

UNITED NATIONS  الأمم المتحدة

UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

UNMIS

Media Headlines, 2nd January 2007

(By Public Information Office)

NOTE: Reproduction here does not mean that the UNMIS PIO can vouch for the accuracy or veracity of the contents, nor does this report reflect the views of the United Nations Mission in Sudan. Furthermore, international copyright exists on some materials and this summary should Not be disseminated beyond the intended list of recipients.

IN THE NEWS TODAY:

➤ **Government of National Unity :**

- Minister of Interior assesses situation on the ground in El Fasher and Kutum,
- Khartoum State Deputy Wali calls for investigation committee to probe police attack on All Saint's Cathedral

➤ **Darfur**

- Armed men detain South Darfur officials in refugee camp. *SudanTribune.com*
- Sudan to unite Darfur peace initiatives. *SudanTribune.com*
- Sudan bombs Darfur rebel areas – AU. *SudanTribune.com*
- Darfur conflict threatens aid operation. *SudanTribune.com*
- Resignation of leading member of Darfur former rebel group. *SudanTribune*
- US welcome progress on UN deployment in Darfur. *SudanTribune.com*
- If Sudan reneges on UN force, it could face punitive measures. *SudanTribune.com.*
- UN changeover could spell disaster for Darfur *SudanTribune.com*
- Sudan: Commission in move to unify Darfur peace initiatives *Republic of Sudan Radio*
- Sudan: South Darfur State delegation detained for two hours at displaced camp *Suna news agency website*
- First batch of UN military experts arrive in Sudan's Darfur region *BBC Monitoring*
- Darfur welcomes the arrival of UN mission (*AFP*)

➤ **South Sudan:**

- Details of strike organized by northern merchants in Juba

➤ **GONU:**

- Khartoum State Deputy Wali calls for investigation committee to probe police attack on All Saint's Cathedral,

IN THE NEWS TODAY:

Darfur

Minister of Interior assesses situation on the ground in El Fasher and Kutum,

Akhbar Al-Yom reported that the Minister of Interior Prof. AlZubair Bashir Taha has arrived ElFashir yesterday accompanied by high ranking police officers delegation. The Minister of Interior has met the police forces, Deputy Governor, head of Legislative Assembly, military and governmental leaders in ElFashir.

“Stability and security in Darfur are on the top of our priorities and intensive efforts are to be exerted within coming days for the peace process in Darfur” He pointed out. The minister has visited also Kutum Locality which had been attacked by NRF during the past days.

Armed men detain South Darfur officials in refugee camp

(ST) ec 31, 2006 (NYALA) Armed men detained South Darfur officials who were visiting a displaced camp here. The armed elements said belonging to a Darfur rebel group, the state-run SUNA reported.

A delegation of the government of South Darfur State headed by acting Chairman of the state’s Legislative Council, Omar Adam Khatir, was Sunday subjected to a detention for two hours by a group of armed men at Draij camp in Nyala in South Darfur.

The delegation was on a visit to congratulate the displaced at the camp on Eid Al-Adha.

The armed group has detained the state’s officials and taken them to offices belonging to the group inside the IDPs camp. A prolonged discussion was conducted between the two parties on the objective the state’s officials to the camp, SUNA said.

The armed elements told the delegation that they belong to Sudan Liberation Movement, without determining to which faction.

After their release, the state’s delegation members continued their visit to the displaced people camp.

There are around 2.5 internally displaced persons in the different camps in darfur since the eruption of the fighting in 2003. Sudanese authorities are accused of hindering the aid workers activities and supporting a militia that spreading terror outside the camps.

Sudan to unite Darfur peace initiatives

Monday 1 January 2007.

(ST) Dec 31, 2006 (KHARTOUM) The National Commission for the Unity of the National Rank has revealed that it plans to work with the relevant authorities to unite the various peace initiatives in Darfur. This is aimed at making the non-signatories rebel groups join the peace process.

The official spokesman of the commission, Maj-Gen Osman Abdallah Mohamed, pointed out in an interview with Sudanese radio that all arrangements have been finalized to unite all the peace initiatives after the Eid al-Adha celebrations.

He said the unification of the initiatives will lead to the specification of the date for the first meeting, which represents a breakthrough in efforts to resolve the Darfur crisis.

The States Council, the Senate, launched that week an initiative to resolve Darfur crisis, saying it has the ability to realize peace in the troubled Darfur.

