



## UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN

### UNMIS

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(By Public Information Office)

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## Highlights

### UN/ Agencies/ Partners

#### **Habbaniya comment on Spokesperson's statements**

(*Alwan 18 May*) Following last week's press conference in which UNMIS Spokesperson Radhia Achouri reported that the Habbaniya had occupied some deserted villages in South Darfur, the Consultative Council of the Habbaniya issued a statement in which it defines the historic boundaries of the Habbaniya people and calls on the UN to base its reports on facts so as not to sow sedition between the people. [*excerpts of the statement to follow in tomorrow's MMR*].

#### **Darfur peace talks could start soon - UN envoy**

(*UN News – 18 May, United Nations*) Formal political negotiations to resolve the deadly conflict engulfing Sudan's Darfur region could begin soon, with many of the warring parties indicating they are ready to sit down and talk, the senior United Nations envoy to the crisis said today.

Jan Eliasson, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Darfur, told reporters that the pre-negotiations phase has almost concluded, with the convergence of several parallel efforts by Sudan's neighbours and the UN to end the fighting.

"We have the beginning now of a credible political process," he said during a press briefing following his most recent trip to the region with his African Union (AU) counterpart, Salim Ahmed Salim. "We are now at the stage where we will practically prepare for the negotiations."

One of the biggest obstacles is the number of rebel movements in Darfur, which have grown because the movements have splintered into factions since the beginning of the fighting in the remote and impoverished region. At least nine distinct groups are now fighting the Government.

Eliasson said the number of rebel groups would present a major logistical challenge to organizing formal negotiations, but he was still confident that the process was on track as many of the groups have pledged that they are ready to talk.

“We expect all parties to cooperate; if they don’t, we will face a new stage, new era of conflict in Darfur,” he said.

Eliasson also warned today that any peacekeeping operations would be in jeopardy so long as the political divisions driving the conflict are not resolved. “It’s time for us now to put much more emphasis on the political process,” he said. “If we don’t deal with the solutions, we will have major problems with peacekeeping in the years to come.”

He added that the swelling populations inside Darfur’s many camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) – and those over the border in neighbouring Chad – were being steadily radicalized by the conflict, further endangering the sustainability of any solution.

The envoy also noted that more people in Darfur are being killed today in tribal clashes, often over productive land made scarce by desertification, than in fighting between the rebels and the Government and allied militias.

This aspect, combined with the splintering of the rebel groups, has made the conflict increasingly internecine and ever more complex to solve. It has also sundered community relations across the region.

“The cultural, social and economic fabric of Darfur is gone,” he said.

### **UN laments growing tribal clashes in Darfur**

*(AFP – 18 May, United Nations)* Warning of growing tribal clashes in Darfur and radicalization of displaced youths in camps, UN special envoy Jan Eliasson on Friday stressed the urgency of a "credible negotiating process" to end the conflict in Sudan’s war-torn region.

"We have the beginning of a credible negotiating process," said Eliasson, who along with his African Union (AU) counterpart Salim Ahmed Salim has been spearheading diplomatic efforts to nail down a new peace deal between the Khartoum government and all Darfur rebel groups.

Khartoum reached a peace agreement with Darfur rebels in May last year in Nigeria but only one of three negotiating rebel factions endorsed the deal and violence has since continued.

Eliasson, a former Swedish foreign minister and ex-president of the UN General Assembly, told reporters here that he and Salim had asked Khartoum to stop its bombardments of villages in Darfur and rebels to cease their military activities.

But he highlighted what he called "a new dimension" in the Darfur conflict.

"More people are (now) killed in tribal clashes" within both black and Arab tribes than in fighting between rebels and government forces.

He also warned against a growing "radicalization" of youths in camps for displaced persons and against "the risk of militarization" because of growing inflow of weapons.

He welcomed a recent spurt in regional peace initiatives, including mediations by the autonomous government of south Sudan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea and Egypt.

But he said it was now time to have a "convergence process" bringing all these initiatives "under one roof", referring to his joint mediation with the AU.

Eliasson stressed the need for "a massive effort to find a political solution" in the next few months focusing on "wealth sharing, power sharing and security."

He said it was now time to give "much more importance to the political process" although it should be pursued in parallel with the separate peacekeeping track.

Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir recently agreed to allow the deployment of some 3,000 UN troops to boost an ineffective African Union (AU) peacekeeping force in the huge, arid region.

