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(By Public Information Office)

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## Highlights

### UN/ Agencies

#### [UNICEF denounces abduction of engineers in North Darfur](#)

23 March 2008 – The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) today condemned the hijacking and abduction in Sudan's North Darfur state of a team of engineers with the country's State Water Corporation and called for the immediate release of the four men and their equipment.

In a statement issued in Khartoum, UNICEF Representative Ted Chaiban said it was unacceptable that the employees of the State Water Corporation should be targeted in this way. The corporation is UNICEF's main counterpart in providing water and sanitation services across northern Sudan, including Darfur, and Mr. Chaiban called it “a valued partner” of the agency.

“This incident underlines that it is not only UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are vulnerable to such banditry,” he said. “Many humanitarian services are provided by technical staff from government departments and they too are at risk of such attacks. This cannot be condoned, and we demand that all such workers are allowed to operate with safety and security in the Darfur region.”

Unidentified gunmen hijacked the corporation team on Thursday night in Um Tajok in North Darfur, and the team's four drivers, its vehicles and its drilling rig remain missing today.

Banditry has become increasingly frequent in Darfur, where in the past five years more than 200,000 people have been killed and at least 2.2 million others displaced from their homes because of fighting between rebels, Government forces and allied militiamen.

A hybrid UN-African Union peacekeeping force known as UNAMID is being deployed to the region to try to quell the violence and the humanitarian suffering, but the mission is still lacking key capacities and remains far short of the 26,000 uniformed personnel expected when it reaches full capacity.

### GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

#### [Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie holds SPLA responsible for conflict in Abyei](#)

(Al-Khartoum) The Presidential Assistant and NCP Deputy President for Political and Organizational Affairs, Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie, said SPLA was to blame for the ongoing conflict in Abyei Area.

Mr. Nafie said SPLA is attacking the Messeriya and that was something known to all the people adding that the Government and all its organs were trying to protect the lives of citizens on both sides.

On the other hand, five Messeriya and 30 SPLA soldiers killed yesterday in a clash between Messeriya and SPLA in Khor Obeid, 40 km from Obeinam, in South Kordofan State.

SPLA military source confirmed to the newspaper the occurrence of the incidents on the route leading to Abyei adding that SPLA casualties were still being counted.

### **Government informs Security Council about Chad's violation of agreement**

(Al-Sudani) Sudan Government briefed the Security Council on violations committed by Chad and complained to the African Union about what it described as violation of Dakar Agreement by Chad.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ali Al Sadiq told Al Sudani that Chad was still supporting opposition in Darfur.

Sudan Ambassador to UN also repeated the same charges against Chad. He said Chad engaged in serious military arrangements and movements. He said Chad assisted JEM to enter Sudanese territories, citing as evidence the recent attack on SAF in West Darfur.

The Foreign Office Spokesperson has accused the Chadian regime of lack of seriousness and commitment to the agreement.

### **National Constitution Review Commission to hold a decisive meeting on Elections Act today**

(Al-Sudani) the NCRC will hold a final meeting today on the Elections Act prior to its submission to the Presidency.

NCRC member (NCP) Prof. Ibrahim Gandoor told the newspaper that today's meeting would be final to be followed by submission of the draft law to the Presidency adding that 90% consensus had been achieved with regard to the document and that the remaining gap was not too big to bridge.

### **US Administration renews allegations over terrorist operations in Sudan against American nationals and western interests**

(Akhbar Al Yom) The US State Department revealed that it obtained information about possible terrorist attacks on Americans and western interests in Sudan.

The State Department warned its nationals that the terrorists operations could be in the form of suicide operations, bombings and abduction and advised its nationals to be extremely cautious.

### **Prof. Machar: Difficulties facing southerners' occupancy of 20% federal posts**

(Sudan Vision) Chairman of the Civil Service Commission, Prof. Moses Machar, has underlined that southern citizens find it difficult to meet the rate of 20% stipulated by the CPA for occupying federal posts.

Machar pointed out in press statements he made that southerners who apply for these jobs have difficulty in residing and renting houses in Khartoum while there is also the problem of compensating senior officials who lose their posts in the process. He added that the Commission has drafted a project for addressing these cases to be discussed with the supporting parties with the objective of adequately compensating officials who lose their post, disclosing that interviews will begin next week for applicants for these posts who will be accommodated in 28 federal ministries and other public departments.

He indicated that out of all the jobs to be provided only six senior posts i.e. six undersecretary posts out of 30 ministries, have been available to be referred to the Ministry of Labour so that applicants for them can be nominated by the council of Ministers.

