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Referendum Watch

We have not achieved what we sought of the CPA – VP Taha

Al-Akhbar Khartoum, 09/12/10 – Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha told the visiting Austrian delegation that the prevailing perception during the count-down to the signing of the CPA was that the south be given the opportunity to build trust in the north in order to shore up unity. He pointed out that the current results were below their aspirations.

He underlined the need to adopt the idea of the inter-dependence between the north and south of the country, regardless of the outcome of the 2011 referendum.

Voter registration comes to a close

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 09/12/10 - The SSRC has declared an end to the voter registration period for the referendum but has extended the period for registration centres outside the country.

Speaking at an open meeting at the Sharjah Hall in Khartoum yesterday, Commission Chair Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil lamented the time and funding constraints the Commission has to deal with in carrying out its duties and requested the parties to the CPA to postpone the exercise “even for only one week” to allow for better organisation.

Khalil expressed fear that the threshold figures for the referendum may not be met and that a re-run of the process may be required. He said that 40% of the target group have registered in the north, 60% in the south and between 50 – 60% of out-of-the-country eligible voters have registered so far.

Khalil also mentioned attempts by the NCP and the SPLM to interfere in the work of the SSRC. “I prevented them from doing so and they are angry with me,” he said. He criticized talk about the need to file suit with the Constitutional Court against the SSRC, saying the Constitutional Court has no jurisdiction to consider or decide on issues of the Commission and complaints.

Almost three million sign up for south Sudan vote

AFP Juba, 08/12/10 - "The registration process has been a success and has been peaceful," said Aleu Garang Aleu, spokesperson for the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau, on Wednesday.

"A great number of people have turned out, close to three million people in the south," he added. "The exact figures will be calculated in coming days since reports are still being gathered from some centres."

The final electoral list is due to be published on January 5, four days before the vote.

The US State Department on Tuesday played up the significance of the referendum which could partition Africa's largest nation.

"This is arguably the most compelling story that the world will face in the first half of 2011, and we understand the risk," State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said.

"If this goes well, it has the ability to... have a very positive effect in the region ... If it goes badly we understand that there is a significant risk of a return to civil war," Crowley said.

There is a likelihood of war with the south – Dr. Nafei

Al-Rai Al-Aam et al Khartoum, 09/12/10 – At an interview with *Al-Jazeera* yesterday, senior President Al-Bashir aide, Dr. Nafei Ali Nafei, said there is a likelihood of an outbreak of post-separation war with southern Sudan. He said that such a war, should it happen, would be fiercer than the past because the south has armed itself but said that the north is not intimidated by that.

“We are prepared for the worst-case scenarios,” he said, adding that all plots would be foiled. He said the South must realize that it needs stability.

Nafei said Abyei could be a bone of contention between the North and the South but hoped it would not plunge the two parties into war. He said the territory could be partitioned, adding it is an option on the table.

Nafei warned that separation of the south from the rest of Sudan would mean the country may head to further partitioning states and would provide a recipe for foreign intervention. He deplored the fact that the SPLM is bent on secession.

The President Al-Bashir aide added that the Abyei referendum would not take place in time due to lack of an agreement.

SSRC denies allegations of irregularities levelled by the NCP

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 09/12/10 – The SSRC has denied allegations of violations of the Referendum Law levelled on it by the NCP. The charges included the employment of staff below 40 years of age to the referendum process. The SSRC pointed out that the NCP allegations were generic and that the ruling party did not mention names of such employees or their duty stations.

Majdi Sarhan, the NCP Secretary for Judicial and Parliamentary Affairs, who unveiled this development to the press yesterday, added that the SSRC should have rather checked out the staff in question instead of denying. He pointed out that the commission took its time to react to these charges and only handed their reply at the final day of registration yesterday. Sarhan accused the SPLM of having full control over the membership of the SSRC in order to stir the process to separation.