But he has yet to agree to the third and final phase of a UN plan that is to culminate in the dispatch of a joint AU-UN force of around 20,000 troops to Darfur, where AU peacekeepers have failed to stem four years of bloodshed.

The raging conflict has cost at least 200,000 lives and forced more than two million people from their homes, according to the United Nations, though Khartoum contests those estimates, saying 9,000 people have died.

### **AU, former rebels agree to ease tensions in Darfur**

*(AFP – 18 May, Khartoum)* The African Union and a former Sudanese rebel group on Friday struck a deal to ease tensions after a clash last month in the troubled region of Darfur that killed eight people, the AU said.

The AU, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) of Minni Minnawi and local tribesmen "agreed to put the welfare and security of the local Um Barro inhabitants first", the AU mission in Sudan said.

In the April 1 clash at Um Barro village in North Darfur armed men attacked AU troops at a watering point, killing five Senegalese soldiers. Three assailants also reportedly died.

The AU did not point the finger for the attack but said it took place in an area controlled by the SLM. The Senegalese army explicitly blamed the group.

Hassan Aliou Gibril, deputy head of the AU mission, led a high-level delegation to Um Barro for the talks with SLA representatives and tribal leaders.

The negotiations focused on water rights and water management in Um Barro and resuming AU patrols and military escorts in and around Um Barro, the AU said in a statement. [*Follow the link to the full text of the African Union Press Release on the issue [AU, SLM-MM and local tribesmen agree to ease tension in Darfur](#)*].

## UN rights body accuses Sudan of Darfur attacks

(Reuters via SudanTribune.com; the local press) The United Nations human rights office on Friday accused Sudanese security forces of killing more than 100 people in indiscriminate machine gun attacks on villages in South Darfur over a three-month period.

In a report covering January-March, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour called on the government to carry out an independent investigation into the attacks near Nyala.

"In all instances, witnesses described hundreds of heavily armed attackers, many of who were identified as Border Intelligence personnel," the report said, citing "consistent" testimony gathered by U.N. human rights officers.

"During all the incidents, attackers fired indiscriminately from the outskirts of the settlements with heavy machine guns and rocket propelled grenades, before entering the settlements and shooting men," it said.

The border intelligence guards, often recruited from the local population, are part of a secretive unit "known to be under the control of Military Intelligence," the report said.

It said some attackers, described as wearing green or beige khaki uniforms, had left behind military identification cards. But the U.N. team had "not found evidence that the attackers were operating under the direct command of the government." [Follow the link to the full text including of the report [TXT-UN rights body accuses Sudan of Darfur attacks](#)].

The SAF says the human rights report is not correct because it did not come from official sources, reports *AlWihda* of Saturday 19 May.

A statement by the *Office of the Spokesperson of the SAF* said that such a report should have come from the joint African Union, United Nations military monitoring office in the state. The statement points out that the responsibility of the SAF is to protect and not to kill the citizens.

Sudan's representative to the United Nations, *Ambassador AbdelMahmoud AbdelHaleem* challenges the report and says the United Nations rights body should come up with witnesses to substantiate the report, reports *AlAyaam* on Saturday 19 May '07.

*Rai AlShaab* daily adds that the Sudan representative said the report does not deserve response. He pointed out that the international community knows full well that these continued accusations are but attempts to cover its failure to meet its obligations towards funding African Union Mission in Sudan and supporting the peace process for Sudan as per the agreements last year in Addis Ababa and Abuja. He told the BBC that there are a number of voluntary agencies operating in the Darfur region that work as branches of foreign intelligence agencies and fabricate reports.

On his part, *Ambassador Ali el-Sadiq, foreign ministry spokesperson, declined to comment* on the report saying that the ministry will respond on Saturday 19 May.

*AlKhartoum* daily of Saturday 19 May also reports that **Deputy Governor of South Darfur said on his part that the security authorities in the region do not attack civilians** but work instead to bring security and protection to the people. Deputy Governor AbdelRahman el-Zein said that the state has seen no such incident following the rebel violations in Daffag, at the southern parts of the state. He said that government troops sent to the area ran into a rebel ambush five days ago leaving ten people dead.

### **Jamous makes a move**

(*AlIntibaha – 19 May*) Suleiman Jamous, who is undergoing treatment at a United Nations hospital in Kadugli, has expressed new ideas and a willingness for peace, according to sources.