The National Commission for the Unity of National Ranks, a body mainly from pro-ruling party members, tries since more than a month to convince the different political forces to support the government of the national unity and find a "Sudanese solution to Darfur crisis".

But the group has failed to convince or to meet the holdout groups who consider this body as an emanation from the Islamist ruling party.

Also there is an initiative led by Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani leader of the pro Egyptian Democratic Unionist Party. Al-Merghani was the leader of a Sudanese opposition coalition and the allied to the Darfur SLM but his stand against the deployment of UN troops in Darfur vulnerablized his impact on the Darfur groups.

All these efforts are rejected by the rebel groups because they doubt the capacity of internal political forces to guarantee a lasting peace in Darfur, but they particularly do not trust the credibility of the ruling NCP.

Analysts say Sudanese government has used these initiatives divert the international community and the public opinion inside the country. But since the 16 November 2006 meeting in Addis Ababa, Khartoum accepted that talks with Darfur rebels should be sponsored by the AU and the UN.

Sudan bombs Darfur rebel areas - AU

Monday 1 January 2007.

(Reuters) Dec 31, 2006 (KHARTOUM) Sudan has bombed Darfur rebel areas, a day after African Union officials visited the insurgents and secured their commitment to a ceasefire, an AU statement said on Sunday.

Luke Aprezi commands a 7,000-strong African Union force in Darfur which, hampered by lack of equipment and funds, has struggled to stem the violence in remote west Sudan. The fighting has driven 2.5 million people from their homes and killed an estimated 200,000.

"For the first time I visited them (rebels) in the field in Um Rai (North Darfur) ... and I was able to get a ceasefire commitment from them," Aprezi told Reuters. The meeting was held two days ago and he notified the government of it, he said.

"Unfortunately (Sudan's army) went and bombed the area and it looks like I led them to the area to get bombed," he said.

A May peace deal was signed by only one of three negotiating rebel factions. Many groups rejected it, formed a new military alliance and renewed hostilities with the government.

One Darfur rebel faction confirmed there had been bombing attacks in North Darfur in the past two days. A government army spokesman said there was no confirmation of this in Khartoum.

"Darfur commanders cannot undertake bombing operations without the knowledge of central command in Khartoum," the spokesman told Reuters. "But we in central command are completely committed to the ceasefire."

Aprezi could not confirm that the ceasefire he had secured with the rebels would still stand.

"I hope that this statement will give them confidence and they still keep it up," he said. President Omar Hassan al-Bashir says the Darfur ceasefire does not apply to the new rebel alliance which was formed after the May deal was signed.

The escalation in fighting since May has threatened the aid operation in Darfur, the world's largest, and led to the evacuation of hundreds of humanitarian workers.

U.N. and AU officials confirm that the new rebel alliance has inflicted heavy losses on the Sudanese armed forces, and say this has prompted Khartoum to remobilise militias, known locally as Janjaweed, to protect their bases.

The mostly non-Arab rebels in Darfur took up arms in early 2003, accusing the central government of neglect. The United States has said the way the government tried to crush the rebellion was genocidal, a charge Khartoum rejects. The International Criminal Court is investigating alleged war crimes in the region.

Darfur conflict threatens aid operation

Sunday 31 December 2006.

(Reuters) Dec 31, 2006 (**KHARTOUM**) As Darfur's conflict enters its fourth year and fighting engulfs main towns, the world's largest humanitarian operation in Sudan's remote west has become increasingly threatened.

The clashes which drove some 2.5 million Darfuris from their homes and killed an estimated 200,000 were concentrated in remote villages in the early stages of the conflict. But the terror has spread to Darfur's main towns, affecting many of the 14,000 aid workers based there.

"These places were safe havens before," said Alun MacDonald, spokesman for British aid agency Oxfam. "Our headquarters are in the town, so it does affect operations," he said. "It's frustrating."

Many war victims fled to the relative safety of the three Darfur state capitals during the conflict and formed mass makeshift camps surrounding the towns.

But that feeling of safety was shattered when militia ran riot several times in recent months or clashed with former rebel forces inside Darfur's main towns. In December U.N. and aid agencies evacuated hundreds of staff from Darfur cities, paralyzing some humanitarian operations.

"The situation here remains like a tinderbox," said one aid worker who witnessed clashes in December in el-Fasher town before evacuated.

With a May peace deal signed by only one rebel faction, violence has escalated as many other rebel commanders formed a new military alliance and renewed hostilities with the government. U.N. officials say Khartoum remobilized proxy militia, known locally as Janjaweed, to combat the rebellion.

