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Media Monitoring Report

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Voting Watch: Day 4

- Voting results on Tuesday – NEC (**Akhbar Al-Youm**)
- Sudan poll body to start announcing election results 16 April (**Sudan Radio**)
- Sudan electoral commission suspends vote in some areas (**AFP**)
- PCP candidate calls for halt of voting (**Al-Sahafa**)
- Voting results will ensure NCP landslide victory – Nafie (**Akhbar Al-Youm**)
- Lam Akol says two SLPM-DC members killed in Unity State (**ST**)
- Sudan elections show up deep divides (**Reuters**)
- UN backs voting extension in Sudan (**CNN**)
- Presidential adviser reveals features of coming government (**Al-Ahdath**)
- Police cordon off polling station in Umbada (**Al-Ahdath**)
- Fears over possible violence in Southern Kordofan (**Ajras Al-Hurriah**)
- Carter election observer mission says no evidence of fraud in Sudan poll (**ST**)
- WES authorities up in arms over voters' intimidation allegations (**ST**)
- Southern Sudan elections body admits polling mistakes (**Al-Rai Al-Aam**)
- Voter stabs himself after realising he did not vote for Al-Bashir (**Al-Rai Al-Aam**)
- Staff moving with ballot papers unescorted apprehended (**Ajras Al-Hurriya**)
- A lorry symbol turned cock in Al-Deaim (**Al-Intibaha**)
- Arman to establish opposition party (**Akhir Lahza**)
- Peaceful demonstration for ballot boxes (**Miraya**)
- NEC on children vote in Kassala (**Al-Watan**)
- Original registration books used to verify voters' names (**Miraya**)
- Women Voting in Large Numbers in Southern Sudan (**VOA**)

Other Highlights

- Chad-Sudan border reopens after seven years (**AFP**)
- Sudanese team joins UNAMID efforts to find missing peacekeepers (**ST**)
- Commentary: European ignorance and Sudan (**Africannews.com**)

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Highlights

Voting results on Tuesday – NEC

Akhbar Al-Youm reports NEC Deputy Chairman Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah as saying that the Commission would announce the elections results on Tuesday 20 April adding that seven constituencies in Khartoum state were still facing a problem of symbol mix up. He said the problem of shortage of ballot boxes in Khartoum state is resolved by borrowing the same from El-Gezira state in addition to 450 boxes brought from the Red Sea state. He pointed out that voting percentage reached 67% in the northern state, 54% in River Nile state, 40% in Kassala state, 60% in Jonglei state, 65% in Unity state and 42% in South Darfur state.

Al-Sahafa reports that voter turnout is decreasing including in Khartoum state and the opposition political parties continue to complain of voting irregularities.

Sudan poll body to start announcing election results 16 April

Sudan Radio 14/4/10 - The NEC has declared that the announcement of the elections results will begin on Friday [16 April] by announcing names of 27 MPs who were recommended from their respective states including Northern Kordofan [central Sudan], Kassala [eastern Sudan] and southern states.

Head of [NEC] Technical Committee Lt-Gen Al-Hadi Muhammad Ahmad told Sudan radio that vote counting for the executive and legislative elections would begin on Friday.

Sudan Radio further reported yesterday that the NEC with the assistance of the United Nations mission which is supporting the electoral process and partners, have completed preparations to open a media centre to announce election results at the Friendship Hall in Khartoum.

Sudan electoral commission suspends vote in some areas

AFP 13/4/10 - Sudan's electoral commission suspended voting in some constituencies on Tuesday after logistical difficulties and opposition boycotts marred the country's first multi-party polls in 24 years.

"We decided to freeze the election in some constituencies because of technical problems," the commission's deputy secretary general Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah told reporters.

He did not elaborate on the problems but delays in distributing ballot papers and opening polling stations had already prompted the commission to announce a two-day extension to the scheduled three days of voting which had been due to end on Tuesday.

That announcement followed appeals for a prolongation of polling from both the southern former rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement and former US president Jimmy Carter, whose Carter Centre think tank is monitoring the election.

According to **Sudan Radio**, Lt-Gen Al-Hadi added that the chairman of the NEC would issue a decision canceling elections in fifteen constituencies, of which six are national and nine in the states of Khartoum, River Nile [northern Sudan], Red Sea [eastern Sudan], Sinnar [central Sudan], Northern Kurdufan, and Al-Qadarif [eastern Sudan]. He said that the elections in these constituencies would be conducted in two months' time after the announcement of the results of

the current elections.

