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# Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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# Highlights

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## On the Campaign Trail

### **Bashir issues expulsion warning to foreign poll observers**

**Sudantribune.com** Khartoum, 22/03/10 - President Omar Al-Bashir yesterday issued a strong warning to foreign election monitors threatening to expel them if they call for a delay of the polls scheduled for April.

The warning appears directed at the US based Carter Center which last week called for a slight delay in elections because of logistical and procedural issues.

The Center said Sudan's first competitive elections since 1986 "remains at risk on multiple fronts" including the ability of candidates to campaign freely and the impact of delayed preparations for the complex vote.

"It is increasingly unclear if the (National Election Commission) can deliver a successful election on time," the report said.

However, Bashir responded angrily with strong rhetoric to the call during an elections rally at the Red Sea city of Port Sudan.

"We brought these organizations from outside to monitor the elections, but if they ask for them to be delayed, we will throw them out.....any foreigner or organization that demand the delay of elections will be expelled sooner rather than later " he said.

"We wanted them to see the free and fair elections, but if they interfere in our affairs, we will cut their fingers off, put them under our shoes, and throw them out," he added.

**Reuters** said that the Center declined to comment until it was able to review the president's speech.

National Elections Commission (NEC) deputy chairman Ahmed Abdullah said "the Carter Center relies on false information that did not come from us," and insisted the elections would take place on April 11 as planned.

"Publishing this information could have a negative impact on the electoral process," he told reporters on Monday.

Mubarak al-Fadil head of the Umma Reform and Renewal Party (URRP) told **Reuters** the warning made it clear Bashir was worried.

"He [Bashir] is very nervous. He may do it," al-Fadil said.

### **NEC increases participation of political forces in media mechanism**

An extraordinary meeting of the NEC yesterday agreed to an increase in representation of political forces in the elections media mechanism that monitors the use of state media in elections campaigning, **Al-Sahafa** reports. The three-hour meeting agreed that the mechanism would have a membership of 12, up from the original five members.

NEC Deputy Chairman Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah said that the step is in response to the demands of some political parties. He also revealed that the NEC has requested state media to increase the slot for elections campaigning in their programs.

The meeting also saw the NEC criticize a statement last week by the Carter Center.

## **Interior Minister cites three tenets to guarantee elections security**

Interior minister Ibrahim Mahmud Hamid says the Ministry of Interior is conscious of the major responsibilities it shoulders to help deliver a safe electoral process come the April polls and cites three basic tenets to guarantee security. According to ***Al-Akhbar***, he lists these as: a police force that is conscious of its role in a democratic system, a society that aware of its rights and obligations and is an integral partner in the keeping of the peace, and a media that is conscious of the nature of the stage and is not part of the crisis but a party to the search for solutions.

“Policemen should know that they are dealing with voters who enjoy constitutional rights in a democratic system of government and not criminals,” he said.

## **FVP Kiir requests Presidency to discuss opposition memorandum on polls**

FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit has requested the Presidency to list the petition by opposition parties requesting a delay of the forthcoming polls as an agenda item for their meeting on Thursday, reports ***Al-Sahafa*** quoting sources.

SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amoum said that the SPLM leadership meets in Juba today to discuss the petition and hopes to emerge from that meeting with a clear position on the issue. The SPLM, he said, would then dispatch representatives to Khartoum to attend a meeting of the Juba Alliance on Saturday.

## **NCP commands 75% of airtime on state media – report**

The Sudan Media and Elections Consortium reports that most television channels based in northern Sudan are giving the NCP more airtime (about 75%) compared to other political forces. Southern Sudan based media gives 90% of the monitored airtime to the SPLM campaign, the report also adds. According to ***Rai Al-Shaab***, this revelation shows the clear discrepancies in coverage tipped toward the two major partners in government.

The report covers the period from 13 February to 8 March and says that the trend is also reflected in the print media with news on the incumbent, Al-Bashir, commanding 46% of political coverage in print followed by Yassir Arman at 33% and Sadig Al-Mahdi (13%) while news of the GoSS candidate for president, Salva Kiir, commands an 82% presence on southern Sudan-based print media.

