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Media Monitoring Report

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Referenda Watch

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Highlights

3.7 million Voters have so far been registered – SSRC

Al-Akhbar 16/12/10 – Director of SSRC Information Department George Makuer told reporters yesterday that so far 3,700,000 voters have been registered, adding that results from 114 centres in Jonglei, Unity and North Bahr el Ghazal states have been delayed due to logistical problems. He denied any move to cancel or postpone the referendum in some areas in the South.

However, Governor of North Bahr El Ghazal state Lt. Gen. Bol Malong has dismissed the SSRC's statement about the situation in his state, saying North Bahr el Ghazal is totally free from tribal conflicts, security problems and rains.

SSRC denies intention to delay referendum in some south Sudan areas

Sudan Tribune website 15/12/10 - The Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) has denied it has any intention to cancel or delay the referendum in some areas in south Sudan, the SSRC's media secretary Gorge Makuer said on Wednesday.

Makuer further said that the commission, which is organizing South Sudan vote on independence, was on schedule to hold the referendum in all areas and as planned in January 9, 2011.

The SSRC's spokesman also said that the commission did not receive any notification from Sudan Constitutional Court to the effect that it had accepted a motion put forward by a legal team against alleged violations in the voter-registration process.

However, Makuer added that the commission does not object to dealing with all judicial authorities regarding the legal aspects of the commission's work.

News of the motion was reported on Monday December 13 by the government-run Sudan Media Center (SMC) which reported that the constitutional court had accepted the motion "in form and content" ...

Referendum will be conducted in Jonglei, Unity and North Bahr el Ghazal

Al-Ahram Al-Youm 16/12/10 – SSRC official spokesperson Ms Sua'd Ibrahim Eissa has confirmed that referendum would be conducted on time and in all states, adding that there is nothing that prevents its conduct in Jonglei, Unity and North Bahr el Ghazal state, citing statement attributed yesterday to Speaker of the SSLA James Wani Igga. "Igga has no authority to suspend referendum," she said.

NCP says SPLM continues voter registration in West Equatoria state

Al-Khartoum 16/12/10 – The NCP has claimed that SPLM continues to register voters for the upcoming referendum in "Madibi" area in "Eibya" County, "Karika" and "Kutub" area in "Mandri" County (West Equatoria state) in clear violation of the referendum law.

NCP official Dr. Osama Ali Twfiq told *SMC* that registration in those areas was still continuing

and that SPLA Intelligence is forcing civilians to register and is keeping their registration slips to vote on their behalf. He pointed out that residents of Equatoria state have abstained from registering to keep the country united.

Vote cancellation will reignite war – SSRC Chair

Al-Ahdath 16/12/10 – SSRC Chair Prof. Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil said that cancellation of the referendum would lead to war, adding there are quarters who would not accept anything less than a timely vote. At a meeting with the National Assembly Peace and Unity Committee, Khalil pointed out that there were no difficulties facing the process other than the shortness of time, saying registration process is proceeding smoothly. Head of the Committee Ramadan Lako told reporters after the meeting yesterday that the SSRC admitted receiving petitions against referendum.

SSRC says receive no notification from constitutional court about suit

Al-Ahdath 16/12/10 – SSRC has categorically denied receiving any notification from the constitutional court to the effect that it had accepted a petition filed by some groups against referendum registration procedures.

SSRC spokesperson Sua'd Ibrahim Eissa told the newspaper that the Commission has not been notified to appear before the court, saying the Commission would continue its work in a normal manner.

SSRC Information Director George Makuer told reporters yesterday that the centres whose results were yet to be made public are located in Jonglei, Unity and North Bahr El Ghazal states, adding that it is the SSRC which will decide conduct of the vote or otherwise.

Al-Watan 16/12/10 reports George Makuer has said that if the SSRC receives a notification from the court it would deal with it according to the law. He said the petitioners could have filed their suit with the referendum courts.

