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Media Monitoring Report

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Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN
Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200

Highlights

Local Arabic and English language press

AU Commissioner Chair urges determent of Bashir indictment

Al-Sudani reports AU Commission Chairman Jean Ping has urged the international community to defer ICC indictment of President Bashir for a year. At a press conference he jointly addressed with EU Commission chair, Ping has urged invoking article 16 to suspend the indictment to give peace a greater chance. Ping has also stressed the importance of negotiations between Darfur movements and Sudan Government.

After indiscriminate firing in Nyala, governor orders search

Akhbar Al Yom reports A girl was killed in Nyala hospital and many other civilians were wounded in indiscriminate firing during Eid.

South Darfur Governor, Ali Mahmoud Mohamed, yesterday declared emergency order to search all houses, shops and suspected areas in Nyala to confiscate unlicensed arms. The emergency order will exempt nobody from searching even if a SAF personnel.

On the helicopter crash, the governor said it was shot by artillery fire and all crew on board have perished. He said according to findings of an investigation team from Khartoum, the helicopter was shot from the ground and blamed Darfur rebel groups for the attack. He said a telephone call was intercepted in which the caller said they shot a helicopter.

Tourists kidnappers leader dismissed from SLM in 2005 – Minnawi

Akhbar Al Yom reports SLM leader and Senior Presidential Assistant Minni Minnawi told the newspaper by phone that the documents and seals shown on TV screens belonged to pre-Haskanita SLM. Minnawi has also revealed that the leader of the group which kidnapped the tourists who was killed by the SAF had been sacked from SLM in 2005, now a member of SLM (unity faction).

Kiir directs return of Muslims property

Sudan News Agency (**SUNA**) FVP Salva Kiir has directed governors of all ten southern states to hand back all Muslim public properties in the south to an Islamic steering committee headed by General Al Tahir Bibor. The First Vice President in his statement to the celebrations organized by the Islamic action steering committee in Juba, urged all citizens to promote unity and peace so that the sons of the north and south should work together as they belong to the same homeland.

Websites/International News Coverage

South Sudan Governors' Forum deliberates on further decentralization

(**Sudan Tribune**)— The 6th Governors' Forum deliberated for a third day on further decentralization of governance. The first two day's were devoted to the need to further decentralize some GoSS administrative and financial functions to the states, and in turn to local government levels, as part of overall public service reform in Southern Sudan in the CPA context.

Government officials at various levels debated the pros and cons of further devolution of powers to the states, with some arguing that the states have not yet acquired adequate capacity to handle such powers. Others supported the move as the best way of ensuring that services reach people grass roots level.

Representatives of international development and humanitarian agencies also made presentations and supported the need for further decentralization and coordination. These included the Multi-Donors Trust Fund/World Bank, USAID, Joint Donors Team (JDT), Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), UNDP and the EU.

ICC push for arrest warrant for Sudan leader

THE HAGUE (AFP) - Prosecutors at the ICC sought to persuade a panel of judges yesterday to grant their request for a genocide arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir. A closed hearing was held at the court's seat in The Hague in the morning for the prosecution to present evidence to back up the request for a warrant.

In a public document, the court said it had convened the hearing because "it (is) necessary to receive additional information from the prosecution in relation to the prosecution's application."

If charges are brought, it would be the first time the ICC has indicted a sitting head of state since it started operating in 2002.

Kenya police detain maritime official over piracy saga

NAIROBI, 1/10/08, (AFP) - Kenyan police on Wednesday questioned a maritime official who claimed that arms aboard a Ukrainian ship seized off Somalia were headed to Sudan and not Kenya. Andrew Mwangura, who runs the Kenya chapter of the Seafarers Assistance Programme, was held at a police station in the Kenyan port city of Mombasa.

"We have been looking for him since yesterday, but we have finally have him. He has been too vocal on the media, we want him to share with us what he knows of these pirates," a police official told AFP. "We just want to question him on a few issues. It appears he knows more on the ship. We want him to tell us about this southern Sudan controversy about the arms," added another official.

