



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN
UNMIS
UNMIS Media Monitoring Report
Roundup of the press, weekending 8th – 9th September 2006
(By Public Information Office)

NOTE: Reproduction here does not mean that the UNMIS PIO can vouch for the accuracy or veracity of the contents, nor does this report reflect the views of the United Nations Mission in Sudan. Furthermore, international copyright exists on some materials and this summary should not be disseminated beyond the intended list of recipients.

IN THE NEWS TODAY:

- **United Nations**
 - Authorities arrest 2 UNMIS officers
 - UNHCR chief worried over situation in Darfur
- **The AU-UN transition debate**
 - President Bashir on tour of eastern Sudan
 - V-P Taha says resolution 1706 does not compel government to accept a un Darfur force
 - Sudan says open for talks after Annan Darfur warning
 - Popular Congress Party supports UNSCR 1706
- **GoNU**
 - Anti-government protests in Omdurman over demos
 - Return of the Censor
 - 6 political parties in the country are illegal, says registrar
 - Sudan agrees to release US journalist
- **Other Developments:**
 - Reactions continue to the assassination of AlWifaq Editor-in-Chief
- **Editorials and Commentaries:**
 - Return of the Censor
 - Murder of a journalist

HIGHLIGHTS:

United Nations

Authorities arrest 2 UNMIS officers

AlSahafa reports that authorities arrested last Wednesday 2 UNMIS officers (a Scottish national and a national of the UK of Palestinian origin) when they were carrying out interviews and taking snaps during last week's demonstrations against the price rises.

The two were taken to a police station in Khartoum and the police has sent a request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take steps to strip them of immunity ahead of instituting legal measures against them.

UNHCR chief worried over situation in Darfur

(*AP/ST* – 8th Sept. **Geneva**) Worsening violence in Sudan's conflict-ravaged region of Darfur is threatening the entire region, the U.N. refugee chief said Friday, warning that Sudanese troops could be preparing for a major military offensive that would lead to many more people being uprooted from their homes.

Guterres, citing the poor security situation in Darfur and the uncertainty over whether a U.N. peacekeeping force will be deployed to the region, said, "A bad situation is worsening by the day."

Guterres' statement noted the danger of a government offensive that could lead to the displacement of even more people in Darfur, and said the violence, which has increased since a May peace deal signed by the government and the region's largest rebel group, threatened other countries nearby.

In neighbouring Chad, where UNHCR camps house more than 200,000 Darfur refugees, cross-border violence has at times been so bad that it has sent some Chadians fleeing into Darfur, he noted. He said the Central African Republic, southwest of Sudan, also was threatened with increased instability by the Darfur conflict.

"Urgent international action is needed to put pressure on the parties to the conflict and to convince everyone involved on the ground to let humanitarian agencies safely carry out their work," he said. "Lives depend on it. If things don't improve, we're heading for a major catastrophe."

UNHCR spokesman Ron Redmond told reporters that there recently have been "disturbing reports" of rapes and killings in Darfur. He added that the insecurity as well as ongoing attacks on U.N. and other aid workers was threatening the agency's ability to act as "the international eyes and ears on the ground."

Jose Diaz, spokesman for U.N. human rights chief Louise Arbour, added that civilians living particularly in Darfur's rebel-controlled areas continue to be exposed to abuses, "either as a result of indiscriminate attacks or as a result of getting in the middle of clashes between warring parties."

He said U.N. monitors have documented a number of attacks on villages, such as a series of rebel incursions in the south Darfur locality of Buram he described as "the most serious since

the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement." Reports indicate that 38 people were killed and 23 injured in the attacks on 10 Buram villages Aug. 28-31, Diaz said.

On Wednesday, the New York-based rights group Human Rights Watch said the Sudanese government was indiscriminately bombing civilian-occupied villages in Darfur.

It said sources report flight crews rolling bombs out the back ramps of aircraft, a means of targeting rebels that was often practiced by government forces in its separate 21-year civil war with rebels in southern Sudan.

The AU-UN transition debate

President Bashir on tour of eastern Sudan

Reported in many local newspapers last Friday [8th September] is the story on President Bashir's visit to Hameshkhoreib where he addressed a rally and reiterated his rejection to a United Nations force deployment to Darfur.

The president is quoted in *AlRai AlAam* of the same date as saying that the government will not hand over to Bush or Blair the very same people they came to liberate.

The president urged the US to "read Sudan's history" so that it does not face the same fate as the colonial British forces defeated by Sudanese fighters.

