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Media Monitoring Report

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Referendum Watch

SSRC fails to collect data from some registration centres

Al-Akhabar Khartoum, 13/12/10 – The SSRC has failed to get the full data for the voter registration for the southern Sudan referendum citing logistics difficulties due to communications problems and the rains. The SSRC has therefore decided to charter a helicopter to help collect the data from the registration centres.

SSRC spokesperson George Makuer says they still lack the data from 173 of the 2600 registration centres in the south.

Constitutional Court to hear lawsuits against SSRC

Al-Rai Al-Aam et al Khartoum, 13/12/10 – Informed sources report that the Constitutional Court will hear cases filed by a group of southern Sudanese requesting the annulment of the voter register and the dissolution of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) on the basis of “irregularities”. Zeinab Bashir, an advocate presenting the case, said that the group challenges the constitutional basis of the voter registration process on the grounds of intimidation, arrests and bias on tribal, ethnic and religious grounds.

She told a group of reporters yesterday that another argument they raised is that the SSRC has violated the Referendum Law with regards to the timelines for challenges to the practice and for appointing staff who are not neutral as some of them were members of the SPLM while others were below the 40-year old threshold set by the said law.

SAF Spokesperson confirms movement of heavily armed SPLA to Abyei

Akhabar Al-Youm Khartoum, 13/12/10 – SAF Spokesperson Al-Sawarmi Khalid has confirmed that heavily armed SPLA soldiers have entered Abyei with 10 tanks and 15 Land Cruisers. The SAF, he said, is not present in Abyei. He pointed out that it may seem that there are some parties who do not want the Abyei referendum to take place on schedule. The Spokesperson said that it is well known that the Misseriya would be the greater losers should war break out in Abyei.

Asked in a phone interview to comment on reports about the presence of representatives of the Darfur armed groups in Juba, the army spokesperson said that he heard US Special Envoy Scott Gration himself confirm that indeed the movements are present in Juba. He pointed out that these are bad signals and signs of ill intentions from the SPLA on the post-referendum situation. Unfortunately, he said, these movements issue statements and threats from the very part of Sudan that the people have tried to bring peace to.

Activists in Abyei protest arrest of Abyei police chief

Al-Sahafa Khartoum/Juba, 13/12/10 – The Sudan Police has put Abyei police chief Luka Deng under house arrest claiming he has been recruiting elements from the Dinka Ngok without the knowledge of his superiors.

Members of the Abyei Referendum Forum have protested the move calling for his immediate release claiming that the measures against him were not correct. In a press release yesterday, the Forum pointed out that his being under house arrest is not in the interest of the area’s security. The Forum further pointed out that the Abyei Police Chief was appointed by the Presidency of the Republic through consent of the Federal Ministry of Interior and his GoSS counterpart and

that the Sudan Police therefore has no right to unilaterally arrest him.

On his part, the Speaker Charles Abyei of the Abyei Legislative Assembly pointed out that as Police Chief, Luka Deng had the right to recruit the people of the area to the police force. He said that the arrest was carried out without prior notification of the Abyei Administration

The Misseriya have meanwhile revealed that the Dinka Ngok community has started to implement an earlier threat to that starting this month they would bar Misseriya cattle from grazing on their lands. Misseriya claim their cattle were shot at while grazing in Abyei. The Abyei Area Administration has vehemently denied these reports.

Post-referendum preparations already underway in South Sudan.

Gurtong.net Juba, 12/12/10 - The United Nations Integrated Referendum and Electoral Division (UNIRED) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has trained 74 four judges to handle petitions on the referendum process.

The judges were selected from all the states of South Sudan by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of South Sudan Justice Simon Wol Maketch.

Justice Maketch told the judges that the judiciary plays a vital role in the referendum.

“The vision of South Sudan will be fulfilled soon and you are expected to ensure the referendum process proceeds smoothly”, he told the judges when he closed the 5-day workshop at a Juba hotel.

“The faith of the credibility of the plebiscite partly lies on your hands and we will all be happy once we achieve the goal of South Sudanese”, said Justice Maketch.

The Capacity Development Specialist at UNDP/UNIRED Edith Kabui said the training covered several areas including Standards for Judicial Conduct, Ethics and Integrity among Judicial Support Staff, Report Writing and Case Data Collection, Initiation and handling of court documents and the role of the competent courts in the Southern Sudan referendum process.

“UNDP has called for the commitment of the South Sudanese leadership and the partners for the success of the plebiscite”, she said

Talks on Sudan external debts continue

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 13/12/10 – The IMF, the World Bank and the African Development Bank presented a number of mechanisms to resolve Sudan’s external debts and arrears in addition to steps needed for the Sudan to benefit from debt relief initiatives. Luka Biong who represented the SPLM at the meeting stated that the responsibility of Sudan’s external debts lie on the mother state in case South Sudan votes for secession. Biong said that the meeting focused on diagnosing the problem and offered solutions thereto in addition to what was expected from the Sudan in such solutions.

