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Highlights

UN/ Agencies

[Sima Samar: Government and movements are violating human rights and international humanitarian law \(Ray Al-Shaab\)](#)

UN Human Rights Rapporteur to Sudan Sima Samar expressed “grave concern” towards human rights situation in Sudan in light of the increasing military operations in the West of the region.

Samar, said, in her report to the 7th session of the UN Human Rights Council, the Government and the various rebel factions have failed to protect the civilians, committing serious human rights violations.

She added that she received killing reports, sexual violence arbitrary detention and impunity indicating the air bombing of Sudan armed forces on Serba, Silai and Abu-Sourooj areas in West Darfur.” The indiscriminate bombing and destruction there left more than 100 people killed and 12,000 displaced”, Samar stressed.

She called on the government to investigate in all allegations of human rights violations and present those responsible to justice.

[Sudanese-Chadian relations vital to ending Darfur conflict, says UN envoy](#)

18 March 2008 – Improving the relationship between Sudan and Chad is crucial to achieving a durable solution to the conflict wracking Darfur, the United Nations and African Union envoys said today after wrapping up two days of consultations in Geneva with key members of the international community.

Jan Eliasson of the UN and Salim Ahmed Salim of the AU said they had received strong support from the participants at the Geneva consultations – which included the Security Council’s permanent members, its African members, the European Union and neighbours of Sudan – for renewed efforts to move the political process forward.

“The first step is, of course, to do whatever we can – and particularly [for] the participants in this meeting, whatever they can – to facilitate the relationship between Chad and Sudan, which is basic for peace in Darfur,” Mr. Eliasson told a press briefing after the meeting.

Last week the presidents of Chad and Sudan signed an agreement regarding reconciliation and the normalizing of bilateral relations amid mounting concern about the violence and instability along their common border.

Tensions have been high in the region in recent weeks as about 10,000 sought refuge in eastern Chad following a series of deadly air and land attacks by Sudanese Government forces and allied militiamen on towns and villages in West Darfur, and Chadian rebels fought the forces of their Government.

Mr. Eliasson said the problems between Chad and Sudan, the growing unrest in the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur, inter-tribal clashes and the

continuing fragmentation of the region's rebel movements had combined to hurt efforts to start substantive peace talks between the Government and the movements.

The splintering of the movements is hindering the formation of a single negotiating team for any serious talks, Mr. Eliasson told UN Radio in a separate interview.

“We hope very much that they will soon come to conclusions on their positions for the talks and decide on a negotiation team... But it seems like they still have a long way to go.”

The Special Envoy stressed that there can be no military solution to the Darfur conflict, which has killed more than 200,000 people and displaced at least 2.2 million others since 2003, when rebels began fighting Government forces and allied militia.

“And if there is no military solution, there is only a political solution. And for a political solution to come about, we have to sit down and talk. And we have to sit down and talk about power-sharing, wealth-sharing and security. And, of course, the right of return – for people to come back to their own homes. And to start talking about the recovery and development. And the hope of a better future for the people of Darfur.”

He urged the countries and organizations participating in the two days of consultations this week to exert any influence they have over either the Government or the movements.

Mr. Eliasson added that the concerned countries had agreed on the need for a multi-track approach to diplomatic efforts to end the crisis, including shuttle diplomacy and indirect negotiations.

[UN and African Union envoys begin informal consultations with Darfur partners](#)

17 March 2008 – The United Nations and African Union envoys spearheading efforts to bring lasting peace to the war-racked Sudanese region of Darfur are holding informal consultations today in Geneva with regional partners to the political process.

Jan Eliasson of the UN and Salim Ahmed Salim are scheduled to hold consultations tomorrow on the same subject with international observers, UN spokesperson Michele Montas told journalists.

She said the consultations are expected to offer an opportunity to review the political process in Darfur, given the security situation there, especially in West Darfur, where there has been a recent spike in attacks.

Ms. Montas said the informal consultations will also consider the delays to plans to conduct substantive talks among Darfur's rebel groups and the Sudanese Government.

More than 200,000 people have been killed and at least 2.2 million displaced from their homes since 2003, when rebels began fighting Government forces and allied Janjaweed militiamen in the arid and impoverished region on Sudan's western flank.

A hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping force known as UNAMID has been in place since the start of the year to try to quell the violence and the humanitarian suffering in Darfur.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

SPLM is awaiting reply from NCP with regard to Abyei (Al-Sahafa)

The SPLM has voiced its discontent and anxiety over the security disturbances along the North-South borders calling on the NCP to reply to its observations on the NCP's proposal to solve Abyei dispute.

