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Highlights

Main News

GoSS Vice President arrives in Khartoum for consultation on Abyei

(Al-Rai Al-Aam) GoSS Vice President Riek Machar arrived in Khartoum carrying a package of proposals dealing with situation in Abyei. Machar arrived in Khartoum as GoSS special envoy.

A source told the newspaper that Machar began a series of meetings with NCP influential leaders to calm situations in Abyei and to pave the way for residents who fled to area to return. According to the source, the parties to the CPA would hold a meeting today to discuss ending sufferings of the people of Abyei.

On the other hand, SPLM announced that it would retaliate to NCP with regard to recent incidents in Abyei. SPLM leader Deng Alor said, "NCP is in illusion if it thinks that SPLM has no capacity to retaliate," He said the presence of brigade 31 constitutes declaration of war and SPLA would not standby, it would take an appropriate action.

Alor has accused UN peacekeepers in Abyei of failure to protect civilians and called upon the political forces to set up a unified front to press NCP to implement Abyei Protocol instead of crying over spilt milk.

Lino main cause for escalation in Abyei, Bakhit

(Sudan Vision) Abyei Commissioner Mohammed Al-Durik Bakhit held Edward Lino and SPLA responsible for last week incidents in Abyei, stressing the presence of secret motives behind the clashes.

"The incidents were caused by Lino's rashness and his inability to manage the area," he said, adding that by forming a government and ministers and appointing a 1000-strong police troops from Dinka Ngok militias Lino has further deepened the crisis. The militias, he said, lacked both discipline and training, added to the fact that formation of a police force in the presence of the joint forces is considered a breach of the peace agreement. He indicated that Lino has hired Nuer forces to carry out the attack on Abyei. He called on members of Dinka Ngok to observe prudence and the requirements for peaceful co-existence, pointing out that Misseriya and Dinka have coexisted peacefully throughout the ages.

Bakhit voiced the Misseriya's total rejection of the experts' report which he described as partial and unacceptable and affirmed that a referendum for Abyei is out of the question unless the experts report has been abolished.

Abyei Commissioner did not rule out renewal of armed clashes after the present

relative calmness of the situation because of some unruly and undisciplined SPLA troops who act on their own. He urged SPLM to exercise more control over its troops.

Meanwhile, Abyei civil administration representatives and elders yesterday sat with UNSG Special Envoy Ashraf Qazi, who was on a visit to the region, and briefed him on the situation during the past few days. Bakhet quoted Qazi as pledging to exert efforts to trigger development in the region and preclude similar bloody clashes in future.

Sudan Abyei is devastated after heavy fighting

(ST) May 24, 2008 (ABYEI) — Smoke still rises from charred huts and the only people left behind in this town of 30,000 in the oil-rich region are the looters and the army. The worst fighting in years between Sudanese government forces and former southern rebels has laid waste to Abyei.

The fighting, which broke out two weeks ago, threatened a 2005 peace treaty that ended a two-decade civil war between north and south in which 2 million people died. That agreement created a unity government between north and south, and left Southern Sudan a semi-autonomous region with its own government and military forces.

Abyei lies just north of the disputed boundary line with Southern Sudan in a volatile region that remains contested despite the peace agreement. It is coveted by both north and south because of its oil resources and green fields used for grazing cattle.

The fighting in Abyei flared at the same time the U.N. was warning of a dangerous escalation of violence on another Sudanese front — the Darfur conflict. Earlier this month, a Darfur rebel group staged an attack just outside the capital Khartoum for the first time since that conflict in western Sudan began in 2003.

Journalists who visited Abyei Friday with the U.N. under heavy security saw a ghost town where devastation was almost total.

The town's dirt roads were strewn with plastic chairs, beds, and clothes, apparently dropped by frenzied looters. Fires still raged in some huts.

Looters, who roamed the streets freely, and Sudanese government soldiers appeared to be the only people left in the town.

