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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

Elections Watch

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What they're saying about the elections (**IRIN**)

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=88712>

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Highlights

SPLM to boycott elections in northern states

Al-Ayaam reports the SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum announced yesterday the movement's decision to boycott elections in 13 northern states of Sudan. He added the party took the decision in protest against fraud, violation and contraventions made by the National Elections Commission pointing out to the ongoing emergency state and war in Darfur.

Amum added that the movement would participate on elections in Southern Sudan and the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States to conduct the Referendum and Popular Consultations processes.

SPLM Deputy Chairperson Malek Aggar said the Political Bureau had earlier decided to participate on all levels of elections in north and south Sudan except for presidential elections. The movement's Chairperson held a meeting two days ago with nine members and seconded the decision of the political bureau and formed a committee to listen to the views of those who opted to boycott the process.

"The NCP regrets this decision by the SPLM, and urges the movement to immediately reconsider it," Ibrahim Ghandour told China **Xinhua** agency. "The SPLM seems to reel under internal division which triggered unreasonable and unjustified decisions," Ghandour, who is in charge of the elections file, said.

Sudan Tribune reports today's decision makes the SPLM the second major party in Sudan to announce some form of boycott to the elections after the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) and the breakaway Umma Reform and Renewal Party (URRP). The mainstream Umma Party led by Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi has failed to reach a decision by a self-imposed deadline that expired today though it appears likely that it will end up taking part in the elections.

Presidential Advisor reiterates overcoming misunderstanding with Carter Centre

SUNA reports the Presidential Advisor, Mustafa Osman Ismail, has stressed Sudan's confidence in the Carter Centre. The Advisor has commended the Centre as a highly competent and a recognized neutral body.

Mustafa said "the misunderstanding between us and the Centre has now been overcome after the clarifications we received from the centre and we now have full confidence in the centre and in its neutrality."

He explained that the president of the Republic himself took the initiative and invited the Carter Centre to come to be an observer of the elections and that the President has commended former US President Jimmy Carter for his efforts.

According to **AFP** Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir said today he would grant former U.S. president Jimmy Carter and his election observers unlimited access in the country during landmark elections that kick off Sunday.

"In two days, president Carter will arrive and I will receive him and will give him and his center permission to go to any area of Sudan and to monitor any area in Sudan," Bashir told a rally north of Sudan, as the election campaign begins to wind down.

"This man did good things for us and we never forget the man who did good things for us," Bashir said in an address broadcast live on state television.

It appeared to be a shift in tone after repeated threats by Bashir to expel observers if they were

believed "to interfere" in the electoral process.

According to **Sudan Tribune**, the US based Carter Center has reportedly requested an apology for Sudanese president's remarks threatening to expel them or else they will reconsider their monitoring mission. Reportedly the Carter Center informed Khartoum about their intention to withdraw unless they receive a "written and public" apology from President Bashir.

Meanwhile **Sudan Tribune** further reports that the French NGOs coalition *Collectif Urgence Darfour* called on the international community and French government to not support these "iniquitous and immoral elections" and to withdraw their electoral observers.

EU considers withdrawing Darfur poll observers

(Reuters) El Fasher, April 7 - The European Union said on Wednesday it was considering withdrawing its election observers from Sudan's Darfur region over fears for their safety and restrictions on their work.

Sudan is days away from presidential, legislative and gubernatorial elections, but opposition parties have said the polls in Darfur will be a farce while a seven-year conflict continues in the region. Some have boycotted the elections fully in north Sudan, also citing fraud.

"We are considering withdrawing the observers (from Darfur)," said Veronique De Keyser, who heads the EU's election mission in Sudan. "The safety of some of the observers in some remote parts of the country is a very big concern for me. I am also concerned about our ability to observe."

"In some parts of Darfur the violence is terrible. The humanitarians cannot access this area. And if aid cannot access, we cannot access," she told reporters as she flew into el-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, to meet her six-strong team in the remote western region.

"We can only have a very partial view, so how can we observe properly in Darfur? The credibility of the mission is at stake. People have been asking how can you observe in Darfur, and this is a question I have to answer."

De Keyser said she was particularly worried after Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir threatened to expel international observers who pushed for a delay in the ballot. Bashir has threatened to cut off their fingers and tongues.

"You don't usually treat international observers you have invited like that. ... It doesn't reflect the traditional hospitality of the Arab world," she said.

