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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Abyei Administration demands compensations for victims of recent incidents

Al-Ayyam reports Abyei Area Administration announced it supports the Area residents' demands for compensation to victims of last May incidents. "The demands are legitimate and we support them," says Abyei Administration's Secretary General Mulong Tonj. He added schools would open during the main vacation to compensate students for the time lost; adding a comprehensive plan has been devised to develop the area.

Linking Sudan's UN membership to ICC is naïve – Sudan Ambassador to UN

Al-Sudani reports Sudan Ambassador to UN Abdul Mahmoud Abdul Haleem speaking at a lecture at the University of Columbia in NY on ICC application said resolution 1593 which referred Darfur case to the ICC derived no legitimacy from the UN Charter. He said it was based on the Rome Statute which UN SC resolution 1422 stated concerns only the member states which accepted it as complementary to their judicial systems.

Foreign Minister meets African Fact-Finding Committee on Sudanese - Chadian Relations

Sudan News Agency reports Foreign Minister, Deng Alor, met Tuesday with the visiting African fact-finding committee on the relations between Sudan and Chad. In a statement after the meeting, the minister said that the committee aims to remove the chill in the relations between Sudan and Chad and implementation of the agreements which were signed by the two countries. He said that committee was set up in the context of the African Union's endeavour to normalize the relations between Khartoum and N'djamena. Alor attributed the delay in arrival of the ambassadors of Sudan and Chad to N'djamena and Khartoum to resume their work to technical and administrative reasons.

Taha acquainted with outcome of SPLM delegation's visit to Chad

Sudan News Agency reports VP Taha was briefed on Tuesday of the outcomes of the visit of the delegation of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to Chad and their meetings with the Chadian President, Idris Deby, and the leader of the Justice and Equality Movement, Dr. Khalil Ibrahim. Taha welcomed the efforts being exerted by the SPLM, pointing out that realization of peace and stability is main issue of the two partners. This came when Taha received at his office Tuesday a delegation of SPLM led by the movement's Secretary General, Pagan Amom.

Our forces surrounding Chinese kidnappers – Interior Minister

Al-Intibaha reports Minister of Interior Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid said police forces pursuing Chinese kidnappers in southern Kordofan have been beefed up. He said the police forces were encircling the area and arrest of the kidnappers is nearing, adding a plan was devised to protect Chinese oil workers.

Police and Juba University students clash in southern Sudan

Al-Intibaha reports fierce confrontations broke out yesterday between police forces and a group

of University of Juba's students in which several students were wounded and 13 others detained. According to the paper's sources, the students demonstrated to protest the University Administration's refusal to absorb 489 of their colleagues who returned from east African countries. The sources said returnees from the Dinka tribe were absorbed but those who belong to the Nuer tribe were refused which is seen by them as discrimination. The students have called upon GoSS President Kiir to intervene to address the issue.

President Mubarak warns of Darfur peace collapse due to ICC

Al-Sahafa carried a report stating that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, speaking to the press during his visit to Paris, has warned of consequences of escalation on the part of the ICC in its dealing with Sudan. Mubarak said such approach would complicate the situation and might lead to the collapse of political negotiations between Sudan Government and movements.

Qatari Minister to meet with JEM leader Khalil

Al-Wifaq states JEM said it received official invitation from Qatar to participate in prospective talks in Doha. JEM official Jibril Ibrahim said the Qatari State Minister Ahmed Ben Abdullah and JEM leader Khalil would meet at Sudan-Chad border soon to discuss JEM vision on how to address Darfur crisis.

UNAMID refutes bias charges made by Sudanese airlines

Khartoum Monitor reports UNAMID in Darfur on Monday challenged the truth of bias charges made against it by the leaders of Sudan's airline companies.

Last week, deputy secretary General of the national Air Companies Chamber Omer Ali Abdul Majid and the head of the Chamber of Pilots, Seif El Dine Hassan, accused the UN of trespassing the rights of the Sudanese national air companies by suing foreign airlines to transport peacekeeping troops to Darfur.

