



UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN
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UNMIS Media Monitoring Report, 17th April, 2006
(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

UN/ AMIS-UN Transition

UN reports of large numbers of refugees crossing into Darfur

(*AlRai AlAam* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) The UNHCR reports that those fleeing the recent clashes in Chad and crossing over to Habeela, Gini and Tundus in Darfur have exceeded 15,000.

UNMIS acting Spokesperson Mr. Khalid al-Hitti told *AlRai AlAam* that the UN will do everything possible to provide emergency assistance to ease the plight of these people.

On the other hand, Human Rights Watch says the Security Council is responsible for the protection of the returnee refugees from Chad and should move fast to put an end to their plight.

HRW renewed accusations to the Sudan government of dragging its feet in reaching a peaceful solution to put an end to the problems of Darfur and called upon the Sudan government to protect these returnees and refugees.

Cambodian troops honoured ahead of mine-clearing mission in Sudan

(*AP/ST* – 15th Apr. **Phnom Penh, Cambodia**) Buddhist monks sprinkled holy water and flower petals on a team of soldiers headed Saturday to the war-torn African nation of Sudan to participate in Cambodia's first U.N.-peacekeeping mission.

The team of 109 soldiers was to fly out aboard a U.N. plane to join an advance group of 26 soldiers already in place for what Cambodian officials have hailed as a historic event for the Southeast Asian country.

The 135 soldiers will focus on mine-clearing missions.

"This is an opportunity to work hard, to build up your honour, dignity and make a great achievement for the whole of humanity," Defence Minister Tea Banh said during a ceremony at the Phnom Penh military airport.

"Cambodian history will not forget your contribution" the minister said, surrounded by government officials, family members of the soldiers and monks dressed in traditional saffron-coloured robes who performed a Buddhist ceremony to bless the troops.

Holding their U.N. blue berets in one hand, the soldiers kneeled as five monks sprinkled holy water on their heads from bowls filled with jasmine and the petals of lotus flowers - a ceremony to bestow good luck, health and safety.

In 1992 and 1993, Cambodia hosted what was then the United Nations' biggest ever peacekeeping operation, costing more than US\$1.5 billion (A1.26 billion) and involving 16,000 troops and security personnel from almost three dozen countries. The operation, established by a 1991 pact ending a lengthy civil war, led to free elections in 1993.

Nearly three decades of civil war had left Cambodia as one of the most mine-ridden countries in the world. Extensive aid from the international community has helped Cambodia build its own capacity in mine-clearing and has enabled the country to help others in need.

"Cambodia has suffered from millions of land mines," Douglas Gardner, the U.N. resident coordinator in Cambodia, said in a Wednesday ceremony that involved handing the U.N. flag to the Cambodian troops. "Yet from those terrible instruments of war, brave Cambodians have developed skills in de-mining that will be now brought to Sudan to ensure that their fellow human beings do not suffer."

The Cambodian soldiers will be stationed in the southern Sudanese city of Malakal along the White Nile River.

"All of you have the greatest honour, to be written down in the Cambodian history - for the first time ever - as the United Nations peacekeeping forces," Prime Minister Hun Sen said during the Wednesday ceremony.

He said Cambodia has reserved 1,080 extra soldiers for future requests from the U.N. for mine-clearing tasks in other countries.

CPA

SAF says it has withdrawn 31% of its forces from southern Sudan

(*AlAyaam* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) The SAF has confirmed its rejections to a UN role in the investigations on the ambush the SSDF was subjected to near Abyei as they were headed south.

SAF Spokesperson Brg. Osman el-Aghbash described the Abyei ambush as a criminal act that does not concern the UN's investigation team and said that the UN has no authority on the issue.

Speaking before the *Sudan News Agency* [*SUNA*] forum, the spokesperson for the armed forces said the SAF had no hand in the Abyei incident.

