



## UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

## UNMIS

Media Monitoring Report 23.3.2008

(By Public Information Office)

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# Highlights

## UN/ Agencies

### GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

#### Armed forces questions neutrality of UN reports

(Sudan Vision) The Sudanese Armed Forces yesterday criticized UN reports describing as incomplete redeployment of the Sudanese armed forces and those of SPLM/A north and south of the 1956 boundaries respectively.

The Armed Forces Spokesman was quoted as denying the UN forces commander's statement that SAF have not been 100% redeployed north of these boundaries.

The Spokesman added that according to the minutes of UN last meeting, the redeployment of the armed forces was put at 95.4% as against 11.4% by SPLM/A redeployment referring to the latter as was defective be it in South Kordofan or the Blue Nile. "Even the areas where SPLM/A has been redeployed fall within the North boundaries," he said.

The Spokesman demanded UN to be neutral when talking about redeployment of forces North or South of 1956 boundaries. For UN to gain credence, it should tell the correct percentages in order to avoid being unfair to any party, he added.

#### Sudan rejects charges of rape in Darfur

(Al-Wahda) The Sudanese Armed Forces have criticized a report issued by UN accusing the army of raping women, girls and looting villages during attacks in western Darfur.

The UN said SAF aerial and ground attacks on three towns in February claimed 115 lives but SAF reacted saying it was doing its duty of protecting civilians by pushing rebels out of the area.

SAF spokesperson, Brig. Osman Mohamed Al-Aqbash, has held the rebels responsible for attacks on civilians in the region and looting their properties.

#### Lam Akol convoy ambushed by unidentified armed group in Liak Dar

(Al-Rai Al-Aam) SPLM prominent leader and former foreign minister, Dr. Lam Akol, survived an attempted on his life yesterday carried out by unidentified gunmen in the Liak Dar area in the Upper Nile. Three members of his convoy – driver, accountant, and bodyguard – were killed in the incident.

The newspaper has learned that unidentified armed men ambushed the convoy of Dr. Lam to Malakal while en route.

The source told the newspaper that Dr. Lam was safe but there were persons who were wounded due to the exchange of fire between the gunmen and bodyguards.

### [Sudan lodges complaints to the Security Council against Chad](#)

(Al-Rai Al-Aam) A diplomatic source said yesterday that N'djamena yesterday gathered the diplomats of the countries tasked with monitoring the implementation of agreement between Chad and Sudan signed in Dakar to show them concrete evidence of preparations on the part of Khartoum for a new aggression against Chad.

On the other hand, a diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity said Sudan had lodged a complaint to the Security Council stating that Chad had violated Dakar Agreement, assisted rebels to return to Darfur and provided them with logistics.

### [SPLM accuses NCP of using militias](#)

(Al-Sahafa) SPLM accused NCP of continuously using armed militias to target SPLM army.

The SPLM said it had declared war on corruption with all its forms.

The SPLM Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Yassir Arman, at press conference in Khartoum yesterday said the SPLM, by convening the fourth meeting of its Interim National Council, it had overcome the shock caused by the demise of its leader Dr. John Garang.

### [Sudan says will fight Darfur rebels “even if the whole world screams](#)

(ST) `March 21, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — A senior Sudanese official today said that the military campaign in Darfur will continue unabated

“We have no problem fighting those who fight us. The UN Security Council will not stop us even if the whole world screams” said Nafi Ali Nafi a presidential assistant and the deputy leader of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) who was also assigned the Darfur peace process.

Nafi made the statements in a meeting with a limited group of reporters including the daily Al-Hayat newspaper which published his remarks.

There was a recent upsurge in fighting when the Sudanese army launched an offensive on three towns to retake them from the Darfur rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) early February.

The attack on Abu Surouj, Sirba and Suleia towns, forcing an estimated 200,000 from their homes — 12,000 of whom have fled into neighboring eastern Chad.

The U.N. refugee agency (UNHCR) said about 12,000 Darfuri refugees had crossed into eastern Chad after Friday's air and ground attacks. The attacks drew worldwide condemnation including the UN.

Nafi also reiterated his government's willingness to negotiate with Darfur rebels "with no pre-conditions".

However, the powerful Sudanese official ruled out any plans to give up the NCP's share in the government of National Unity.

"The NCP is not naive or stupid to give up power and liquidate itself," he added.

Nafi said, "Those who want the NCP to relinquish its share in the government would not accept that the South portion be compromised".