In response, UNAMID noted that as a matter of policy, the countries that provide troops to the peacekeeping mission use their own national air companies to transport them, or use a third party on the basis of bilateral agreements.

UNAMID halt running cruiser vehicles in Darfur

Al-Sudani reports UNAMID in South Darfur ordered halt of use of land cruiser vehicles due to increasing carjacking. A source which spoke on condition of anonymity said the halt of use of such vehicles would limit UN work.

Machar in Uganda today to hold talks

Al-Ayam reports that Vice-President of the Government of Southern Sudan Riak Machar is scheduled to travel to Uganda today in his capacity as Senior Mediator between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Machar will attend a round of talks between the government of Uganda, the LRA and some United Nations representatives to decide on a final date for a ceasefire that will put an end to the tension between the two concerned parties.

Websites/International News Coverage

Ahmed al Mirghani to be buried today

(Miraya FM) The country will witness today the burial ceremony of former Head of the States Council, Late Ahmed al Mirghani who died in Alexandria on Sunday.

Member of the Democratic Unionist Party, Sayed Haroun Omer, told Miraya FM that the burial ceremony will be official.

He added that Mohamed Osman Al Mirghani will accompany the body of his deceased brother

after eighteen years in exile.

Mohamed Osman al Mirghani left the country in 1990 and later reconciled with the government but remained in exile in Egypt.

Sudan downplays effect of US sanctions renewal

(Sudan Tribune website) The Sudanese government downplayed the renewal of US sanctions imposed on the East African country since 1997.

Last week the White House announced an extension of “the National Emergency with Respect to the Situation in Relation to Sudan”. The executive order issued by Bush stated that the “the conflict in Sudan’s Darfur region posed an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”.

The spokesperson of the Sudanese foreign ministry Ali Al-Sadek said the decision was to be expected and accused Bush of “trying to win election points”. “Bush did not put into consideration the recent positive developments by the Sudanese government in resolving the Darfur crisis and cooperating with the international community in this regard” he said. The executive order went into effect on November 3rd for the duration of one year.

Washington first imposed sanctions on Khartoum in 1997 under former president Bill Clinton because of the North-South war and Sudan’s alleged sponsorship of terrorism. Despite the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended two decades of civil war in Sudan, the US refused to lift the sanctions because of the humanitarian crisis that erupted in Darfur. The Bush administration working along with Congress in 2006 & 2007 expanded the sanctions as a result of intensification of the Darfur conflict.

Sudanese journalists start hunger strike over censorship

(Sudan Tribune website) Over 150 Sudanese journalists launched yesterday a 24-hour hunger strike and three newspapers will shut down for three days in a protest against media censorship. After 16 years of full control on the media, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the interim constitution upholds freedom of the press and expression since 2005. But laws guaranteeing press freedom have yet to be passed, and security officials inspect the editions of every newspaper nightly.

Ajras Al-Hurriya, Al-Maidan and Rayal Al-Shab newspapers halted production for three days, saying they could no longer accept government restrictions over editorial content.

“We are being censored every day,” said Ajras al-Huriya newspaper’s general manager Saleh Ahmed Mohammed Elhag at the protest launch.

Journalists say news articles and editorials are banned, particularly on subjects deemed sensitive such as the conflict in Darfur, International Criminal Court, corruption and human rights.

Reporters and human rights activists also say the current crackdown started in February after newspapers published reports accusing the government of backing Chadian rebels in a failed coup attempt.

Elhag said he had been ordered to remove so many articles that he had been forced to pull entire editions more than 20 times since the paper’s launch in April.

Al-Maidan and Rayal Al-Shab newspapers are respectively belonging to the opposition Sudanese communist party and the Popular Congress Party.

However journalists from other independent newspapers took part in the protest.

“I have been interrogated many times by security officers,” said Amal Abbas, the former editor of Al-Sahafa newspaper and a columnist in the same daily who is taking part in the hunger strike and suspending her column.

