

**UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN****UNMIS****Media Monitoring Report, 21 November 07**

(By Public Information Office)

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Highlights

UN/ Agencies

On the UNHCHR to Take Action on Child Abduction

(Sudan Vision), **By: SUNA**, The Sudan delegation to the meeting of experts of the Higher Commission for Human Rights has urged the commission to take specific action on the crime of kidnapping Sudanese children by the French Arch De Zoë. The Chairman of the Sudanese Advisory Council on Human Rights, Dr Abdul Moneim Osman Mohamed Taha,

who was a member of the delegation to Geneva that delegation, has learned that the commission has contented itself with the condemnation of the crime as issued by the Special commissioner on prevention on child trafficking. He said the delegation has insisted that there should be moral and professional responsibilities from the officer of the commissioner towards this crime. He added in his briefing to press men at his office today that the Sudanese delegation has explained to the commissioner the dimensions of the crime, stressing that the attempt to transport some 103 children was only the tip of the iceberg for the trafficking of some 10 million other children as has been proved the documents issued by the humanitarian aid organizations. He pointed to the condemnation issued by the European Commission for the event and that the French ambassador has condemned it and called for provision of any information on any number of other missing children. He affirmed Sudan's readiness for launching the criminal procedure in Chad because it would be easier to obtain

information and to interrogate the witnesses there. He said the delegation has explained the dimensions of the event to the various African, and Arab Groups there and asked them to issue a clear and frank condemnation and that investigation by the Special Reporter on Child Trafficking and the office of the Higher Commissioner for refugees as well. He said the Sudan Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid also met with the Deputy Higher Commissioner for Refugees who has returned from a field visit to Darfur and briefed him on the procedures going on about the incident. Dr Abdul Moneim has meanwhile stated that the delegation has given a press conference in the UN premises in Geneva in which it stressed on the need to draw the attention of the international community to this plot. He said any attempt to move the trial from Chad to any other place would be an insult to African and to the Chadian judiciary system in particular. The delegation has meanwhile expressed Sudan's dismay over the silence of the International community with regard to this crime. He said the Sudanese minister of Justice has ordered that a case be opened against the French organization and that there were further information about other missing children that are being investigated so as to reach the exact number of those missing children. He said this crime would not however affect the work of other organizations operating in the Sudan and would not affect the facilities being provided for the NGOS. He said the aim of the campaign launched by the Sudan was to investigate the incident and to specify the responsibilities so that it would never be repeated in the future and was also aimed at creating a general international public opinion to put and end to such crimes.

UNICEF representative: We are making efforts to return Darfur children from Chad to their families

(AlSudani), UNICEF representative said the mortality rate of the children under five in Sudan is the highest in the world though it has decreased from 156 children among 1000 before the signing of the CPA to 112 children. After signing the agreement. He condemned the abduction of Darfur children by the French NGO and hinted to efforts by the Sudanese government to return the children to their families.

Speaking to the media at the 18th anniversary of the Child Rights Convention, the UNICEF Head in Khartoum affirmed the success of the programme of demobilizing child soldiers saying that 1500 children have been demobilized in south Sudan, east Sudan and Nuba Mountains. However, he said there are still around 10,000 child soldiers recruited by the armed groups and forces in Darfur.

UNICEF representative commended efforts leading to a child rights bill which is now at the Parliament.

GoNU (CPA, DPA, ESPA)

32 oil workers arrested after protest in Sudan's Upper Nile (ST)

November 20, 2007 (MALUT, Sudan) – Local authorities in Upper Nile state arrested thirty-two workers of the Petrodar Oil Company operating in Malut County after a protest they organised against what they described "mistreatment" by the multinational oil firm.

Three representatives of the causal workers told Sudan Radio Service (SRS) by phone that they demonstrated early on Friday 16 November morning, alleging that they have not been paid for four months. They also complained that they are working under harsh conditions, including verbal and physical harassment from their supervisors.

The representatives also said that Petrodar's workers are Sudanese from all over southern Sudan, plus a few from Darfur and Blue Nile. They claim that county authorities resent their presence, which has also led to discrimination against them by the local community, the Nairobi based SRS reported from Malut.

