders met yesterday to discuss a plan to secure New Year parties and Independence celebrations.

Demonstrators burn US, Israeli flags in Khartoum

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports students yesterday staged anti-Israeli demonstration in Khartoum. They called on the international community to intervene to end the massacre in Gaza and then burned US and Israeli flags.

The National Assembly met yesterday to condemn Israeli aggression against Palestinians and declared support for the Palestinian cause. The Assembly called on UN and SC to live up to their responsibilities to maintain international peace and security.

According to **Al-Intibaha**, SPLM MPs refused to vote for yesterday's National Assembly statement in condemnation of Israeli aggression. SPLM MP Yasir Arman said they have not been consulted on its formulation. "We are not party to the statement," he said.

Qatar not familiar with Darfur issue – Minnawi

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports SLM-Minnawi as saying that it is presently considering the possibility of referring the Arab-African initiative on Darfur to another country because Qatar is not familiar with the Darfur issue. SLM (Minnawi) spokesperson Mustafa Al-Jameel stressed the importance of the roles of Libya, Chad, Eritrea and Egypt in the upcoming negotiations.

SPLM boycotts Parliament

Ajras Al-Hurriah reports that Gen. Kiir gave SPLM MPs the green light to boycott today's National Assembly sessions to protest the Speaker's announcement of an end of the Parliament Session before key laws have approved on the democratic transformation, referendum and the popular consultation. SPLM MPs threatened to take up the matter with the Presidency.

Websites/International News Coverage

Sudanese opposition figure briefly detained over ICC support

(Sudan Tribune website) The Sudanese security service briefly arrested and then released the deputy chairman of the Democratic Unionist Party Ali Mahmoud Hassanein for his support to the ICC.

The prominent Sudanese opposition leader was detained on Monday morning and released late in the evening. He is known for his position in favor of the ICC. He said publicly that Sudan has to cooperate with the ICC because the Darfur Peace Agreement requires to Sudan must accept all UN Security Council resolutions. The referral of Darfur crimes to the ICC had been decided by UN resolution 1593 of March 31, 2005.

The **Sudanese Media Centre** said Hassanein had been apprehended after "negative remarks he made supporting the ICC allegations against the President of the Republic."

According to the **Sudan Tribune**, The pro-regime media also said that Hassanein's remarks come after he had contacts with a senior official in a Western embassy known for its hostility to the Sudan.

Hassanein, aged 74 years, a lawyer and a vocal critic of the government, has spoken out against restrictions on press freedoms and security abuses. He was detained last July on charges of attempting to overthrow the government.

JEM yesterday condemned the arrest, saying “this reckless move—made in the midst of the hysteria the regime is experiencing due to the expected ICC decision—is only a prelude to mass arrests” in the country.

By the end of November three human right activists — Osman Humaida, Moniem El-Gak and Amir Suleiman – had been detained and interrogated for their links with the ICC. After release they spoke about bad treatment and torture by the security service.

UNAMID officer dies after car-jacking

(UN News Centre) A military officer serving with UNAMID died yesterday, after being shot in the leg two days ago during a car-jacking at a market in El Fasher. The victim was one of three UNAMID military officers who were car-jacked by three unknown armed men. The officers were forced to leave their vehicle and, in the process, one was shot.

Accused denies helping Darfur war crimes court

(Reuters) A Sudanese man denied in court yesterday that he had tried to pass sensitive documents about a Darfur war crimes suspect to the ICC. Mohamed Alsary Ibrahim is the first person in Sudan to be prosecuted for cooperating with the ICC.

Sudanese intelligence officer Omar Abdel told Khartoum north court last week that Ibrahim had been caught in a sting operation receiving confidential documents from a contact in one of Sudan's police forces. The officer said Ibrahim had been trying to find documents to "fabricate a relationship" between Ahmed Haroun, Sudan's state minister for humanitarian affairs, and the pro-government Janjaweed militias that are accused of war crimes in Darfur.

Abdel told the court that Ibrahim had intended to pass the documents to Sudanese-American contacts who had promised to pay him for the papers and pass them on to the ICC. However, Ibrahim told the court on Monday he had only asked his contact to supply him with false travel documents, to allow him to leave the country for medical treatment. "He gave me the papers. But before I knew what was in the papers, about six men with guns came in and arrested me...I had no idea what was going on," he said. Ibrahim also told the court that national security officers had tortured him after his arrest to force him to confess to working with the ICC. But he had refused, he added.

Prosecutors last week told the court Ibrahim faced seven charges, including working to overthrow the constitutional government, spying and waging war against the state -- all three of which carry the death penalty. Judges on Monday said Ibrahim would be formally charged with the less serious offences of criminal conspiracy and passing on confidential military documents.

After the hearing, lawyers told **Reuters** that the lesser charges carry only prison terms.

Wife of Sudan Islamist leader accuses officials of corruption

(Sudan Tribune website) The wife of the leading Islamic opposition leader blasted Sudanese officials including the president accusing them of accumulating wealth through their positions in the government.

Wisal Al-Mahdi, wife of Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi, told the pro-SPLM newspaper **Ajras Al-Hurriya** that the ruling NCP “demonstrated greed for money and power”. Al-Mahdi said that NCP figures contributed to the downfall of the Islamic ideology in Sudan “who built palaces and luxurious homes and ride private jets”.

Al-Turabi, a former ally of President Al-Bashir, was the government's ideological mastermind in the 1990s and de-facto ruler. However Al-Bashir and Al-Turabi split ranks and the latter was jailed on accusations of conspiracy. Released in October 2003, the opposition leader was jailed again for more than a year in 2004, accused of involvement in an alleged coup plot. He was released in 2005.