On redeployment as stipulated by the CPA, the spokesperson said the SAF has fulfilled all its commitments on redeployment and has withdrawn 31% (16,699) of the total of its 46,403 soldiers from southern Sudan to areas north of the 1.1.'56 line. He pointed out that a UN report puts the figure at 36% of the total SAF presence in southern Sudan now redeployed.

"The CPA stipulates the SPLA's evacuation from Hamesh Khoreib but they are still there," says Al-Aghbash.

On the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army, the spokesperson said that all activities of the Lord's Resistance Army occur in places not held by the SAF which proves that the SAF has no hand. "the Lord's Resistance Army," he said, "operates on the Ugandan border and all access points are observed by the ceasefire commission."

Referring to the recent rebel attack on Warni and Wagar in the east, the army spokesperson said that the Beja Congress was supported by the JEM in the attacks and added that this may cause the issue to expand and complicate.

SPLM warns NCP against disregard for the issues of Abyei and the national capital

(*AlAyaam* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) The SPLM has warned its NCP partners in the GoNU not to ignore some important issues like the questions of Abyei and the status of the national capital as these issues, it says, will cause the country to disintegrate.

The SPLM called for NCP commitment to the implementation of the CPA and said the NCP should start to change the mental picture that many in southern Sudan have of it as obstructor of the CPA and supporter of the Lord's Resistance Army.

Speaking to the press yesterday, SPLM spokesman Pagan Amoum said the Sudan is now passing through a critical stage in its history and should seek national consensus on a number of issues such as the problems of Darfur and eastern Sudan.

He said the SPLM will improve its relations with the other political parties in the country with the aim of striving to realise a true democracy in the country where the rule of law prevails and set foundations for realisation of voluntary unity.

Amoum who was hosted in his first press conference after being appointed Secretary-General for the SPLM called upon all concerned sectors to turn Khartoum into a national capital where the rights of all are guaranteed and through the provisions of the Interim Constitution.

“We want every single Sudanese to come to the capital without the fear that he or she will find a system that is harmful to his or her interests,” he added.

Darfur/ Abuja talks/ Chad

Minnawi says SPLM team in Abuja talks is actively engaged in the process

(*AlAyaam* – 17th Apr. **Abuja**) SLM leader Minnawi says he held talks with vice-president Taha yesterday on the outstanding issues on power and wealth sharing and the security arrangements but added he can not say whether these talks were successful or not.

Minnawi confirmed that the SPLM was now an active participant in the Abuja talks and that a lot is expected of them.

“Group of 19” threatens war

(*AlAyaam* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum, Abuja**) The group of 19 SLA officers who parted ways with their leader AbdulWahid Mohamed Nur has requested the AU mediators in the Abuja talks to accept their participation as coordinators between SLM-Minnawi and the JEM.

They claim that AbdelWahid represents only the Jebel Marra sector of the SLM/A while they represent 90% of the areas controlled by the SLA.

The group says they will go to war should the AU does not heed to their demands.

Chad withdraws from Darfur peace talks

(*AFP/ST, AlSahafa* – 17th Apr. **N'Djamena**) The Chadian delegation has withdrawn from the African Union-brokered peace talks on Sudan's troubled Darfur region because of "Sudanese aggression", a senior minister said Sunday.

"There is no point in being mediators when we are the victims of Sudanese aggression right up to N'Djamena," Foreign Minister Ahmat Allami said. "We cannot be part of a conflict and guarantee its mediation."

That view was echoed by the leader of the Chadian delegation at the talks in Nigeria, Habib Doutoum: "Following the rupture of diplomatic ties between Chad and Sudan, the Chadian government has decided to withdraw its mediation team from the AU-sponsored talks on Darfur."

Chad's foreign minister also said Chad will report the Sudan to the Security Council "for failure to implement the Tripoli Agreement".

He reiterated accusations that Sudan was supporting Chadian rebels fighting against the government and that Khartoum has trained and armed terrorist and mercenary groups.

Chad broke off diplomatic relations with Sudan on Friday, accusing it of arming rebels who tried to storm the capital N'Djamena in an attack that killed 400 people.