U.N. officials estimate the 30,000 residents and 20,000 from neighboring villages fled at the height of the fighting, which erupted over a personal argument between government soldiers and the former southern rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, according to witnesses.

The U.N. says another 40,000 in neighboring villages may also be on the move, fearing the spread of hostilities.

Jehangir Qazi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sudan, said the violence that flared in Abyei could easily spread and threaten the entire peace accord. He spoke after visiting the embattled town.

"It just doesn't exist anymore," he said of Abyei. "It is absolute devastation. It is totally charred."

Since the peace deal, many ethnic Africans who fled Abyei during the civil war have returned. Now, they are fleeing again.

"I was running with fire behind me. I lost my children on the way." said Awal Dau, a 44-year-old Abyei resident who fled to Agok, a village about 25 kilometers south.

Nyakum Bakonly Chan, a frail 50-year old woman, said she never left Abyei at the height of civil war. But last week, she hid under her bed for two days while fighting raged, until her son carried her out on his shoulders and they fled.

"Back then, there were no heavy machine guns. Now, it was fire everywhere. It was killing everywhere," she said from Agok.

The fighting ended when the Sudanese forces, which remain in the town center, pushed the southern rebels back.

There have been no meeting by leaders of the two sides to work things out.

The government in Khartoum rejected a border demarcation proposed in 2005 by an international commission that would have put Abyei in the south. This left the fate of the town to be determined in two future votes — the 2009 national election and a 2011 referendum on whether the south secedes.

Khartoum has a major interest in keeping control of Abyei, located in a region where at least three major oilfields are. The International Crisis Group estimated oilfields in the area brought in about \$670 million for Sudan in 2006, about 13 percent of its income from oil exports that year.

For southerners, many of their leaders come from Abyei, and have vowed to reclaim it.

Under the peace treaty, all troops were supposed to withdraw from the border zone to allow it to be patrolled by U.N. peacekeepers and joint units from north and south. But in violation of that agreement, both sides keep their separate forces in and around the town.

Since the peace agreement, the two sides have been jockeying for position within Abyei, and tension has often erupted into protracted and violent confrontations.

Brig. General Osman al-Aghbash, the Sudanese army spokesman, said this time SPLA forces attacked the town after a cease-fire, aiming to take it over.

The army forcefully expelled the SPLA forces, after 22 of its soldiers were killed, army officials said.

There are no figures from the SPLA on their casualties, but medics in Agok said they treated about 130 southern fighters.

The southern leaders say the presence of the Sudanese forces is the cause of the tension.

This is not the first time Abyei has strained the peace deal. In October 2007, southern cabinet ministers walked out of the unity government over a number of disputes, including Abyei — raising fears the peace could collapse. The ministers rejoined the government in December, having settled most of their differences.

The U.N.'s Qazi said the two sides have not been able to reach a compromise on a number of issues related to the peace deal, primarily Abyei. He called on them to take "tough decisions."

"We can see that with any one issue, with Abyei in particular, if violence flares up it could easily spread to other areas and easily threaten the whole" peace deal, he said.

JDB spokesperson: fighting may resume in Abyei

(**Al-Ahdath**) the Joint Defence Board (JDB) spokesperson Pior Ajang has warned of renewal of fighting in Abyei due to SAF military buildup. He said SAF was amassing troops including those on horseback to attack SPLA compounds and denied the existence of any contacts between the two parties for JDB meeting.

However, SAF denied military buildup and accused SPLA of bringing more troops from the South to attack SAF.

Maj. Gen. Pior Ajang has earlier accused SAF of disrupting JDB meetings on the grounds that SAF JDB members were pensioned off.

UN/Agencies

SG denounces assault on peacekeepers in Darfur

(**Al-Rai Al-Aam**) SG Ban Ki-Moon has denounced yesterday the attack on UNAMID peacekeepers in Darfur.

"SG strongly condemns the attack and urges all parties to cease military action and commit themselves to negotiations and peaceful settlement," SG spokesperson said.