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between North and South gives the NCP 52 percent of executive positions, the SPLM 28 percent, other southern groups six percent and northern parties 16 percent.

The NCP official also slammed Western nations saying they gave Sudan "nothing but empty promises" despite signing peace agreements all over the country because of the Darfur crisis.

International experts estimate 200,000 people have died in the conflict, which Washington calls genocide, a term European governments are reluctant to use. The Sudan government says 9,000 people have been killed

### [Fresh fighting breaks out in Sudan North-South border region](#)

(ST) March 21, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — There has been new reports of fighting between former southern Sudanese rebels and armed tribesman in the oil rich border region.

The Al-Sahafa daily said that the deadly clashes broke out between the Sudan people Liberation Army (SPLA) and the cattle-herding Misseriya tribes around 20 kilometers east of the Heglig oil field.

The newspaper said that the fighting claimed 3 members of the Misseriya tribe but said that there were no reports of casualties from the SPLA.

Tensions have worsened in the border region over the failure of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) in the north and the SPLM to reach a deal on the demarcation of the borders of Abyei, the source of much of Sudan's energy reserves.

A leadership figure in the Misseriya tribe Sabir Ahmed Mohamed said that the SPLA sent reinforcements to the Heglig oil field area. He also said that the recent clashes claimed dozens on both sides.

The SPLM signed a peace deal in January 2005 with the government of the National Congress Party in January 2005 ending two decades of civil war in Southern Sudan. The peace deal made the SPLM, the ruling party in the south and the NCP the ruling party in the north.

Both sides also signed the Abyei protocol to allow for the resolution of the dispute over the area at a later date.

Under the protocol a commission known as the Abyei Boundaries Commission (ABC) was to “define and demarcate the area of the nine Ngok Dinka Chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan in 1905, referred to herein as Abyei Area”.

However the president Omar Hassan Al-Bashir said that the NCP is committed to the Abyei Protocol only with the border of 1905. He further said the government is not concerned with the ABC report and that the latter is of no value to them.

Al-Sahafa also reported that the transitional council of the SPLM meeting in Juba affirmed it will not accept any alternative to the Abyei protocol and refused any compromises.

The Abyei region has been described as Sudan’s Kashmir by the ENOUGH project saying that it may develop into a “national war with regional implications and historically devastating repercussions”.

Last month Sudan’s First Vice President and president of South Sudan Salva Kiir told the semi-governmental Al-Ahram daily in Egypt that “the ABC report should be binding to all parties but the NCP rejected it and is looking for an alternative. This is not acceptable to us and we will stick the report”.

### [SAF rejects UN accusations and biasness](#)

Khartoum, March 22 (SUNA) - The Armed Forces have rejected United Nations accusations and biasness over targeting of civilians in Darfur, stressing the Armed Forces, discharging its duty as stipulated by the constitution regarding prevalence of security and protection of citizen lives, would go after rebels and bandit groups all over the country. Brigadier Mohamed Osman Al Aghbash, the Official Spokesman for the Armed Forces, told the Sudan News Agency that such accusations were to be seen within the context of the campaign seeking to distort the image of the Sudan and that reality proves the falseness of those accusations. He said the Envoy of the United Nations-African Union Joint Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) Mr. Rudolph Addada, had officially asked during the meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council held on the 28th of last February that the Armed Forces should discharge their duty in the protection of civilians. The Armed Forces Spokesman pointed out that the Armed Forces have nothing to fear, explaining that the Armed Forces has been in defensive positions that are well known to the peacekeeping missions in the region, and that on the contrary the rebel groups do not have specific locations and have always refused to identify their positions and have made of civilians human shields, a matter which is punishable by the International Humanitarian Law. The Spokesman said the civilians in the region always take refuge in the areas under the Armed Forces control when they seek security and protection. He pointed out that the Armed Forces have been commended by the International Red Cross for protecting its properties in Darfur and for supporting local civilians go on with their daily life normally. Brigadier Al Aghbash criticized the rebel movements that continue to practice looting and armed robberies against civilians and occupy villages a matter that led to the deterioration of humanitarian situation and caused the displacement of civilians from the areas of Sirba, Sulaia and Abu

Suruj, West Darfur, which the rebels claimed to be have liberated and which the Armed Forces have subsequently restored and was now in full control over them.