Machar reiterated that jobs of lower grade, from the 8<sup>th</sup> up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank, will be referred to the Ministry of Labour, explaining that the Federal Selection Committee will decide the persons qualified for these jobs. He further revealed that only 500 persons who possess experience have applied which falls below the 20-% rate. "Most of the applications were made by graduates whose number has exceeded a thousand, he said.

### [Parliament set up committee to study Hybrid Status of Forces Agreement](#)

(Al-Khartoum) The National Assembly set up a committee to study the hybrid operations' status of forces agreement.

The committee will prepare a report on the agreement to be submitted to the Parliament for discussion in its forthcoming session in April.

Member of the Committee, Dr. Al-Reyah Mahmoud, said any agreement or act has to be approved by the parliament. Dr. Al-Reyah did not elaborate whether the Parliament has some reservations with regard to hybrid status of forces agreement.

### [One of the suspects shooting at Akol's motorcade arrested](#)

(Sudan Vision) SPLM leading member Telar Ring Deng has revealed that Upper Nile Governor, Big. Taban Deng, has sent a military delegation to the spot where gunmen had fired at the motorcade of former Foreign Minister Lam Akol, killing three of his guards, he further stated that a suspect who was shot during the incident was arrested and transported to Malakal hospital to receive intensive treatment closely attended by guards.

Telar told Sudan Vision that the concerned organs will investigate the arrested person to dig out the reasons that caused the gunmen to fire at Dr. Akol's car that was carrying his bodyguards, disclosing that at the time of shooting Dr. Akol was not in the car, he was in an area near Malakal and that he phoned Akol twice to make sure of his safety.

He recounted that the attack was probably made by bandits who had robbed some cows from Malakal area, and while making off with them came across Akol's motorcade

carrying his bodyguards. Believing the motorcade to be an army convoy that was tracking them, he added, they fired at it, killing three of the bodyguards in the car.

SPLM Deputy Chairman and Chairman of GoSS Legislative Council, James Wanui, said he would make the necessary contacts with officials in the Upper Nile Government to uncover the accompaniments of the incidents.

### [SPLM, NCP agree over Sudan's elections law](#)

(ST) March 23, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) has disclosed details of the agreement reached with its peace partner the National Congress Party (NCP), over the draft elections law.

The SPLM's deputy secretary general, Yasir Arman, said in a press conference on Saturday that the agreement was to allocate 55 % to geographic constituencies and 45% to proportional representation including a women's list.

The SPLM position was to divide the constituencies 50% elected by proportional representation system and 50% of the seats are elected by majority election system. Women are to be represented by 50% of the proportional representation lists.

The NCP was proposing to allocate 60% of the constituencies for the majority election system and 40% for the proportional representation system. Regarding women, it proposes to establish separate lists on the state level and the list that obtains the highest votes will have all the seats.

The SPLM coordinated its position over the elections law with the rest of the political forces in the countries. Different meetings were held in this regard between the SPLM, the Umma Party, the Popular Congress and the Communist Party.

Following the deal, opposition forces censured the SPLM for not informing them of its agreement with the NCP.

The Communist Party representative on the elections committee, Sidiq Yossif affirmed that the SPLM had not informed them of its agreement with the NCP. He urged the SPLM to explain its position and present it in clear way.

While the Popular Congress Party's legal affairs secretary, Kamal Omer regretted the NCP-SPLM deal saying that means the SPLM ignored its previous agreement with the opposition parties. He further considered this move as clear indication of future alliance between the two forces. He also called the opposition forces to learn from the lesson and strengthen their alliances.

### [Former Sudan PM denies partnership with ruling party](#)

(ST) March 23, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Former Sudanese Prime Minister and leader of the opposition Umma party Sadiq al-Mahdi denied any intention to forge a political partnership with the ruling National Congress Party (NCP).

“What alliance and what partnership are you talking about? Our discussions with the NCP were simply focused on bringing all Sudanese political parties to agree on a common platform” Al-Mahdi told Sudan Tribune by phone.

The Umma party and the NCP have engaged in a direct political dialogue during the last few months. The meetings have stirred a great deal of speculation among observers on whether it would actually result in an agreement between the two parties.

“We want the Naivasha agreement to be owned by all the Sudanese people and not just two parties. The Umma party emphasized to the NCP the need for a democratic transformation, lifting of political restrictions and peace in Darfur” the Umma party leader said.

Asked whether that confirms what the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) chairman Salva Kiir said about the Umma party being against the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) Al-Mahdi said “we are not against the CPA or the rights of Southerners included in it. We simply want it to be an agreement that incorporates all Sudanese political powers”.