UN warns IDPs in Abyei may reach 90,000

(**Ray Al-Shaab**) UN warned that the number of IDPs due to bloody fighting in Abyei over the past two weeks might reach 90,000.

UN Coordinator J. Mathews said lack of exact number of casualties and IDPs makes the humanitarian situation more complex.

JMST to organize informal ceasefire consultations in Geneva

(Al-Ayyam) UN-AU Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST) is preparing to hold informal consultations in Geneva to discuss security and ceasefire issues. All parties in Darfur will be involved in the consultations, which are intended to push the peace process forward.

Sources said JMST was still at the stage of discussion to fix date for commencement of the consultations and that it had made contacts with GoS, United Resistance Front, SLA (Unity) and Abdul Wahid faction for participation in the consultations.

UN will not tolerate Abyei violations

(Khartoum Monitor) The UN described the security and Humanitarian situation in Abyei as tragic. The UN Secretary General's representative Ashraf Gadi warned that tension in the town may ignite war between the two parties to the government. Gadi in a press conference following his visit to IDPs in Abyei and Agok said Abyei had been completely destroyed and added that the number of IDPs is estimated to 90,000 in Agok and Al mujlad. "The UN will not tolerate violations of that magnitude". The destruction of Abyei discredits the two partners," he said. He disclosed that the UN peacekeeping forces were investigating the incident and called on the two parties to find an urgent mechanism in settling the crisis before it was aggravated.

For his part, the commander of the peacekeeping forces said the two parties are trading accusations over responsibility for the fighting in Abyei.

The forces of the two parties are mobilized and put on alert despite withdrawal of SPLA to the South. On the role of the peacekeeping forces, he said that they had not been mandated according to chapter seven and that their role is restricted to monitoring. The UN urged all organizations to provide urgent assistance to 90000 IDPs.

GoNU

SAF, NISS and Police continue search operations in Omdurman

(Al-Sahafa) SAF, NISS and police continued combing and search operations in Umbada, Karari and Omdurman.

Director of Khartoum State Police Lt. Gen. Mohamed Osman Mohamed Nour in press statements yesterday said the operations led to arrest of a large number of JEM elements who took part in the assault on Omdurman in addition to seizure of weapons and documents relevant to the incidents.

The DG police urged citizens to provide police with the necessary information and assured them that security organs were vigilant to secure the capital and protect civilians.

Sudan-USA dialogue resumes next week, Darfur, Abyei and UNAMID figure high on their agenda

(Al-Sudani) Sudanese-American dialogue will be resumed next week. A high level American delegation will arrive in Khartoum on Friday led by US special envoy Richard Williamson to resume dialogue between the two countries.

According to US Charge d’Affaires Alberto Fernandez dialogue between the two countries would focus on key issues such as Darfur, North-South tension particularly Abyei. He said Sudan pledged before the International Community and UN to dislodge obstacles hindering deployment of UNAMID in Darfur but it failed to honour that pledge.

He said his country was concerned about serious escalation in Abyei and impact on civilians and emphasized the need to implement Abyei Protocol as that would bring an end to the crisis.

President Al-Bashir leaves for South Korea

(SUNA) President of the Republic Field Marshal Omer Al-Bashir left Saturday for South Korea on a historic two-day visit at the invitation of President Lee Myung-bak.

President Al-Bashir will hold talks during the visit with his South Korean counterpart on means of boosting bilateral cooperation in the political, economic and developmental fields. Director of the Political Administration at the Presidency of the Republic Ambassador Osman Nafie said in a statement to SUNA that President Al-Bashir would participate during the visit in the launching of the Korea-Arab Society, which aims at establishment of relations of partnership between Seoul and the Arab countries.

He pointed out that President Al-Bashir would meet with the Korean businessmen and attend signing of an agreement between the Korean and Sudanese businessmen. President Al-Bashir will also meet with the Sudanese community in Seoul to brief them on the situations in the country.

AU urges GoS and SPLM to exercise self-restraint, seek political settlement in Abyei

(Al-Ahdath) AU has urged GoS and SPLM to exercise self-restraint and to seek political settlement in the oil-rich Abyei.