Jamous is said to have contacted an influential government official who “has the final say on the talks with the rebel movements of Darfur” and discussed different means to reach an understanding between the parties to the conflict. Jamous is said to have expressed commitments to stability and the realization of peace in Darfur and to exert efforts towards that end should they reach an understanding.

Another official said to have visited him at the hospital described him as “very positive”.

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Others :

*Attached is the copy of a transcript of a Reuters interview on 16 March 2005 with then SRSG Jan Pronk reproduced by The Citizen daily of 17 May 2007.*

## **UN support Package**

### **Sudan denies discussing hybrid force with UN Secretary General**

(*SudanTribune.com, AlRai AlAam18 May, Khartoum*) Sudan has denied that it held any talks with the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on the deployment of AU-UN hybrid force in troubled Darfur region.

An unidentified Sudanese official denied any contact with the UN Secretary General on the AU-UN hybrid operation in Darfur. He told the daily Al Rayaam newspaper on Friday that the last phone call between Ban and the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir was “three weeks ago”.

Ban told Reuters television on Wednesday May 16 that he has a “firm agreement in principle between the Sudanese government and United Nations and African Union that there will be a hybrid operation, so therefore it is a matter of implementing this commitment.”. He added that he recently conducted a series of telephone calls with the Sudanese president on the issue.

The Sudanese official expressed surprise at the Ban’s statements and stressed that his government has never agreed to the AU-UN hybrid force. He added that the UN Secretary General’s statement is an attempt by him to “ease pressure on the UN to take other measures against Sudan”.

*AlRai AlAam* issued on the same day adds that a government official described Mr. Ki-moon's statements on continued contacts with President Bashir on the composition of the hybrid force as a statement issued "for local consumption and to lessen the pressure on the UN to take other measures on Sudan". The official is quoted as having said that the last telephone contact between the Secretary-General and President Bashir was three weeks ago.

The official's statements cast a deep shadow of doubt over the success of Ban's attempt to get Sudan's approval for a AU-UN hybrid force. The US has signaled its impatience with the fruitless diplomacy of the UN Secretary General. President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair expressed frustration over the global community's failure to act against Sudan over the bloodshed in Darfur.

The U.K., France and the U.S. have met with the UN Secretary General last week to express their concern about the slow progress in deploying the UN troops as part of the second phase of the AU-UN hybrid force. Analysts say that Western nations are concerned that Khartoum is not serious about following through on its commitments. [*Read full text of the story from this and related story from SudanTribune.com [Sudan denies discussing hybrid force with UN Secretary General](#); [UN chief holds Sudan to agreement on Darfur force](#)].*

### **African Union Peace & Security Council delegation to arrive in Khartoum**

(*AlRai AlAam*) A delegation of the African Union Peace & Security Council is expected in Khartoum tomorrow.

The delegation is on a tour that takes it to Darfur, Chad and the CAR in a bid to build bridges between the three capitals.

### **CPA**

#### **UN repatriates 143,000 refugees to South Sudan**

(*Xinhua via SudanTribune.com*) United Nations-backed repatriation of southern Sudanese refugees has reached 140,000 since the peace agreement between the north and south was signed in 2005, UN humanitarian agency said Saturday.

In a news release the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said about 143,500 refugees have returned so far, more than 61,400 of which were directly helped by either the UN or its partner agencies.

OCHA however, said almost twice as many refugees remain in neighboring countries that fled there following two decades of civil war in the vast region.

The UN agencies said 35,380 refugees have so far this year returned as the south continues to slowly rebuild in the wake of the comprehensive peace agreement that ended one of the continent's longest civil wars.

The UN aims to repatriate 102,000 refugees in 2007, almost two years since the north-south civil war ended at the start of 2005.

But about 270,000 refugees are still outside Sudan, OCHA reported, living in Uganda, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Egypt.

The UN, the Sudanese government and the government of Southern Sudan have been working to boost returns of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) under a joint plan as part of the comprehensive peace deal which ended the north-south conflict, separate from the fighting that continues to rage in the western region of Darfur between rebel forces, the government and allied militias.

As many as 850,000 IDPs are estimated to have also returned home to central or southern Sudan during the past two years.

### **Tensions in Laggawa between Misseiriya and the Nuba**

*(AlSahafa)* An unidentified armed group, some in military uniform, killed last Friday 3 people in Laggawa, South Kordofan, sources report.