Ajras al-Huriya columnist Yai Joseph said he had been censored on a range of subjects including the Darfur conflict, corruption allegations, food price hikes and pollution.

The launch of the strike hunger was addressed by different opposition leaders like Shafei Khidir and Farouk Abu Eissa and also Edward Lino from the SPLM.

Lino, said censors had ordered Ajras al-Huriya to remove an interview with him from Tuesday's edition.

"Censorship will effect how people will campaign in the elections (promised in 2009 by the north-south peace deal).It will effect how people are going to be shown what is going on. It will effect how the results come out," he said.

Ajara Al Huriya and Rai al Shaab newspapers suspended for three days

(Miraya FM) The two newspapers of Ajara Al Huriya and Rai-al-Shaab have announced suspension of their publication for three days beginning from today.

The papers said the move is in protest against censorship by security national security organs. Addressing a press conference yesterday, the Chairman of Board of directors of Ajras al Huriya, said they will continue opposing security sensorship.

Other political parties also confirmed support for the suspension of publication.

The Secretary General of the Sudan Liberation Movement, Pagan Amum said the movement condemns the measures of the national security towards press freedom.

Sudan FM says ambassadors were summoned without his knowledge

(Sudan Tribune website) Sudanese foreign minister revealed during his recent visit to Cairo that Ethiopian and Kenyan ambassadors were summoned over accusation of weapons delivery without his knowledge.

The foreign ministry summoned the ambassadors of Kenya and Ethiopia to Sudan on October 13 over allegations of weapons shipments to southern Sudan.

Deng Alor told Sudan Tribune that the summoning of both Kenyan and Ethiopian Ambassadors was done without his knowledge, "which is a real problem in itself," he said distancing himself from this inamical move towards the two neighbouring countries.

During a two-day visit to Egypt, the Sudan Foreign Minister, Deng Alor met with Egyptian President, Mubarak, Foreign Minister, Ahmed Abul Gheit, Secretary General Arab League, Amr Musa, and Ministers of Investment, Health and Education as well as Amr Suleiman, the head of Egyptian intelligence service.

Talks with the Egyptian officials focused on the Arab and African initiatives for peace in western Sudan as well as on the Sudan's People Forum on Darfur crisis held in Khartoum and Kenana last month.

This initiative aims at reaching a common ground between the government and the opposition regarding the settlement of the Darfur crisis, the Sudanese foreign minister said in Cairo.

Speaking at GoSS Liaison office Alor told Sudan Tribune that there is no arms race between south and north. He stressed that that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement gives legitimate right to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to arm itself as well as Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), which has to be done through specific mechanism and joint defense committee.

The minister went on saying that, therefore it is not prohibited for SPLA to arm itself, but both SAF and SPLA are not informing the joint defense committee.

As regards the accusation that the Ethiopian airline landed at Juba airport with weapons to SPLA, Alor said that this accusation has got no ground. He explained that Ethiopia is producing light weapons and in assumption if SPLA wanted to import weapons from Ethiopia, it can be done through land which no one will notice it.

"The arms brought by small plane were just samples for the Ethiopian exhibition in Juba" he said.

But when Ethiopia saw that it is going to create problems with the Sudanese Government, the arm samples for exhibition was returned back to Ethiopia and was never displayed in the Ethiopian fair which was opened last month in Juba, the minister said.

Speaking about the Ukrainian shipment, Sudan Foreign Minister said that the row over the weapon that is heading to the Government of Southern Sudan was fabricated by the NCP media, thus both SPLM and NCP agreed to leave this issue aside because it is not going to

solve any purpose.

Ukraine and Kenya deny that the tanks shipment ship hijacked by Somali pirates since two months were for South Sudan. But different sources said the arms were for southern Sudan army. Kenyan Ambassador to Sudan Robert Mutua Ngesu told reporters on October 26 that the hijacked weapons are belonging to the Kenyan army and have nothing with southern Sudan army.