A press release issued by AU in Addis Ababa said AU was concerned about resumption of fighting in Abyei and urged parties to exercise maximum restraint and allow delivery of humanitarian assistances to civilians.

GoSS

Sudan’s Kiir appoints 27 SPLM Political Bureau members

(ST) May 22, 2008 (JUBA) — The Chairman of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Lt. General Salva Kiir Matardit appointed twenty seven members to the office of SPLM Political Bureau including five women, first of it kind, after they were dully selected by members of National Council meeting.

The National Council also confirmed continuation of the SPLM Deputies Secretary General for Southern, Anne Itto and of Northern sectors, Yassir Saed Arman for the next five years.

The president promised to appoint more female of southern Sudan sector to the nine governor's position in order to realize SPLM mandatory twenty five percent for them. Notably Lam Akol Ajawin and Theiopilous Ochang Lotti were dropped form the previous list.

As the 1587 delegates prepares to leave Juba for their respective states, counties, payams and Bomas, elders, Gen. Joseph Lagu and Abel Alier strong advise them to carry the message that SPLM is their national party ready to win the coming national election in 2009. "United we stand, divided we fall" reminded Abel and Lagu.

Below is the list of the SPLM Political Bureau members:

Lt. General Salva Kiir Mayaardit, SPLM Chairman and Commander in Chief of SPLA
Dr. Riek Machar Teny, First SPLM Deputy and GoSS Vice President
Mr. James Wani Igga, Second SPLM Deputy and Speaker SSLA
Mr. Malik Agar Eyer, Third SPLM Deputy and Governor Blue Nile
Mr. Pagan Amum Okiech, federal Cabinet Affairs Minister and SPLM Secretary General who is also Secretary to Political Bureau
Dr. Anne Itto, SPLM Deputy Secretary General Southern sector
Mr. Yasir Said Arman, SPLM Deputy Secretary General northern sector
Mr. Daniel Awet Akot, Governor Lakes state
Mr. Kuol Manyang Juuk, Governor Jonglei state
Mr. Nhial Deng Nhial, member from Warrap state
Mr. Deng Alor Kuol, federal Minister of Foreign Affair
Mr. John Luk Jok, GoSS minister of Industry and Mining
Mrs. Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior, GoSS presidential advisor on Human Rights
Mr. Paul Mayom Akec, GoSS Interior minister
Mr. Mansour Khalid, Advisor to President of the Republic
Mr. Lual Diing Wol, GoSS advisor of political affair
Mr. Mark Nyipuocho Ubong, Governor Western Bahr el Ghazal state
Dr. Tabitha Butrus Shokai, federal Health Minister
Mr. Ezdihar Juma, member
Mrs. Jemma Nunu Kumba, Governor Western Equatoria State
Mrs. Awut Deng Acuil, GoSS Minister of Public Service, Labour and Human Resource Development
Mr. Kosti Manibe, federal minister of Investment
Mr. Taban Deng Gai, Governor Unity state
Mr. Addelazia Adam el Hilu, member
Dr. Samson Lukare Kwaje, GoSS minister of agriculture and forestry
Mr. Akol Paul Kordit, chairman of Youth Southern sector
Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Eissa, chairman of Youth Northern sector

Darfur

Senior JEM leader Abdul Aziz Oshar arrested last Wed in New Halfa

(**Akhbar Al Yom**) A high-ranking security source revealed how JEM leader Abdul Aziz Oshar was arrested in New Halfa last Wednesday. Oshar and his bodyguards were arrested in a residence in New Half; they were preparing to escape to neighbouring country.

The first thing Oshar requested after been arrested was to be taken to NISS Director to give him important information and he indeed gave important information about the assault on Omdurman such as funding, preparations etc.

With regard to JEM leader Khalil, a security source said there were information that he arrived in the town of Umjaras in Chad. However, the source said Khalil himself was not seen or heard since the attack on Omdurman, making his fate unknown.