The police are in pursuit of the culprits.

Sources say the situation has returned to calm but expressed fears that the incident may affect the weeks' long tensions in the neighboring region between the Misseiriya and the Nuba.

### **GoNU**

#### **Salva Kiir urges additional aid to Sudan least developed states**

*(SudanTribune.com)* First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit has called for additional aid to help the least developed states in the fiscal and financial fields in order to explore new further sources of revenue, in building local capacities and identifying private investment opportunities in line with the 5-year National Strategic Plan (2007-2011).

Addressing the plenary session of the Fiscal and Financial Allocation and Monitoring Commission (FFAMC) at the Friendship Hall in Khartoum Saturday, the First Vice President also called on the Commission to be attentive to the national allocations to the development funds created by the Peace Agreement, especially to the three areas of Abyei, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, the official SUNA reported.

He commended the criteria set by the Commission for allocation of revenues among the states. Salva Kiir said the comprehensive periodical reports made by the Commission reflected the serious work the Commission had been doing in the past year with the help of the Technical Secretariat and the National Panel of Experts.



The session also saw speakers complain of the low revenue remittance rates from the capital to the states.

A minister in one of the states pointed out that there is a 30% drop in the remittance rate.

### **Parliament supports anti-mines legislation**

(*Sudan Vision*) The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly described land-mines as the biggest threat to development in Sudan and called for efforts to rid the country of this threat.

While addressing a special workshop on mine control which was organized by the parliamentary committee on Humanitarian Affairs in coordination with the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Deputy Speaker Atem Garang called for financial and political support for mine action. He further added that the National Assembly will back any legislation on mine control.

Ahmed Mohamed Haroun, the state minister at the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs who is also the s g of the National Organ for Mine Control, asserted that the aim of mine control is to have a Sudan free of landmines and unexploded ordnance of war in order to pave way for development.

He cited the following as dimensions of the mine control action in Sudan:

1. Removal of landmines and UXO,
2. Public awareness campaigns on the dangers of mines,
3. Destroying of all anti-personnel landmines
4. Prohibiting mines,
5. Abiding by legal international provisions for mine control.

### **New SAF draft statute to be tabled before parliament within days**

(*Allintibaha*) The Ministry of Justice has declared a repeal of the SAF statute and said that it will be replaced with a new statute that has passed cabinet approval and awaits the parliamentary nod.

The minister said that the new draft statute is “advanced” for conformity with International Law.

### **Sudanese envoy urges end to US sanctions**

(*St. Louis Post via SudanTribune.com*) Sudanese envoy to the United States on Friday has urged the American administration to end economic sanctions against his country for failing to stop years of killing in Darfur.

Ambassador John Lueth Ukec, during a visit to St Louis, acknowledged that people are fighting and dying. But he said it is not genocide, as critics in Congress insist, the St Louis Post reported Saturday.

Genocide, he said, would be white people killing black people, or Jews being herded into death chambers.

"It is not genocide," Ukec said. "Darfurians are fighting among themselves."

He added: "I want people to know what is going on in my country so they can put pressure on your country" to end its sanctions.

A St. Louis group, the Universal African Peoples Organization, invited Ukec for its Africa symposium at the Holiday Inn convention center downtown.

Ukec said U.S. sanctions have stopped his country from getting American parts to maintain Sudanese aircraft. He said the sanctions even extend to him. [*Follow the link to the full text of this story* [Sudanese envoy urges end to US sanctions](#)]

### **Chadian President visits Sudan in June - official**

(*Reuters via SudanTribune.com*) Chadian President Idriss Deby will visit Khartoum next month for talks aimed at fully normalising frayed ties with neighbouring Sudan, a Sudanese Foreign Ministry official said on Friday.

The two countries, who have long been at loggerheads over military clashes and rebel activity on their volatile desert frontier, signed a Saudi-brokered reconciliation deal on May 3. They have pledged to cooperate in stabilising war-ravaged Darfur and neighbouring areas of Chad.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Al-Samani Al-Wasiyla said the visit was part of efforts to implement a Libyan-sponsored deal to end a crisis between the two countries brokered in Tripoli in February 2006, the state news agency SUNA said.