They claim that 400 casual workers at Petrodar's concession blocks 3 and 7 took part in the protests. They said that the workers blocked a road, hoping to stop an oil company official so they could make their demands. However, according to Malut County Commissioner Thon Juac, the workers were violent, beating people along the road, particularly those appearing to be of Arab origins.

Joint Integrated Unit soldiers were called in to break up the protest. According to the workers' representatives, the soldiers began shooting, injuring two workers. Juac denied any shooting.

As the protest broke up and workers fled the scene, the soldiers managed to detain 32.

The workers, who asked that their names not be revealed, claim that the arrested were severely beaten by county authorities over the weekend, an allegation the county commissioner says is not true. Those arrested remain in detention.

Malut commissioner also denied the charge that the workers face discrimination. He said neither the oil company nor the local community has any problem with workers coming from other parts of Sudan.

He further said that the demonstration was broken up because it was illegal and said that no protesters were injured. He praised the JIU soldiers, saying they helped restore order. The workers are now calling on the Government of Southern Sudan to intervene and investigate the incident.

(SRS/ST)

Al Bashir: Peace strategic option for NCP

(AlRai AlAam), Addressing the concluding session of the NCP National Shura Council yesterday, al Bashir admitted differences within the NCP but said they should be resolved within the structures of the party.

He called on the Sudanese political forces to restructure themselves, like the NCP, after adopting political pluralism and freedom of organization.

Al Bashir said the first and strategic objective of the NCP is achieving peace which, he argued, has local, regional and international opponents (Please see attached summary of statement).

Al-Bashir vows 'no return to war' in southern Sudan

(ST), November 21, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Sudanese President Omer al-Bashir vowed on Wednesday that despite a simmering crisis with southern former rebels there would be no return to war two years after a peace deal was signed.

"Today I say before you: there will be no return to war as long as there is a glimmer of peace," Beshir told a conference of his ruling National Congress also attended by officials from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

"Dialogue is the only way to preserve national unity," said Bashir, who on Saturday ordered training camps of a ruling party auxiliary — which fought the south for years — to re-open in order to prepare for war.

Bashir said he wanted "an effective and responsible partnership with the SPLM" and that the ruling party "needs peace and stability to carry out its development project" in Sudan.

(AFP)

Recommendations of the NCAP National Shura Council

- ❖ Strengthening NCP organizational institutions at all levels.
- ❖ Supporting peace as a strategic option for the NCP and assuring commitment to peace agreements, and completely ending the war.
- ❖ Assuring commitment to and continuing partnership with SPLM to ensure political, economic and social stability, including reactivation of the CPA mechanisms and overcoming differences in interpreting the CPA.
- ❖ Conducting elections as agreed and in time.
- ❖ Urging NCP members in all states to be prepared for elections.
- ❖ Avoiding foreign intervention through unity of national ranks.
- ❖ Working for national unity, respecting diversity and democracy.
- ❖ Giving special importance to NCP in South Sudan.

Kiir: I asked Washington to support links between north and south

(AlRai AlAam), The FVP and GoSS President, Salva Kiir, yesterday briefed the GoSS Ministers and the SPLM Ministers in the GoNU on his visit to the US and his meetings with the UN Secretary General, the US President George Bush and officials at the US Administration.

Kiir advised his Ministers to strengthen ties between the north and the south saying that he has requested the US Administration to support and fund programmes that help strengthening links between south and north Sudan such as river transport, roads and railways, and issues of democratic transformation and elections.

Minister of Justice: Kosheib under investigation

(AlRai AlAam), In an interview with AlRai AlAam, the Justice Minister Mohamed Ali al Mardhi said Ali Kosheib, who has been accused by the ICC of committing crimes against humanity in Darfur, is still in detention. The Minister refused to give further details as, he believes, Kosheib is still under investigation.

371 cases of rift valley fever

(AlSahafa), The Federal Ministry of Health said yesterday that until the 17th of November the rift valley cases have reached 371 of which more than 215 in Aljazeera State, 103 in the White Nile state and 53 in Sinnar State. The Ministry said as a result of these cases 108 deaths (more than 25%) have been reported.

Authorities allow international human rights monitors to visit prisons in Darfur

(AlSahafa), Authorities of the Ministry of Justice and Intelligence and Security Services have allowed international human rights monitors to visit prisons and detention centers in Darfur to assess the situation and verify reports on release of detainees there.