In a related development, the Political Parties and Associations Council has revealed its intention to file a suit at the Constitutional Court on perceived irregularities in the voter registration process. The Council also said it believed that pegging the fate of a country to a vote by a particular segment of its citizens is “unjustified”. Council Chairman Aboud Jabir said that their teams toured some registration centres and listed a number of irregularities that they believe are a threat to the process. He called on monitors of these centres to be transparent in their reporting on the registration process.

Higher Committee formed for referendum appeals

Khartoum Monitor/SUNA Khartoum, 09/12/10 – Chief Justice Jalal Mohamed Osman issued a decree yesterday for the establishment of a court to rule over appeals on the referendum results. The step is pursuant to the Southern Sudan Referendum Act.

The decree names Supreme Court Judge Mahjoub Al-Amin Al-Faki as the presiding judge and judges SIRR-al-Khatim Salih and Benjamin Bak as members.

NCP, SPLM resume post-referendum negotiations

The Citizen Khartoum, 09/12/10 – AUHLP leader Thabo Mbeki arrived in Juba yesterday to mediate in talks between the NCP and the SPLM on post-referendum arrangements. As per schedule, members of the technical teams on the economy, citizenship, international treaties and security would meet in the next two days to iron out the issues.

Armed men fail in attempt at Deputy Abyei Administrator

Al-Ahram Al-Youm Khartoum, 09/12/10 – An attempt by three armed men, believed to be SPLA, to “rough it up” with the Deputy Administrator of the Abyei Administration Area failed when they realised the driver was the only person in the vehicle that they believed was carrying their target. Sources reveal that the three armed men last Tuesday fired at Rahama Abdulrahman’s vehicle ordering the vehicle to a halt only to be disappointed by Rahama’s no-show. Left to go, the driver phoned Rahama who notified the police. The incident reportedly happened in Khartoum.

Misseriya challenge SPLM to bar it from at the Abyei referendum

Al-Tayyar Khartoum, 09/12/10 – Misseriya leaders are challenging SPLM figure Edward Lino to bar them from voting at the Abyei referendum. The Misseriya were reacting to a recent statement attributed to the SPLM figure in which he said that the SPLM would not allow them to vote.

Musa Hamadein of the Misseriya Union warned that such statements would draw the region back to “square one” and is unacceptable to the Misseriya. He reminded Lino of the time 117 people lost their lives when the SPLM appointed him their point man in Abyei.

Opposition parties to meet Misseriya representatives

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 09/12/10 – A meeting between representatives of the opposition alliance and the Misseriya tribe is slated to take place at the residence of the head of the opposition alliance, Farouq Abu-Eissa, in Khartoum today.

Kamal Omar, a high ranking member of the Popular Congress party (PCP) said that the opposition alliance is taking this initiative because the parties to the CPA and the international community have failed to find solutions to the Abyei issue. He said that they would seek audience with representatives of the Misseriya and then with representatives of the Dinka Ngok in an attempt to help reach a solution.

S. Africa's Tutu calls for peaceful Sudan referendum

AFP Johannesburg, 08/12/10 - The head of a group of international statesmen, Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, on Wednesday called for a peaceful independence referendum in Sudan next month amid fears the vote could provoke bloodshed.

"This is a critical time for the people of Sudan and the African continent. I pray that voting will be peaceful, but if things go badly, it's likely that there will be further conflict," said Tutu, chairman of The Elders Group.

The Elders, a grouping brought together three years ago by former South Africa president Nelson Mandela, includes former US President Jimmy Carter and ex-UN secretary general Kofi Annan.

Mandela's third wife, the Mozambican children and women's rights activist Graca Machel, another member of the Elders, said the referendum result must be honoured.

"It is crucial that the will of the people is respected," she said. "Sudan's leaders throughout the country should protect and uphold the rights of all voters."

Other Highlights

Thousands displaced by Sudanese army bombs - aid agency

AlertNet Nairobi, 08/12/10 - More than 3,500 people have fled their homes after their villages on Sudan's north-south border were hit by Sudanese army bombers, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) aid agency said on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the government of semi-autonomous South Sudan accused Khartoum of fresh bombing attacks on its territory this week -- a charge denied by Sudan's northern army.

