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Highlights

Local Arabic and English language press

The presidency to issue decree next week on elections commission members

Al-Ayyam reported that the NCP leader Ibrahim Gandoor said the presidency would issue a decree next week to appoint members of the elections commission. He played down threats by some political parties to boycott elections.

The political parties said they were not consulted on selection of the commission members so they have reservations on integrity and impartiality of the members to run the elections process.

Two CPA partners negotiate nominations of Abyei administration membership

Sudan Media Centre (SMC) stated that the two CPA partners engaged in intensive consultations on nominations of Abyei interim administration members.

Meanwhile Abyei chief administrator Arop Moyak left yesterday to Juba for more consultations on the issue. Deputy Chairman of Abyei administration Rahama Abdel Rahman Al Nur said they would meet today until late hours of the night to complete nominations of the five members from both side to fill vacancies of Abyei administration council.

Al Nur says situation in Abyei has started to return to normal, encouraging considerable numbers of citizens to return home.

SPLM call for cooperation with the ICC does not mean supporting handing over of suspects

Al-Sahafa reported that the Foreign Minister Deng Alor has ruled out rapprochement between Khartoum and Washington before the new US Administration in place and denied any demand from circles to overthrow the existing government and remove President Bashir from power adding that as partners they would not accept that.

“The demand of foreign envoys who visited Khartoum was cooperation with ICC and resolution of Darfur. We have not heard demands for change of government and removal of Bashir,” he said. Alor said the government was left with only one month to convince friends in the SC to block arrest warrant for Bashir. He said SPLM’s call for cooperation with ICC does not mean it is asking for handing over the suspects.

SPLM says its members will not resume work until Darfur problem is resolved

Al-Watan carried a report stating that SPLM announced that the decision to suspend the participation of its ministers in the Darfur States was taken by Salva Kiir and the Ministers would not go back to work until Darfur problem is addressed or a clear roadmap is worked out for solution.

That was revealed to Al-Watan newspaper by the SPLM minister of agriculture in South Darfur State Omer Abdul Rahman whose participation is also suspended.

Misseriya & Rizagat to hold reconciliation conference on September 10

Sudan Media Centre (SMC) reported that Missareiya and Rizagat tribes have agreed for

holding a reconciliation conference on 10th of the current month under the auspices of house speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al Tahir.

Reliable sources told SMC that dignitaries of the two tribes in addition to commissioners of Abyei and Bahr Al Arab localities met today at Abu Jabra of south Kordofan and recommended the importance of holding the conference on the proposed schedule.

Websites/International News Coverage

Darfur rebels support Salva Kiir's presidency

(The Daily Monitor) Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), a rebel force fighting Field Marshal Omar Bashir's government, has said they will support Salva Kiir, in the forthcoming presidential polls.

The SLM head of wealth sharing commission, Mr Abaker Mohamed Abuelbasha, said at a press conference in Kampala on Monday, Mr Kiir, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) leader, has gained experience to run Sudan. Mr Abuelbasha is an adviser to the SLM rebel chief, Mr Minni Minawi

"SPLM is our strategic ally. We are also in the same boat of political vision of new Sudan," Mr Abuelbasha, who is on a fact-finding mission in Uganda said. "We would like to see Salva Kiir as president of Sudan through an election," he added.

Sudan's elections, scheduled to take place by July 2009, are a major milestone of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which Gen. Bashir's government signed with SPLM. Mr Kiir, the Southern Sudanese leader, was sworn in as Sudan's first vice president in Khartoum, on August 11, 2005.

Mr Abuelbasha supported the International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment against Gen. Bashir saying he deserved it for atrocities he allegedly committed in Darfur, where an estimated 300,000 people are reported to have died and over two million displaced.

The rebel leader condemned the killing of the Ugandan police officer, Julius Osega, in July while on a peace keeping mission in Darfur. Mr Abuelbasha said, they (rebels) were in Uganda because Uganda has publicly declared it supports the Darfur rebel political cause. "We feel the people of Uganda and the government is supporting us politically," he said.

President Museveni during the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Kampala in June faulted international inaction on Darfur. "It is hypocritical to concentrate on the Palestine crisis and pay little attention on the African conflicts involving OIC member states like in Darfur," he said.

The conflict in Darfur broke out when ethnic minority rebels took up arms against Khartoum and state-backed Arab militias often called Janjaweed, fighting for resources and power in one of the most remote and deprived places on earth.

Sudan foreign minister says ruling NCP not serious about Darfur peace

(Sudan Tribune) – The Sudanese foreign minister Deng Alor launched an unprecedented attack on the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) accusing it of not being serious about Darfur peace.