The EU team, which arrived in Darfur in mid March, consists of two observers in each of the three state capitals. Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes in Darfur, hopes to legitimise his rule with a victory in next week's polls.

Rebels and one U.N. official reported continuing clashes in the central Jabel Marra area and other parts of West Darfur last month, saying aid groups and diplomats had been barred from entering the area. Sudan's army denied serious fighting took place.

South Sudan's main party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, pulled out of elections in most north Sudan states on Tuesday, citing widespread fraud in the build up to the vote and the insecurity in Darfur. Other small opposition parties have followed but De Keyser said it was too early to judge the impact of the withdrawals on the credibility of the elections.

UN: Elections are important to establish a legitimate government

Al-Akhbar newspaper reports that following a meeting yesterday with the Minister of Presidential Affairs Bakri Hassan Salih, SRSG Haile Menkerios said "opening a democratic space for the participation of the Sudanese people is hoped to make unity attractive." "The importance of elections is that it establishes a legitimate government elected by all states of Sudan and it provides for a democratic space. Besides, it represents an important step towards the Referendum and what would the elected government decides in that regard," he said. SRSG added that "we wait for credible elections that boost the CPA and we will do all our best to fill in the gaps."

SUNA reports the Minister of Interior Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid Tuesday received SRSG

Menkerios and affirmed Sudan keenness to cooperate with the UN. He said that the arrangements for holding the elections are progressing well towards peaceful and democratic transformation in the country. Hamid said that his ministry is keen to preserve security and to serve the citizens, a fact which would have positive impacts on the development and economic progress in the country.

Umma Party resumes its meeting Wednesday for final decision on elections

Miraya website reports that the National Umma Party, led by al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, said it has failed to reach a final decision in its meeting held on Tuesday in Khartoum. The party said it will resume the meeting on Wednesday at eight o'clock in the evening in order to determine its final stance on whether to participate or boycott elections.

Media sources reveal that party's political bureau has divided into groups calling for full participation, partial participation or complete boycott of general elections, which led to suspension of the final decision on Tuesday.

Al-Ray al-Aam daily quotes the Head of the Political Bureau of the National Umma Party, Sara Nugdalla, saying that the government has responded to six of the eight demands presented by the party. She added the meeting would continue today to decide on the issue.

NEC sets up 21 polling centers abroad

Miraya website reports that the NEC has set up 21 polling centers outside Sudan to enable Sudanese living abroad to vote in Sunday's Presidential elections. Voting centers are set up, among others, in Washington, New York, Ottawa, London, Dublin, Brussels, Rome and Kuala Lumpur.

DUP candidate back to Presidential race

Al-Akhbar reports the opposition Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) said late on Tuesday it had reversed its decision and decided to reinstate its presidential candidate Hatim Elsir and participate at all levels of elections.

Sudan vote credibility at stake as ex-rebels extend boycott

(AFP) April 7, Khartoum - The credibility of Sudan's first general elections in two decades has been thrown into further doubt following a boycott by the ex-rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement of the vote in the north.

The SPLM had already announced the withdrawal of its candidate in the presidential election Yasser Arman, a key challenger to President Omar al-Beshir, as well as a boycott of the vote in war-torn Darfur.

The party late Tuesday extended its boycott to include the northern states in Sudan, but said it would still field candidates in the sensitive border states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, where the party enjoys support.

The April 11-13 presidential, legislative and local elections, the first in Sudan since 1986, are a prelude to a referendum on southern independence scheduled for January 2011.

"After reviewing the situation ... we the SPLM for the northern sector have arrived at the conclusion to boycott elections in the 13 northern states of Sudan," excluding the sensitive states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, Pagan Amum, the secretary general, said Tuesday night after a meeting of the SPLM political bureau.

"We will continue to participate in the elections in southern Sudan, Nuba mountains (in Southern Kordofan), and Blue Nile, and we are sure the SPLM will win those areas," he said.

Amum lashed out at Beshir's National Congress Party, accusing it of intimidation.

"The NCP continues to issue threats to observers and you can imagine if they are threatening observers to cut their limbs and noses, what will happen to Sudanese people," he said, in

reference to statements Beshir had made.

Amum said Sudanese authorities had expelled observers with the Carter Centre in nine northern states, saying it revealed the NCP's "intolerance."

But Graham Elson, field officer with the centre that was set up by US former president Jimmy Carter, denied anyone had been kicked out.

"No one has been expelled," he told AFP.