The allegations came after the southern army accused the north of bombing inside its border several times in November. The north said it accidentally dropped bombs once as it battled Darfur rebels just over the border in the north but has denied all other reports.

"The displaced started crossing into North Aweil after the attack on November 12 and have been arriving in waves at a makeshift camp in the town of Jaac - following a nearly two day journey across the rivers and through thick forest," IRC said in a statement.

Aid agencies are providing the displaced, who are mostly women and children, with food, household supplies and medical care. Immunisation was a priority because none of the fleeing children had had been vaccinated, IRC said.

"Epidemics can spread quickly among displaced populations so this is an easy intervention that saves lives," said the IRC's Vincent Kahi.

Kahi said Sudanese army planes circled overhead during a visit last week by a team composed of several aid agencies, which was sent to assess the needs of the displaced.

"The overflying planes caused additional fear and alarm among a group already traumatised by last month's bombings," he added.

Susan Purdin, the IRC's country director in South Sudan, said the latest violence and displacement were "troubling".

"With the referendum a month away, these incidents raise political tensions and distrust on both sides of the border," she said in the statement.

Humanitarian agencies are making contingency plans for the referendum. The U.N.'s refugee agency UNHCR predicts that up to 200,000 Sudanese may flee to Kenya if the vote leads to renewed violence.

"We are hoping for the best but preparing for the worst," IRC's Purdin said.

Northern Bahr el Ghazal gets humanitarian assistance for victims of air attacks

Sudantribune.com Juba, 08/12/10 - Authorities from Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State on Wednesday received humanitarian assistance for the victims of air attacks allegedly carried out by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF).

Speaking to *Sudantribune* from Gokmachar, Aweil North County Commissioner Kuol Athuai said some relief organizations in the area are providing medical care to thousands of the recently internally displaced persons, who fled air bombardments in the area.

"The initial figure which was 3,500 has increased. The house to house assessment conducted jointly with international relief organizations, after the attack on Kiir Adem has found out that a lot of people have left their homes. The entire village and her surrounding have been deserted."

"5,820 people are confirmed to have been displaced. This morning I received a report from the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission that 5,820 have been displaced," said Athuai.

Authorities release students arrested in Bahr-el-Ghazal

Al-Rai Al-Aam et al Khartoum, 09/12/10 – Authorities in southern Sudan released yesterday a group of students arrested recently by the SPLA in Bahr-el-Ghazal. Speaking at a press conference following the release, representatives of the Southern Sudan Students' Union called on the GoSS bear its responsibilities towards the referendum and rein in the SPLA and its intelligence body from such "irresponsible acts" of intimidation and gagging proponents of unity.

In a related development, *Akhir Lahza* quotes the head of the Youths' Committee at the NCP as having declared "full readiness to go back to square one".

"The drums of war being beat by the SPLM/A do not threaten us and is indeed a challenge we have longed for and would embrace were it not for our wishes for peace," he told the same press conference. He warned that the student body may "transcend political considerations" should the need arise.

SPLM fears Athor may have been transferred to Khartoum

Al-Sudani Khartoum, 09/12/10 – Informed sources report that the SPLM is afraid that renegade general George Athor may have been transferred to Khartoum with the help of the federal government. A committee is said to have been formed by the SPLM to identify the whereabouts of the renegade general with a focus on Khartoum as a likely hideout.

The sources intimate that these fears have come to the fore because the SPLM assumes Khartoum may react in such a way to their hosting of the Darfur movements in Juba.

Minnawi orders his troops to cross over to southern Sudan

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 09/12/10 - The leader of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army Mini Arcua Minnawi has reportedly called on his troops to cross over into southern Sudan, sources reveal. The "informed" sources said that the troops would cross over on board the trucks carrying returnees to the south.