FVP Kiir opens the GoSS Presidential Palace in Juba

Ajras Al-Hurriya Juba, 13/12/10 – First Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit opened yesterday the newly-renovated Presidential Palace in Juba. GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar described the inauguration as a “major achievement of the GoSS” and promised the people more “vital and important” achievements to come.

SPLM fails to launch March for separation in southern states

Al-Raed et al Juba, 12/12/10 - Southern Sudanese citizens have boycotted a pro-secession march organised by the SPLM to mark the end of the voter registration process. Sources report that the SPLM had planned to encourage a one million man march in support for separation but only around 1,300 people turned out in Central Equatoria State, the same number in Upper Nile, 600 in Jonglei, 1,600 in Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal and about 140 in Eastern Equatoria. The sources note that the march did not take off in Western Equatoria due to differences between the Governor and the head of the SPLM office there while citizens in Western Bahr-el-Ghazal instead circulated pro-unity pamphlets. The sources said that the SPLM felt let down by the increase in the pro-unity rhetoric.

Carter Center denies monitoring a unilateral referendum in Abyei

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 13/12/10 – The Carter Center denies reports that it was ready to monitor a unilateral referendum on the Abyei area. The Center stated that it will monitor a separate referendum in Abyei only if the parties to the CPA agree on such a process. A statement by the Carter Center mentioned that the centre has two monitors in Abyei for the referendum and follow up of implementation of the CPA, particularly provisions pertaining to the southern Sudan referendum in Warrap State and in Abyei.

Youth observe a moment of silence in Khartoum against war

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 13/12/10 – The Youth Forum for Social Peace observed yesterday a 30-minutes moment of silence at Jackson Square in central Khartoum. Members of the forum were holding banners calling for peace, a free and fair referendum, tolerance and end to discrimination.

EDITORIAL: Dinka Ngok and Misseriya tribes will solve the question

Al-Ayyam 13/12/10 - National Consensus Forces presented an initiative to solve the question of Abyei based on direct talks between Ngok and Misseriya tribes without interference or pressure from international actors and the CPA parties. The initiative has been accepted by the Misseriya while the Dinka Ngok has a set of reservations.

The life-long intermingle and coexistence between the two tribes has made of Abyei a special area dictated by the prevailing geographical and ecological conditions. Both tribes are cattle herders who move from one place to another in search of fodder and water. They have been conducting such livelihood activities together for centuries. Hence, depriving any of them from freedom of movement would be tantamount to a death sentence. For them movement is life.

The National Consensus Forces initiative is based on the inherent faculties of the Ngok and Misseriya to solve the issue of voter eligibility in the Abyei referendum. We have been calling for this act for a long time. We believe that if the issue is left to the Misseriya and Ngok alone without political interventions the two tribes will agree on who to vote and on the boundaries of Abyei as they know better than any person their interests and traditional rights. The Dinka Ngok are the most qualified people to assess the importance of the river in the life of the Misseriya and they know very well how important it is to share water resources of Bahr-al-Arab. It would be no surprise if the two tribes agree to award Aragaba Azzarga to the Misseriya despite the decision the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

We have prematurely resorted to the arbitration without giving the local communities an opportunity to work out solutions by themselves.

Other Highlights

General Athor to send high level delegation to meet SPLM

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 12/12/10 - George Athor Deng Dut, a former SPLA General who turned rebel after losing his bid to become governor of Jonglei State in April's elections on Sunday, has announced the formation of an eight-member high level negotiating committee.

Speaking to *Sudan Tribune* from his base in Korfulous, Athor said the committee will be sent to Juba to negotiate with the SPLM. Athor's says his negotiating team includes religious leaders and civil society organizations.

Dok James Puok, spokesman for the high level committee on the side of General Athor, confirmed in a separate interview from Khartoum the formation of such a committee.

"The eight member committee has been formed and has already been approved by General Athor. It was formed yesterday and we are only waiting to meet delegation of the government of south Sudan coming from Juba to Malakal for negotiation," said Puok, explaining that Malakal is the venue of negotiation.

However, he said their delegation would first go to Korfulous for a briefing with General Athor.

Speaking from Juba, Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul, who heads the GoSS delegation to meet with Athor's representatives, said they are ready to leave.

"We have been briefed by the President of the government of south Sudan and we are ready to leave. Members of our delegation are all here in Juba and ready to leave to the venue of negotiation," Bishop Bul told *Sudan Tribune* from Juba on Sunday.

He, however, declined to give details of the talks saying he could not talk to the media until after talks.