Sunday's election has been marred by a widening boycott by opposition parties.

But late on Tuesday, the Democratic Unionist Party, one of Sudan's two main opposition groups, said it would present Hatim al-Sir as presidential candidate, after an initial decision to boycott.

The other key opposition party, the Umma party, is expected to announce its level of participation in the election later on Wednesday.

The Umma and the DUP came first and second respectively in the 1986 elections three years before Beshir came to power in a military coup.

With no strong presidential challenger, however, Beshir looks to secure a comfortable win.

"When they realised that the NCP was going to win, they decided to say that there is fraud," he told a rally on Tuesday.

In a slight shift in position, the US State Department on Monday urged Sudan to immediately lift restrictions on political parties and indicated it would accept a short delay in the landmark elections if it helped address concerns.

But the national election commission insisted Tuesday that the vote will go ahead as planned on April 11-13.

There will be "no delay," Hadi Mohammed, head of the technical committee of the National Elections Commission, told reporters after talks with US special envoy to Sudan Scott Gration.

North and south Sudan were engaged in a bitter decades-long civil war that left around two million dead and some four million displaced.

The two parties signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, which provided for both the elections and the referendum.

Other Highlights

SPLA military intelligence stops an NCP delegation in Raja County

Akhir Lahza reports the SPLA intelligence authorities on Tuesday stopped for several hours an NCP delegation heading from Wau to Raja in Northern Bahr El-Ghzal State. The intelligence also detained the NCP Youth Secretary who was receiving the delegation at Raja airstrip, accused him of espionage and took him to unknown place. In another context, the paper adds, a group of SPLM members stopped the NCP candidate for the Upper Nile State Dak dob Bishop while he was traveling to launch his campaign at "Jarbent" area.

Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and UNHC/RC review situation in Darfur

SUNA reports the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs Aroun Luwal discussed yesterday with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, George Charpentier the humanitarian situation and the cooperation between the two sides. According to the two parties, the higher committee will meet next May in Darfur. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator commended the efforts exerted by the government and pledged support national capacity building and joint humanitarian mechanisms.

South Sudan president accuses north of oil grab

(Reuters) Yirol, April 7 - South Sudan's President Salva Kiir said Khartoum was delaying demarcating the north-south border to try to retain control over oil reserves with Sudan's elections just days away.

Analysts say a failure to resolve the border issue between the former north-south foes could spark renewed conflict if the problem is not sorted before Africa's largest country holds a January 2011 referendum on independence for the south.

On Tuesday Kiir's ex-rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) said it would boycott Sudan's April 11 national elections accusing Khartoum of widespread fraud.

"Why it is not demarcated is because there is oil and the north wants to take the oil, they want also to take the agricultural land we have so it becomes their land," Kiir told voters at a rally in the southern Lakes State.

Sudan's potential 500,000 barrels per day of oil from wells mostly in the south inflamed a 22-year-long civil war between the SPLM and the northern National Congress Party which ended with a 2005 peace deal.

Under the accord south Sudan receives about 50 percent of government oil revenues from wells in the south but the opaque distribution of cash has been a source of much contention. Oil revenues accounts for an estimated 98 percent of semi-autonomous south Sudan's budget. Many of the oil fields lie on the north-south border.

Analysts say the north-south border demarcation is key to successful talks between the two sides on post-referendum wealth sharing of oil and water from the River Nile.

Hundreds of supporters greeted Kiir on the campaign trail for the south Sudanese presidency, waving banners and kicking up dust in celebratory dances in the small Yirol town, which has few permanent buildings like much of the south devastated by the war. Several white bulls were slaughtered in his honour.

The SPLM said it would boycott all elections in the north on Tuesday, except the central states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, where it said it was sure to win, despite the widespread fraud they accuse the NCP of committing.

The move has sparked confusion among Sudan's opposition. Some have also boycotted but others are continuing in the race, although they all agreed with the concerns over irregularities.

Kiir also accused Sudan's President Omar Hassan al Bashir of refusing to form commissions to oversee the southern referendum and another vote for the citizens of the oil-rich Abyei area to choose whether to join the north or south.

"They don't want the south to stand alone," he said, speaking in his native Dinka, the language of the south's largest tribe. "The intention is to take over the land so they will control everything."

Lakes state is largely flat scrub land dotted with big palm trees but also has wetlands, valuable to the resident pastoralist tribes whose armed young men battle in deadly cattle raids through the dry season.