Alor told the independent Al-Sahafa newspaper in an interview to be published in the coming days that resolving the Darfur conflict "is the key to settling all the crises in the country". "The conflict [Darfur] will not be resolved through military means and parties must sit at the negotiating table" he said.

Alor also said that the NCP is not handling the Darfur crisis and stressed that grievances of Darfuris can “easily” be addressed paving the way for peace in the war ravaged region.

The statements by the Alor, who is also a key figure in the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM), may signal his deep frustration with the NCP strategy on resolving the Darfur crisis. Last week, Alor criticized a raid by Sudanese soldiers and security officers on the Kalma refugee camp in South Darfur that killed at least 30 people and injured many more. “The Kalma camp events will drown the country into unnecessary problems” Alor was quoted by the daily independent Al-Ahdath reporter.

The news piece that contained Alor’s statements was not cleared for publication by Sudanese security.

“We are in no need of new accusations by the international community at this time and we are not in a position to enter into internal problems more than what we already have....we need a consensus to solve our problems” the Sudanese foreign minister said.

In the Al-Sahafa interview, Alor warned that time is running out and that the government must bolster its efforts to defuse the ICC crisis before mid-October when the judges are most expected to make a decision.

The Sudanese top diplomat also downplayed chances of a Chinese intervention to protect Al-Bashir from indictment. “We [government] should not place much hope on things that will not happen” he said before adding that China will not sacrifice its “interests” with the West for Sudan’s sake.

Alor said that options for Sudan are very limited. “There is no choice before the NCP but to deal with the ICC. Demonstrations and protests will not solve this”, he said.

He also revealed that some within the NCP favor dealing with the ICC but he did not elaborate. The SPLM figure called for a democratic government in Sudan to replace the “hybrid” NCP-SPLM one.

Alor’s blunt remarks will likely infuriate the NCP officials who look at him with suspicion and consider him a dissenting voice within the government. Al-Bashir has been reluctant to endorse Alor’s appointment as a foreign minister but bent down to pressure by the SPLM.

France reiterates keenness to have good relations with Sudan

(Sudan Tribune) — A French Presidential advisor reiterated, during a two-day visit to Khartoum that Paris remains keen to have good relations with the Sudanese government and to provide the necessary help to end Darfur crisis.

Bruno Joubert, French Presidential Advisor for African Affairs met with the Vice President Ali Osman Taha, Presidential Assistant Nafi Ali Nafi, Foreign Minister Deng Alor, Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail and the chief of security and intelligence services Salah Abdallah Gosh.

Joubert made it clear that Khartoum has to act seriously to end the five year conflict and to cooperate with the international organisations and institutions including the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Last June, foreign minister Deng Alor and presidential advisor, Mustafa Osman Ismail were in Paris to discuss bilateral relations after accusations that France provided logistical support for a Darfur rebel movement to carry out a raid on Khartoum last May. At that time, Alor also asked Paris to help in the resolution of Darfur crisis and to ease tension with the neighbouring Chad.

During a tour in Darfur in July, President Bashir accused France of obstructing peace efforts in Darfur by allowing SLM leader Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur remain in Paris.

Sudan: Press Council closes two English-Language dailies indefinitely

Reporters sans Frontières (Paris) - 3 September 2008: Reporters without Borders condemns a decision by the National Press and Publications Council (NPPC) on 1 September to suspend two privately-owned English-language national dailies based in the south of the country, The Citizen and Sudan Tribune, for an indefinite period.

"The closure of these two southern-based dailies is the harshest measure taken so far in the wave of censorship launched by the government at the start of the year," Reporters Without Borders said. "Depriving the semi-autonomous south of its means of expression will just fuel the tension between the south and Khartoum. The NPPC should be more reasonable and rescind this decision."

In a letter to the Sudan Tribune on 1 September, the NPPC said it was closing the newspaper for "administrative" reasons. The previous day, the security forces went to the place where the latest issue of The Citizen was about to be printed and told employees its publication was forbidden.

The NPPC claims that, by choosing to be based in Juba, the capital of the semi-autonomous south, the editors of the two newspapers are violating their licences, which require them to be in Khartoum.

Sudan Tribune editor and owner William Ezekiel told Reporters Without Borders the NPPC also accuses his newspaper of obstructing the 2005 peace agreement that ended the civil war between the north and the south. He said the closure was "unacceptable" and "serves the interests of the ruling party" in Khartoum.

The closures came after several months of what the southern media describe as a government-orchestrated campaign of intimidation. Ezekiel said his newspaper had not been able to appear for nearly 20 days as the authorities had seized all the copies from its printing presses in Khartoum on 17 occasions.