Reuters 14/4/10 reported today that Sudanese election officials on Wednesday said they were considering re-running ballots in a very few constituencies to correct errors in voting forms, as the troubled poll entered its fourth day.

Officials from Sudan's National Elections Commission told Reuters they were considering suspending voting for seats in national and state assemblies in some states after discovering they had printed the wrong party symbols next to some candidates' names on ballot papers.

"Logos have been swapped in a very limited number of constituencies," said commission deputy chairman Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah.

"According to the law it (the commission) can cancel elections and hold them again within 60 days. That is one of the options we are considering."

Other commission members and international observers told Reuters the printing errors were thought to have affected ballots in 15 to 18 state and national constituencies.

Voting has been taking place in 270 national constituencies and just under 700 state constituencies in African's largest state.

"There are ballots that are missing symbols, duplicate symbols, even missing candidates on some forms, so that (a partial re-run) would be the logical step to take," said one international source close to the elections.

PCP candidate calls for halt of voting

PCP candidate for Khartoum state governor Adam Al-Tahir Hamdoun said the NEC is to blame for all the errors and the irregularities in the voting process, saying the NEC members should resign immediately, ***Al-Sahafa*** reports. He also called for suspension of the ongoing voting. Hamdoun pointed out registered names in some constituencies exceeded the number of residents of those constituencies.

Voting results will ensure NCP landslide victory – Nafie

In a first statement after voting kickoff, Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie appeared optimistic that the NCP will achieve landslide victory in the current elections, ***Akhbar Al-Youm*** reports.

He said the high turnout and the unprecedented enthusiasm on the part of the voters indicated that the people "would not betray {the NCP} and that they know the path that will lead them to the achievement of their hopes".

Lam Akol says two SPLM-DC members killed in Unity State

Sudan Tribune website 13/4/10 — Lam Akol, SPLM-DC leader and a candidate for the GoSS presidency said on Tuesday that two voters had been killed after the southern army opened fire at a polling station in Unity State.

"I was informed by telephone that at 11 am (0800 GMT), the southern army went to a polling station in Riak in (the southern) Unity State and opened fire, killing two voters and wounding one candidate," said Lam Akol, who is challenging southern leader Salva Kiir in elections for the head of the semi-autonomous government of south Sudan. The report could not immediately be confirmed by independent sources.

Akol called on the National Election Commission to exercise its powers and to adopt serious measures to prevent the SPLA from intervening in the polling centers in southern Sudan.

The chairman of the SPLM-DC further said foreign observers are completely absent from most of the polling stations in southern Sudan adding they are only present in the cities.

Today an NCP delegation composed of presidential adviser Salah Abdallah Gosh and Agnes Lukudu, head of NCP southern Sudan sector was received by the SPLM chairman Salva Kiir in Juba. The two officials complained over the SPLA intervention and intimidation in the electoral process against the NCP candidate in southern Sudan. Salva Kiir directed to release immediately a number of NCP members and promised to free the others soon.

In a separate development, there are many reports in Lakes state that SPLA soldiers have detained cars belonging to SPLM-DC and NCP. But the SPLA spokesman responded that there are checkpoints because of disarmament exercises in the state and the soldiers do not stop cars involved in the elections like those carrying ballot boxes.

Sudan elections show up deep divides

Reuters 13/4/10 - Sudan's elections were set up under a peace deal designed to unify the country - but in Khartoum they are showing up the oil-producing nation's deep divides.

In the centre of the desert capital, the NCP has rolled out a slick operation with video displays, banners, t-shirted volunteers and long lines of police and security officers outside polling stations voting en masse.

Just forty minutes drive away from the centre a different scene is unfolding.

Walking through the sprawling slums on the outskirts of Khartoum - home to hundreds of thousands of refugees from the south, Darfur and other parts of Sudan's periphery -- you might not know the country was half way through its first multi party vote in almost a quarter of a century.

Any spark of election fever that might have been building up was snuffed out by the last minute withdrawal of Yasir Arman, presidential candidate for south Sudan's dominant Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

The SPLM is boycotting most voting in northern Sudan, complaining that President Omar al-Bashir's NCP has rigged the vote.

"It was a shame that he (Arman) did not stand," said one man from the capital's Mandela camp, who declined to give his name. "Now I will vote for no one."