But the Charge d'Affaires of the Chadian embassy in Khartoum said yesterday that his government was not notified him of the decision to sever diplomatic tie and that the embassy in Khartoum will remain open.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol Ajawin denied that Khartoum had backed the rebel offensive in the Chadian capital.

The AU spokesman at the Abuja peace talks, Nouredine Mezni, told AFP that the organisation was watching the situation closely and would react at the appropriate time to the withdrawal of the Chadian team.

Presidential Advisor says Sudan has not severed diplomatic ties with Chad

(*AlRai AlAam* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) Presidential Advisor Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail says Khartoum has not severed diplomatic ties with N'Djamena and has not reciprocated the action taken by the Chadian government to expel the head of the Sudan's diplomatic mission in Chad.

He said that the government of Sudan believes in the strong ties between the two people and is committed to the implementation of all agreements signed between them.

He pointed out that what happened in Chad recently is an internal issue and the Chadian government should not use the Sudan as a scapegoat but should face those problems and show concern to its people.

He called upon the Chadian government to 'borrow a leaf' from the Sudanese experience of direct dialogue or through mediation to resolve its problems.

The President's advisor said events in Chad have a bearing on the Sudan and he consequently urges Deby's government to sit with the rebels and not to increase the tension in the region.

AU inaugurates inquiry panel on allegations of sexual abuse in Darfur*

(*ST* – 16th Apr. **Khartoum**) The African Union envoy to Sudan inaugurated the members of the investigation panel over the allegations of sexual abuses against the AU peacekeeping force in Sudan's troubled Darfur region.

The Special Representative of the African Union Commission Chairperson in the Sudan, Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe today inaugurated the members of the Committee of Inquiry into allegations of sexual abuse levelled against members of the African Union Mission Forces in Darfur.

The British Television Channel 4 in March, 2006 in a broadcasted news report alleged incidences of sexual misconduct including rape and child abuse against the African Union Forces in Darfur.

Baba Gana said in his speech before the inaugural meeting that the African Union Mission in the Sudan has been instructed to fully cooperate with the Inquiry.

He asked the inquiry panel to identify the potential responsible for the violations, and make recommendations on appropriate sanctions.

Further, he urged the committee to “work quickly but with sensitivity and purpose to establish the required report”

The eight member Committee is headed by Ms. Winnie Byanyima as Chairperson.

Byanyima is an internationally renowned Women's rights activist who has worked as adviser and consultant to several UN and other international agencies and academic institutions. She is currently the Director, Women, Gender and Development in the Office of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

The other members are all experts in their own field and include representatives from the UN, the European Union, and the NGO Community.

The Committee which has wide ranging terms of reference is given four weeks to submit their report.

** The full text of the statements of the head of AMIS, Amb. Kingibe, and the chairperson of the committee of investigation, Ms. Winnie Byanima, is in a separate attachment to this MMR*

Sudan asks Libya to take care of its interests

(*Xinhua/ST* – 15th Apr. **Khartoum**) Sudan asked on Saturday the Libyan embassy in N'Djamena to take care of its interests in Chad, one day after Chadian President Idriss Deby decided to sever diplomatic relations with Sudan and expel Sudanese diplomats from Chad.

However, spokesman of Sudan's Ministry for Foreign Affairs Jamal Mohammed Ibrahim told reporters that the Sudanese government was not determined on whether to take further actions, including closing the Chadian embassy in Khartoum or expelling the Chadian ambassador, in response to Chad's decision.

"We have not decided till now about what next steps should be taken on our diplomatic relations with Chad," Ibrahim said.

He said that the Chadian authorities gave the Sudanese diplomats in N'Djamena a respite of five days to leave Chad, which forced the Sudanese government to "entrust the Libyan embassy to look after our interests there."

"We expect that the Chadian government will also ask its embassy staff in Khartoum to leave Sudan, but we don't have information on that," he added.