Censorship was officially lifted in Sudan in July 2005, after the peace accord was signed with the rebels of the southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement. The government restored censorship for the privately-owned media on 6 February of this year after they referred several times to Khartoum's support of a Chadian rebel offensive against N'Djamena.

One refugee killed in Darfur after riot over reduced food rations

(Sudan Tribune) — UNHCR said today that one refugee was killed during a riot in a Darfur refugee camp over reduced food rations. According to UNHCR, a riot took place in Um Shalaya camp, 70 km southeast of El Geneina, a camp that hosts mainly Chadian refugees.

The riot broke out around 10:00 AM Tuesday, September 2, when hundreds of stick-bearing and shouting women angrily demonstrated against a temporary food reduction due to logistical problems.

Following an assault on a policeman, the police fired warning shots in the air. A 26-year-old male refugee was killed and six other persons, including three policemen were injured.

The reduction in the amount of sorghum, a staple that is widely consumed in both Chad and Sudan, was due to the inability to safely transport food from El Geneina to Um Shalaya camp, the UNHCR said.

There are approximately 6,600 refugees in Um Shalaya where new asylum seekers trickle in every month after fleeing violence in their home areas in eastern Chad. In Darfur, there are an estimated 50,000 mostly Chadian refugees who are mainly settled along the border areas.

No peacekeepers deployed near Darfur camp — IDPs

(Sudan Tribune) — Darfur IDPs at Kalma camp in South Darfur said there are no peacekeepers deployed near the camps to protect civilians and prevent government troops from attacking them again.

Yesterday, UNAMID said that it decided to deploy, on a permanent basis, a joint force of the UNAMID Military and Police, following fears that the camp could be once again raided by the government troops.

However, Darfur IDPs spokesperson, Hussein Abu Sharati said they didn't notice any peacekeepers deployed near the camp where he lives. He further said they had been told by the deputy head of the hybrid operation that UNAMID could be able to protect them within some months.

UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative, Henry Anyidoho, on Tuesday 3 September 2008, visited the camp in order to assess the situation there after the attack.

Abu Sharati who attended the meeting said Anyidoho told them that peacekeepers currently based in EL-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, would be in Darfur to protect them in the near future."

The head of the UNAMID, Rodolphe Adada, on Monday protested officially against the excessive use of force inside Kalma Internally Displaced People (IDP) on August 25. Adada emphasized that UNAMID mandate includes the protection of civilians in the troubled region of Darfur.

Abu Sharati said Kalma IDPs delegates who took part the meeting with the deputy head of UNAMID were very frustrated by the Anyidoho speech who told them they came to investigate the 25 August attack and its causes. "We rejected to talk with them about the deadly raid by the Sudanese troops on August 25 because they were there and know all what happened there." Kalma delegates told the UNAMID deputy chief "they need a protection force and not a peacekeeping force because there is no peace to keep."

A total of 32 camp residents, including seven children as young as 11, were killed after armed Sudanese forces entered Kalma on Monday August 25.

Arabic gum company executives suspended over corruption probe

(Sudan Tribune) – The board of directors for the Gum Arabic Company in Sudan suspended two of its executives while they undergo investigations for corruption charges.

A committee established recently to audit the financial standing of the company recommended

probing the Chief Operating Officer (COO) Professor Hassan Abdel-Nour and his deputy Mutwakil Bakri.

State minister of commerce Al-Sameeh Al-Nour told the daily Al-Sudani that the company's liabilities on the balance sheet add up to \$63 million (three times its paid in capital). Al-Nour said that the company's weak balance sheet threatens its existence but did not specify any steps that will be taken to rectify the situation. He added that suspension of the two executives had been agreed to unanimously by the board of directors. He denied that any "personal factors" were involved in the decision taken.

The Sudanese official said that the committee found that company's assets such as lands for example were sold at \$28,000 a square foot which he described as an "astronomical" price.

The Board of Directors will meet Thursday to review the situation. The chairman is presidential adviser Mansour Khalid who is also an adviser to the chief of Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) Salva Kiir. Khalid has been criticized by some within the company for constant skipping on the board's meetings.

The Gum Arabic Company, Ltd., holder of the monopoly position for the export of crude Gum Arabic from the Sudan was founded in 1969. The Sudanese gum is produced in Kordofan region 49.3%, Kassala region 24.4%, Darfur region 23.4 % and White and Blue Nile region 2.9%. The U.S. buys about one-fourth of Sudan's annual production of the commodity. Washington excluded the company from its comprehensive sanctions imposed since 1997.