"Most of the people are not voting here. Everyone is too busy chasing a living. Everyone knows it is a closed race for the NCP," said Moawia Ahmed Massa sitting in a dark tea shack in Mandela's market.

A few torn SPLM posters cover the shop hoardings in the dusty market place, but it is hard to find anyone with the telltale green ink on their left index finger, the indelible mark given to voters at polling centres.

"I might vote this tomorrow or this evening, but I'll be working most of the time," said Massa, a surgery administrator who moved to Khartoum from Pibor county in south Sudan's Jonglei state 10 years ago while the last north-south civil war was raging.

"Bukra (tomorrow)," was the regular refrain from other stall holders in the market, when asked

when they plan to vote."

"I am not going to vote for anyone," said Abu Abeid Moula sitting next to Massa in the tea shack, filled with clouds of smoke rising from an incense burner.

"If they can sort out the housing here before the elections I'll vote. If they can't I won't," said Moula, originally from the Nuba mountains area of South Kordofan state, one of the key battle grounds in the civil conflict.

Analysts have long diagnosed one of the main weaknesses in Sudan's political system as the concentration of power and wealth among the central Khartoum elite, at the expense of surrounding regions and populations.

Deep-felt resentment over central domination and marginalisation has helped fuelled revolts in the south, the east and most recently in the remote western Darfur. Sudan's two-decade civil war ended in the 2005 peace deal that set up the current elections.

Now the survivors of many of these conflicts, sheltering in mud and brick shacks on the edges of Khartoum, are feeling just as alienated by the running elections process.

Voters queued for hours in the centre of Khartoum on the first day of voting, with opposition supporters accusing the NCP of bussing in its supporters in a show of strength.

Two men and a woman slowly went through the voting process in one of the three polling centres in Mandela's Mosab bin Omair School in neighbouring Mayo camp just before voting closed on Monday. Staff at the school had registered less than a quarter of their combined 3,419-strong electorate in two days of voting.

Officials quoted similar statistics in two voting centres in Fatima al-Zahra school in neighbouring Mayo camp.

"The turnout is low. But there is a lot of ignorance here. People do not know a lot about the elections. The voting has been going smoothly," said one official in Mandela.

Outside the market James "Bond" Koch, sits outside his hut in front of a pile of dirty washing. The tall, rake-thin former southern rebel soldier is now in his late 60s and makes his living doing laundry.

"If there was a box on the form for Salva Kiir, I would vote for him," he says. Unfortunately SPLM leader Kiir is running in south Sudan, not Khartoum, for the presidency of just the underdeveloped south. "It's an important election, so maybe I should vote anyway. Maybe tomorrow"

UN backs voting extension in Sudan

CNN 14/4/10 - The United Nations on Tuesday applauded the decision by Sudan's National Election Commission to extend voting in the nation's multi-party elections by two days until Thursday.

"The UN also hopes that this will enable more Sudanese voters to cast their vote, especially in areas and constituencies where the technical errors caused delays to the voting process or where voters have been unable to determine which polling center they are registered in," Martin Nesirky, a spokesman for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, told reporters in New York.

The extension came after Sudanese and international observers complained of technical problems, including ballots being sent to the wrong polling stations and registers missing voters' names...

The voting, which began Sunday, has been scrutinized by some 750 international and 18,000 domestic observers. Among them is former US President Jimmy Carter, who on Tuesday criticized those political parties that have pulled out of the elections.

"I don't think that they should have pulled out and we and the United Nations and the United States' representatives all urged them to stay in the race," Carter told CNN.

"You have to remember two things: one is they withdrew basically after the campaign period was over at the last minute and they have known about these problems for months." Secondly, it's too late for them to withdraw legally. The last date was back in February, when they could have withdrawn legally. They didn't do so."

Presidential adviser reveals features of coming government

Presidential Adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail has revealed features of the upcoming government if the NCP wins elections, *Al-Ahdath* reports. He said the forthcoming government would be formed from the NCP, SPLM and DUP (mainstream) adding it would be a broad-based government and would also include the personalities who participated in elections at the presidential level but did not win. Ismail also revealed that the national Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi had promised to cooperate with the post-election government.

"We would extend the invitation to all parties, even those who have not participated in the elections, to join the government, because we believe this is a critical moment in our history," says Presidential Adviser Ghazi Salaheldine Atabani, according to Bloomberg 14/4/10.