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.

In 2009 Sudan will hold its first general elections since the 1989 coup that brought Sudanese president Omar Hassan Al-Bashir to power. A census is supposed to prelude the elections but it remains unclear whether it will be held in the war ravaged region of Darfur which was also the Umma Party stronghold.

However Al-Mahdi said that his party is not prepared to be part of the elections if the Darfur crisis is not resolved.

The former prime minister also disclosed that during his discussions with government officials, both sides agreed that the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) signed in May 2006 should be skipped because it is unworkable.

Some analysts have suggested that the government would benefit from instability in Darfur to prevent a region which has historically been hostile to the NCP, from voting in the next elections.

But Al-Mahdi said that the NCP showed willingness to work on bringing peace to Darfur during their meetings, but acknowledged that he cannot confirm “whether they are serious or not”.

### **War of words with Darfur rebel leader Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur**

The Umma party leader has recently engaged in a war of words with the Darfur rebel leader Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur following the latter’s controversial step of inaugurating an office in Israel.

Al-Mahdi had accused Al-Nur of becoming a tool in the hands of the Jewish state while the rebel leader alleged that the Umma party chief called him secretly to congratulate him on the office.

“This is a lie. I never called him” the former prime minister told Sudan Tribune.

“Al-Nur had crossed the red line by opening the Israel office. We are firm believers in the rights of the Darfurian people but that does not mean that they have the right to do anything” he added.

Al-Mahdi said he had contacts with the rebel leader in the past to solve the Darfur crisis. He further said that his party was one of the first to call for an international peacekeeping force in the region to replace the African Union (AU) forces, a key demand by Al-Nur.

The opposition said that “it is not right” for Al-Nur to have an office in Israel at a time when the latter is “conducting a Holocaust against the Palestinian people”.

Al-Nur has told Sudan Tribune last month that Israel has given more help to Darfuri people than any Arab or Muslim country.

The Umma party leader agreed with Al-Nur that Arab and Muslim countries have shown little interest in helping Darfurians, but stressed that this “bad logic” because “Israel is persecuting the Palestinian people the same way the people of Darfur are being persecuted”.

### [Sudan to replace its envoy in Washington 'Khartoum Karl'](#)

(ST) March 23, 2008 (WASHINGTON) — The Sudanese government intends to replace its highest ranking envoy in Washington, sources tell Sudan Tribune.

The Sudanese Chargé d’Affaires John Ukec Lueth assumed this position in October 2006. He will be replaced by Akec Khoc Acieu who is currently serving as the Sudanese deputy envoy to the UN.

The nomination has to be approved by the US Administration before it becomes official.

Lueth is well known for the press conference he held to protest the decision by US president George Bush to impose stiffened against Sudan.

The press conference was marked by the ambassador’s sharp rhetoric and his vigorous gestures as he blasted the US administration, calling the sanctions an outcome of “bi-partisan politics”.

In the press conference Lueth also denied that genocide occurred in Darfur despite the fact that he wrote an article labeling the conflict in Darfur as "genocide" in September 2004.

Dana Milbank from the Washington Post named Lueth as 'Khartoum Karl' saying he acted as a "propagandists" for "the genocidal Sudanese government".

Both Lueth and Acieu are members of the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) which joined the government of national unity following the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

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.

### [Census Commission criticizes SPLM call for inclusion of religion in the census](#)

(MirayaFM) The head of the Census Commission, Dr. Yassin Al-Haj Abdine, criticized the SPLM call for the inclusion of religion in the Census questionnaire form. Dr. Abdine said that modification in the Census questionnaire form means the Census exercise will have to be postponed.

Speaking to Miraya FM, Dr. Abdine said that the non-inclusion of religion and tribe in the questionnaire was agreed upon by the technical committee in the Commission.

He said that the technical committee comprised both the Census Commission in the south and the north, experts, and organizations. He added that the committee agreed on only the technical aspects of the Census and the final statements were endorsed by the Presidency.

The Deputy Secretary of the SPLM, Yassir Arman, has meanwhile said that religion and tribe should be included in the Census questionnaire form. Mr. Arman added that the Census should be conducted with transparency in the northern States. However, the governor of the Lakes State, Daniel Awet Akot, said that the State may boycott the current population census if the question of ethnicity is not included in the Census questionnaire form.

Speaking during the reception of 204 returnees from Khartoum to Rumbek, Akot said that the data on ethnicity is very important to determine who is a south Sudanese to vote during the referendum in 2011.