## **GoSS**

### **South Sudan president Salva Kiir on a “low profile” visit to UAE**

(ST) March 21, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — The president of South Sudan Salva Kiir is due to arrive in United Arab Emirates (UAE) today according to local newspapers.

The Al-Sudani newspaper said the two day visit will be “low profile” and complimentary to one made by Sudan’s president Omar Hassan Al-Bashir earlier this month.

There was no confirmation from any UAE official or the official UAE news agency (WAM) on the visit.

This will be the first time Kiir travels to UAE and the first of its kind by a Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) chairman to the oil rich Arab country.

Sources speaking to the newspaper said that Kiir’s meeting with UAE officials will focus on Arab investment in Southern Sudan. The UAE is the second biggest investor in Sudan after China.

### **Gunmen abduct 17 civilians from Sudan’s Central Equatoria**

(ST) March 20, 2008 (JUBA) — Seventeen people have been abducted by armed gunmen from Kajokaji and Kagwada counties of Central Equatoria state last Saturday and Monday, Commissioner of Juba County, Redentore Pitya has said.

Commissioner Pitya said two groups of bandits attacked; looted shops and food stuff thereafter abducted seven people from Kagwada payam on Saturday night of 16th March and at Kala payam on Sunday 15th March where they abducted ten people.

Speaking in an exclusive interview to Sudan Tribune on Thursday in his office, Commissioner Pitya said the bandits are heavily armed and wearing green military uniforms that matches that of SPLA with exception of Southern Sudan national flag are terrorizing Kajo-kaji and Kagwada payams speaks Acholi , Arabic, Bari and Kiswahili languages. Surprisingly the bandits does not take any alcohol even if the found them, he remarked.

Commissioner says the bandits who came from east are now reported moving west of Kagwada - fifty miles from Juba town - and that contingents of SPLA forces are pursuing them.

According to eye witness, Mr. Stephen Pembe Luka, Deputy Director of Dollo payam that they show a government helicopter came at night hovering then he as administrator ordered surrounding people to put on lamp light to enable the copter land but the pilot seeing those light it quickly disappeared.

Earlier in an interview at Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission office, the State Director of Central Equatoria, Mr. Stan Yata, stated that same copter was spotted by rural community landing in forest then it disappeared after fifteen minutes.

Commissioner Pitya appeals to government of Southern Sudan to step-up security to protect rural people from heavily armed bandits and the international humanitarian organizations operating in Southern Sudan to urgent support the affected communities in Kagwada and Kajo-keji with relief assistance as their means of livelihood have been looted by bandits.

Last week the First Vice President of the Republic and president of the government of Southern Sudan, General Salva Kiir Mayardit has already directed states governors of Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Western Equatoria, Central Equatoria and Eastern Equatoria states to disarm all armed civilian in order to avert what he termed a persistence insecurity to pave way for development programmes in the states.

Earlier the chief mediator of Uganda peace talks in Juba who is also the GoSS Vice president, Dr. Riek Machar refuted allegation that it was the LRA who launched an attack on Kajo-keji, Yei and Lainya counties of Central Equatoria state.

He stated that a joint investigation carried out by peace talk Cessation of Hostility and Monitoring Team revealed that there are disgruntled Sudan people liberation Army who called themselves No Unit are responsible for banditry activities in those areas and promised to find a solution by bring the culprits to books.

## **Darfur**

### **[Annan excludes mediation in the Darfur issue](#)**

(Sudan Vision) The former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan yesterday excluded the talk about the possibility of his playing mediator in the Darfur issue. Annan statement came in response to JEM demand for his mediation in its talks it has proposed to conduct directly with the Sudanese government.

Annan told journalists yesterday that one of the reasons for the success of his mediation in the Kenyan crisis was because there was only one mediator speaking to the international community with one voice. The former Secretary General said he believed that some competent individuals are now mediating in the Darfur crisis and so they must be given the chance, a reference to UN and AU envoys Ian Elliasson and Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim.

### **[Dozens killed in clashes with Darfur peace partner](#)**

(ST) March 21, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — A Darfur tribal chief accused forces loyal to the leader of the only rebel group that signed a peace agreement of attacking two areas in South Darfur.

Musa Galis chief of Al-Bargad tribe told Al-Sudani daily that forces from Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) faction led by Minni Arcua Minnawi launched an attack on Kasib and Khour Sharam regions in South Darfur.

However there was no independent confirmation of the clashes.

Galis said that 12 civilians were killed and 3 injured when Minnawi's forces entered the local market in 17 Land Cruisers vehicles. However he said that the people in the market repulsed the attack killing at least 5 people.