"We're facing important decisions like self-determination in the South and we'd like to garner as much support and as much consensus as we can," Atabani said.

Police cordon off polling station in Omdurman

Central reserve police personnel yesterday cordoned off a polling station in constituency 25 in Umri Al-Jadeeda (Omdurman) when opposition forces threatened to burn down the station because of what they described as visible fraud, *Al-Ahdath* reports. Large number of people in the area took to streets and shouted anti-NCP slogans.

Fears over possible violence in Southern Kordofan

Political forces in southern Kordofan have said local residents were getting impatient due to ongoing voting fraud by the NCP, *Ajras Al-Hurriya* reports. SPLM leading figure in Mujlad Locality Muhanad Zamil said the NEC would be held responsible should the situation deteriorate, saying the registered voters were 120,296 but the political forces were surprised that the number of the voters in the register now is 166,284.

Carter election observer mission says no evidence of fraud in Sudan poll

Sudan Tribune website 13/4/10 - The head of the Carter Center observation mission in Sudan, former US president Jimmy Carter, in an interview with *AFP* said that there was no proof of fraud in the Sudanese national elections currently underway running contrary to assertions made by opposition.

Carter told *AFP* that voters could not always find their names on electoral lists but he explained, "Those are administrative problems but no evidence of fraud so far as I know."

The former president, who is leading a team of 70 observers, also welcomed a decision by the National Election Commission (NEC) to extend by another two days the three-day vote that kicked off Sunday, saying that should be adequate to allow everyone to vote.

"There are some problems but they are trying to be corrected and I think it's a very good decision by the NEC to extend the voting for two more days," he said, sitting under the welcome shade of a tree in Mugoro, south Sudan.

WES authorities up in arms over voters' intimidation allegations

Sudan Tribune website 13/04/10 - With polling entering day four in Sudan's historic general elections, authorities from Western Equatoria State, one of the 10 states in South Sudan have already emerged to express dismay over alleged interference into the conduct of the elections.

Yesterday, Mr. Louis Wabeyote, the Press Secretary to the WES caretaker government, told **Sudan Tribune** that earlier reports alleging voters' intimidation and harassment reportedly in some parts of the state were mere rumors and speculation.

"We need to correct some of these allegations which may give wrong impressions of the real situation on the ground. No one has been intimidated by state agents. Voting has been and is still going on peacefully here [WES]", Mr. Wabeyote told **Sudan Tribune** by phone.

His remarks follow scores of allegations labeled against state authorities, where the army and some police forces were allegedly interfering into the voting procedures, contrary to regulations set by the NEC.

Such irregularities, mostly blamed on NEC were cited in polling stations within Tambura, Maridi and Ezo counties. Efforts to get a comment from NEC were futile by press time. But the Press Secretary to the caretaker Governor said irregularities were only cited in the areas where registered voters complained of missing names on the registry, something that delayed voting in most stations.

Southern Sudan elections body admits mistakes in the polling process

The South Sudan High Elections Committee has acknowledged irregularities in some polling stations in the region, reports **Al-Rai Al-Aam**. Elections official, Anthony Eriki, told a press conference in Juba yesterday that the process is continuing smoothly despite these violations.

Meanwhile Jackson Elia, a Spokesperson for the elections security committee for southern Sudan, rebuffed earlier reports of the arrest of some elections observers in the region.

Voter stabs himself after realising he did not vote for Al-Bashir

Mohamed Murkaz Badawi (54) was rushed to the Police Hospital in Burri to be treated for knife stabs he inflicted upon himself yesterday when he discovered that he had, by mistake, not voted for his preferred candidate Omar Al-Bashir, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports. According to the paper, the man was turned back by staff at the polling station yesterday when he returned to correct his error of the previous day. Reportedly, the voter decided to stab himself and would have succeeded had it not been for prompt intervention from nearby people who rushed him to the hospital. NCP members visited him at the hospital yesterday.

Staff moving with ballot papers unescorted apprehended

Political parties' agents in West Darfur state apprehended a female polling staff who was carrying a box of ballot papers and moving without escort, **Ajras Al-Hurriya** reports. Eyewitness said the staff member was taken to a police station, where she refused to register a report

against her and advised them to take her to a Prosecutor who also asked them to complain to the NEC. State Elections Committee Chairman apologized for the mistake which, he said, was not intentional and promised to investigate the incident.

