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Media Monitoring Report

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Elections Special

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Highlights

Elections Special

NEC issues regulations for elections campaigning

The National Elections Commission (NEC) has circulated rules to govern elections campaigning activities, *local dailies* report. The NEC notes that elections campaigning is a right granted to all candidates within the framework of the law. The circular calls on all candidates not to advocate violence, sow sedition or give hate speeches while on the campaign trail. The regulations would also require political parties and independent candidates to have a permit from the relevant authorities at least 72 hours in advance of a campaign or rally. The relevant authorities have the right to accept, reject or amend such a request on condition they provide reasons for a rejection or suggested amendment. Regulations also require that candidates should not place campaign posters in private places.

The NEC circular said also that the elections body will organise debates over the media for the different candidates.

NEC denies allegations of bias in state media

The NEC has denied accusations that the media is biased towards the NCP campaign camp, reports *Al-Rai Al-Aam*. An NEC official said that the media has equally distributed slots to the candidates to air their campaign strategies.

Presidency calls on NEC to differ elections for Southern Kordofan

A meeting of the Presidency yesterday mulled over possibilities of deferring the polls for the Southern Kordofan governor and legislative assembly positions to allow time for the parties to resolve the differences over the census results in the state, *Akhir Lahza* intimates.

The Presidency reportedly agreed to conduct a new population and housing census for Southern Kordofan State on the basis of which the state's representation at the National Assembly would be decided.

It was further agreed to establish a committee to discuss post and pre-referendum issues, the paper says.

Quoting GoSS Presidential Affairs Minister Luka Biang, *Al-Sahafa* reports that the Presidency also agreed to give the south 40 parliamentary seats, four seats for Southern Kordofan State and two for Abyei. He said that an understanding was also reached on the chairman and deputy chairman of the South Sudan Referendum Commission.

Presidency underlines need for elections-related code of conduct

The Presidency confirmed at a meeting yesterday its support for the electoral process in the country and its commitment to a transparent, just and free exercise as well as its commitment to remove obstacles to the process, *Al-Ayyam* reports.

The meeting held yesterday in Khartoum underlined the need for a code of conduct for political bodies for the elections and the need to accelerate a final draft for such a code.

The Presidency has ordered the technical north-south border committee to immediately demarcate the north-south border areas where agreement has been reached and to prepare a report on the disputed border points for further consultation.

Special Envoy Gration, NEC discuss security challenges for the elections

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports that US Special Envoy Scott Gration held talks in Khartoum yesterday with NEC Chairman Abel Alier and other members of the electoral body. Discussions covered the electoral process and the challenges faced by the NEC, especially with regards to the transportation of ballot boxes and polling cards and to security challenges.

NEC Deputy Chairman Abdalla said that the NEC shared with the US Envoy some of its concerns. He said that the envoy pledged to support the NEC in its efforts to see the process to a safe end.

According to **SUNA** [via *BBC Monitoring*], Gration has expressed satisfaction over the election process in Sudan, promising to provide the required support to complete the upcoming elections peacefully.

On the progress of Doha negotiations and the possibility of delaying the elections, Abdullah said that the elections would proceed as scheduled.

Activists file appeal against Al-Bashir candidacy

Some 104 human rights activists yesterday submitted a petition to the Constitutional Court challenging the legality of some provisions that grant President Al-Bashir absolute powers, reports **The Citizen**. The appellants say President Al-Bashir should be tried “retroactively for crimes committed that can not be dropped by prescription.”

The appeal was presented by the head of the Khartoum Centre for Comparative Human Rights Studies, Mahmoud Al-Sha’arani, who later told a press conference that the memorandum is based on the admission of President Al-Bashir himself of incidences of crime in Darfur. He said that the defendant in the case has embarked on an “illegitimate electoral campaign and squandered public funds.”

The activists who denied affiliation to any political party also called for a postponement of the polls “because of the unsound procedures accompanying the process” and for the annulment of some “unconstitutional provisions”.

Islamic law is a “red line” that can not be crossed – NCP

NCP campaign manager Haj Majid Suwar says the Islamic criminal code is a red line the party would not allow to be compromised, **Al-Ahdath** reports. “Those who seek to shelf the Islamic laws should look for a brewery outside Sudan where they can rule,” he said.

Haj was speaking at an NCP campaign rally in Port Sudan with a pointed reference to SPLM candidate Yassir Arman.

He noted that the NCP is a big party that could not be destroyed however much its enemies conspire. “Whatever coalition they form, the opposition would not defeat the NCP at the polls because the NCP is a big party based on principles and values,” he added.