Sudanese delegation presented in Geneva a report prepared by the AU ceasefire committee proving that SAF has not attacked the village of Muhajria as stated in some reports.

100 Sudanese killed by suspected Rift Valley Fever - official

(ST), November 20, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Nearly 100 people have died of suspected Rift Valley Fever with over 360 more infected, Sudan said on Tuesday, after initially being slow to confirm an outbreak of the deadly disease.

The health ministry said 94 people had died and 362 been infected in the suspected outbreak concentrated in White Nile, Sinnar and Al-Jazira states, south of Khartoum.

Ministry epidemiologist Issam Mohammed Abdallah released the figures in a meeting with health officials, the official SUNA news agency reported.

Abdallah said the disease could be transmitted by eating uncooked meat, drinking unpasteurised milk or close proximity to infected animals.

Fear of contracting the disease has caused a significant decline in meat consumption, the Khartoum press reported.

(AFP)

Egypt hails release of abducted oil workers in Sudan

(ST), November 20, 2007 (CAIRO) — The Egyptian Foreign Ministry welcomed on Tuesday the release of Egyptian engineer Joseph William who was kidnapped in South Kordofan State two weeks ago by a rebel group.

The Egyptian is one of five engineers — three Sudanese and one Iraqi — were seized by Darfur rebels of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) during a raid on the Defra oil field in October. The rebels said they meant to send a message to China to stop funding the Sudanese government through its oil industry.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman said the Egyptian ambassador in Khartoum, Mohamed Abdelmoneim al-Shazli, was on hand at Khartoum airport last night to receive the released petroleum engineer.

Two weeks ago the rebel JEM said it will release the abducted oil engineers after the humanitarian intervention by the Egyptian authorities.

The five men had been working on the Defra oil field, run by the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company consortium. China's CNPC has the biggest stake in the group alongside India's ONGC, Malaysia's Petronas and Sudan's state-owned Sudapet.

(ST)

[Sudanese respond to militia callup - report](#)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Young supporters of Sudan's president are responding to his call for more recruits to northern militia, a political youth leader told a pro-ruling party media on Tuesday, further raising tension after a north-south civil war.

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir urged the government-allied Popular Defence Forces to start training more mujahideen (holy warriors) in a televised speech on Saturday.

Former rebels from Sudan's semi-autonomous south accused the president of "calling for war".

The Youth Department Secretary of Bashir's dominant National Congress Party (NCP), Haj Majed Suwar, told the pro-NCP media that members had "started assembling Mujahideen who (were) waiting eagerly to execute the president's order".

Suwar told the Sudanese Media Centre (SMC) the youth department was preparing to open training camps in response to the president's call.

The SMC quoted Suwar as saying Jihad was a tradition that could not be stopped by signing peace agreements.

"(Suwar) said our target in the upcoming possible war was not the SPLM (the south's dominant Sudan People's Liberation Movement), but its backing elements," reported the agency, without giving further details.

(Reuters/ST)

[Justice Minister Denies Armed Force Bombing of Muhajria](#)

(Sudan Vision), By: Zulikha Abdelraziq, Minister of Justice, Mohammed Ali Al -Mardi, dismissed reports claiming bombing of Mahjtria village by the Armed Force (SAF) , particularly Human Rights Rappoteur, Sema Sumer's report. In press statements he made yesterday, Al- Mardi revealed that the AU ceasefire Committee report submitted by Sudan delegation to UN Experts Committee meeting in Geneva has rejected reports alleging cases of violence against women in Darfur.

He noted that the Delegation highlighted the Committee on the coordination between National and UA Police demonstrated by the joint patrolling of Camps.

Justice Minister stated that SAF Law guarantees civilians protection and mandates the enforcement of Humanitarian criminal Law by SAF in conflict areas as stipulated in the International Conventions.

He pointed out to the arrangements taken by North Sudan DDR Commission and Senior Assistant to the President, Mini Minawi to demobilize 800 child solders in Darfur.

Al -Mardi added that the Delegation further informed the Committee out of the remaining 70 detainees, 11 were released and others were under interrogation pending prosecution , adding that the Committee as well received the list of SAF and Police elements of whom immunity has been lifted and they prosecuted. Moreover, the Delegation informed the Committee that operatives in the Human rights affairs were conducting their activities freely

Parliament opposes amendments on draft law of national council for developing national languages 2007

(Sudan Vision), By: Alsamani Awad Allah, National assembly in its yesterday session disapproved amendments submitted by youth culture and sport committee about draft law of the national council for developing national languages for 2007.