Kidnapped Latvian pilots released in South Darfur

SUNA Khartoum, 08/12/10 - Security and intelligence authorities in West and South Darfur were able to secure the release of the three Latvian pilots after 35 days of abduction by an armed group in Nyala, South Darfur.

South Darfur Governor Abdul-Hameed Musa Kasha affirmed on Wednesday that the release was carried out thanks to an exchange of intelligence between authorities in West and South Darfur and without ransom.

ICC prosecutor accuses Sudanese rebels of killings

Reuters Amsterdam, 09/12/10 - International Criminal Court prosecutors on Wednesday accused two Sudanese rebels of responsibility for the killing of 12 African Union peacekeepers in Darfur in 2007.

The hearing was to determine whether rebel leaders Abdallah Banda Abakaer Nourain and Saleh Mohammed Jerbo Jamus - who were not in court - should stand trial for the deaths. Both men had earlier declined to attend the proceedings.

Banda and Jerbo are accused of three counts of war crimes, including murder, directing attacks against personnel and installations involved in a peacekeeping mission, and pillaging. "Banda and Jerbo personally led and physically participated in the attack," ICC senior trial lawyer Essa Faal told the court, citing witnesses.

The pre-trial chamber must decide within 60 days of the hearing whether Banda and Jerbo should stand trial.

Pirates' catch exposed route of arms in a tense Sudan

Boston.com Khartoum, 08/12/10 - It was September 2008 and a band of Somali pirates made a startling discovery.

The Ukrainian freighter they had just commandeered in the Gulf of Aden was packed with weapons, including 32 Soviet-era battle tanks, and the entire arsenal was headed for the regional government in southern Sudan. The Ukrainian and Kenyan governments vigorously denied that, insisting that the tanks were intended for the Kenyan military.

"This is a big loss for us," said Alfred Mutua, a spokesman for the Kenyan government, at the time.

But it turns out the pirates were telling the truth — and the Kenyans and Ukrainians were not, at least publicly. According to several secret State Department cables made public by WikiLeaks, the tanks not only were headed to southern Sudan, but they were the latest instalment of several underground arms shipments. By the time the freighter was seized, 67 T-72 tanks had already been delivered to bolster southern Sudan's armed forces against the government in Khartoum, an international pariah for its human rights abuses in Darfur.

Bush administration officials knew of the earlier weapons transactions and chose not to shut them down, an official from southern Sudan asserted in an interview, and the cables acknowledge the Kenyan officials' assertions that they had kept American officials informed about the deal. But once the pirates exposed the arms pipeline through Kenya, the Obama administration protested to the Ukrainian and Kenyan governments, even threatening sanctions, the cables show.

Rise in commodity prices in Khartoum

Ajras Al-Hurriya Khartoum, 09/12/10 – A tour of the markets in some parts of Khartoum revealed yesterday a rise in some commodity prices with sugar and cooking oil leading the list with a recorded 25 – 50% rise in the last two days.

Sudan men fined over "indecent" fashion show makeup

Reuters Khartoum, 08/1/10 - A Sudanese court convicted seven men of indecency on Wednesday after police accused them of wearing makeup during a fashion show in Khartoum, their lawyer said.

The men, amateur models at the "Sudanese Next Top Model Fashion Show" in June, were arrested by the public order police, a body known for its crackdowns on perceived indecent dress and drinking in the Muslim north, one defendant told **Reuters**.

All seven were found guilty on Wednesday and each fined 200 Sudanese pounds (\$80), as was a woman who faced the same charge for applying the makeup, said lawyer Nabil Adib.

"The court thought that they were indecently dressed ... The judge thought that wearing makeup could be offensive for men and allowing a woman to put makeup on men was against the law," said Adib.

The lawyer said he had argued in court that men, including religious preachers, regularly wore makeup for appearances on Sudan's state television station.

The defendants could have faced a maximum punishment of 40 lashes and imprisonment, said Adib.

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