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(By Public Information Office)

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IN THE NEWS TODAY:**➤ UN/ Agencies**

- UN says Darfur efforts could collapse
- AU, UN envoys visit Darfur
- UN targets repatriation of 350,000 IDPs to southern Sudan
- WHO welcomes pledges by DPA non-signatories to allow polio vaccination teams access
- EC allocates 8 million to UNICEF for health improvement in southern Sudan

➤ The Transition Debate

- Sudanese government says new sanctions over Darfur "to solve nothing"

➤ GoNU

- Minnawi's press conference over recent clashes between SLM and police
- Government requests \$2 billion grant from China to save the budget

➤ Southern Sudan/ GoSS/SPLM

- 430 die of meningitis in southern states

➤ Darfur/ Darfur Peace Agreement

- Sudan executes a defector SLA commander in Darfur- rebels
- Three killed in intertribal fighting in West Darfur
- AU official condemns government policy on Darfur

➤ Reactions to ICC action on Darfur

- President Bashir in exclusive interview says state minister Ahmed Haroun will not resign, will not be arrested and will not be brought under investigation

HIGHLIGHTS :

UN/ Agencies

UN says Darfur efforts could collapse

(SudanTribune.com, AlSahafa, AlAyaam) The United Nations' new humanitarian chief said on Sunday efforts to help Darfur could collapse if the situation there got any worse.

On his first trip as U.N. envoy, Holmes visited a camp for displaced people near El-Fasher, capital of the north Darfur region, a day after Sudanese soldiers barred him from a different one.

He said the well-established Salaam camp showed what could be done for people driven from their homes by a 4-year-old government-rebel conflict, but warned a "big incident" or further problems could scupper the humanitarian effort.

"People aren't starving and health conditions are decent," he told reporters at the camp. "This shows the enormous humanitarian effort that has been made here for three years, but this humanitarian effort is fragile.

"If the situation deteriorates, it could collapse. The risk is high, it is not imminent but if things deteriorate people (aid groups) may not want to maintain their efforts, which could lead to a humanitarian collapse."

On the other hand, state minister Ali Karti of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the Sudan government has presented its apologies to the USG over last Saturday's events when his convoy was barred on the road from entering an IDP camp.

He described this as an isolated incident that came as a result of weak arrangements for the visit and a misunderstanding on the part of the people on the ground. He said that Mr. Holmes is free to tour the region as he wished and that his visit is very much welcomed.

AU, UN envoys visit Darfur

(SUNA via BBC Monitoring, 25 Mar.) Southern Darfur Acting Governor Abd al-Rahman al-Zayn has called for the support of the AU so that it plays its role in the implementation of Darfur Peace Agreement.

This came about, in a meeting he held in Nyala [S. Darfur] with UN Secretary-General Special Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU envoy to Sudan Salim Ahmed Salim.

He pointed out that the government sticks to AU as supervisor of the implementation of Abuja Agreement, saying that Darfur crisis requires joint efforts with the international community so as to get a solution to its problem.

For his part, UN Secretary-General Special Envoy Jan Eliasson said they were cooperating with the AU in two ways, peacekeeping and fostering the political [peace] process. He added that there was international collaboration over the Darfur crisis, saying that it had gone on for a long time and there must be joint national and international efforts to resolve it.

UN targets repatriation of 350,000 IDPs to southern Sudan

(*AlAyaam*) The UN is planning to repatriate 350,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to southern Sudan through the organized voluntary repatriation program carried out in coordination with the GoNU, GoSS and the UN.

Head of the UN RRR Robert Turner announced that more than 600,000 persons have been registered through the registration camps around Khartoum as willing to return to southern Sudan.

He cited insecurity and unpaved roads as main obstacles facing the repatriation program. Of government support to the program, he described it as good but albeit slow at times.

He further pointed out that they do not have statistics of those returning after having been repatriated but downplayed such figures as not effective.

Turner further pointed out that the situation is good in the areas of return and that the voluntary repatriation program also provides those wishing to return with detailed information on the situation in the areas of return on which they could base their decision to return or not to do so [*the paper promises a full text of the interview with Mr. Turner tomorrow*].

WHO welcomes pledges by DPA non-signatories to allow polio vaccination teams access

(*AlSahafa*) Darfur Peace Agreement non-signatory groups have pledged to allow polio vaccination teams to travel to areas under their control on condition that these teams are from NGOs and not government teams.