In May 2006, the SLM signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) with the Sudanese government and its head Minni Arcua Minnawi was appointed as the senior assistant of the Sudanese president in August.

However Minnawi's faction has grown increasingly frustrated with Khartoum's negligence of the DPA.

The tribal chief said that the assault was caused by differences between Minnawi's faction and another SLM faction called "Free Will". He called on the UN to intervene and enforce security arrangements as well as removing armed movements in the area.

International experts estimate 200,000 people have died in the conflict, which Washington calls genocide, a term European governments are reluctant to use. The Sudan government says 9,000 people have been killed

### [UNSC Permanent members meet Darfur rebel leader](#)

(ST) March 19, 2008 (GENEVA) — The Five permanent members of the UN Security Council met with the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement leader in presence of UN and African Union envoys.

Abdel Wahid Mohamed Ahmed al-Nur the founder leader of the rebel SLM held unprecedented meeting with five permanent members of the UN Security Council with the participation of the UN and African Union envoys for Darfur on Tuesday evening in Geneva.

The meeting was organized by France, the host country of the rebel leader, in order to allow the rebel leader to express his point of view with regard to the peace process undertaken by the UN-AU envoys to Darfur.

Al-Nur has refused to take part in different meetings brokered by the two envoys.

The rebel leader told Sudan Tribune that the meeting meant to explain what the SLM expects from the international and regional communities in order to facilitate a comprehensive peace settlement in the war-torn region of Darfur.

"We are very thankful to the French Foreign Ministry and the other permanent members of the Security Council to give us this opportunity because we are peace lover and we want it today before tomorrow." Al-Nur said.

The rebel leader who described the meeting as "very positive" said he exposed the demand of Darfur people for security as prior condition before peace talks. "Our people do not trust this regime which signed two ceasefire agreements but continues to disseminating death and terror among civilians since 2003."



Abdel-Wahid explained that the "Conflict Suspension" is a confidence-building measure and not in any case an obstacle to achieve peace in the region. He further said that asking Khartoum to stop air and ground attacks and to disarm Janjaweed militia are all ready included in cease-fire deals or the peace agreement that Khartoum already signed.

"We do not ask the impossible. We encourage Khartoum to implement peace" Al-Nur affirmed.

He further said that his "movement (SLM) continues to reiterate the commitment to N'Djamena cease-fire agreement in April 2004 and we demands Khartoum to act reciprocally." He further condemned the recent attacks by Sudanese army and government backed militia in western Darfur.

He added that such violence justifies our rejection for talks with Khartoum unless it stops violence and killing of innocent civilians.

Abdelwahid reiterated that once Khartoum fulfils the "Conflict Suspension" the SLM is disposed to engage the "Conflict Resolution" and negotiate with the Sudanese government to discuss the root causes of the problem.

An western expert who declined to be named said that antagonism and distrust between Darfur main ethnic group, the Fur, and the Sudanese Islamists back to the early nineties when the National Islamic Front started to encourage the settlement of Arab tribes from Chad and ignite troubles between them and other tribes like the Turgam tribe and recruit Zagawah people.

He added that root causes of the current conflict in Darfur goes beyond the simple presentation of local intertribal clashes between African and Arab tribes over the control of land and water.

#### POLITICAL MANEUVER

Asked about the call of Khalil Ibrahim, the leader of the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), to Sudanese government to hold one-on-one peace talks, Al-Nur said that "Khalil once again demonstrates that he defends another political agenda usurping the Darfuris cause."

The historical leader of the SLM further regretted that the plight of Darfur people used as political pretext to realise "hidden agenda."

Al Nur underlined that "Khalil mentor" the Sudanese Islamist Hassan al-Turabi is negotiating a reconciliation deal "with his former adepts of the National Congress Party (NCP) so it seems that Darfur is part of this deal" he said.

Khalil Ibrahim said that JEM is the only rebel group in Darfur and asked Khartoum to discuss with him alone to achieve peace in Darfur.

#### **Miscellaneous**

[Sudanese Embassy in N'djamena to Resume Work](#)

(Sudan Vision) The Sudanese Foreign Affairs Ministry has embarked on preparing for reopening of the Sudanese Embassy in the Chadian capital N'djamena next month. A diplomatic source was quoted by SMC as saying that consultations on resumption of the embassy work are expected to be finalized by the end of this month.