DUP candidate slams NEC for violating law limiting campaign spending

DUP presidential hopeful Hatim Al-Sir has called on the political parties to boycott media appearances that he said are tipped in favour of the NCP. **Al-Ayyam** reports that the candidate praised the recent SPLM step to boycott appearances on state broadcast media but pointed out that a collective action is required from all the parties because individual actions “only serve the NCP”.

The candidate lashed out against the NEC over what he saw as a violation of the electoral law that limits campaign spending by political parties. He pointed out that the NEC’s silence over the issue of limiting campaign spending benefits the NCP that “controls everything”. Al-Sir added

that the NCP is spending millions from the public coffers to finance its campaign.

The DUP candidate also called for a broadcasted debate with the other presidential hopefuls.

SPLM's Arman reiterates commitment to unity

SPLM presidential hopeful Yassir Arman has reiterated commitment to the country's unity on a new basis. He believes unity still has a chance despite the emerging voices for secession, reports *Al-Ahdath*.

An election victory for him would guarantee voluntary unity or stability on both sides of the north-south border should the south opt for separation, he said.

FVP Kiir to hold talks today with opposition leaders

The second meeting held yesterday between representatives of the opposition parties (the Juba Group) and the African Union Darfur Panel has failed to reach agreement over requests by the panel that the opposition sign a code of conduct for the elections as a matter of priority ahead an envisaged summit meeting of the parties, reports *Al-Ahdath*.

The paper meanwhile reports that SPLM Chairman (FVP) Salva Kiir Mayardit will hold talks in Juba today with opposition leaders including Umma's Sadiq Al-Mahdi, Popular Congress Party's (PCP) Hassan Al-Turabi and Sudan Communist Party's Ibrahim Nugud.

PCP Political Secretary Kamal Omar said that the AU panel had insisted that the opposition sign the code of conduct for the elections but the opposition believes that such an action would not help resolve the contentious elections issues like border demarcation and the delimitation of constituencies and other issues such as justice for Darfur. He said that the opposition does not want a "public relations appearance" sitting with the NCP but does respect the Darfur panel and fully welcomes its recommendations for hybrid courts for Darfur.

SPLA soldiers tear down NCP posters in Baw, Blue Nile State

SPLA Military Police yesterday tore down campaign posters in a market in Baw, Blue Nile State, of the NCP candidate for President, Al-Bashir, and of the NCP's candidate for Governor of Blue Nile State, Farah Aggar.

Eyewitnesses described this act by "heavily armed SPLA MPs" as a gross violation of the Elections Law.

WES independent maintains his candidacy; reaffirms commitment to SPLM

Sudantribune.com Yambio, 21/02/10 - Colonel Joseph Bakosoro, independent candidate for Western Equatoria governor, reiterated commitment to the SPLM saying that the party's decision to disown independent candidates would not change their position towards the party.

"We have received the message from the deputy Secretary General for southern sector Ann Itto with respect and it is not going to change our position as independent candidates and committed SPLM members," said Joseph Bakosoro in a statement obtained by *Sudan Tribune*.

"We are contesting to strengthen the position of the SPLM," he further reaffirmed.

Bakosoro cautioned that, "if the SPLM Political Bureau is willing to fail the party by imposing unpopular candidates on the people against their own will, people are aware of this and will continue to resist."

"Independent candidates all over the south are going forward to contest in order to represent the aspiration of our people because we are the people's choices. Therefore, I personally insist

that the will of the people must be respected and that is my decision,” Bakosoro reiterated.

Team Bakosoro says the candidate the are campaigning for has pledged to achieve peace and security, realize high economic productivity and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities in Western Equatoria State.

Other Highlights

Egypt hosts NCP, SPLM meeting on attractive unity

Egypt is currently hosting a meeting between the NCP and the SPLM in a last-ditch effort to help make unity attractive ahead of the 2011 referendum, *Ajras Al-Hurriya* reports. The NCP delegation is headed by Presidential Advisor Nafei Ali Nafei while SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum heads the SPLM delegation.

Sources intimate that if a breakthrough is made, a meeting between President Al-Bashir and FVP Salva Kiir would be convened and an agreement probably reached.

AL, OIC and UNAMID welcome Sudan-JEM peace agreement

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 21/02/10 - The Arab league(AL), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and UNAMID welcomed today the peace deal signed by Sudanese government and rebel Justice and Equality Movement in Ndjamenia on Saturday.

The framework agreement is a "positive and constructive step towards reaching a settlement for the Darfur crisis, especially when the general elections, due to be held in April, is so close, "said Amro Moussa in a statement released in Cairo on Sunday.

OIC Secretary General, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, pointed to the important role played by Chad and the other parties to bridge the gap in viewpoints between the Sudanese government and JEM rebels, following the normalisation of relations between Sudan and Chad.

While the hybrid peacekeeping mission said achieving peace in Darfur will enable UNAMID to implement its mandate and serve the Darfur people, its Spokesperson also stressed UNAMID's readiness to support the concerned parties to implement Ndjamenia agreement.