U.S. academic Eric Reeves says the militia are in the towns because the new rebel alliance had inflicted heavy losses in remote areas on government forces and their proxy militia.

"The towns now offer safe haven and easy pickings for the Janjaweed, and they are certainly less fully under control of the Sudanese armed forces," he said.

The Janjaweed "report to no one," the aid worker in el-Fasher said, adding "there is a huge amount of tension between the Janjaweed, the government of Sudan and the police."

In West Darfur's capital el-Geneina, armed men dressed in various military fatigues roam the streets in unmarked vehicles. As well as militia, insurgents from neighboring Chad drive in and out of the town.

Aid compounds in many of Darfur's major towns have been targeted by armed men in the past few months. In North Darfur's Tawila town, all the international aid agencies have left, leaving tens of thousands of victims without help.

Oxfam's MacDonald said with the May deal, there were many more armed factions in the towns as former rebel forces have gained legitimacy but have not yet laid down their weapons. "There are lots more men with guns inside the towns," he said.

Most agencies are reluctant to leave Darfur, which U.N. officials call the world's worst humanitarian crisis, but many are operating dangerously close to the edge, stretching normal operational rules.

"They are all operating in the red zone, beyond acceptable levels of security," said Reeves. "They would never think of entering a situation like Darfur if they weren't already there."

Mia Farrow, the goodwill ambassador for the U.N. Children's Agency (UNICEF), warned hundreds of thousands were already out of reach of the aid operation because of the growing violence and the situation was likely to get worse especially if evacuations of aid workers continued.

"The people of Darfur are utterly helpless to protect themselves and their children from the tsunami of violence that is about to engulf them," she said.

Resignation of leading member of Darfur former rebel group

Friday 29 December 2006.

(ST) Dec 28, 2006 (KHARTOUM) The spokesperson of the chairperson of SLM-Minni Minawi presented his resignation from the former rebel faction in protest for the failure of Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA).

Mahgoub Hussein, the official spokesperson of the chairperson of the Sudan Liberation Movement Minni Minawi, resigned from the SLM-MM for failure of the DPA and the faction to achieve peace and stability in the troubled region of Darfur.

Hussein also said that the SLM had lost its legitimacy to express the will and the aspirations of Darfur people.

But Seif Haroun, the spokesperson of the SLM-MM, denied that Hussein had delivered his resignation to Minni Minawi. He further invited Hussein to address his critics within the institutions of the movement not through the media.

Hussein said last week that the SLM-MM had prepared a list of Sudanese official involved in Darfur war crimes and it would be presented the International Criminal Court. But, his statement had been dismissed by Seif Haroun.

The former rebel faction faces growing frustration among its members because the DPA is not implemented since May 2006. Also Minawi troops on the ground have been attacked by the Khartoum backed militia several times.

Two weeks ago, three leading commanders have joined the holdout rebel groups saying there is no tangible peace on the ground and their situation remained unchanged.

Sudanese government delays the implementation of the DPA saying it would be better to wait the signing of the other holdout groups to distribute the ministerial posts; also it argues that it can not disarm its militia as far as the rebellion continues.

Aware of the growing frustration within Minawi troops, Sudanese government proposed last week to integrate to the Sudanese army Minawi forces and other rebel factions which signed the DPA. According to the DPA, this integration should come after the disarmament of the militia and within a mechanism supervised by the AU.

But the ongoing process of integration would lead to the integration of the former rebels to the Sudanese army and its militia without the participation of the African Union.

US welcomes progress on UN deployment in Darfur

Friday 29 December 2006.

(AP) Dec 28, 2006 (WASHINGTON) The State Department on Thursday welcomed what it said was "positive movement" by the Sudanese government toward implementing a United Nations plan to end the violence in Sudan's Darfur region by sending U.N. peacekeeping forces there.

Deputy spokesman Tom Casey noted that Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir had approved the plan in a letter to outgoing U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and that deployment of the first phase of the three-phase plan is under way.

A joint statement issued by U.N. and African Union offices in Sudan said they had provided the Sudanese government Wednesday with a list of names of the 43 U.N. military staff officers and 24 police advisers making up the first U.N. group to be deployed to Darfur.

A U.N. Security Council resolution envisions the eventual deployment of a "hybrid" U.N. and African Union force totaling more than 20,000 U.N. peacekeepers and police.