After the members opposed the amendment of appointing the general secretary by the president as they see it should come from the presidency establishments
National assembly speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Altahir has requested the committee to refer to the constitution and CPA.

The national speaker stated that the assembly is committed to the decrees issued by the national commission for constitutional review but he authorized the assembly members to amend or refuse any article.

He explained that the commission is not a constitutional body and the national assembly has the right to cancel any constitutional article .He has commended the role taken by the national commission for constitutional review.

He added that article 58 [1] has given the president of the republic wide authority and the same article in paragraph 2 has given firs vice president exclusive authority in what the constitution and the agreements stipulate, except that the president of the republic exercise authority without agreement of his first vice president .

Kenya open borders to Sudan, asks Sudan to reciprocate

(The Citizen), Kenya's ambassador to Sudan has said his country has ceased visa for Sudanese and asked Sudan to reciprocate.

SAF General wants army control wrestled from NCP

(The Citizen), A retired SAF General has yesterday said political parties should demand that the armed forces law make the force independent from the NCP. In an interview, Rtd. Brig Gen. Abdel Aziz Khalid yesterday told the Citizen the amendments done to the SAF law were not enough.

If the agreement is not working, why should we be part of it, says SPLM

(The Citizen), A senior Minister of SPLM Monday said SPLM could never be part of an agreement that is not working.

Deng Alor Kuol Monday accused the ruling NCP of sponsoring a militia group that does not have a legal ground in the CPA.

French police delegation meets Minister of Interior

(Sudan Tribune), Minister of Interior, al Zaubair Bashir Taha, yesterday met with the visiting French police delegation and discussed the issue of the abducted children while confirming confidence in the French police in dealing with the issue, General Mahjoub Saad who attended the meeting called on the French authorities to hand over those involved in this case and demonstrated the Sudanese police keenness to improve its relations with the French police to upgrade capabilities, fight terrorism and fight cyber crime.

US\$ 1.48 billion budget of the hybrid

(AIRai AIAam), UN estimates indicate that the budget of the hybrid operation in Darfur for the first year is US\$ 1.48 billion. The UN General Assembly Fifth Committee is currently discussing the budget of the hybrid.

Sudanese president reshuffles state-owned media management

BBC Monitoring Service, President Umar Hasan al-Bashir has appointed the former director of the television sector at the Sudanese Radio and TV Corporation, Awad Jadayn Muhyi al-Din, to head the state-owned Sudanese News Agency [SUNA].

Meanwhile, SUNA's Director Muhammad Hatim Sulayman was relieved from his post and assigned to run Sudan TV.

GoSS

Former SPLM minister slams Pagan Amum positions (ST)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Discordant voices within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement criticized the SPLM secretary general and accused some circles of seeking to oust Salva Kiir from the chairmanship of the party.

In statement to the Arabic language al-Sudani, the former state minister at the presidency, Telar Reng Deng, accused some circles within the SPLM of seeking to overthrow the chairman of the party, Salva Kiir Mayadrit. He warned that such move could split the SPLM.

Telar, according to the Khartoum based daily, also addressed harsh criticisms to Pagan's statements against the National Congress Party (NCP). He described it as individual and do not represent the position of the SPLM.

He further accused what he called "communists" inside the SPLM of working to organise a popular uprising. He further said these communists didn't fight during the war in the battlefields.

Telar reiterated his support to Salva Kiir saying that no one has the capacity to remove the current SPLM leader from his position. He also said that Kiir would not run the presidential election in 2009.

Telar Deng is seen as one of those who defend the idea that SPLM should work only in the south and leave the north for the NCP rule. Pagan considers the SPLM is the future ruling party for the whole country.

(ST)

Darfur

South Africa urges rich nations to equip Darfur force (ST)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (CAPE TOWN) — South Africa urged rich countries on Tuesday to provide the hardware required for the deployment of a hybrid United Nations-Africa peacekeeping force in the strife-torn Darfur region of western Sudan.

While South Africa was committed to providing what it could to help resolve the deadly years-long conflict, it was "not such a military power", deputy foreign minister Aziz Pahad told journalists in Cape Town.