SPLM's Secretary-General Pagan Amum, who was speaking during the meetings of the SPLM's Transitional Council, told journalists that the council was committed to conduct the general elections on time following the attainment to a democratic electoral law.

He said that the council denounced the repeated violations of human rights and public freedoms, urging the government to guarantee non- harassment of journalists and press freedom.

Amum rejected attacks launched against the SPLA and the citizens, calling on Miseria tribe to work with the leaderships of the areas of ethnical interaction to maintain stability and realize common interests for all Sudanese people in these areas." We appeal to them (Miseria) to avoid occurrence of security collapse because this does not serve the issue of unity".

He disclosed that the council discussed arrangements for conducting the census next April, adding that the SPLM set a condition that census questionnaire should include questions of race and religion.

Government rejects US warning to its nationals not to travel to Sudan (Al-Sahafa)

Spokesperson of Foreign Affairs Ministry Ali Al- Sadik ruled out presence of any threats facing the US dependencies in Sudan.

Al-Sadik said that Sudan is a secure country and no suicidal actions are committed in it, adding that Sudan did not witness organized violence or abnormal incidents.

Al-Sadik, who is reacting to statement by US Department of State, warning US citizens against traveling to Sudan, said the US warning was issued due to the assassination of the US diplomat last January." This incident was isolated and it can occur in any country in the world", he stressed.

However, the US Department of State warned its citizens against traveling to Sudan saying it received indicators of possible threats against Americans and other westerners.

It cautioned US citizens to be aware of the risk of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in public places, which include tourist and commercial sites associated with U.S. or western presence.

It said U.S. citizens should avoid travel to Sudan, particularly to Darfur Region, where violence between government forces and various armed militias continues. It added that Americans and other westerners have been victims of carjacking and armed robbery while traveling in Sudan, noting that land travel at night should be avoided.

It warned of possible danger in case of traveling outside of the capital city of Khartoum and the adjacent town of Omdurman. It said that foreigners working in the oil industry in Upper Nile State were threatened.

[Sudanese president urges to increase women seats in legislative assemblies \(ST\)](#)

March 18, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese president has urged to increase women participation in the legislative chambers in the 26 states of the country.

The Sudanese President was addressing the opening session of the First Forum of Sudanese Women Parliamentarians, held at the Friendship Hall in Khartoum Tuesday under the theme "A Sudanese Woman Parliamentarian: Active in Performance, Excellent in Efforts and Strongly Involved in Issues."

President Omer al-Bashir Tuesday called on the states legislative assemblies to include in the Local Government Act allocation of at least 25% of the parliamentary seats for women for boosting stability and development in the country.

Al Bshir said that giving 25% of the seats in the coming general elections for women constitutes challenges to the Sudanese women with regard to the mobilization and enlightening of women grassroots about the elections process.

He stressed the necessity of upholding the values of national unity, stability, restoration of the social fabric and maintaining the religious co-existence and discarding violence, underling the crucial role being played by women in these domains.

He further called for unification of the efforts by the legislative bodies at the federal, the South and state levels in order to contribute to the issues of national unity, democratic transformation, safeguarding human rights and cohesion of the society.

Speaking also at the forum, the Speaker of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, James Wani, has praised the great role played by Sudanese women throughout the different eras.

Wani called for empowerment of women economically, politically and socially.

Chairwoman of the Sudanese Women Parliamentarians Caucus Samya Hassan Sidahmed pointed out that Sudan is a pioneering country regarding political participation of women, saying that the Sudanese women have gained their parliamentary rights since the first elections in 1954.

She added that the Sudanese women are actively participating in the basic issues of the country of peace, national unity, combating poverty and realization of balanced development. She called for establishment of a parliamentary body that brings together Arab and African women parliamentarians to exchange experiences.

[Sudan says ready for separate peace talks with rebel JEM \(ST\)](#)

March 18, 2008 (KHARTOUM) – A Sudanese official affirmed government's readiness to hold separate negotiations with the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) if it is determined to achieve peace in Darfur region.

Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) leader Khalil Ibrahim said two days ago that his is ready for one-on-one peace talks in Libya's with the Sudanese government. But he added that it should be mediated by former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and negotiations should spread beyond Darfur to cover "marginalised" territories across Sudan.

Sudanese state minister of Information and Communication welcomed the move saying "If Ibrahim is serious, the government does not have any problem for holding the negotiations at any place."

"We do not care about the forms of the negotiations, what we care about is the results, which should be an end of the suffering of the Darfur people," the Sudanese minister noted.

However the influential Nafi Ali Nafi who is in charge with the file of the peace talks with Darfur rebels didn't make any comment.