The existing 7,000-member AU force has been unable to bring stability to the region. Almost four years of sectarian conflict have left more than 200,000 dead and some 2.5 million homeless.

Al-Bashir had been resisting deployment of a U.N. force but has been under increasing international pressure to accept it.

Welcoming al-Bashir's apparent change of heart, Casey said, "We're working off the assumption that the letter from the president and head of state is the accurate and full position of that government."

The U.N. Security Council welcomed al-Bashir's new stand Wednesday but fresh doubts about the commitment arose almost immediately.

Contradicting him, Sudan's U.N. Ambassador Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem said the hybrid force must be smaller and have no U.N. peacekeepers, only U.N. technical and logistical experts supporting African troops.

"The force is African, the leader is an African," he said. "There is support and logistical support staff by the U.N., wearing their own helmets, but they are not going to engage in peacekeeping activities."

Casey said he was aware of the ambassador's comments but added that they do not carry the same weight as a presidential letter.

Eric Reeves, a Sudan expert at Smith College said it is doubtful that al-Bashir will ever permit the kind of U.N. force envisioned in the Security Council resolution.

"In the absence of a robust force, as Khartoum well knows, the current precipitous decline in security will continue indefinitely, ultimately forcing virtually all humanitarian efforts to end," he said. "The genocidal status quo will be preserved, and people will die in rapidly increasing numbers."

If Sudan reneges on UN force, it could face punitive measures

Saturday 30 December 2006.

(AP) Dec 30, 2006 (WASHINGTON) The Bush administration, while cautiously welcoming Sudan's acceptance of a United Nations peace plan for the Darfur region, has an array of economic and military sanctions available for consideration if the Islamic government reneges on its commitment.

At issue is a three-stage plan to send some 20,000 U.N. peacekeepers and police to Darfur to provide protection to the 2.5 million Darfurians who have been uprooted from their homes since early 2003 as a result of sectarian conflict. Fatalities number in excess of 200,000, victims of violence as well as malnutrition and disease.

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir indicated last Tuesday — just days ahead of a Jan. 1 deadline — a willingness to go along with the plan. Bashir said the proposed creation of a hybrid U.N.-African Union force to bring stability to Darfur "constitutes a viable framework for peaceful settlement."

For months, Bashir had said that a U.N. deployment in Darfur would signify recolonization of his country.

But, as U.N. diplomats point out, al-Bashir remains opposed to any large-scale dispatch of U.N. troops. His U.N. ambassador raised eyebrows when he contradicted the spirit of al-Bashir's letter by flatly ruling out any U.N. peacekeeping operation in Darfur. The State Department took note of the envoy's remarks but said it should not be given the same weight as the presidential letter.

But given al-Bashir's track record, including years of support for local militia attacks on innocent civilians in Darfur, there is broad skepticism here about his willingness to cooperate.

Andrew Natsios, special envoy to Sudan, said he told the Sudanese in early December that full compliance with the U.N. plan is essential, warning that, "If you starting cherry picking you will essentially collapse the whole plan."

That could lead, according to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other officials, to the imposition of punitive measures against Sudan that have been approved by the U.N. Security Council but not yet implemented.

One such measure is the establishment of a no-fly zone over Darfur to spare its residents further attacks by Sudanese military aircraft. The idea is backed by British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Mark Schneider, a vice president of the International Crisis Group, which monitors global hotspots, said the plan has merit but carries risks.

He said that if a Sudanese plane violated the zone and were shot down, the Khartoum government could retaliate by attacking camps that now teem with Darfur's displaced. To avoid a massacre at the camps, Schneider recommends deployment of a rapid reaction force across the border in Eastern Chad.

Sen. Russ Feingold, a Wisconsin Democrat., has backed a no-fly zone as well as "placing economic sanctions on perpetrators of the violence."

Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol, urging that Sudan be left alone, says "threats and blockades, and no-fly zones, would not solve the problem, but would increase suffering in Darfur."

Other possible punitive options against Sudan include the banning of international travel by Sudanese officials responsible for atrocities; the freezing of their overseas assets; and imposing sanctions against certain commercial entities, including the petroleum sector, a major foreign exchange earner.

Both outgoing U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and President George W. Bush have invested considerable political capital in ending the sectarian misery in Darfur.

Annan was the major instigator of the deal that al-Bashir signed off on this past week. It won support from a broad spectrum of countries, including some which had advocated a hands-off U.N. policy toward Darfur. Examples are China and some Arab countries.