Darfur tribes welcome signing of framework agreement in Chad

SUNA [via BBC Monitoring] Khartoum, 21/02/10 - The People's Committee of Darfur Tribes for Peace and Unity Sunday [21 February] issued a statement affirming its support to the agreement signed between Sudan and the JEM saying it regarded the agreement as a step towards the a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement for Darfur.

Sudan seals peace deal with JEM-Southern Kordofan Chapter

Sudan signed a peace deal yesterday with the Southern Kordofan Chapter of the JEM, crowning talks that have been ongoing since November last year, *Al-Ahdath* reports. The signing ceremony also saw the JEM members join the NCP and pledge to campaign on its behalf.

Haj Majid Sowar, who headed the government delegation to the talks with JEM Southern Kordofan, pointed out that this development and the Doha track are a sure sign that a comprehensive peace is on the horizon. He pointed out that all those who had opposed the regime on the grounds of a search for democracy now have no other excuse to continue bearing arms. He invited all opposition forces to come and form political parties in order to safeguard stability in the country.

Political parties behind the “Niggers” phenomenon – Police

Khartoum State Police have recorded a drop in crime rates, especially related to the “Niggers” and snatchers of ladies’ purses, a source at the police said. He said that this is as a result of a police dragnet launched a few days ago, reports ***Al-Rai Al-Aam***.

The source said it is believed that some political parties and political leaders support these “Niggers” as they seek to destabilise the capital. He said that police, along with the state security apparatus, will take the necessary steps towards any suspect.

Seven killed in south Sudan

***Reuters** Juba, 22/02/10* - At least seven civilians were killed in crossfire as cattle-herding tribesmen attacked a weapons store to try to get arms to retaliate against a rival clan who had attacked them, officials said yesterday.

Violent cattle rustling raids are common in the underdeveloped territory, but the scale of the recent carnage has sparked accusations of political meddling. Members of the Rek Dinka ethnic group attacked a camp occupied by Gok Dinka cattle herders in the remote Bahr Gel area of south Sudan’s Lakes State on Saturday, SPLA Spokesperson Kuol Diem Kuol said.

A Gok Dinka group then went to the nearby settlement of Cueibert and tried to break into an army weapons store, filled with guns taken during a recent state-wide disarmament exercise, he said. “The guards guarding the gun stores clashed with them to protect the guns,” Kuol said. “So in the crossfire five civilians and two chiefs were killed.”

The Gok then attacked a separate southern Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) base in Cueibert on Saturday afternoon and again yesterday morning, leaving an unknown number of additional casualties, said Kuol.

“They were repulsed, but there were casualties on both sides ... Cueibert town was evacuated,” he added.

Deputy Governor of Lakes State David Noc confirmed the seven deaths and said he was waiting for updates from the remote area.

Sudan, Darfur armed group clashed before deal: JEM, UN

***Reuters** Khartoum, 21/02/10* – The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) clashed with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) hours before both sides agreed a ceasefire and signed an agreement paving the way to peace talks, rebels and a UN source said on Sunday.

JEM said it fought off a SAF attack between the areas of Sirba and Seleia in West Darfur on Saturday afternoon. The SAF dismissed the report as “absolutely wrong” saying it had not taken part in any attack.

Any afternoon fighting would not have broken the terms of the Sudan/JEM ceasefire announced in Chadian capital N’Djamena on Saturday evening, but would underline the challenges facing efforts to end the conflict.

Leaders from both sides are due to ratify the ceasefire and “framework agreement” setting the terms for negotiations in Qatari capital Doha on Tuesday, and have promised to reach a final peace deal by March 15.

It was difficult to get more detailed confirmation of Saturday’s reported fighting as international sources in West Darfur said government forces had closed roads in the area.

A UN source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there were clashes involving JEM and

the SAF in the area on Saturday, but could not confirm who attacked or won.

A second international source said there were reports it was JEM that attacked the army in the area about 55km (34 miles) north of the capital of West Darfur El Geneina.

"The government troops attacked our forces just after midday," JEM field commander Abubakr Hamid Nur told **Reuters**, saying he was speaking from Darfur by satellite phone. "It is unbelievable. While they were sitting down with us in N'Djamena, they were attacking us in Darfur."

JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein Adam said the rebel force regretted the incident but said it could have been caused by a breakdown in communication between Sudan's negotiators and their forces in the field. "This is something we can put behind us. Everyone here wants to enter into the new spirit." He said the fighting ended before the deal was signed.

A spokesman for Sudan's army dismissed the JEM report outright, telling **Reuters**: "This story is absolutely wrong. Sudanese army didn't attack this area alone or with other forces. This is wrong absolutely."

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