Mwangura said 33 Soviet-type T-72 tanks as well as other military supplies aboard the Belize-flagged MV Faina, seized last week off the Somali coastline, had been headed to South Sudan and not Kenya as Nairobi has insisted. Bahrain-based US Fifth Fleet's spokesman later repeated the allegations, which have also been rejected by Ukraine and Sudan.

Russia calls upon UN to condemn terrorist act in Sudan

Interfax, Moscow, 1/10/08 -- The Russian Foreign Ministry has issued a statement about the Mi-8 helicopter fatal crash, which killed the Russian crew. "Moscow strongly condemns this unprecedented act of terrorism, which sits alongside other crimes committed by the rebels, as a result of which civilians and peacekeepers are dying and convoys of humanitarian cargo are destroyed," says the statement by MFA official Andrey Nesterenko. "We proceed from the fact that the UN will give an appropriate assessment of what happened and will take the necessary measures to prevent a recurrence of such inadmissible acts of terror," Nesterenko added.

Darfur leader says Al-Fashir agreement is practical step towards peace

Suna website, Khartoum, 1 October: The official spokesman for the Sudan Liberation Movement (Mani Wing), Al-Tayyib Khamis, described the agreement signed between Vice-

President Ali Uthman Muhammad Taha and Senior Presidential Assistant, Chairman of the Darfur Interim Regional Authority, Mani Arkoi Minnawi in Al-Fashir as a practical and good step that pours in the context of the efforts aimed at achieving peace and improving the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur. He pointed out in a statement to the Sudan News Agency that the agreement stipulations were not out side the context of the Abuja Peace Agreement and that they are a response to the basic demands that have been tabled by his movement and which include full implementation of the agreement including the security arrangements, the civil services through the participation of the Darfurian people in the essential joints of the government and the inclusion of the agreement in the Interim Constitution.

On the articles of the agreement that seek to invigorate the peace process in Darfur, he pointed to the formation of a committee that includes UNAMID, Government of the Sudan and the SLM within the context of the security and political arrangements to go ahead with the implementation of the agreement and that this would be an impetus for the implementation of the agreement.

Khamis said the one-month frame set for the implementation of the agreement would reflect the seriousness of the concerned parties and their adhesion towards peace as war option has failed. Minawi's return to Khartoum and his resumption of work there would depend on progress in implementation of the agreement within the set time frame.

Sudan presidential race may test fragile coalition government

By Edmund Sanders, **Los Angeles Times**, 2/10/08, KHARTOUM, SUDAN -- The U.S.-brokered coalition government that has run this country since 2005 has survived Cabinet reshuffles, oil revenue disputes and even armed skirmishes this year. But can the partnership that ended a 21-year civil war between Muslim Arab northerners and mostly Christian and animist rebels from the south survive a knock-down, drag-out presidential race?

That's what many have been asking since the SPLM, announced that its chairman, Salva Kiir, would seek to unseat President Omar Hassan Ahmed Bashir in next year's election. Under the 2005 peace deal, Bashir and former rebel Kiir, who serves as first vice president, have been jointly running the country. Their parties share Cabinet posts, parliament seats and oil revenue.

But some question whether the fragile government can withstand an electoral fight that pits Bashir, who seized power in a 1989 coup, against Kiir, who took charge of the SPLM in 2005 after the death of Chairman John Garang in a helicopter crash.

"People that break up make bitter enemies," said Hassan Turabi, a top Islamist opposition leader who predicted a hard-fought campaign.

Late last year, southern government ministers staged a walkout over allegations that Bashir was failing to live up to the treaty. Northern and southern armies clashed briefly this spring over who would control the oil-rich city of Abyei, about 500 miles southwest of Khartoum, the capital.

Differences in political agenda, values and style -- which the men once downplayed for the sake of their partnership -- are coming into focus.

The election promises not only to select the next leader of Africa's largest country, but it also could play a key role in determining whether Sudan breaks apart. In 2011, southerners will vote on secession, and their decision will depend partly on who wins the presidency.

There's still a chance that the showdown will never take place. Immediately after the SPLM's

political bureau announced in August that Kiir would run, other top officials of the party insisted that a final decision had not been made. The statements appeared to reveal internal divisions. Kiir has refused to clarify, an indication of what some say is his reluctance to seek the job. He declined to be interviewed for this article.