SLM's Jar-el-Nebbi AbdelKareem pointed out that the SLM will not obstruct the vaccination campaign especially taking into consideration the fact that earlier campaigns did not cover their areas as a result of insecurity.

The WHO had announced that the polio vaccination campaign will kick off on 1st April with an estimated cost of \$2 million and targeting more than 6 million children under 5 years of age. The WHO welcomed the pledges made by the SLA.

EC allocates 8 million to UNICEF for health improvement in southern Sudan

(*Khartoum Monitor*) The European Commission (EC) has allocated 8 million to UNICEF for supporting the improvement of the health and livelihood of rural communities in southern Sudan and the three transitional areas through increased access to safe and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

The agreement between, EC's Ambassador Kent and UNICEF's Ted was signed yesterday at the European Commission Delegation in Khartoum. The Ambassador said that the project will be implemented by UNICEF and its partners over a 36-month period and cover the southern states as well as addressing the urgent needs in the three transitional areas of Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Abyei.

He explained that the overall objective of the project is to improve the health and quality of life for some 900,000 people in round 1,400 rural communities.

It is expected that by the end of the project period, access to safe water supplies as well as to access to safe sanitation facilities and hygiene will be significantly increased.

The Transition Debate

Sudanese government says new sanctions over Darfur "to solve nothing"

(Sudan TV via BBC Monitoring, 25 Mar.) Responding to calls by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor Merkel of Germany for sanctions on Sudan should it continue to reject the deployment of international troops in Darfur, foreign ministry spokesperson Ali el-Sayed pointed out over Sudan Television that Sudan is not opposed to a peaceful resolution for the Darfur crisis and did not reject what had been agreed upon with the African Union and the UN in this regard but believes that sanction solve nothing.

He pointed out that the Sudan's economy flourished at a time it was facing economic sanctions from western states and the US. Furthermore, he points out, sanction contradict the arrangements agreed with the African Union and the UN in Addis Ababa mid November.

GoNU

Minnawi's press conference over recent clashes between SLM and police

(AlSahafa – headliner article in most major dailies) SLM leader Mini Minnawi held a press conference yesterday during which he accused the National Congress Party and the security organs of planning to strike on his forces and derail the peace process. He called for an independent commission of enquiry into the clashes recently between SLM elements and the police in Omdurman.

He deplored the clashes and asked for guarantees for the safety of 93 SLM fighters who were arrested during the police break-in.

The SLM leader also expressed the belief that the traffic incident before an SLM guesthouse housing injured SLA fighters and that originally sparked the clash was a plot aimed at completely razing down the house. He said that 7 injured SLA fighters are among those unaccounted for after the clash. He said his movement will only carry off the corpses of their dead through a third party and that this should be documented.

Minnawi further pointed out that phone calls he made to President Bashir and the Minister of Interior resulted in a complete halt of all such actions and stressed the need for mutual respect in the implementation of the DPA.

Minnawi also called for the strengthening of the role of the international community in monitoring the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement through a more capable and more mobile mechanism.

Meanwhile the courts in Omdurman have inked criminal charges against 41 SLM-MM elements arrested following the clashes.

On the other hand, Sudan Tribune reports that the police issued a statement yesterday saying that a traffic accident occurred before the Omdurman guesthouse housing SLM-MM elements and that a group of fighting stay in the house assaulted the drivers of the two cars causing them grave injury.

On Saturday 24 March authorities demanded that the SLM hand over the culprits but this was not carried out and a police force that went to the house to carry out the legal order faced heavy gunfire and lost two in the process. The police then reinforced and stormed into the house.

The police report puts at 47 the number of people arrested in relation to the incident.

Quoting eyewitnesses, *Sudan Tribune* goes on to say that the police are still surrounding the area and have brought in 4 tanks.

Parliament has underlined the need to disarm militias in Khartoum following the Omdurman clashes between SLM Minnawi supporters and the police, report *AlWifaq*.

The head of the parliamentary defence committee has called on the Government of Khartoum State to expedite implementation of its campaign to collect illegal arms and pointed out that campaign should involve not only those elements loyal to the armed groups but also other civilians in illegal possession of arms.

He said that transferring militia elements to camps outside the capital might be one of the solutions to this problem.

Government requests \$2 billion grant from China to save the budget

(*AlSahafa*) Reports say that the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Sudan have set pre-emptive measures to salvage the budget as a spectre of a major deficit looms in the air.