NCP has no connection with court petition – official

Al-Tayyar 16/12/10 – NCP Political Secretary Ibrahim Ghandour has denied any connection between the NCP and lawsuit filed with the constitutional court against the referendum, saying his party is committed to a timely process.

In an interview to the newspaper, Ghandour said SPLM has succeeded in hiding its separatist tendencies for too long, indicating that the majority southern Sudanese favour unity but their choice has been hijacked by SPLM separatist minority.

SPLM withdraws its constitutional court members to block quorum

Al-Rai Al-Aam 16/12/10 – Secretary-General of the Democratic Salvation Front David “Del Jal” has revealed that the SPLM had pulled out its members from the constitutional court to prevent quorum needed to look into the suits filed against referendum measures.

Meanwhile, he said the increasing security tension and tribal conflict in the South is a proof that the SPLM is unable to rule the region revealing that SPLM is hit by a new defection as commander of SPLA 8th division has mutinied in the Upper Nile state.

“We will protect referendum even if by gun” – SPLM reacts to court

Al-Sudani 16/12/10 – News of the constitutional court having accepted a petition challenging referendum procedures have sparked a wave of threats, with SPLM warning to go back to war should the court proceed with the suit to disrupt the process. The SSRC has also announced that it is not concerned with the court decision accepting the petition, saying it has not been officially notified.

National Assembly Peace and Unity Committee Chair Ramadan Lako said the SPLM would not accept any decision from the court, adding that cancellation of registration would mean repeal of a CPA provision and return to war.

Meanwhile, sources said the SPLM has described the court move as a “serious step”, adding if the court rules for suspension of the referendum that would mean return to war. High level sources in the SPLM and GoSS have reportedly stressed that the right of the southern Sudanese to decide their destiny would be protected by all means including the “gun”.

South Sudan voter registration “credible”- report

AFP 16/12/10 - The registration of voters for a referendum on independence for south Sudan was "credible" despite a raft of logistical and security problems, observers from the Carter Centre said.

"Observers reported that referendum centres generally opened on time and with appropriate materials across northern and southern Sudan, and that southern Sudanese have had adequate opportunities to register," the US-based group said in a statement posted on its website late on Wednesday.

Organisers of the vote said almost three million people signed up during the three-week registration period that ended on December 8.

"Although the voter registration... faced several logistical, procedural and security challenges, the process was generally credible and represents a strong step toward the successful conduct of the referendum," the Carter Centre said.

The centre, founded by former US president Jimmy Carter, noted some security problems and "a few isolated incidents of intimidation" but stressed there were no "systematic attempts to undermine the process."

"In the overwhelming majority of locations, registration was conducted in a peaceful environment, with the notable exceptions of security incidents in Akobo and Kiir Adem in southern Sudan," the statement said.

The Carter Centre urged authorities in north and south to solve "key political issues" ahead of the January 9 referendum, including the question of the disputed oil district of Abyei and future citizenship arrangements should the south vote to break away.

"It is critical that key political issues are resolved.... (Particularly) the ambiguity surrounding the future of Abyei and the citizenship of nationals in both northern and southern Sudan, before the referendum," it said.

The referendum was the centrepiece of a 2005 peace agreement between north and south that put an end to two decades of civil war, and could lead to the break-up of Africa's largest nation...

"Also important is the inclusion of the entire Sudanese population in the debates surrounding unity or secession," the Carter Centre said.

"The possible secession of southern Sudan is an issue of critical significance to the future of the country, and all segments of Sudanese society should become actively engaged in the process," it said.

The statement listed a series of "key issues... that should be addressed urgently to facilitate a smooth and peaceful referendum" -- particularly voter education.

Observers from the Carter Centre monitored voter registration across Sudan and in eight nations where out-of-country registration took place.

FVP Kiir says foreign quarters seeking to sabotage referendum –

Al-Rai Al-Aam 16/12/10 – FVP and GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit has accused unnamed local and foreign quarters of seeking to sabotage the referendum, adding that the conduct and security of the process and state property is the biggest challenge for the police.