A lorry symbol turned into a cock in Al-Deaim

Candidate of constituency (23) in the town of Al Deaim, South Darfur state, Mohamed Bursham has complained to the NEC, saying his electoral symbol which was a lorry is turned into a cock in the ballot papers, *Al-Intibaha* reports. Barsham has demanded a repeat of voting in the constituency.

Arman to establish opposition party

Akhir Lahza reports informed sources revealed yesterday a move by former SPLM presidential candidate Yasir Arman to establish an opposition party in the North following escalation of differences between him and SPLM Chairman Salva Kiir Mayardit over SPLM's boycott of elections in the North, a move repeatedly opposed by Kiir. Some sources said that Arman as he is now certain that the South will separate in 2011, wants to set up a party in the North while other sources claim that the move by Arman is intended to block the path for SPLM leaders Abdul Aziz Al-Hilu and Malik Aggar for the post of chairman of the SPLM Northern Sector.

Peaceful demonstration for ballot boxes

Radio Miraya 14/4/10 - Hundreds of voters from Luri polling center, six kilometers north of Juba, have conducted a peaceful protest demanding the delivery of ballots boxes to their center for the remaining three days of the election. The citizens are frustrated because they have not been able to vote since the start of elections on Sunday.

An irate registered voter said that his registration slip states the number 0144 which is specifically linked to Luri, however, his name is missing from the voters list. Mark Peter said he and his friends had pooled their money together to rent a car in order to travel to polling stations throughout Juba County in search for their missing names. None of them have met with any success.

Peter blasted the GoSS, saying it neither wants him nor 700 other registered voters whose names are missing, to vote. The discouraged Peter further said he had given up on voting and will remain at home for the rest of the polling period.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Central Equatoria State High Elections Committee, James Brown, said that Luri area falls under Bilfam voting center. Speaking to Radio Miraya, Brown pledged to provide transportation for the protestors to assist them in voting.

The Chairman added that special provisions were made on Tuesday for elderly and pregnant voters. The ballot boxes from Bilfam were brought to Juba for one hour for them to vote. All the other voters will be transported to Bilfam on Wednesday to vote, Brown assured.

NEC on children vote in Kassala

While touring polling stations in Kassala, *Al-Watan* reporter noted that children were casting their votes at constituency (3) in the state. According to the paper, Kassala state High Elections Committee Chairman Sayed Mohamed Abdul Moneim has confirmed voting by children in the said constituency and argued that since nobody has challenged their eligibility the voting is lawful even if they are seven years old.

Original registration books used to verify voters' names

Radio Miraya 14/4/10 - The Head of the Konyo Konyo Boma polling station in Juba, Polan Victor, said that original registration books have been brought to polling centers in Juba to verify missing names. He urged officials to disseminate this information to citizens. Victor said this was a solution for the difficulty faced by many voters in finding their names at polling centers where they had been registered.

Women Voting in Large Numbers in Southern Sudan

VOA13/4/10 - As voting continues for a third day in Sudan's first multiparty elections in 24 years, women appear to have come out in huge numbers to participate in the elections. Analysts say the women's vote may be the determining factor in the outcome of the elections.

Despite extreme logistical and organizational challenges facing the Sudanese elections, the women of Sudan appear to be more determined to have their voices heard in these landmark elections.

It will take days to determine exact figures, but visits to Southern Sudan polling stations in the past three days have shown that women clearly outnumber men in voting queues. Reports from other parts of Sudan also indicate that more women have cast their votes, most of them for the first time in their lives.

The deputy secretary-general of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Southern Sudan, Ann Itto, related her voting experience at a press conference in Juba. "It was the first time I ever voted in my life. The feeling was great. And I felt that I had made my contribution to making this country a better place to live. More than 70 percent of the people in the queue were women ... pregnant ones and those who had just delivered the other day," she said.

Women have also proven to be more tolerant to the frustrating moments during the voting process, patiently waiting for their turn to vote. This reporter witnessed a number of men turning their back and leaving the polling stations with frustration, but many women stayed on to cast their votes.

This woman voter explained the frustration she encountered at a polling station in Juba.

She says some names are written in English at the polling stations, and it is hard to recognize those names because they are not in Arabic.