As for Bush, he famously once wrote in the margin of a report describing the 1994 Rwanda genocide, "not on my watch" — meaning that as president he would act to prevent a similar occurrence. The words have become a rallying cry for the nationwide movement that has demanded decisive international action to bring peace to Darfur.

Rep. Tom Lantos, a California Democrat and the incoming chairman of the House International Relations Committee, is a strong advocate of military action in Darfur and said the United States, after taking on Iraq, should not worry about the "p.r. ramifications" of using force against another Muslim country.

"We would not be taking action against a Muslim country. We would be saving people who are in desperate need of outside help," he said.

UN changeover could spell disaster for Darfur

(Reuters) Dec 31, 2006 (**KHARTOUM**) As African U.N. chief Kofi Annan steps down on Sunday, many fear that the Darfur war, called the world's worst humanitarian crisis, will fall off the world body's top agenda and become a forgotten disaster.

Darfur catapulted to the forefront of world attention in 2004 as Washington described it as the first genocide of the 20th century, sparking unprecedented focus in the U.N. Security Council on the war in Sudan's remote west which has killed an estimated 200,000 and driven 2.5 million from their homes.

Khartoum categorically rejects a Security Council resolution to deploy some 22,500 U.N. troops and police to Darfur, and Annan has failed to breach the impasse between Khartoum and New York as South Korean Ban Ki-Moon takes over as U.N. Secretary-General on Jan. 1.

Some within the U.N. system fear an Asian secretary-general will not focus on African issues like Darfur as much as Annan and his fellow outgoing colleagues like U.N. humanitarian chief Jan Egeland have.

"The first thing is that Ban Ki-Moon has made a statement that ... there's no military solution to this problem," said Lee Feinstein, of the Council on Foreign Relations, a U.S.-based think tank. "I'm not sure that Ban gets off on the right foot in emphasizing the diplomatic approach."

In Sudan the top U.N. players will leave, like humanitarian coordinator Manuel Aranda da Silva and U.N. top envoy Jan Pronk who was expelled in 2006. In Khartoum's embassies, new diplomats are arriving with no prior knowledge of the crisis.

In 2004/5 Darfur's humanitarian crisis was dealt with directly at ambassadorial level but it has now been delegated to lower-level second secretaries.

And it seems Annan himself has had last-minute fears that the impasse in Darfur over a U.N. force will dwindle attention given to the crisis after he leaves office.

Before leaving Annan appointed a special envoy to Darfur, Jan Eliasson, to lobby European capitals, and nominated another personal envoy, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, to meet President Omar Hassan al-Bashir to try to convince Khartoum to accept a compromise U.N.-African Union hybrid force. Bashir also rejected this.

"Annan seems to have fully awakened to the realities of Darfur and the very real possibility that the region will be completely abandoned, destined to sink below detectable levels on the 'to-do list' of the incoming secretary-general," said Mia Farrow, the U.N. children's agency (UNICEF) goodwill ambassador and Darfur activist.

But some believe Annan did not do enough during his time in office. Criticized for not doing more to stop the 1994 Rwandan genocide when he was head of U.N. peacekeeping, those who say Darfur is a 'genocide in slow motion' say Annan has failed again, this time as U.N. secretary-general.

Sudan: Commission in move to unify Darfur peace initiatives

Text of report by Sudanese radio on 31 December

The National Commission for the Unity of the National Rank has revealed that it plans to work with the relevant authorities to unite the various peace initiative in Darfur. This is aimed at making the groups which have not signed the Abuja Peace Agreement join the peace process.

The official spokesman of the commission, Maj-Gen Uthman Abdallah Muhammad, pointed out in an interview with Sudan radio that all arrangements have been finalized to unite all the peace initiatives after the Id al-Adha celebrations.

He said the unification of the initiatives will lead to the specification of the date for the first meeting, which represents a breakthrough in efforts to resolve the Darfur crisis.

Source: Republic of Sudan Radio, Omdurman, in Arabic 0900 gmt 31 Dec 06

Sudan: South Darfur State delegation detained for two hours at displaced camp

Text of report in English by Sudanese news agency Suna website

Nyala, 31 December: A delegation of the government of South Darfur State was Sunday subjected to a detention for two hours by a group of armed men at Draij displaced people camp in Nyala city.