JEM's call enraged some Darfur rebel leaders. Isam al-Haj the spokesperson of Sudan Liberation Movement of Ahmed Abdelshafi, criticised the JEM proposal wondering how Khalil Ibrahim wants to fight marginalisation will he asking Khartoum to negotiate with him alone and to exclude the existing rebel movements.

Ibrahim on Sunday had said that no other groups should now be involved: "The main players in Darfur are JEM. There are really no other groups in Darfur apart from JEM." Other factions, he said, were just a "media phenomenon" with no real support in the ground.

Ibrahim said other regions would include neighbouring Kordofan, where JEM clashed with government forces last year, and the country's east, which ended a low-level insurgency against the government in 2006.

[SPLM, NCP to revive Messeriya routes \(the Citizen\)](#)

The government of southern Sudan has said roads blocked by Miseria tribesmen last Jan. were "being cleared" to allow IDPs to residing in the North to come to the South for the population census due next month.

Simon Kun Pouc, the Commissioner of southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) yesterday said the roads have been no go zones in the last two months would be free for passage in the next three days.

He said GoS and GoSS were doing the clearance in a move to make the forth-coming population census a success after 15 years without a count. Pouc said GoSS had returned 1,699,000 IDPs from the North during 2006-2008 and have been integrated and resettled in their communities.

He added 250,000 refugees from neighboring countries have been repatriated and reintegrated respectively.

GoSS

[SPLM official: SPLM excluded from census teams \(Khartoum Monitor\)](#)

SPLM National Capital Secretariat disclosed that the SPLM was not represented in the teams of enumerators in Khartoum State who are assigned to carry out the census which is due on 15th April.

The Secretariat added that it raised a list of its representatives through the Deputy Governor of Khartoum State, Yormina Oryal, but the list was not approved. The SPLM has no representatives in the training course for census supervisors or the two-week training course for enumerators, which is due to start today. "Only elements of the NCP are being trained", said the Secretariat.

Darfur

[JEM claims 50 SAF dead in fresh battle \(The Citizen\)](#)

The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) Tuesday claimed victory over SAF.

The claim comes less than a week since the Darfur rebel group claimed fending off a Sudan government rebel attack last Thursday.

'An invading government battalion consisting of SAF and Janjaweed militias were crushed by JEM forces this morning at 11 am', JEM Spokesperson Ali Wafi said in a statement.

According to JEM, Tuesday's battle took place between Goz Minnu and Salia'a, 70 km northeast of Al-Geneina city, West Darfur.

The fleeing government army left behind 50 dead combatants in addition to 18 who surrendered to JEM.

Eight military vehicles belonging to GoS were destroyed while 10 others were captured with their arms intact.

[Armed bandits attack Darfur peacekeeping convoy \(ST\)](#)

March 18, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Armed bandits opened fire on a convoy of peacekeepers in Sudan's Darfur region, officials said on Tuesday, in the latest in a string of attacks in the country's remote west.

Five international police officers were injured after their vehicle flipped over during the ambush on Monday afternoon, a spokesman for the U.N./African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) said.

"They managed to crawl out and get away," spokesperson Adrian Edwards, said.

"We are fairly sure this was the work of bandits, trying to get hold of tyres. We are not taking it as an attack specifically on UNAMID. But it shows the challenges of working in the area and the dangers of using the roads."

The attackers opened fire as the police officers were driving south on a patrol from the town of Duma to Nyala, the capital of South Darfur state, at 12.45pm (0945 GMT), he added.

The second vehicle in the convoy, carrying four police officers and a translator, managed to speed off without anyone getting injured.

Details of the attack were still coming in, added Edwards, saying it was unclear what happened to the attackers or how the five officers were rescued.

It was the fourth reported confrontation between armed groups and the joint U.N./AU force since it took over from an under-manned group of AU peacekeepers at the beginning of the year.

Law and order has collapsed in Darfur where international experts say five years of conflict has killed 200,000 and driven 2.5 million from their homes.

The U.N.'s World Food Programme last week said a surge of bandit attacks on their vehicles had halved deliveries of emergency aid to the region.

Hijackings and roadside hold-ups have become an almost daily occurrence in some areas, say aid workers.

The UNAMID force, which is supposed to help bring stability to a region the size of France, is currently at less than a third of its promised strength, with just over 7,000 troops and 1,600 police officers on the ground.

Miscellaneous

[Cabinet General Secretariat: Thursday is official holiday on occasion of Miladul-Nabi \(Al-Khartoum\)](#)

The Secretariat – General of the Council of Ministers has announced that Thursday 20 March 2008 is an official holiday throughout the country on the occasion of Miladul-Nabi (Birth day of Prophet Mohamed).