## **PCP calls on opposition parties to lay plans to unseat the NCP at the polls**

Sudanese leaders can only lead against the background of conflict amongst its people, the Secretary-General of the Popular Congress Party (PCP) Abdullah Hassan Al-Turabi, said at a campaign rally yesterday in Hassaheisa Locality, Al-Gazira State.

***Rai Al-Shaab*** reports that Al-Turabi went on to lash out at the government for reneging on the implementation of a number of the provisions of the CPA “thus causing southern Sudan to lean towards separation”. He pointed out that these policies have also estranged “brothers” from abroad who came and invested in the country’s military and oil industries.

In another development, PCP Political Officer Kamal Omar Abdul Salam says it is useless to participate at the polls without the opposition charting a unified course that would unseat the NCP at the polls, ***Al-Ayyam*** reports. He said that chances for change are further diminished by the existence of “pro-NCP independent candidates” on the political arena.

On chances for a postponement, he said that the views of the international community against a boycott should be taken into consideration as well as the impact of a postponement on the 2011 referendum. The SPLM, he said, should be brought on board for any plan for a boycott to be successful.

## **SPLM arrests NCP campaign officials west of Juba**

Members of an NCP team campaigning for President Al-Bashir in the Greater Equatoria area have been arrested and their property looted en route from the regional capital westwards to Rokon, reports *Al-Sahafa*.

Lutfi Mursal of the NCP's Greater Equatoria Secretariat reportedly said that five SPLA intelligence operatives arrested the NCP's regional elections supervisor, Eissa Zarara, and seized SDG23,000 in his possession on the grounds that the laws of southern Sudan do not allow a person to carry any amount over SDG5,000 while travelling from a state to another.

Mursal described this as "armed robbery".

## **Kiir drums up support for SPLM candidates in Western Equatoria**

*Sudantribune.com* Yambio, 22/03/10 - SPLM leadership continued efforts to galvanize and drum up support for party candidates with a campaign tour to Western Equatoria (WES) by Chairman Salva Kiir Mayardit, who is also the SPLM nominee for president of the semi-autonomous government of Southern Sudan.

Salva Kiir and Governor Jemma Nunu Kumba toured Greater Mundri, Maridi and Yambio Counties in Western Equatoria State with his presidential campaign team on Monday, March 22, 2010.

Markets in Yambio were closed to allow citizens to welcome the president with what seemed almost hundreds of colourful vehicles and motorcyclists parading joyously. The campaign rally was graced with lots of traditional dancers.

Chairman Kiir arrived at Yambio Airstrip with Yassir Arman, SPLM candidate for president of Sudan, Dr. Deputy Secretary Riek Machar, Secretary General Pagan Amum, Kiir's campaign manager Dr. Samson Kwaje, Deng Alor, Anthony Makana, and many other senior SPLM dignitaries.

Kiir was warmly welcomed by WES citizens chanting "SPLM oyee, Kiir oyee, Arman oyee," delighted to receive their president who toured the presidential villa and guest houses that were built for the CPA celebrations undertaken earlier this year.

## **Parties' council calls for a revoke of license of an Islamic party**

The Political Parties Council is calling for a revoke of license of the Hizb-el-Wasat Al-Islami, headed by Muslim cleric Yusif Al-Kawda, reports *Al-Intibaha*. The demand comes following statements attributed by the party leader calling upon President Al-Bashir to step down and face trial.

In a statement circulated yesterday, the Council noted that only Al-Bashir is qualified to lead Sudan from amongst the other candidates in the political arena.

## **Voters in Sudan's upcoming elections uncertain over existence of names**

*Sudantribune.com* Juba, 22/03/10 - Registered voters for the upcoming April general elections Sudan have expressed uncertainty over the fate of their names, in the voter registry, following reports that tens of thousands are already missing from the preliminary exhibitions.

With the conduct of the polls just over two week away, the NEC is yet to publish the final list of registered voters in the country for confirmation.

This has prompted fears of uncertainty among registered voters on whether they would find their names in the lists on polling days, or would be suddenly told that they were missing and thus denied the right to vote.