Describing Chad's decision to break off diplomatic ties with Sudan as "a unilateral and hasty action which was not based on objective truths", the spokesman holds the Chadian government responsible for the consequences.

He also expressed Sudan's regret over Chad's decision as well as its threat to expel some 200,000 Sudanese refugees who came to Chad to escape the over three-year-long conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region, saying "this threat contradicts all the international accords concerned with the refugee problems."

Chadian President Deby announced on Friday that his government had decided to break off diplomatic relations with Sudan, accusing it of supporting rebels who attempted to storm N'Djamena.

The Chadian president made the announcement shortly after the army defeated a rebel attack, in which, according to the government, more than 350 people, including troops, rebels and civilians, were killed and 271 rebels were captured.

The Sudanese government, however, denied again on Friday any involvement in rebel activities in eastern Chad, reiterating its commitment to an agreement signed by the two countries' heads of state earlier this year which called for good neighbourhood.

Unidentified armed group raids Sheiriya

(*AlSahafa* – 17th Apr. **Nyala**) 17 people were killed and 13 others wounded in a new rebel attack yesterday on Sheiriya, South Darfur.

The commissioner for Sheiriya said the unidentified attackers raided Korumji village 68 kilometres east of Nyala leaving behind 17 dead and 13 injured and taking off with a large number of livestock.

Eastern Sudan

NCP says rebel attack on Wagar in the east shows lack of commitment from the Eastern Front

(*AlAyaam* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) The National Congress Party says the recent rebel attacks on Tenei and Wagar in eastern Sudan were aimed at terrorising the citizens.

Salah Ali Adam, a state minister at the Ministry of Science and Technology and the NCP's official responsible for eastern Sudan, said this shows that the Eastern Front is not committed to the peace process for the east.

He said that participation of the JEM alongside the Eastern Front in these attacks is an attempt at exporting the tension from Darfur to eastern Sudan.

He said that the attack may not consolidate prospects for dialogue soon despite the fact that the government is ready to seek just solutions to the problems of eastern Sudan.

Southern Sudan/ GoSS/ SPLM

SPLM says AbdelAziz el-Hillu did not split

(*AlSahafa* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) Speaking at a press conference yesterday, SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amoum rebuffed recent media reports of a rift within the SPLM led by AbdelAziz el-Hillu.

He said that el-Hillu still remains a key member of the SPLM Political Bureau, the SPLM's Deputy Secretary-General and in charge of its Northern Sudan Sector and described him as a great revolutionary who contributed to the establishment of the SPLM.

He said these rumours are being spread by people who hope the SPLM will split.

SPLM to establish radio and satellite television stations

(*Akhbar Alyaum* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) The Secretary-General of the SPLM's Northern Sudan Sector, Yassir Erman, intimates that the SPLM is planning to open a radio and satellite television channel in the near future.

He said these broadcast stations will consolidate the chances for dialogue, respect for diversity and the freedom of expression and will be strong and accessible to all.

Other Developments

Sudanese Council of Ulama sues US Charge d'Affaires

(*Akhbar Alyaum* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) The Sudan Council of *Ulama* (Islamic Scholars) has filed a law suit against the Charge d'Affaires of the US Embassy in Khartoum for allegedly issuing statements demeaning to the Muslim faith, official sources say.

The source says the Cd'A issued those statements while attending a party launched by a Sudanese businessman and that the plaintiffs say they will bring forward eyewitnesses and evidence from the local press to support their suit.

Conference of Nomads calls for support for education for the nomads

(*AlSahafa* – 17th Apr. **Khartoum**) The fifth conference for education for nomadic communities wound up yesterday with recommendations that a percentage of the revenues the state realises from livestock exports be used to fund education for their communities.

Among other recommendations are that ministries be established in states with a large nomadic population to cater to the needs of these communities, that the UNICEF support for education for the nomads cover the stages from 4th primary to the last stage of basic education and that the Administration for the Nomads be elevated to a National Council for the Nomads.