"The type of equipment they need must come from bigger military powers, clearly.

"The key challenge is that developed countries must move decisively to provide the equipment that is needed. That includes Russia, China, the United States and some of the EU countries."

South Africa was considering a UN request to contribute helicopters and ground transportation, and has already agreed to boost its existing presence in the region from 700 to 800 by December.

Chinese army engineers head to Darfur this week (ST)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (BEIJING) — A contingent of Chinese engineering troops will leave for Sudan's troubled Darfur region later this week, China's Foreign Ministry reported Tuesday.

Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said the troops would depart Friday from their base in the central province of Henan, but gave no details.

Official media previously said China would send a 315-member unit to Darfur comprising three engineer platoons, one well-digging platoon and one field hospital. The Chinese were to build roads and bridges and dig wells ahead of the arrival of a 26,000-strong African Union-U.N. peacekeeping force likely early next year.

Liu said the unit leaving this week was an advance party, but it wasn't immediately clear what additional forces China planned to send. A press officer at the Ministry of National Defense said he had no additional information on the Darfur deployment.

The Chinese deployment follows criticism from foreign governments and international human rights groups over Beijing's reluctance to support international intervention in Darfur. A four-year-old conflict between rebels and government-backed militias in Darfur has killed 200,000 people and left 2.5 million homeless.

Energy-hungry China buys two-thirds of Sudan's oil output and sells weapons to the Khartoum regime. Critics say Beijing has not used its economic leverage to push Sudan's government more strongly for peace, and have attempted to shame China into acting by linking the Darfur crisis to next year's Summer Olympics in the Chinese capital.

Liu did not directly address those complaints, but said China opposed "politicizing technical issues."

(AP)

Sudan Reiterates Support to Hybrid Operation as Mandated and Characterized

(Sudan Vision), By: Mona Al Bashir, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mutrif Siddig, has renewed Sudan's readiness to fully cooperate in the hybrid operation in accordance with Resolution 1769 as well as the mandate that provides for the dominant African character of the operation.

The UN had on Monday held a meeting for the General Assembly 5th Committee concerned with financial and administrative affairs for discussing the financial requirements for the hybrid operation in Darfur.

Meanwhile, based on the report presented by the UN Secretary General, Sudan's envoy to the UN, Ambassador Abdelmehmoud Abdelhalim, said assessments for the hybrid operation's budget for the first year reached \$1.480 billion, noting that Sudan's

delegation had submitted a report during the session in which it asserted that the terms of reference that govern Sudan-AU partnership target implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement, boosting the stability and progress of peace in Sudan, in addition to Sudan's commitment to the political approach and initiation of centers for running the hybrid operation in Al Fasher and Darfur states.

The Committee is scheduled to submit its assessments for the operation's budget to the UN General Assembly in the coming December as the UN Secretary General is holding talks with the industrial countries, seeking to secure trucks to be used in the operation that is expected to set off at the beginning of next year.

For his part, Mutrif called on the international community to take a hard stand and impose penalties on rebel factions that reject Sirte negotiations for putting an end to the strife and suffering in Darfur. He further affirmed that the incidents of Haskanita were committed by rebel groups, urging the UN and AU organizations to take decisive action towards these practices. In press statements he made yesterday, Mutrif asked the parties who accused the Sudanese government of being involved in Haskanita incidents to apologize for that groundless charge.

In another development, the UNSG spokesperson said the UN and AU have met in Juba with representatives of Darfur rebel movements to urge them to unify their stance before their coming negotiations with the government in Sirte to be held mid-September.

Lebanese banker triumphs in Sudan's war-torn Darfur region (ST)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — If there were an award for banker of the year in Sudan, where business carries on despite a four-year conflict in the western region of Darfur, it would go straight to Nadim Ghantous of Byblos Bank.

"Good management, little bad debt, perfect," says Wabel Abdallah, International Monetary Fund representative to Sudan's central bank, describing the market's view of Ghantous's operation.

When Byblos Bank, Lebanon's third, offered to send Ghantous to this country gripped by conflict, squeezed by a US embargo and run by a Islamo-military clique, he jumped at the chance.

"Instinctively I said yes, and I have no regrets," he told AFP.