## **South Sudan election committee says polls will be "free and fair"**

**The Juba Post** Juba, 22/03/10 - The coordinator of the South Sudan High Elections Committee (SSHEC), Jersa Kide Barsaba, has assured voters that the forthcoming general elections would be free and fair throughout the country.

Speaking during a workshop organized for media managers and editors on 18th March 2010, at Heron Campsite in Juba, Barsaba said the general elections, due in April 2010, constituted a great opportunity for southern Sudan and Sudan in general because Sudanese will, for the first time, participate democratically in electing their own leaders.

"After a long civil war many citizens of Sudan have never had a chance to determine who should be their leaders since the military has ruled the country. This is very significant in the history of Sudan and the media should be extra careful in reporting issues relating to the electoral and polling processes," she said. She said the commission has put in place measures that will ensure peaceful and successful elections in Sudan.

"The army and the police will be deployed to provide security in all the states; already 10,000 police officers have graduated and 5,000 more will graduate just in time to provide security during the campaigns, polling process and after the elections," said Ms Barsaba. She assured the media managers and editors that the people at the grass roots are already receiving instructions about the electoral and polling procedures. Many civic educators have gone to all parts of southern Sudan to disseminate voter education focusing on the key aspect of the processes involved during the campaigns and on polling day.

On the issue of lost voter slips, she said that a mechanism would be put in place to address the issue. On reports of missing names on the voter registry, Barsaba said the original registration file would be displayed to settle such situations should they arise. She allayed fears that some names might be missing in the register and said that the local authorities may be required to identify a person in the event of related complications.

## **Kassala State bans campaigning in local dialects**

Salah Barkin, the Beja Congress' candidate for Governor of Kassala State, has slammed as "unconstitutional" a Kassala State ban on campaigning in local dialects, **Ajras Al-Hurriya** reports. The local state radio had turned down requests to air his campaign message in the local dialect saying it had to be recorded in Arabic.

Barkin maintained that this was a show of disrespect for the local dialects of eastern Sudan and a continuation of "policies of cultural hegemony" meted out on them and on others by the central government.

## **South Sudanese minister says use of local languages during elections "crucial"**

**The Juba Post** Juba, 22/03/10 - In a workshop addressed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in Juba, the Acting Minister of Information and Broadcasting said that the people of southern Sudan and community institutions should embrace the use of local languages during the campaign period.

Acting Minister Pinyjwoke Akol Ajawin said the use of local languages in the elections in southern Sudan is crucial. It highlights the importance of the elections to the citizens because the local languages help those who do not understand English and Arabic.

## **Soba Shahinat "punished for not supporting NCP candidates"**

Authorities yesterday laid a siege on the Soba Al-Shahinat area south of Khartoum and cut off the areas water supply, reports **Ajras Al-Hurriya**. Some grass-thatched dwellings were

reportedly burnt down.

Joseph Adut, the SPLM candidate for the constituency, pointed out that authorities wanted to punish the people of the area for not supporting the NCP candidates and sought to bar them from participating at the polls.

According to *Al-Midan* weekly, an eyewitness has called on human rights organisations to come and witness for themselves the plight of the people in that area as authorities have also cut down access to foodstuffs. A photographer for the paper was reportedly arrested while taking pictures.

## Other Highlights

### **Sudan's Bashir not welcome in France: Elysee**

*Sudantribune.com Paris, 20/03/10* - President Omar Al-Bashir has been asked to dispatch an envoy to attend the France-Africa summit scheduled for May in Nice but has not been personally invited, officials at President Nicolas Sarkozy's office said today.

The Elysee made a clarification on the reports carried by Sudan state media stressing that Bashir would not be welcome on French territory.

"The president has indeed sent a letter to Omar Hassan al-Bashir to ask him to nominate the person who will represent Sudan at the Franco-African summit," said an unidentified French official to Reuters, making clear that the Sudanese leader himself could not come.

### **Health ministry officials to meet disgruntled medical practitioners over strike**

Doctors protesting over entitlements insist they will carry out their open strike starting today, reports *Al-Sahafa*. The disgruntled practitioners reveal that staff manning emergency wards would cease work today and others would follow suit in phases.