He also wondered what the JEM had in common with eastern Sudan and described it as a proxy for foreign parties.

V-P Taha says resolution 1706 does not compel government to accept a un Darfur force

Vice-President Taha, in an interview in *AlJazeera*, said that UNSCR 1706 does not force the Sudan government to accept a United Nations force for Darfur, says the lead story of *Alintibaha* of 9th September. He said that there is an improvement in the security situation on the ground and the deployment of a United Nations force is not justified.

He said that the Security Council resolution is not based on the facts but at least grants the government the right to decide and government will adhere to its right to reject or accept the resolution.

Of the differences in view over the issue, the V-P said everyone is free to say what he wishes on the issue but the government is committed to respecting the decision of the people and of the legislative and executive bodies of government.

Of the future of the African Union force in Darfur after September 30th, the Vice-President pointed out that the government has requested the African Union to clarify its view on the issue and should it choose to withdraw then the government will take over peacekeeping responsibilities in Darfur; but the African Union is also free to extend its mandate should it so wish.

Sudan says open for talks after Annan Darfur warning

On the issue of a possible African Union-United Nations transition in Darfur, the *AFP* [sourced from *SudanTribune.com*, 9th Sept.] quotes Sudanese foreign minister spokesperson

Jamal Mohamed Ibrahim as saying that Sudan remains open to talks with the international community over the situation in Darfur and that the government has not asked the African Union to withdraw its forces. This comes after UN chief Kofi Annan warned earlier that Sudan's leaders could be held to account over the rejection of UN peacekeepers for Darfur.

The spokesperson described as unjustified comments by the UN secretary general in New York on Friday about a possible deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Darfur.

He also assured that there will be no securities vacuum even should the African Union decide to leave Darfur as the Sudanese government has its own plan to ensure safety in the area.

The foreign ministry spokesperson further said that the government is waiting for the arrival of an African Union delegation to Khartoum before the meeting of the foreign ministers envisaged in New York on September 18 to discuss their mission.

Elsewhere, *Rai AlShaab* [8th Sept.] quoting the CNN, reports that the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amru Musa, told a press conference in the wake of the meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers held in Cairo that the Arab League is not opposed to the Security Council resolution on Darfur.

Earlier media reports, also quoted in an earlier edition of the MMR [7th September], quoted Musa as telling the press in Cairo at a joint press conference with the Bahraini foreign minister that the Arab League supports Sudan's plans to improve security in Darfur but during the press conference mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Secretary-General of the Arab League confirmed that the League does not oppose the Security Council resolution on Darfur but is seeking means for a “smart implementation” of the resolution as to guarantee stability in the region through cooperation between Sudan and the international community.

But state minister for foreign affairs, Ali Ahmed Karti, is quoted in the *Sudan Tribune* daily as telling the press in Cairo where he was attending a meeting of Arab foreign ministers that Sudan has managed to cultivate an Arab consensus in support of its plans for Darfur.

AlRai AlAam meanwhile reports [8th September] that the US representative to the Security Council said that the Security Council is still waiting for the Sudan government's acceptance and understanding to a United Nations troop for Darfur even it be a “silent” acceptance.

Earlier reports from news agencies that the US says it believes the African Union will remain in Darfur beyond the 30th September date have been viewed as a welcome change from its insistence on a deployment of United Nations troops in Darfur.

Popular Congress Party supports UNSCR 1706

Rai AlShaab daily carries the story of a statement issued by the opposition Popular Congress Party of Dr. Turabi expressing support for the deployment of a United Nations force for Darfur.

The statement issued by the party's “Secretariat for Darfur” said that the party backs its leadership in supporting a deployment of a United Nations force to Darfur due to the insecurity in the region.

GoNU

Anti-government protests in Omdurman over demos

Thousands of Umma Party loyalists took to the streets of Omdurman after Friday prayers and went round some parts of Omdurman chanting anti-government and pro-Umma slogans, reports *AlAyaam*.

The Umma party leader's daughter, Mariam Sadiq el-Mahdi was also released by order from President Bashir citing "humanitarian" reasons. News of her release was widely reported by the local press.

The Umma activist who, alongside others, was dished a 2-months sentence by the courts for participating in last Wednesday's demonstrations, told issued statements following her release vowing to continue to struggle for the rights of the people.

Return of the Censor

AlAyaam reports that censorship returned to the newsroom last Thursday morning after an absence of almost a year.

The paper says security officers read each newspaper page by page before circulation and censored off those articles critical of the government handling of the demonstrations the previous day.