Al-Turabi's wife provided what she claimed to be examples of corruption by top government officials. "This does not require any proof. I ask you to go to Kafoori area to see for yourself 31 pieces of land owned by the president and his relatives. Then go to Al-Raqi area to see the homes of Al-Bashir, Ali Osman Taha [2nd Vice President], Mustafa Ismail [presidential adviser]" she said.

Al-Mahdi revealed that Finance and Economy Minister Awad Al-Jaz bought apartments in Dubai's prestigious Palm Islands. "Al-Jaz bought 30 apartments and wanted to buy more but they [Dubai authorities] rejected that and asked him to disclose the source of his money but he declined to show them" she said. "Of course the source of his money is Sudan's oil" she claimed.

Prices of apartments in Palm Island range between \$1.7 to \$4.2 million.

The issue of corruption in Sudan has been largely minimized by Khartoum, observers say. Sudanese officials are not required to submit a report showing their net worth despite some lawmakers pushing for it. Sudan has consistently been named by Transparency International as one of the most corrupt countries in Africa along with Chad and Guinea.

South Sudan budget discussion postponed

(Sudan Tribune website) 29 Dec 2008 The Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly yesterday postponed the second reading of the 2009 budget until January 15, 2009, according to Economy, Development and Finance Committee Chairman Professor Bari Wanji.

Wanji emphasized that before the proposed budget can be passed, it requires critical analysis by specialized Assembly groups based on guidelines given by the chairman of Economy, Development and Finance as to whether the budget takes into account aspirations of Southern Sudanese.

According to Wanji, GoSS will be forced to borrow money from the international community by either using unexploited oil resources as collateral or assuring international creditors of its commitment to collection of non-oil revenue.

Meanwhile, in an interview, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning Kuol Athien Mawien said that the postponement was necessitated by many expensive celebrations and lack of a quorum in the assembly. He cited the upcoming CPA fourth anniversary celebration in Malakal, for which \$21 million has been earmarked. The annual celebration is conducted on a rotational basis among the ten state capitals of Southern Sudan as a way of supporting state governments with peace dividend projects.

The minister added that it would be very important for the president of Southern Sudan to attend the deliberation on the proposed budget for ushering in new change.

He reiterated that a lot of money has been wasted on house rent and vehicles for senior staff at the expense of government. He declared that only ministers would be entitled to drive government vehicles while other staff will be given funds to purchase cars as per their

entitlement.

Some MPs expressed their disappointment over the postponement and demanded the removal of the specialized committee together with the Speaker.

600 Sudanese refugees return from Ethiopia – IOM

(***Sudan Tribune website***) IOM said that 600 southern Sudanese refugees have been safely repatriated this month in an air lift operation that ended Saturday. The air lift was organized by IOM in collaboration with Administration for Refugees and Returns Affairs (ARRA) and UNHCR, IOM statement said.

Some of the returnees had been refugees in Ethiopia for 26 years. Over 5000 refugees, all from south Sudan were repatriated in 2008.

Ugandan LRA “in church massacre”

(***BBC***) 29 Dec 2008 Uganda's army has accused LRA rebels of hacking 45 civilians to death in a Catholic church in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Capt Chris Magezi said the scene was "horrendous... dead bodies of mostly women and children cut in pieces". The attack happened on 26 December.

A rebel spokesman has denied responsibility for the killings, which follow a collapse in the peace process. The UN says at least 189 people were killed in several attacks last week. Some reports say more than 100 people were killed in the church alone.

The armies of Uganda, South Sudan and DR Congo carried out a joint offensive against the rebels in mid-December after LRA leader Joseph Kony again refused to sign a peace deal.

Uganda's government had been involved in lengthy peace negotiations with the LRA, hosted by the South Sudanese government. But Mr Kony has demanded that ICC arrest warrants for him and his associates be dropped before any agreement can be struck.

Meanwhile, the UN peacekeeping mission in DR Congo says one of its troops accidentally shot and killed a Ugandan soldier in the nearby town of Dungu.

Aid officials requesting anonymity near Doruma, which is about 40km from the border with South Sudan, confirmed to Uganda's Daily Monitor newspaper and to AFP that the massacre had taken place.

"Bodies of the women and children, with deep cuts are littered inside and outside the church," an aid official told The Monitor. Witness Abel Longi told AP that he recognized the LRA rebels by their dreadlocked hair, their Acholi language and the number of young boys among them. "I hid in bush near the church and heard people wailing as they were being cut with machetes," he said.

LRA spokesman David Nekorach Matsanga has denied that the rebels are behind the killings.

"They want to justify their stay in DRC [Congo] and loot minerals from there like they did before," he told AP.

Capt Magezi said that on Saturday the army had killed 13 of the rebels behind the alleged attack and were pursuing the rest of the group. The UN's humanitarian agency Ocha says 40 people were killed in attacks in DR Congo's Faradje district, 89 around Doruma and 60 in the

Gurba area.

Presidential Adviser hails ESPA implementation process

(**Suna website**) Presidential Adviser and chairman of the GoNU delegation for East Sudan negotiations, Dr Mustafa Uthman Isma'il, said that implementation of the Eastern Sudan peace Agreement is progressing well. In a statement to SUNA, Dr Isma'il denied there was any impediment facing implementation of the agreement. Dr Isma'il indicated that the Assistant of the President and chairman of Eastern Front Musa Mohamed Ahmed is continuing his contacts concerning implementation of East Sudan peace agreement even while on private vacation.