UN police take arduous route to deliver equipment to mission in Darfur

(UN News) The joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur has received its latest batch of vital equipment and supplies after a convoy made the journey from a logistics base in central Sudan, a UN spokesperson said today.

A police unit of the UN-AU mission, known as UNAMID, yesterday shipped the much-needed supplies from a UN logistics base in El Obeid to the operation in Darfur over some of the country's most inhospitable terrain, particularly during the rainy season.

The convey included 39 vehicles, seven trucks of contingent owned equipment – equipment supplied by Member States which are reimbursed by the UN – and three trucks of humanitarian relief provisions.

UNAMID noted that the 900-kilometre journey is an opportunity for UNAMID police to make contact with the local population along the route and develop better working relations with the people.

The mission, tasked with quelling the violence and humanitarian suffering across Darfur, has been in place since January, but only about 10,000 military personnel have been deployed so far, well short of the roughly 26,000 troops, military observers and police officers expected when UNAMID reaches full deployment.

Convoy runs gauntlet to Darfur with supplies

(Sudan Tribune website) The peacekeeping mission in Darfur, lacking critical equipment, has managed to convoy supplies from a logistics base in central Sudan, where approximately 6000 sea containers full of equipment have been held up by a lack of transportation, administrative obstacles and roads potentially beset with unknown armed attackers.

A police unit of the African Union-United Nations hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID) on Monday escorted three trucks of humanitarian relief supplies and seven trucks of military equipment from El Obeid in central Sudan to Darfur. Overall, there were 39 vehicles in the convoy.

The 900-kilometer (560 mile) journey passes entirely through government-held territory.

UNAMID police last reported undertaking the journey from El Obeid to Darfur on October 13, travelling in 35 vehicles.

The Mission's police force has attempted to establish contacts with the local population along the route as well as develop better working relations with the local police, according to a UNAMID spokesman.

Uniformed military rape three women, two girls in Darfur

(Sudan Tribune website) Two girls aged 11 and 12 were gang-raped by armed men in uniforms in Darfur, according to incidents documented over the last week by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Three more women were raped during the same period. In all, there were five incidents of rape reported and two incidents of attempted rape by unknown armed men.

The attacks were accompanied with physical assaults.

Government officials deny that a pattern of mass rape has taken place in Darfur. Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir said, "the Darfurian society does not have rape. It's not in their tradition", in an interview with Britain's Channel 4 News

Sudanese President to Asharq Al-Awsat: There Will be No Return to War

(Asharq Al-Awsat) – Riyadh, by Turki Al-Saheil - Sudanese President Omar al Bashir has ruled out the option of returning to war saying that the initiatives and conventions regarding the peace process in Darfur are “proceeding well.”

In an exclusive statement to Asharq Al-Awsat, on the evening of his departure from Saudi Arabia following a two-day visit, al Bashir played down reports of processes of armament in Southern Sudan in preparation for a possible war.

Al Bashir said, “The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (also known as the Naivasha Agreement), which ended the South Sudan conflict, and the Darfur Peace Agreement (signed in Abujah, Nigeria) invited the ‘people of Sudan’ to solve the problems in Darfur. On the domestic level, it is proceeding well and we do not fear the return of war as that is now in the past.”

Concerning the peace initiative in Darfur, which has faced a number of obstacles, the Sudanese president said, “The first stages are always difficult,” but added, “Thanks to God and to the awareness of our leaders and our people at a grassroots level, they have agreed that there will be no return to war, and the only path is one of dialogue and the culture of peace.”

President Omar al Bashir affirmed that his country is committed to holding the elections and the announcing the results as scheduled.

In response to a question about the possibility of his deputy Salva Kiir Myardit, now backed by the opposition party, winning the forthcoming elections, he said, “We are committed to holding the elections as scheduled, and this is essential, just as are we committed to the results regardless of their nature, and this is a conviction that is a political and moral commitment. We welcome all free, fair and transparent competition.”