Atim Garang, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly [SPLM ticket], has criticized the practice and described it as unconstitutional.

He vowed the issue will feature prominently in parliament when it comes out of recess in November.

6 political parties in the country are illegal, says registrar

The Registrar of Political Parties and Organisations has branded as illegal the National Umma Party, the SPLM, the DUP [*elMirghani faction*], the Baaathist Party, the Sudan Communist Party and the Sudan Liberation Movement, *AlSahafa* reports.

He pointed out that these political forces are not registered at the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties and Organisations but the government is showing leniency with them and deals with them as though they are duly registered parties.

As a follow up comment to the above story which appears on Friday's edition of *AlSahafa*, the Registrar of Political Parties and Organisations said [*as reported by the Saturday edition of the same paper*] that the statement he made earlier was not meant to downplay in any way the role of the six parties he mentioned. He said that he only meant to say that these parties have not gone through the formal processes of registration.

Sudan agrees to release US journalist

Sudan's president agreed to release American journalist Paul Salopek after meeting with New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, reports the *AP*.

Richardson said Friday he will pick up the Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for the Chicago Tribune, his Chadian driver and his interpreter in the war-torn Darfur region on Saturday.

"I was surprised and overwhelmed that it would happen so soon," Richardson told The Associated Press in telephone interview. "I made a strong pitch on humanitarian grounds and after 30 minutes of my pitch, he agreed to the release."

The Sudanese government confirmed the release without additional comment.

Other Developments:

Reactions continue to the assassination of *AlWifaq* Editor-in-Chief

All newspapers continue to carry throughout the weekend extensive follow up stories on the assassination of the *AlWifaq* Editor-in-Chief with some columnists actually putting the blame on the government security apparatus.

Most gave detailed accounts of the burial that took place last Friday and of the personalities that attended.

AlWan reports that a joint team from the CID, the police and the National Security Organ has been formed to investigate on the assassination of the *AlWifaq* editor-in-chief.

The paper says that sources report that the crime was masterminded by some foreign parties but may have been executed by Sudanese.

AlRai AlAam agrees there was a foreign mastermind and adds that the joint investigations team headed by Mjr. Gen. Izzaldeen Sid-Ahmed has seized a number of suspect vehicles and that investigations have picked up pace.

Meanwhile the New Forces' Movement Front says government knows full well the identity of the murderers but is covering for them because it may be involved in one way or other.

A student's body that goes by the name of the "Students' Resistance Front" issued a statement on Friday condemning the murder and accusing security of not doing enough to pursue the culprits, writes *Rai AlShaab*.

Most have called for a quick and transparent investigation into the murder and for the assassins to be brought to book.

Editorials and Commentaries:

Return of the Censor

Under this heading, the editorial article in the *Rai AlShaab* of 8th September claims that the Censor has returned.

The paper says authorities came into its offices in the early hours of last Thursday and censored out some front-page and inner page articles – most of which carried the story of the clampdown on the demonstrations of last Wednesday.

The paper goes on to say that all the other newspapers suffered the same fate that day.

The editorial draws a comparison between the murderers of the *AlWifaq* editor-in-chief and the censor and points out that they are not different because both could not tolerate a different point of view.

It concludes by wondering whether this marks a departure from the process of the transition to democracy.

Murder of a journalist

Many columnists on Friday wrote on the assassination of their colleague and editorials have in one way or other highlighted the issue during the weekend.

AlFateh Abbas of *AlSudani* edits in the Friday edition of the paper a quarter-page compilation of what the Arab media around the world has said about the murder of the *AlWifaq* editor-in-chief. He quotes Lond-based *AlQuds AlArabi* as saying “Manslaughter - Zarqawi style [[reference to the prominent *AlQaeda* member]”

Osman Mirghani also of *AlSudani* talks of the murder and wonders whether the government still believes that it can enforce security through its security apparatus alone. He points out that the murderers of the late Editor-in-Chief of the *AlWifaq* daily must have planned well before hand to know that their target would walk out with them without struggle and to murder him and leave him in a semi-remote area to be found b the authorities and al this without leaving a single trace behind.

He said that this sets a precedence to others who may seek to take the law in their own hands because of the feeling that government can not right the wrongs committed against them.

He pointed out that government instead uses teargas to disperse a peaceful demonstration and later claim the roads secure. This only proves that government respects the strong; those who can commandeer a tank, pick up a Kalashnikov rifle or use a knife to demand his rights will receive the respect proportionate to the weapon used and may even be granted a share in power and wealth while those who just take to the streets in protest will only receive batons raining on their heads.