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Other Headlines:

- Governor of Khartoum State relieves 4 ministers and 3 commissioners and appoints two ministers (*AlAyaam*)
- National Federation of Workers' Unions rejects increase in VAT (*AlAyaam*)

### **Southern Sudan**

#### **Salva Kiir declares 16 May National Day in South Sudan**

(*SudanTribune.com*) The Sudanese First Vice President and president of Southern Sudan government Salva Kiir Mayadrit declared the 16 May "National Day" for Southern Sudan, Blue Nile, Abyei and Nuba Mountains.

In a speech delivered in Malakal on May 16, during the celebration of the 24th Anniversary of the SPLM/SPLA, the Chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and President of Southern Sudan Government declared "the 16th of May as an official national day to be annually celebrated throughout South Sudan, Blue Nile, Abyei and Nuba Mountains. We will work towards annexing an Act to declare this day, "The SPLA Day". [*Follow the link to the full text of the story and a text of the GoSS President's speech* [Salva Kiir declares 16 May National Day in South Sudan](#)]

## **Kiir issues decree relieving of duty the Government of N. Bahr-el-Ghazal State**

(*AlHayat*) GoSS leader Salva Kiir, still on the reshuffle campaign trail, has issued a decree relieving the Government of North Bahr-el-Ghazal of duty and appointing a number of ministers and commissioners.

The step follows consultations with the Governor of North Bahr-el-Ghazal and in line with the recommendations of the Yei meeting of the SPLM leadership.

## **South Sudan Vice-President, EU envoy review peace process**

(*SudanTribune.com*) Vice-President of the Government of Southern Sudan Riek Machar on Friday, briefed the EU special representative to Sudan, Torben Brylle, who arrived in Juba the day before yesterday, on the efforts made by the National Congress Party (NCP) and the SPLM to overcome obstacles facing the implementation of some protocols in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Machar assured the European envoy that the forthcoming meeting between the NC and the SPLM on May 27 would address the pending issues on the implementation of the agreement.

Machar also briefed the envoy on the SPLM's role in trying to solve the Darfur issue, pointing out that the SPLM was striving to bring together the armed groups for a meeting which is to take place in Juba soon.

He also pointed out the GOSS' mediation between the Ugandan government and the LRA, saying the talks between the two sides had achieved a steady progress.

For his part, the EU envoy said the EU would support the implementation of the clauses of the CPA and the GOSS' mediating efforts between the parties to the Ugandan conflict. He also expressed his understanding about obstacles facing the Darfur issue.

Torben Brylle, former Denmark's ambassador to Egypt has been appointed the European Union's special envoy to Sudan on 19 April.

Torben Brylle, a 58-year-old career diplomat, represents the 27-member EU in negotiations with the Sudanese government, a post that has taken on significance as the situation in the troubled region of Darfur deteriorates.

Brylle assumes his new role since May 1.

## **South Sudan starts forced evictions of Juba squatters**

(*Reuters via SudanTribune.com; Allintibaha*) The south Sudan government has begun forced evictions of roughly 4,000 to 5,000 families who are squatting on government land in the southern capital of Juba, a government official said on Friday.

State Minister for Housing and Lands Alikaya Aligo Samson said the evictions, backed by soldiers, had begun this week but did not say how many people had been evicted so far.

Juba has experienced a population surge, driven by a flood of returning refugees, since a 2005 peace deal granted semi-autonomous status to south Sudan and ended more than two decades of north-south civil war.

That has produced a severe housing crunch in Juba, which is surrounded by known and suspected minefields, leading many returnees to turn to squatting.

"They are all over the place ... occupying public places, schools, government building premises. Some of them are even in ministries," said Samson, who is coordinating a 90-day push to clear squatters.

He told Reuters the evictions would target residents who turned to squatting during the civil war as well as newcomers, and that the squatters include government and army officials and civil servants.

"They cannot defend it, some of them are thinking that they can use their position in government," he said. "But it is clear — everybody must move."

Samson estimated that some 20 to 25 percent of property in Juba, previously a northern-controlled garrison town, had been taken by squatters, much of that by people in positions of power who were squatting on prime land.

The government earmarked 20,000 new plots at the end of 2005 to deal with the expected influx of people to the capital, although it has encountered resistance from tribal communities who do not want to release the land.

Samson said those evicted would get alternative plots. But the bulk of those relocated will be sent to empty land on the less-developed side of the river Nile. No transport or cash compensation will be provided for those being relocated.