Leaders in Bashir's National Congress Party are accusing the SPLM of disloyalty and political gamesmanship. They note that the statement about Kiir's presidential bid came shortly after an ICC prosecutor announced a genocide case against Bashir over the Darfur conflict in western Sudan. "The timing was embarrassing to us, like stabbing someone in the back," said Mohamed Ahmed Salim, a former judge who is registrar of political parties.

As the election approaches, he said, the SPLM appears to be exerting greater independence and openly criticizing Bashir's leadership. This summer, a top SPLM leader called Sudan a "failed and corrupt state." In September, the foreign minister, also with the SPLM, questioned Bashir's "seriousness" about resolving the situation in Darfur, where more than 200,000 people are believed to have died and 2.5 million have been left homeless since fighting broke out five years ago between rebels and the government.

SPLM leaders say the decision to run against Bashir presents them with tough choices. Next year's poll, whose date has not been set, will also elect a president for the autonomous southern region. Kiir is president of southern Sudan, but election rules prevent him from running for both jobs. If Kiir runs in the national race and loses, he could find himself out of power. Some believe that Kiir's rivals are pushing him to run so they can seize control in the south. On the other hand, a Kiir victory could complicate the 2011 referendum. "How can he then support the separation of the south while leading the country?" said Andrew Natsios, a former U.S. envoy to Sudan.

Kiir's chances of winning are unclear. SPLM strategists are betting that he can unite the country's marginalized populations, including those in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains and eastern Sudan. But even some SPLM leaders question whether voters in Muslim-dominated northern Sudan are ready for a southern Christian as president.

"If Salva runs, he will fail in the north and lose his position in the south," said Ghazi Suleiman, an SPLM representative in parliament. "And the government of national unity will crash." Suleiman said he preferred a "soft landing" in which Bashir continues as president until 2011.

To many, it's surprising that the unity government has lasted this long. For Kiir, it has meant that he has had to pick his battles and sometimes stand beside Bashir despite animosity between them. He has rarely publicly criticized Bashir's handling of Darfur. When rebels attacked near Khartoum in May, Kiir backed Bashir. After the genocide case was announced, Kiir echoed Bashir's call for a delay in issuing an arrest warrant.

A run for president would draw out the men's differences, experts say, and Kiir would need to answer sticky questions that he has avoided, including whether he believes that the government committed genocide in Darfur by backing militias blamed for many of the deaths.

Bashir supporters, who insist that the death toll in Darfur has been wildly exaggerated, warn against using the genocide prosecution in a political campaign, noting that the case has stirred anti-Western sentiments in Sudan and other African nations, where the court is viewed as a tool of the United States. "Using the ICC might help them win votes in the south, but it will backfire in the north," said Salim, the political registrar.

Despite their bumpy history, Bashir and Kiir might surprise everyone with a last-minute deal to

run on a single slate, some strategists say. Running as a team is the only way to ensure both remain in power. "They'll need to remain partners," said University of Khartoum political analyst Adlan Hardallu, "for their own sake."

Hundreds of Congolese flee attacks by notorious rebels – UN refugee agency

1 October - About 1,200 Congolese have sought shelter in southern Sudan in recent days to escape brutal attacks by members of the notorious LRA that have included the abduction of children and the torching of homes, the United Nations refugee agency reported today.

The Congolese arrived on foot in the Sudanese villages of Gangura and Sakure after a four-day journey, telling local authorities and aid agencies about savage attacks on six separate villages in the DRC, according to UNHCR.

The refugees said they fled to Sudan because the LRA, which has waged war against Ugandan Government forces for two decades, sometimes from bases in remote areas of the north-eastern DRC, had blocked all other routes out of the region.

"From what we have learned in speaking to the refugees, the attacks were ferocious and unremitting," said Geoff Wordley, assistant representative for UNHCR operations in southern Sudan, adding there are unconfirmed reports of bodies seen floating in local rivers. "Many refugees being treated in the MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières] clinic showed wounds from machetes and bullets."