The SPLM's Itto said women, just like men, faced numerous frustrations at polling stations across the country, but there was an obvious determination in them to exercise their voting rights. "The determination I saw on the faces of those Sudanese who wanted to have an opportunity to choose their leaders for the next government, is the determination that SPLM would like to protect," she said.

There are also many women candidates in the elections. According to the Southern Sudan Election Committee almost 1,000 women are running for legislative and local government positions. Three women are running for governorships in the Southern Sudan states of Western Equatoria, Warrap and Unity.

Other Highlights

Chad-Sudan border reopens after seven years

AFP 13/4/10 - The border between Chad and Sudan has reopened seven years after the Darfur conflict forced its closure, Chadian officials said Tuesday, in another sign of improved relations between the former foes.

"The border was opened Saturday and traffic is moving freely between the two countries," Hassan Ibrahim, a local official in Adre, told AFP by telephone from the Chadian border town.

"Sudanese taxis are going back and forth and so are the people," he added. His town is located about 34 kilometres (21 miles) from El-Geneina in Darfur. The reopening of the border was also confirmed by an official in Chad's foreign ministry who requested anonymity.

The border decision was part of the accord signed in January normalising relations between Chad and Sudan, the official said.

Sudanese team joins UNAMID efforts to find missing peacekeepers

Sudan Tribune website 13/4/10 - Sudanese Government dispatched a special team of investigators to help UNAMID in the search of the missing peacekeepers, UNAMID said today. Four UNMAID police advisers, two male and two female from South Africa, went missing on April 12. The peacekeepers remain unaccounted since April 11 when they left their team site, outside Nyala, at 4 pm returning to their private accommodations.

Government officials "informed Professor (Ibrahim) Gambari they had dispatched a special to Nyala to assist our colleagues" on the search operations conducted by the hybrid mission to find the missing peacekeepers.

Noureddine Mezni, UNMAID spokesperson said JSR Ibrahim Gambari is in close contact with the Sudanese Government which assured him that every effort is being done.

Commentary: European ignorance and Sudan

Africanews.com 13/4/10 - Savo Heleta, AfricaNews contributor in Johannesburg, South Africa: Speaking at a press conference in Egypt, Javier Solana, the European Union foreign policy chief, said that he does not support independence for South Sudan.

As agreed in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended one of the longest and bloodiest wars in Africa, South Sudan will hold a referendum on self-determination in 2011 where the people in the south will decide if they want to remain a part of Sudan or form an independent country.

Despite all that, Solana already dismisses the will of the people in the south and emphasizes; "it is very important that the country remained unified".

"I looked at the chart, I looked at the distribution of resources, and I looked at the situation as a whole. I am for the unity of the country", said Solana.

It's that easy and straightforward for Europeans to make crucial decisions regarding Africans, their lives, and their future. Just take a look at the charts, numbers, resources, and then make a quick decision.

It happened before, when white Europeans, during their ruthless scramble for Africa's resources, decided what the map of Africa should look like.

A few centuries later, white Europeans still want to make final decisions that will profoundly affect the lives of Africans. The fact that the southerners in Sudan have been treated as lesser human beings first by the British colonial administration and then by the successive Arab governments in Khartoum for over a century does not matter at all to Javier Solana and Europeans.

Brutal murder

It doesn't matter that millions of southerners have been brutally murdered by the Islamist regimes in Khartoum since 1956.

It doesn't matter to Solana and Europeans that the military regimes in Khartoum have marginalized the south politically, socially, and economically for over five decades.

Given the Sudanese post-independence history and the deep-rooted, protracted, and bloody conflict between the north and south over power, resources, religion, ethnicity, and self-determination, a peaceful separation may be the best solution for Sudan.

But the European Union does not seem to care what's best for Sudan and particularly the people in the south. It seems the Europeans have already made up their minds regarding the future of Sudan. Never mind the hopes and aspirations of the people in South Sudan.

A few years ago, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia and was supported by Solana and the European Union. Then Montenegro had a referendum where people voted for independence and this was also fully supported by Solana and the European Union.

But when Africans in South Sudan want to decide in what kind of a country they want to live in, then Solana and Europeans have a problem. They want to dismiss their legitimate right for self-determination just to keep the status quo in Africa and the world.

After decades of unthinkable discrimination and brutality by various Khartoum regimes, people in South Sudan should disregard ignorant politicians such as Javier Solana, who like to play games with people's lives around the world, and decide for themselves in 2011 about their future.