Samson said the housing crunch was exacerbated because many families who said during a survey done by the new government in 2005 that they wanted to return to rural areas had changed their minds and settled in Juba.

In a similar development, *Allintibaha* daily quotes informed sources as reporting that authorities in Juba have launched a campaign to forcefully evict northern Sudanese from southern Sudanese cities, especially Juba, Wau and Malakal.

The paper reports that even title deeds and other land ownership documents could not help the northern Sudanese stop this wave of evictions that is being carried out with the assistance of the SPLA. The paper further quotes a "northern Sudanese trader" as having reported that authorities have asked him to leave the property he owns on the grounds that he does not have ownership documents.

## **Total petroleum may not sue the GoSS**

(*Alwan*) Well-placed sources in the SPLM intimate that the Total international oil company may after all not sue the GoSS before the courts in Britain over the controversial Plot B concessions. The source points out that Total may stand to lose much should it file court proceedings against the GoSS.

Other sources point out that southern Sudanese with strong links with the west have advised Total not to sue the GoSS but to instead negotiate on the concession. The same sources say the GoSS appears willing to negotiate with Total to grant the company part of the Plot B concession.

## **Darfur**

### **Darfur rebels say government shells water station**

(*Reuters via SudanTribune.com*) Darfur rebels accused the Sudanese government of bombing a Darfur water station on Saturday and said militiamen and soldiers shot dead four people in a village elsewhere in the country's war-ravaged west.

A Sudanese army spokesman denied the military had been involved in any incident in either place. A spokesman for African Union peacekeepers in Darfur said he was checking the report.

Jar al-Naby Abdelkarim, commander of a breakaway arm of the Sudan Liberation Movement that is not a signatory to a 2006 peace accord, said a government Antonov plane had dropped around 15 shells near a water station in Malam al-Hoj, about 150 km (93 miles) south of el-Fasher.

"They fired on civilians. One citizen was killed and four were wounded," he said, speaking to Reuters via satellite phone from Darfur.

Abdelkarim said that Janjaweed militia men and government troops in 12 vehicles and riding horses and camels had also attacked a village in West Darfur earlier in the day, killing four people in Abu Surouj south of Jebel Moon.

The Sudanese army spokesman dismissed reports of an attack near Jebel Moon: "The Sudanese military conducted ordinary patrols, but there were no clashes."

He said the incident could have been a tribal clash, and that the rebels were wrongly blaming the government. He also denied that a government plane had shelled the Malam area.

### **Darfur to top agenda for French foreign minister**

(*AFP via SudanTribune.com*) France's new foreign minister Bernard Kouchner, a maverick left-winger and champion of human rights, will likely make breaking the diplomatic deadlock over Sudan's war-torn Darfur region his top priority, experts said Friday.

But diplomats will be watching closely to see how much room for manoeuvre President Nicolas Sarkozy leaves his star recruit, whose appointment is one of the big surprises of the right-wing government line-up.

The 67-year-old doctor-turned-politician, who founded the French charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF), is famous for developing the theory of "humanitarian intervention". This argument justifies international action against dictators who flout human rights.

### **US to refurbish Abeche airport for use as a launch pad for possible attacks on Sudan**

(*AlRai AlAam*) The US Senate endorsed last Friday a bill for amendments to the draft defense budget that will allow for the refurbishment of an airfield in Chad near the Sudan border.

The refurbished airport will allow use by the NATO, the United Nations and humanitarian agencies for operations in Darfur.

### **El-Mirghani starts talks to bring non-signatory factions to unite**

(*AlHayat*) At a meeting that took place in Cairo last Friday, NDA leader Mohamed Osman el-Mirghani called upon representatives of some of the non-signatory groups that the current situation requires serious efforts from the part of the movements to expedite the quest for solutions to the Darfur problem.

A representative of the JEM said that the movement is ready to reach an understanding and to negotiate in order to reach a sustainable solution to the problems in Darfur. He pointed out however that the multiplicity of initiatives may lead them to lose the cause. The JEM representative pointed out that the efforts for dialogue and negotiations with the movements are based on the two basic points of coordination in views and unification of the initiatives.

He explained that the JEM view is based on the demand for a United Nations sponsorship for forthcoming talks alongside mediators and observers from neighboring states.

### **International church body exerts efforts to unite Darfur factions**

(*Alwan*) Diplomatic sources reveal that the international council of churches is exerting efforts to unite the Darfur armed factions and has gone a long way towards that end.