With regards to the development of the Darfur region, al Bashir criticized a group of donors saying it failed to fulfil its obligations satisfactorily. “[With regards to] what the donors promised [in order] to support the peace process in our country; the donors did not fulfil their promises even before the global financial crisis hit,” said al Bashir. He added that his country would have to rely on its own potential; “Therefore we rely on God, and on our own potential, as well as the support of our neighbouring countries and allies, whether they are Arab, Islamic, or African.” It is unlikely, therefore, that international donors would fulfil this obligation with regards to the development of the region following the recent economic crisis.

In this regard, al Bashir also emphasized the need for initiative when the Islamic Conference is held in Saudi Arabia in February 2009 in the hope that it will play, “an effective role in the reconstruction of Darfur, the provision of services and the establishment of a foundation for development, God willing.” The Organization of the Islamic Conference revealed recently its intention to hold a conference in Saudi Arabia regarding the development and reconstruction of Darfur. Sudanese President Omar al Bashir held an in-depth meeting with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz recently. He returned to Sudan from Medina, Saudi Arabia, following a two-day visit during which he performed the Umrah pilgrimage and visited the Prophet’s Mosque. Al Bashir stated that the topic of bilateral relations between Sudan and Saudi Arabia was the most important issue that was discussed with King Abdullah.

Japan should be more active in peacekeeping

(The Yomiuri Shimbun) – Tokyo - The government must change its passive attitude toward the Self-Defense Forces’ international peace cooperation activities from just waiting for a dispatch request from the United Nations or other countries to one of actively seeking to participate in peacekeeping operations.

The government has dispatched two members of the Ground Self-Defense Force to the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) headquarters in Khartoum. This is the first time Japan has participated in a peacekeeping operation in Africa since a 1993 - 1995 mission to Mozambique.

However, it took nine months from the time the government started studying the possibility of dispatching SDF members to their actual departure. Although this was the first mission in Africa in a long time, it seems like a lot of time to spend discussing the dispatch of only two people.

Since the description of the SDF's duties was changed to include international peace cooperation activities as a primary duty in January last year, the government should decide on such missions and dispatch SDF personnel more quickly.

One of the main duties for the two GSDF members sent to UNMIS is administration of its data base, but they do not have to limit their work there to that.

The two members should actively gather information on areas of operation and tasks that would be appropriate for the GSDF if the government decides to send troops to the UNMIS in southern Sudan or to peacekeeping missions in other parts of Africa in the future.

The government will post a GSDF attache at the Japanese embassy in Khartoum for the first time. The Defense Ministry also plans to add four more analysts specialized in Africa at its Defense Intelligence Headquarters next fiscal year.

The government must actively seek out areas where circumstances including security conditions and mission contents are suitable for the SDF, and secure a peacekeeping role there for Japan through diplomatic negotiations. Unless the government takes such a proactive approach, Japan will never be able to rise above the status of a developing country when it comes to peacekeeping.

As of Sept. 30, Japan ranked 82nd among nations in the number of participants in U.N. peacekeeping operations, with only 36 assigned to such duties. The number of Japanese participants must also be increased as soon as possible to enhance Japan's influence in the international community.

The United Nations is currently undertaking 16 peacekeeping operations and 12 political and peace building missions around the world, half of them in Africa. Though Japan tends to be hesitant about dispatching personnel all the way to Africa, such an attitude has to change immediately.

The government plans to revise the National Defense Program Outline next year, which defines the basic policy on national security. In the process, it is important to review the SDF's armament procurement programs and organization of units so that its international peace cooperation activities can be enhanced.

The GSDF Central Readiness Force includes the 700-member Central Readiness Regiment, which serves as an advance group in U.N. peacekeeping operations, and the International Peace Cooperation Activities Training Unit. Enhancement of their capabilities should be considered.

The government also should give priority to increasing the number of armored personnel carriers and heavy-lift helicopters, and to the early acquisition of next-generation transport planes with longer ranges, which are all suitable for international peace cooperation activities.

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