An emergency assessment team from UNHCR visited Gangura on Saturday, where MSF (Spain) runs a village clinic and has been treating some of the wounded refugees. Most of the arrivals are sleeping in the open at a derelict school, without bedding, cooking utensils or other basic household items, and subsisting on forest fruit.

UNHCR, which is sending a team to the area to support relief efforts, said in a statement that it feared the humanitarian situation could soon worsen, given the poor living conditions, the diminishing stocks of food and the proximity of the refugees to the volatile border.

The agency said it was working closely with WFP and UNICEF to provide emergency aid to the beleaguered local population. Last month, UNICEF reported that LRA fighters had conducted a series of attacks on villages in DRC's Orientale province and kidnapped an estimated 90 children from their schools.

Today, in a joint statement with Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF urged the immediate and unconditional release of the abducted pupils. "There are documented cases where children kidnapped by groups in this region have been forced to fight as child soldiers, and where young girls have been raped and used as sex slaves," the statement said.

Colonial clue to the rise of HIV

(BBC) The arrival of colonial cities in sub-Saharan Africa at the dawn of the 20th Century may have sparked the spread of HIV. US experts analyzed one of the earliest samples of the virus ever found, in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1959. The study, published in the journal Nature, suggests the virus may have crossed from apes to humans between 1884 and 1924. They believe newly-built cities may have allowed the virus to thrive.

AIDS, the illness caused by HIV, was first reported by doctors in 1981, but the virus had been around for many decades before that. HIV is not a single virus - there are a number of different strains and subtypes of strains, some sharing the same "founder event" in history, in which a

single human was infected.

Scientists believe that these "founder events" may have involved eating monkeys infected with a similar virus. Research published last year found the viral ancestor of a subtype of HIV responsible for most modern cases in the US and Europe in a blood sample taken in Leopoldville, the capital of Belgian Congo - now Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Now the same team, from the University of Arizona at Tucson, has found another sample containing a different subtype in a 1960 sample from a different patient in the same city. By analysing the genetic differences between the two viruses, and calculating the amount of time these differences would take to evolve, they now say that the two probably have a common ancestor dating from at least 50 years earlier.

Dr Michael Worobey, who led the research, said: "Now, for the first time, we have been able to compare two relatively ancient HIV strains. That helped us to calibrate how quickly the virus evolved and make some really robust inferences about when it crossed into humans, how the epidemic grew from that time, and what factors allowed the virus to enter and become a successful human pathogen."

HIV was and remains a "relatively poorly transmitted" virus, he said, so the key to the success of the virus was possibly the development of cities such as Leopoldville in the early 1900s. The large numbers of people living in close proximity would have allowed more opportunity for new infections. "I think the picture that has emerged here, is that changes the human population experienced may have opened to the door to the spread of HIV," he said.

Professor Paul Clark, a researcher into evolutionary history at the University of Edinburgh, said that while the finding was mainly of "historical interest", it might provide more clues about how the virus changed over time. He suggested that it was likely that all of the early cases of "group M" HIV-1 - the strain causing 19 out of 20 modern infections - happened in the Leopoldville area. He said: "We can now paint a remarkably detailed picture of the time and place of origin of HIV-1 group M viruses and their early diversification, and thus of the prehistory of the AIDS pandemic."

ACP Foreign Ministers renew support for Bashir over ICC move

(Sudan Tribune)— Foreign Ministers of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP Group) renewed today their support for the Sudanese President, Omer Bashir, against ICC indictment.

In a meeting held in the capital of Ghana, Accra, where the ACP summit starts today, the foreign ministers of the 79 state members reiterated their position against efforts to sue the Sudanese President over Darfur crimes.

Yesterday's preparatory meeting called on the ICC to write off the lawsuit against Al-Bashir. It also urged to allow political and diplomatic efforts a chance to find a just and sustainable solution to the conflict in Darfur.

President Bashir arrived in Accra yesterday and He was received by his Ghanaian counterpart John Kufuor

COMMENTARIES/LINKS

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By Mahmoud A. Suleiman, **Sudan Tribune**, 30/09/2008.

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Darfur: Will the World trust the untrustworthy?

By Elrayah Hassan Khalifa, **SudanTribune.com.**, 1/10/2008.

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