The source that opted for anonymity said that these efforts target all signatory and non-signatory factions under the auspices of the international church body and supervision of some international institutions.

The source adds that Rome has been tipped as a likely venue for consultative talks between these factions.

### **Libyan leader says world aggravates Darfur conflict**

(AFP via SudanTribune.com) Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi has said that the people of Darfur should be left alone to resolve the conflict in their region. He further accused the international community of aggravating the conflict.

"In Darfur, and problems similar to Darfur, we leave the problem for the people of Darfur," Gadhafi reportedly told students at Oxford University, central England, according to a transcript of an address released by the BBC Friday.

"They will solve the problems by themselves," he was quoted as saying of the people in the war-torn western Sudanese region.

"We do not need to aggravate the situation. Intervention is aggravating the situation — to the extent that there is a conflict between America and China because of the oil in Darfur. [Follow the link to the full text [Libyan leader says world aggravates Darfur conflict](#)]

### **Sudan urged to grant access to Darfur and stop media repression**

(SudanTribune.com) A global network of media and editors urged Sudanese government to not obstruct the access of journalists to Sudan war-strife Darfur region and halt local media repression.

Meeting at its Annual General Assembly on 14 May 2007 in Istanbul, Turkey, the IPI membership adopted a resolution calling on the government to grant all journalists full access to the Darfur region and to halt its repression of local media and journalists in Sudan over the last 14 months.

The security services have reviewed the contents of local newspapers before publication; some newspapers have been banned. In the same period, local and foreign journalists have been arrested and others intimidated or beaten by the security services.

Last April, Sudanese authorities have expelled the BBC Correspondent from the country. The ministry of interior accused him of hostile reporting on Darfur, described as part of the western media propaganda against Khartoum. [Follow the link to the full text [Sudan urged to grant access to Darfur and stop media repression](#)].

### **Other Developments**

#### **Group holds sit-in to protest closure of Sudanese newspaper**

(AP via SudanTribune.com) More than one hundred people staged a sit-in Saturday outside the offices of an independent daily newspaper that was shut down after publishing a column criticizing Sudan's justice minister.

The group, which included journalists, politicians and lawyers, pledged in a statement to sit for 24 hours in a sign of solidarity with the Al Sudani newspaper and called for the dismissal of Justice Minister Mohamed Ali al-Mardi.

"The justice minister ... is trying to settle personal scores, an attitude which shows that he is not qualified to assume this important position and for this reason we call for his dismissal," the group's statement said.

The demonstration came two days after the paper was closed and editor-in-chief Mahjoub Urwah and columnist Osman Mirghani were detained by the government.

The source of the dispute was a column by Mirghani calling on Justice Minister Mohamed Ali al-Mardi to resign for lying about a money-laundering trial. After the column appeared, al-Mardi filed a defamation complaint, and Al Sudani was shut down indefinitely.

During Saturday's demonstration, Urwah was released from detention, one day earlier than anticipated. The government had previously stated it would hold both men for three days. It was not immediately clear why Urwah was released while Mirghani remained in detention.

After he was warmly greeted by the crowd, Urwah held a press conference in which he bitterly criticized al-Mardi for filing a defamation complaint against the newspaper.

"We will continue the struggle ... for the freedom of the press," Urwah said.

The protesters demanded the formation of an independent committee to handle the Al Sudani case and formed a group among themselves to meet the National Press Council to urge it to protect freedom of the press.

### **Prosecutor in the case of the slain Sudanese newspaper editor says suspects were also plotting to assassinate VP Taha**

(*AlSahafa*) The prosecutor in the case of the slain editor of *AlWifaq* newspaper said that the defendants had planned to assassinate VP Taha in retaliation over the justice minister's ruling earlier to withdraw the case filed against the newspaper over an article that one of the defendants says was derogatory to his tribe.

He said that they were arrested before they could execute the plot.

### **Authorities in Eritrea arrest EF leader**

(*AlHayat*) Authorities in Eritrea have detained the head of the East Sudan Front (also head of the internal Beja Congress).

The arrest follows his objection to the nominations presented by the Eastern Front for Government of National Unity positions on the grounds that the nominations were tribally motivated.

The eastern town of Kassala also saw people rally in large numbers to express their total rejection to the nominations that were presented by the leadership of the Eastern Front in Asmara.