Regarding the inclusion of the Darfur in the forthcoming Census, Mr. Abdine said that the Census Commission has reached an agreement with the military administration in Darfur in collaboration with the UN to conduct the exercise in the displaced camps.

### [Rebel JEM urges Sudanese forces to stop bilateral dialogues](#)

(ST) March 23, 2008 (LONDON) — Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) urged Sudanese political parties to stop bilateral dialogues with the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) because it would lead only to strengthen it and maintain it in power.

"We are watching on the political arena dialogues between the NCP and the other political forces including, the Umma Party, the Popular Congress Party and the Communist Party." Said JEM spokesperson.

Ahmed Hussein Adam added that JEM, as a political movement backed by broad sectors of society, feel that these dialogues include division, lack of realism and strategic dimension with regard to the popular concerns.

He pointed out that these dialogues will not solve the problems of the crisis of governance in Sudan and the structural imbalance of power distribution. He further said that Darfur crisis is just a manifestation of the disorder in the structure of governance in the Sudan.

"The problems of marginalized people are absent from these dialogue as well as the issues of democratic transition. Thus they are useless dialogues that the NCP exploits to gain time and to realise the fragmentation of political forces in order to remain in power." He said.

Ahmed said that a real dialogue implies that the NCP recognizes the existence of real crisis in the country and sign agreements of just peace in Darfur and all of Sudan, including the implementation of CPA.

"We advise all political forces to move away from bilateral dialogues with the National Congress Party and direct their efforts toward a comprehensive dialogue proposed by the marginalized regions and different entities and dealing with crisis of governance in the Sudan."

However the rebel spokesperson ruled out the seriousness of the Sudanese government to achieve lasting peace in the country.

"We reiterate that peace is a strategic choice for JEM if the NCP is willing to do so but we exclude that the government would be serious in this direction."

JEM is thought to have the largest military rebel force in Darfur and has gained extra prominence in recent months through a series of clashes with government forces.

JEM leader, Khalil Ibrahim, proposed last week to hold one-on-one talks with the Sudanese government; he further said talks must include Kordufan and eastern Sudan. But Khartoum declined the offer saying peace talks on Darfur should be conducted under the auspice of the current UN-AU mediation.

Khalil call had been seen as a push to ongoing dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition Islamist party of Hassan al-Turabi, the Popular Congress Party.

International experts estimate some 200,000 have died and 2.5 million have been forced from their homes in the five years of revolt in Darfur, which borders Chad

## **GoSS**

[Easter celebration: Kiir reiterates no more war in South Sudan](#)

(ST) March 23 2008 (JUBA) — Hundreds of thousands Christians in Juba the capital of Southern Sudan today celebrates in styles the forth Easter after signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 9th January 2005.

In typical African Sudanese tradition, yearling and ululations, the faithful Christians stated that Easter is the center of their Christianity faith foundation perfectly associated with suffering, dead and resurrection of their Lord Jesus Christ as the prince of peace.

Both Catholic and Anglican believers in Southern Sudan today called on their Southern Sudanese Christians to embrace reconciliation and forgiveness as demonstrated by Jesus Christ himself through his suffering in the hand of leaders of the land, betrayal and denial by his friends and companions who denied him at hottest time but still he forgave all those who betrayed and murdered him to became the foundation of Christianity to all man kind today.

Conceived with message of forgiveness and reconciliation, in his Easter message to Sudanese masses, the First Vice President of the Republic and President of the government of Southern Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardiy, asured Sudanese Christians faithful and the entire masses that there would never be a return to war because people of Southern Sudan and the marginalized areas have suffered more than enough from 21 years destructive civil war.

President Kiir, himself a committed catholic faithful, said both Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and National Congress Party (NCP) have recently merged in order to solve their conflict of differences on implementation of the CPA to the letter. Therefore, there will never again be another war in the Sudan, he assured.

Adding that whatever that was happening in northern Bhar el Ghazal, Abyei and Darfur could be politically addressed as the two parties to CPA signatories are willing to cooperate for realization of lasting peace in the whole Sudan.

President Kiir called on citizens of Southern Sudan to cooperate with staff members of population and housing census enumerators by providing them with required information on their family members.

Kiir also appealed to traditional leaders to encourage their people to fully participate in the fifth Sudan population and housing census which he said is vital for planning, equitable distribution of wealth sharing and effective development allocations in the country.

On the other hand, the catholic Archbishop of Juba, His grace Paulino Lukudu Loro called on Christian's world wide to respect and love one another and to embrace the example of forgiveness and reconciliation as demonstrated by Jesus Christ through Easter passion.