The 45-year-old who moved to Khartoum in 2003 after living in Accra, Beirut, Quebec, Riyadh, Kuwait and New York admits that "Sudan is certainly not Switzerland, but over there I'd be bored to death!"

With a small team based in Khartoum, Ghantous created Byblos Africa in a business landscape that is Islamised and empty of big Western companies.

His new venture is 65-percent owned by the mother company in Lebanon.

The business plan forecast three years in the red. But after the first year, profits hit two million dollars and are expected to reach several million more in 2007, with an increase in capital from 12 to 25 million dollars.

A quarter of the company is soon to be floated on the stock market.

This performance came during an economic high in Sudan driven by an oil boom and hopes for a period of peace between north and south Sudan, even if not in Darfur where a civil war continues to rage.

"A feverish number of projects and consumer loans like never before," summarised Ghantous.

On the banks of the White Nile and Blue Nile, which meet in Khartoum, traffic jams testifying to the consumer spending spree have begun forming against a backdrop of cranes and scaffolding.

But since the end of 2006, the free-for-all received a knock from an unexpected drop in crude oil revenue, the production of which had reached 500,000 barrels a day.

In June the country almost ran out of foreign exchange reserves.

"Some banks had up to 60 percent in unpaid debt because of extremely risky loans," Ghantous said.

The largest of the 34 Sudanese banks, the state-owned Omdurman National Bank, is in a state of complete collapse, he said.

Sudan has two financial systems. There is the Islamic system in the north, where most banks, including Byblos, are based which rejects interest on loans. The other system is the "conventional" one in the predominantly Christian south.

"The problem with the Islamic banking system is that it doesn't have the right refinancing instruments to deal with a crisis by helping punctual payers out of a temporary tight spot," Ghantous said.

So how to explain Byblos's success?

Ghantous himself doesn't say so explicitly, but the American embargo on dollar transactions has created opportunities as well as obstacles.

His bank, like the latest Lebanese arrival Audi, benefits from links with sister agencies in Europe, and even lends dollars or euros at high rates to Sudanese institutions.

And the crises continue, with a major split since October between north Sudan and former rebels in the south in spite a peace deal signed in 2005, while there is still no sign of a negotiated solution to the Darfur crisis.

Highlighting these risks, the respected Economist Analyst Unit is counting on a flow of investments and loans particularly from Asian countries like China, or Gulf Arab countries.

"I am by nature optimistic, things can only improve," insists Ghantous showing off the plans of the new 14-floor headquarters which should be ready in two years' time.

As for his personal plans, "If my wife — my secret weapon — agrees then we will go elsewhere to take new risks."

(AFP)

Tanzania to send 800 troops to Darfur Force (ST)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (DAR ES SALAAM) — Tanzania will contribute 800 troops to a U.N.-African Union force charged with restoring stability and halting civilian massacres in Sudan's Darfur region, the government said Tuesday.

Defense Minister Juma Kapuya said his troops, to be deployed in March, would refrain from combat while patrolling the region where peacekeepers have already been attacked and killed.

"We have all the blessings of the Sudanese government, who have requested Tanzania to contribute to the hybrid force to help them restore peace and tranquility in the region," he told reporters.

"They will only be mandated to fire back if they come under attack," he added.

Kapuya said a U.N. team was inspecting equipment, while the U.S. was training personnel.

(AFP)

Darfur rebels claim victory after govt "attack" (ST)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Darfur rebels said on Tuesday they had seized a Sudanese army base after repelling an attack by government soldiers.

A spokesman for Sudan's armed forces dismissed the report as "baseless".

If true, it would be the first serious clash reported between insurgents and government troops in Darfur for almost four weeks, and a serious blow to ongoing peace talks.

It would also be in breach of a government ceasefire in the war-torn western region.

The United Resistance Front (URF), a newly formed umbrella group for five rebel factions, said government forces entered territory controlled by its troops in north Darfur at 4 p.m. (1 p.m. British time) on Monday.

"They opened fire. They started the attack on us. They were a force of Sudanese army and Janjaweed (government-aligned militias)," said URF spokesman Hassan Khamis.

Khamis said URF troops fought back and forced the army to retreat to one of its bases in the settlement of Foro, north of the town of Kutum.

"We defeated them and we now have control of the base," said Khamis, adding that the URF had taken a number of army prisoners. He said the rebel group would release details of the number of people killed or injured in the attack later on Tuesday.