The Minister of Finance and National Economy has led a delegation to China to request a \$2 billion grant to cover the deficit while the Governor of the Central Bank of Sudan is leading a delegation to Malaysia on a similar mission.

Sources expect the government to announce an increase in the prices of combustibles to cover the deficit.

Southern Sudan/ GoSS/SPLM

430 die of meningitis in southern states

(*AllIntibaha*) The death toll from meningitis in southern Sudan has topped 430 out of 6,946 reported cases of infection.

The WHO however describes these figures as temporary due to the fact that reports of infection come in late.

A WHO report reveals that a team has flown in from WHO headquarters and its regional offices in southern Sudan to consolidate technical support to the GoSS' Ministry of Health.

Darfur/ Darfur Peace Agreement

Sudan executes a defector SLA commander in Darfur- rebels

(*SudanTribune.com*) Sudanese authorities have killed, a commander of a former rebel faction signatory of Darfur peace agreement after his defection, a rebel faction announced today.

Sudanese security forces killed the head of the regiments of artillery within the Sudan Liberation Army led by Minni Minawi, commander Abdelshafi Jumah, the spokesperson of a holdout SLM faction, Esam al-Haj, said today.

Jumah and his two bodyguards were killed between Lebdo and Muhajeriah in South Darfur after his departure from Nyala to join the non-signatories rebels.

Jumah's defection is not the first since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement between Sudanese government and a SLM faction led by Minni Minawi in may last year [*click on the link for the full text [Sudan executes a defector SLA commander in Darfur- rebels](#)*].

Three killed in intertribal fighting in West Darfur

(*SudanTribune.com*) Arab tribesmen killed three people and wounded 15 others in an attack carried against a village in the troubled Darfur region, the UN mission in Sudan bulletin reported today.

Three people were killed and 15 others were wounded and 35 houses were destroyed when armed Arab tribesmen attacked Sirba village (45km North of El Geneina) in West Darfur on Saturday March 24.

The UN evacuated 13 aid workers from Abu Surug and Sirba to El-Genina.

According to local security officials in El Geneina, capital of West Darfur region, the incident involved a group of Erenga rebels who attacked a group of Arab nomad on 22 March, killing one nomad and kidnapping another, and stealing between 300 and 400 sheep, and Arabs who mobilized to recover the animals.

The Arab nomads found the stolen cattle on 24 March in Karangala, located near Sirba and while collecting the sheep, they were attacked by Erenga rebels. As a result, one Arab was killed and four injured.

Four were killed from the other group and 11 were injured. A number of houses were burnt. Late on 24 March the authorities sent representatives and vehicles to transfer the injured to El Geneina.

The injured are expected to arrive in El Geneina today, UNMIS said.

[*Sudan Tribune* local daily – not to be confused with the *SudanTribune.com* website – has issued a 1/3-page Page 2 column reproducing a near-full text of the UNMIS News Bulletin of 26 March 2007].

AU official condemns government policy on Darfur

(*Al-Mashaheer via BBC Monitoring, 25 Mar.*) Salim Ahmed Salim has said that the only way for the international community, the Sudanese government and armed movements is to embark on a peaceful solution in order to solve the Darfur crisis.

For his part a senior AU official yesterday warned that the failure of Abuja Peace Agreement will lead to a crisis in Darfur. He condemned the policy of the National Congress Party in the implementation of the agreement.

The political adviser of AU, Alex De Waal, who was the engineer of the Darfur Peace Agreement, signed in Abuja in May 2005, said the strategy adopted by the NCP is aimed at consolidating power and wealth by tactics of buying people and a adopting divide and rule policy, he added, that will not solve the problem.

He also said peace policy and deployment of international troops to Darfur at once, adopted by the international community, was not reasonable either.

Reactions to ICC action on Darfur

President Bashir in exclusive interview says state minister Ahmed Haroun will not resign, will not be arrested and will not be brought under investigation

(*AlSudani*) In his first press statement over the ICC prosecutor's statement on Darfur crimes, President Bashir described the case as cheap political blackmailing and a clear attempt to pass some of the UNSC resolutions after the failure of the US and its allies to impose such resolutions on Sudan.

President Bashir said “Haroun will not resign, will not be fired and will not be subject to new investigation”.

He added that there was no surprise that the statement of ICC Prosecutor is a kind of a conspiracy against Sudan and definitely will not be the last part of this “evil episode” as he described.