It is the first time in twenty five years, Archbishop of Juba Paulino Lokudu Loro celebrates Easter out of Juba because of his health problem which he assured the faithful congregation that South African doctors are properly taking care of him and that he will be back to Juba in two weeks times.

Meanwhile the Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of the Sudan, Bishop Daniel Deng also called on Christians working government officials to fight corruption, tribalism and nepotism now devouring government of Southern Sudan in totality.

The prelate further appealed to government of Southern Sudan to assist innocent citizens of Bentiu and Abyei to get their compensation from oil companies that have forcefully evicted them from their original land.

The Bishop also appealed to government of Southern Sudan officials to stop grabbing land from Bari people; otherwise, he says, they are creating another distrust and insecurity after CPA has clearly stated that the land belong to the people and if government wants land for development purposes they must consult with traditional of the concern location or areas than using force as it has been the case in Juba were government officials undermined traditional leaders their right over land ownership.

The most reverend also called on the government of national unity to put an end to bloodsheds in Darfur and allow women and children of Dafurian to benefits from dividend of the CPA.

Officiating Easter service at St. Theresan Cathedral Kotor, Vicar General Fr. Thomas Igga called on Christians faithful and the people of God to refrain from intimidation of innocent and peace loving people in Juba town. He called on GoSS government to direct services towards improvement of services to people including security control to pave ways for effective reconstruction and development.

History shows that the churches witness tends to be most effective when it comes to confrontation with manifest of injustice. The churches in Sudan today particularly in Southern Sudan are working shoulder to shoulder in the struggle for democracy in the marginalized areas. However, of late, some church leaders have made a scathing attack on those in positions of power who only wanted to feel important without contributing to the liberation struggle.

A critical question however is whether the church should be confined to occasional statements in addressing national issues or not.

But for sure, the voice of the churches in Southern Sudan, particularly Catholic and Anglican still carries considerable weight in contemporary history of South Sudan, a politician could not pass in a fair and democratic election without support of the church, women and the youth majority of whom are Christians. In fact the church was and still instrumental in to bring together the more than fifteen warring Southern Sudan factions in 1992 on a negotiating table through People of peace for Africa, a catholic organization based in Kenyan capital Nairobi through the catholic diocese of Torit to the New Sudan Administrative Areas whose aim was promotion of tolerance and reconciliation that gave birth to the present comprehensive peace agreement of 9th January 2005.

## **Darfur**

### **[Financial irregularities in Darfur Transitional Authority](#)**

(Al-Ayyam) a report issued by the Darfur Transitional Authority revealed the existence of financial irregularities within the Authority.

The Authority admitted that some of its institutions have embezzled and mismanaged funds.

The Secretary General of the Darfur Transitional Authority has tendered his resignation after being pressurized and provoked by some groups within the Authority.

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Three Darfur war crimes suspects inaugurate new health facilities**

March 23, 2008 (KHARTOUM) — Three Sudanese officials accused of taking part in the Darfur war crimes inaugurated health facilities in the town of Merowe 350 km north of the capital Khartoum.

The officials included Salah Gosh, the head of Sudan's National Security and Intelligence Service; Ahmed Haroun, minister of state for humanitarian affairs and Musa Hilal adviser to the ministry of Federal Affairs.

Gosh has been accused by human rights group of being one of the Sudanese officials responsible for orchestrating the war crimes in Darfur and counter insurgency campaign. He was identified by the UN panel of experts as an individual who should be sanctioned.

Musa Hilal, leader of the Darfurian Arab Mahameed clan, has been named by numerous eyewitnesses in Darfur as leading terror campaign against the African tribes in the war ravaged region.

The tribal leader told Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a videotaped interview in 2005, that he only recruited Janjaweed militias on behalf of Sudan's central government. He is under a travel ban and asset freeze imposed by the UN Security Council (UNSC).

The only official indicted attendee to the inauguration was Haroun who has an arrest warrant against him issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) since May 2007 for more than 50 counts of war crimes.

However Sudan has refused to hand over Haroun and the UNSC has been unwilling to pressure Sudan on the issue despite a Chapter VII resolution adopted 3 years ago.

Ironically Hilal was named in the filings made by the ICC prosecutor in February 2007 as making a speech alongside with Haroun in July 2003, which was characterized as "racist". However he was not named as a war crime suspect.

"Hilal was enthusiastic about unifying to fight the enemy and characterized the conflict as a holy war" the ICC prosecutor said in the document he submitted to the judges.

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.