Noureddine Mezni, spokesman for African Union peacekeepers who have a base in Kutum, told Reuters he had not received any reports of the incident but would check with officers on the ground.

A spokesman for Sudan's armed forces, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was no truth to the reports.

Khamis said the government troops had been moving into URF-controlled land in response to a belligerent speech from Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir calling for the build up of northern militias.

"This is very dangerous for the peace negotiations," said Khamis. "(Khartoum) has started to re-group the militias. They are moving in Darfur. They are trying to move their army in the area."

The URF was formed out of five Darfur rebel factions currently meeting in south Sudan's capital Juba - two splinter groups from the Sudan Liberation Army, one breakaway group from the Justice and Equality Movement, the NMRD and the United Revolutionary Forces Front.

(Reuters)

Ireland approves use of troops for EU Darfur mission (ST)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (DUBLIN) — Ireland's government agreed Tuesday to provide 400 troops to a European Union force that will guard Darfur refugee camps along Sudan's borders and questioned why Germany and Italy had contributed nothing to the mission.

Defense Minister Willie O'Dea said the full Cabinet approved Ireland's role in the planned 4,300-member force for Darfuris and others displaced by violence in central Africa, but he said the mission couldn't get off the ground unless other countries contribute air power.

The E.U. hopes to start deploying 3,700 soldiers next month in the border regions of Chad and the Central African Republic, with a 600-member reserve based in Europe. France would supply about half the troops.

O'Dea said the E.U. mission needed approximately 15 troop-carrying helicopters and a half-dozen fixed-wing airplanes. He said he was hopeful other E.U. nations would commit to delivering these resources at a meeting Wednesday in Brussels.

Asked whether the Darfur spillover mission could proceed without these aircraft, O'Dea said: "In short - no."

He specified Germany and Italy as two countries with "ample military resources, and so far they haven't made any contribution to this particular mission."

O'Dea spoke out a day after a briefing in Brussels from Lt. Gen. Pat Cash, the Irish general commanding the E.U. force.

"The mission won't be deployed unless the force commander is absolutely certain he has the required air support to make it successful," O'Dea said.

O'Dea rejected suggestions Ireland was in a poor position to criticize others' donations, given it is donating troops without the required equipment needed to function.

"The fact is we don't have any (aircraft) to provide," he said. "Our own helicopters and planes were purchased with a view to use in this country.

"They wouldn't have the range or capacity to be of any use in Chad. Because we're a small country, we can't supply everything on our own."

Ireland emphasized Tuesday its soldiers would be just as focused on deterring conflict involving a half-dozen Chad rebel groups active in the borderlands. It said camps in eastern Chad were currently home to more than 180,000 Chadian refugees as well as 236,000 Darfurians.

(AP)

Sudan puts heat on France, agencies over children row (ST)

(ST), November 20, 2007 (KHARTOUM) — Aid agencies and French interests in Sudan are coming under intense pressure over a plot to abduct 103 Darfur children from neighbouring Chad and transfer them to France.

Three weeks after the aborted attempt by the French charity Zoe's Ark to fly the children out of Africa, Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir has added his voice to a chorus of anger, branding the action as modern-day slavery.

"This we can call a slave market," Beshir said on Saturday. "The operation took place under the eyes and noses of Western charitable organisations and the French government," he said, despite French denials.

"America, Britain and Europe are liars and hypocrites who want our resources and that's why they stole our children to sell in a slave market in Europe."

Aid agencies operating in violence-wracked Darfur are being harassed, and the authorities are using the scandal to tighten the noose around some 12,500 aid workers deployed in the western Sudanese region.

"It would have been a good opportunity for Sudan to underscore that what happened in Chad would have never happened here," lamented Orla Clinton of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Members of French NGOs, and other foreign aid workers, have been summoned by Sudan's humanitarian aid commissioner Mohamed Abdel Rahman Hassabo and warned their actions will be held to account, one of them said.

Hassabo has accused Paris of having furnished visas to the French charity to get the children out of Chad, before the Chadian authorities intervened.

"In March, April, May, the authorities of France gave advance visas and gave permission for the plane to take these children to France," he said earlier this month in Geneva.