Minnawi declares death of the Darfur Peace Agreement, seeks alternatives

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 12/12/10 - Minni Minnawi has declared the Darfur Peace Agreement he signed in May 2006 with the Sudanese government as dead. He also disclosed that his movement is in talks with Abdulwahid Al-Nur on reunification of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM).

"The agreement with them does not hold anymore," said Minnawi in an interview with the *AFP* on Sunday. He went further to say "I can say very clearly that whenever they target our forces we will also target their forces," said Minnawi. "We will defend ourselves."

Minnawi who was speaking from Juba stressed that as the Sudanese army consider his forces a target "That means they are pulling out of the DPA agreement".

Minnawi who spilt from the SLM after Haskanita conference in November 2005 said today he is discussing with, the SLM historical leader Abdulwahid Al-Nur ways to reunite the group. .

"Abdulwahid and I never stop contact with each other," he reaffirmed. The former senior presidential assistant further expressed his readiness to rejoin Doha peace process if he is invited to take part.

"Now we are talking about that," he said.

Eight rebel groups form a new alliance in Darfur

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 12/12/10 - Eight Darfur rebel groups have formed a new coalition to prepare for peace or war, said the signatories in a statement released Sunday from London.

The "Charter of Sudanese Alliance Resistance Forces in Darfur" is inked today in London by Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), United Revolutionary Forces Front (URFF), Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) led by Babiker Abdalla, Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) led by Mahgoub Hussein, United Resistance Front (URF), Democratic Justice and Equality Movement (DJEM), SLM led by Khamis Abdalla Abakar, and the Democratic Revolutionary Forces Front (DRFF).

The signatories pledged to adopt within two weeks the statute of the new alliance, announce its political and military structures and the formation of its delegation to the peace talks.

The charter further said the next two-week period will serve to draw up policies and strategies of the new alliance and to define its joint position for the peace negotiations.

"By signing this charter all the parties are committed to be united for peace and war alike," said Ahmed Hussein Adam, JEM official spokesperson when was asked about whether this move comes before to rejoin Doha for talks with the government.

"Just peace has always been at the top of JEM agenda, and we will be part of the alliance's delegation to Doha if there is a decision to join the process," he stressed.

Sudan's judiciary orders probe into video of woman being flogged

Sudan Tribune.com Khartoum, 12/12/10 - The Sudanese judiciary on Sunday issued a statement announcing a probe into the manner by which a Sudanese woman was flogged as part of a punishment handed down on her, Sudan's state media said.

This week a You Tube video surfaced showing an unidentified woman in a voluminous cloak on her knees screaming and pleading in agony and pain with blue-uniformed policemen who took turns whipping her across the head and feet.

The policemen are shown to be laughing as the woman received the punishment and they are heard saying that she is sentenced to 50 lashes.

The video stirred widespread outcry among Sudanese around the world and even some pro-government columnists wrote critically of the incident.

"The investigation was started immediately after the images of the young woman, being punished under Articles 154 and 155 of the 1991 Sudanese penal code, appeared on the Internet," the judiciary said in a statement.

The statement said the investigation would look into whether the punishment was carried out improperly.

Al-Sudani reports in a related story that the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee may request parliament to summon the Ministry of Interior over the video and other issues related to human rights violations.

Charity organizations and Salafi groups to form a New Islamic

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 13/12/10 - A new Islamic Front will be formed by leaders of charity organizations and Salafi groups to face what they depicted religious, social, security and political challenges in Sudan following secession of the south. Informed sources told *Al-Sahafa* that the new front is backed by religious leaders from gulf countries including the Kuwaiti national Abdulrahman Abdulkhalig, a prominent leader of the Salafi movement in the Arab world. Mr. Abdulkhalig has recently presented a series of lectures in the Sudan upon invitation from Zee Annourein Organization chaired by Imadadeen Albakri Abuharaz.

Press Council suspends three more sports dailies

Akhbar Al-Youm Khartoum, 13/12/10 – The Press and Publications Council has suspended three more sports newspapers. Starting next Wednesday, *Goun* and *Al-Zaem* have been served a one-day suspension while *Wahj Al-Safwa* would suffer a two-day suspension. This brings to six the number of sports dailies that have suffered a similar fate of late.

Rise in commodity prices not linked to referendum – Khartoum Governor

Al-Raed Khartoum, 13/12/10 – Khartoum state Governor Abdulrahman Al-Khidir says the recent rise in the prices of flour has nothing to do with the forthcoming referendum but is a reflection of the rise in commodity prices in the international market. He pointed out that the repercussions of referendum could only be felt roughly after one year. He also pointed out that the rise in some other commodity prices could be attributed to the rumours going the rounds and attempts by some traders to make a quick gain.

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