The delegation included the acting Chairman of the state's Legislative Council, Umar Adam Khatir, Chairman of the Justice Civil Service Chamber and a number of officials, who were on a visit to congratulate the citizens at the displaced people camp on Id al-Adha.

The armed group has detained the state's officials and taken them to offices belonging to the group inside the displaced people camp. A prolonged discussion was conducted between the two parties on the objective the state's officials to the camp. The armed group members said that they belong to Sudan Liberation Movement, without mentioning a certain faction of the movement.

After their release, the state's delegation members continued their visit to the displaced people camp. Suna learned that the delegation's visit was appreciated by the displaced at the camp who assured the importance of such visits toward boosting confidence and getting informed with the displaced conditions and problems.

During the delegation's visit to Deraij camp, Chairman of the Justice Civil Service chamber, Siddiq Abd-al-Nabi, called for tolerance and peaceful co-existence between all the citizens, surpassing of the bitterness of the past and the unity of the Muslim rank.

The delegation members were informed with the problems facing the displaced people at the camp and pledged to solve these problems and to facilitate their voluntary return to their home towns and villages.

Source: Suna news agency website, Khartoum, in English 31 Jan 06

12/29/2006 04:03:43

First batch of UN military experts arrive in Sudan's Darfur region

BBC Monitoring International Reports via NewsEdge Corporation :

Text of report in English by Sudanese news agency Suna website

Al Fashir, 28 December: The first group of military experts and civil police individuals arrived in the town of Al Fashir [Northern **Darfur** State] on Thursday [28 December] within the context of the implementation of the first phase of the United Nations assistance to the African Union in **Darfur**. The first group includes eleven military experts and ten police individuals who will join some fourteen military experts already in **Darfur**.

The deputy special representative of the United Nations secretary-general in **Sudan**, Emanuel Aranda Da Silva, has pointed out in press statements that the arrival of the groups constitutes the beginning of a new phase that the UN hopes would help in realizing peace in the region.

He stressed that the United Nations wants to help the **Sudan** achieve peace in

Darfur and wants to help the African Union carry out its mission in the best

Darfur welcomes the arrival of UN mission

Saturday 30 December 2006.

Dec 29, 2006 (**KHARTOUM**) Darfur welcomed the arrival of a UN mission of military and police experts and pledged to foster cooperation between it and the African Union troops charged with peacekeeping.

A delegation of 34 UN experts led by the deputy UN representative in Sudan Manuel Da Silva arrived on Thursday in Al-Fasher, North Darfur's Acting Governor Idriss Abdallah Hassan said.

"I told them that they are welcome and will find every possible means for cooperation," Hassan said. "They will not be barred from reaching any place where civilians are in need of food, clothing and shelter."

The delegation held a meeting late Thursday with North Darfur government and Security Committee and discussed the tasks the experts would do in support of the African Union mission in Sudan (AMIS) that operates in Darfur.

Hassan added that his government would cooperate with the UN and AU for protecting the civilians and achieving peace and stability in the region.

The 34 experts who have already arrived in the North Darfur capital are part of 183 military, police and civilian experts whose arrival is to be completed by mid-January, representing the first phase of the UN support to AMIS.

In a letter to UN chief Kofi Annan released Tuesday, Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir stated his government's readiness "to start immediately" with implementation of the Darfur peace plan.

The three-phase plan was agreed at a high-level meeting in Ethiopia last November and at a November 30 meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council in Abuja, Nigeria.

Beshir, who had until now steadfastly rejected any large-scale UN troop deployment in Darfur, endorsed the plan which includes the deployment of the "hybrid" AU-UN peacekeeping force.

The United States had given Khartoum until January 1 to accept the UN package or face coercive action to end the conflict in Darfur, which has killed at least 200,000 people and displaced two million in four years.

(AFP)

Source: Suna news agency website, Khartoum, in English 28 Dec 06

South Sudan:

Details of strike organized by northern merchants in Juba

Akhtar Al-Yom reports that the northern traders in Juba have gone on strike yesterday, in a protest against the way their colleagues who were killed during recent events were buried. They have also protested because the government had ignored their memorandum of protest, in which they called on the government to provide a list of their dead colleagues who were buried in Juba without the knowledge of their families.

GONU:

Khartoum State Deputy Wali calls for investigation committee to probe police attack on All Saint's Cathedral,

Al-Sudani, Khartoum State Deputy Governor criticized the police attack and use of tear gas on All Saint's Cathedral during prayers for the new years. The police authorities have denied the attacks and called for investigations.