The children were merely the advance guard of a vast operation to send 10,000 African children to Europe, Hassabo said.

Zoe's Ark said the children were orphans from Darfur who were to be placed in foster care with families in Europe.

But Chad argued the group did not have permission to take the children out of the country.

While Hassabo claims 17 of the children were Sudanese, aid agencies who have since cared for them said most of the youngsters are Chadian and have at least one living parent.

Nevertheless protests were organised in front of the French embassy in Khartoum.

Ruling National Congress Party officials have also upped the ante, and some of its MPs have even demanded the expulsion of French Ambassador Christine Robichon as well as French charities.

"The question is why these children were being taken to the West? Perhaps to provide organs such as hearts and kidneys to elderly patients," Nafie Ali Nafie, number two of the NCP, told a party news conference on Monday.

Party member Qotbi al-Mahdi branded the action by Zoe's Ark as "proof of the Western plot against Arabs and Muslims."

In an unrelated move earlier this month — but one that clearly reflects the general mood prevailing in the region — Sudan expelled the Canadian head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) from Nyala, south Darfur.

Aid workers are meanwhile determined to strengthen communications channels with the Khartoum government to repair the damage done by Zoe's Ark, and 40 organisations have signed a petition to denounce the charity.

"It is a scandal. A band of nincompoops cannot threaten the assistance we give to 5,000 children in Darfur," said Joel Weiler, of the *Enfant du Monde-Droits de l'Homme* (Children of the World) organisation.

Celine Beaudic of the group "Solidarites" which has 45 expatriates and 300 Sudanese nationals working in southern and western Darfur, is equally keen to distance her organisation from Zoe's Ark.

"We condemn this one hundred percent. What they did was very serious," she said.

(AFP)

Sudan: Five Darfur rebel groups merge

Text of report in English by UN sponsored Radio Miraya FM, Juba on 19 November

BBC Monitoring Service, The five Darfurian groups which took part in Sirte [Libya] talks and in on going meeting in Juba have announced their unification under the name of United Forces for Resistance [UFR].

The spokesman for the new group Hasan Khamis said in his press statement that the Sudan Liberation Movement, Khamis Abubakar faction, the Sudan Liberation Movement leadership led by Adam Bakhit, the Revolutionary United Force, the National Movement for Reform and Development in addition to Justice and Equality Movement collective leadership would be working on the new movement's manifesto in two days' time.

Abd-al-Qasim, who is the official in-charge of unifying the movement confirmed to Miraya FM, that the unification of the third group and the movement presented in Juba had become three movements after the recent merges.

"The other factions are moving very well, the group of Sudan Liberation Movement including more than twelve factions. While the group of Unity Liberation has reached good results through valuable deliberations with the people. But the field commander, who is now in the field, will take the final decision. Now there are three groups and they will be compressed to be one group", said Abd-al-Qasim Ahmad Abd-al-Qasim. Abd-Al-Qasim also thinks that mediators should stay away from the unification process. Pointing out that the mediators might not deal well with cultural characteristics of Darfurians. "I expect that if the mediation committee in particular as United Nations officials who are in Juba or anywhere were not represented people who could narrate an agreement."

Minawi and Dr. Nafie Reviews Progress Of Sirte Negotiations

Tuesday 20 November 2007

Khartoum: Sudan vision Daily

BBC Monitoring Service, Senior Assistant to the President, Arko Minni Minawi and the Assistant to the President, Dr. Nafie Ali Nafie held a meeting at the Republican Palace Sunday to review progress of Sirte negotiations, stances of the movements opposing Sirte, and their demands. In press statements following the meeting, Dr. Nafie said the meeting also reviewed implementation of Darfur Peace Agreement with the emphasis on the security arrangements.

He said they held several meetings before with the technical committee entrusted with the security arrangements where the two sides agreed to conduct a field work and enhance implementation of the security arrangements. The two sides also agreed to hold future meetings to review what has been implemented and what has not yet been implemented as well as what is needed to be implemented. Answering questions by SUNA on whether there was a trend to postpone Sirte negotiations, Dr. Nafie stressed the government's readiness for the negotiations on the 3rd of next December as decided by the UN-AU Joint Mediation Team, expressing hope that the negotiation would be held on the fixed date. However, he added that if the negotiations could not be held on the fixed date for any reason, the government would consider the matter as well.