The source said the Dakar meeting between the Sudanese President and his Chadian counterpart would defuse the tension between the two countries, as well as its would realize border security and stability which will positively reflect on conditions in Darfur and bilateral relations.

### Women join de-mining charge in south Sudan

MILE 38, Sudan, March 23 (Reuters) - Seven months pregnant Opayi Mary stands half a metre away from a mine made expressly to blow anything over 3 kg to pieces. For her, it's just part of a day's work.

Mary leads an all-female team of deminers working for Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in one of south Sudan's most dangerous areas: the civil war battlefield Mile 38.

The location, 38 miles (61 km) from the southern capital Juba, was on the frontline in a decades-long conflict between mainly Christian and animist southern rebels and the Islamist government in Khartoum.

The war, fought over ideology and ethnicity and fuelled by oil, killed 2 million people and displaced 4 million before a peace deal was signed in 2005.

Now, south Sudan's semi-autonomous government, which will hold a referendum on secession in 2011, is trying to rebuild a region where even the most basic infrastructure is lacking.

Clearing the thousands of mines is an important part of efforts to rebuild the devastated region, where mined roads have made travel and transport of goods difficult.

"I was so afraid of my first one," Mary admits. Two years later she is now in charge of her group's safety and for exploding the mines taken from this empty scrubland.

"Now I have taken more than 20. I can even hold them with my hand," Mary grins. She is short and seems all burgeoning bump but walks fast between cordoned off areas.

Under Mary's watch, Joanne Jenty slides a prong into a marked-out area in front of her that she has already wetted. In the hot silence of the bush and on her hands and knees, she is feeling for the side of a mine that she will then delicately unearth.

People used to live along this major trade route but have been slow to return since the war ended, deterred by a lack of infrastructure, worries of a return to fighting and the lines of hidden explosives buried just inches under the earth's surface.

The UN Mine Action Office, which coordinates demining projects run by dozens of groups, says more than 2,000 people have been killed or injured by mines since the end of the war. The cost for farmers and communities is incalculable, it says.

## STILL A STRUGGLE

With a new administration and funds of between \$1.5 - \$1.7 billion a year from the region's share of oil revenues, many southerners were expecting dramatic peace dividends for communities long alienated from basic services by war.

They have been disappointed. The daily struggle for survival has not changed for most rural populations and returning refugees put more pressure on scant resources. A government study showed around 90 percent see corruption as a major problem.

And the peace is still shaky.

In December and January, Misseriya tribesmen fought southern soldiers in the Abyei area, an oil-rich region straddling northern and southern Sudan. The distribution of oil revenues and border demarcation remain contentious issues.

But Mary, who fled the war to neighbouring Uganda, believes passionately that peace will hold.

"My work is like a soldier," she explained.

"When we are in training we learn: your first mistake is your last," she said as she showed her simple bush tent that contained a fancy handbag and a bottle of nail polish.

So far, Mary's team and another NPA team have removed 205 antipersonnel mines and 96 anti-tank mines from around the main road that links neighbouring Uganda to Juba, the capital of a vast and wild region that still has no large commercial farming or factories.

For Mary, who feels her baby move as she works, the job just has to be done, inch by gruelling inch in prickling grass.

"We have to work hard to develop our country, even if it is hard," she said. "We have to clear. For my children and for others."

Mary initially wanted to be a doctor but could not afford the training. But her pragmatic mind has adapted well to clearing contaminated earth.

## A WOMAN'S TOUCH

According to Lado Victor, from Norwegian People's Aid, women learn demining techniques as quickly as men but follow procedures more vigorously. The only complication is pregnancy.

Southerners have traditionally raised large families with up to 10 children, and since the war there is a social consensus on the need to repopulate. At any one time, a handful of the 25-woman team are pregnant, Victor explained.

The women used to have in-camp sitters who would look after the babies while they were in the minefields. But the sudden appearance of a rabid dog from the wilderness encouraged NPA to enforce longer maternity leave.

Mary will eventually leave her child with her mother in a nearby town. She admits that especially since she became pregnant for the first time there has been growing pressure on her to stop what many in the traditionally conservative south see as masculine and dangerous labour.

"A lot of people tell my husband he should stop me," she said. "I just don't mind it," she adds. (For full Reuters Africa coverage and to have your say on the top issues, visit: <http://africa.reuters.com/> ) (Writing by Skye Wheeler; Editing by Alastair Sharp