The Ministry of Health has meanwhile assured that no medical practitioner will be dismissed from work because of the strike and sources intimate that senior officials at the ministry are due to hold conciliatory talks with representatives of the protesting doctors to help sort out the differences.

### **Misseriya tribesmen to block some roads leading south**

Al-Bushari Sharafeldin, a prominent Misseriya leader, has challenged the SPLA to follow up on its threats to use heavy artillery against the Misseriya. "We will defeat them in direct confrontation," he told *Al-Intibaha*.

In response to the constraints the SPLA imposes on their herders trekking south, he said, the Misseriya would reciprocate by blocking the Mairam-Aweil and Kailak-Bentiu roads as well as the railroad to Wau in a bid to impose an economic siege on the GoSS and the SPLA.

### **UNAMID chief and rebel SLM leader agree to cooperate in Darfur**

*Sudantribune.com Paris, 22/03/10* - UNAMID chief Ibrahim Gambari and the leader of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur have agreed to cooperate to improve the humanitarian situation and the protection of civilians in Darfur.

Gambari was in Paris on Friday and Saturday for talks with French government officials and the SLM leader on the role of the hybrid peacekeeping mission with regard to the protection of civilians and supporting efforts to bring peace in Darfur.

Following a meeting held in Paris on Friday Gambari and Al-Nur agreed to cooperate on the ground in order to provide humanitarian assistance and allow UNAMID patrols aiming to protect civilians and residents of Darfur camps, the two parties told **Sudan Tribune** in separate statements.

Gambari said he called on French officials to encourage Al-Nur to join the Doha peace talks stressing the need to have a comprehensive and inclusive process.

### **JEM slams Sudan Darfur peace accord ultimatum**

**Sudantribune.com** Paris, 22/03/10 - The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) today rejected an ultimatum made by the Sudanese government to reach a peace deal in Darfur.

Last week, the Sudanese Presidential Adviser in charge of Darfur file, Ghazi Salah-al-Din gave a 2nd of April deadline to conclude the talks that started earlier this year and led to a temporary ceasefire between the two sides.

"They are free to make their own deadlines. As far as we are concerned our negotiation strategy is based on resolving outstanding issues so whether it takes a day, a week or a year the most important thing is that it creates the ground for credible and sustainable peace for our people in Darfur" JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein told Sudan Tribune.

"We call on the mediation to distance themselves from Ghazi's remark. He has done that before and came up in all arrogance seeking to impose his deadlines upon all parties. Doha was supposed to be a neutral venue for peace talks. It is important that the mediation assert that" Hussein said.

### **Railway line linking south-north halves prices of goods**

**IRIN** Wau, 22/03/10 - During wartime, trains heading south to this former garrison town used to deliver violence and terror; now they are bringing lower prices.

The first two trains in about a decade arrived in the southern city of Wau in March 2010, one with goods and the other with maintenance crews and supplies, Sudan Railways official Al Haji Maktoub told **IRIN**.

The central government paid 35m US dollars towards a 46m US dollars renovation; the remainder was funded by donors through a World Bank-managed national trust fund.

"One sack of sugar cost 155 [Sudanese pounds, 69.50 US dollars]. When that train arrived it went to 80 [35.90 dollars]," said John Arop, an NGO manager based in Wau. Soft drinks such as Coca-Cola and Fanta halved in price from 2 SDG (90 cents) to 1 SDG (45 cents), he said. The first cargo train also carried sugar, cement and sorghum.

Stalls in a market opposite the renovated train station are being constructed and repaired in anticipation of a boom. In the past, timber, honey, coffee and tea were sent north from Wau, but the first of planned weekly services returned empty.

Rail transport can dramatically cut prices because delivery trucks face multiple roadblocks and taxation, Arop explained, although its potential to cut the cost of humanitarian operations such as food aid distribution had yet to be assessed, said officials. Were passenger services to resume, it could make it much easier for southerners to travel to and from Khartoum or Darfur, according to an international observer.

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