Addressing a graduation ceremony of more than 5,000 police recruits, Kiir stressed the need for the recruits to work seriously to secure the vote, saying conducting the process in a fair and transparent process is a major challenge for the police. He said the upcoming referendum is a sensitive phase that requires comprehensive security for state property and to contain violence.

Kiir pointed out that the remaining time for the referendum is very short, saying full and proper preparations should be made. "There are quarters in the South and abroad seeking to sabotage the referendum," he said.

Over 55,000 Southerners return to south ahead of referendum

Sudan Tribune website 15/12/10 - deputy representative of United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Southern Sudan, Mireille Girard, told Sudan Tribune on Wednesday that over 55,000 Southern Sudanese have returned to the south ahead of the region's independence referendum in January. The returnees have arrived through both organized by the autonomous Government of Southern Sudan programs and spontaneously to various states across the south.

Girard said that once they arrive, international NGO's together with UNHCR, are to assist them upon their arrival. UNHCR is responsible for providing temporarily accommodation at way stations for up to 72 hours, after which they are transported to their various final destination. On arrival other agencies like World Food Programme (WFP) and the southern government will provide the returnees with humanitarian assistance including three months of rations.

UNHCR, Girard said, is providing non-food items to allow returnees to set up temporary houses when they are allocated land by the government upon their arrival. She added that oil-rich Unity state, which shares a border with the north, has seen the highest number of returns with 19,000 people arriving in the state in the last two months.

There is a continuing flow of movement from north to the South, she said. Currently awaiting transport to Western and Eastern Equatoria states at a UNHCR way station are a group who arrived by plane and by river on Tuesday, said Girard...

Misseriya held 1000 southern returnees hostages, demand ransom

Al-Rai Al-Aam 16/12/10 - SPLM announced that the Misseriya tribe has detained a convoy of trucks carrying over thousand southern returnees in Kharsana area at the North-South Border and are demanding a ransom of SDG 2.5 billion, threatening to kill the hostages if the amount is not paid. The southern Sudanese are returning to their areas in the South ahead of the upcoming referendum to decide the destiny of their region.

SPLM Parliamentary Committee Chair Tomas Wani told a press conference yesterday in Khartoum that the abductors are threatening to kill them if they do not get the ransom, adding that the convoy of 154 trucks is carrying returnees from the North to Unity, Warrap and Bahr el Ghazal states. He called on the central government to intervene to release the hostages and to bring the abductors to the book.

6000 southern returnees stranded in Kosti as contractor disappeared with SDG 600 million

Al-Watan 16/12/10 – the newspaper has learned that over 6000 southern Sudanese returning to the South are stranded in Kosti as the contractor who was paid SDG 600 million to transport them to the South by barges disappeared in mysterious circumstances.

Due to their dire conditions, many of them have asked to be returned to the North rather than proceed to the South. Reportedly, photographers have been barred from photographing the returnees.

SPLA buildup in Abyei a “gamble” – NCP

Al-Rai Al-Aam 16/12/10 – NCP leading figure Qutbi Al-Mahdi has described SPLA military buildup in Abyei territory as “uncalculated gamble”. “We are about to conduct the referendum and that any such attempt will harm the process”, he warned. “If war breaks out in Abyei fate of the referendum will be unknown. If the SPLA wants war then it should be prepared to bear the responsibility”.

In response to a question on US’s proposal for annexing the territory to the South in exchange for representing the Misseriya in the government in the South he said, “this is unacceptable to the Government”.

Other Highlights

China forgives \$6 million of Sudan’s debt (Sudan Tribune)

Sudan Tribune website 15/12/10 - December 15, 2010 (KHARTOUM) – The government of Sudan today signed an agreement with China by which the latter would forgive 40 million Yuan (\$6 million) of the debt owed to it by the East African nation.

The pro-government Sudanese Media Center (SMC) said that this portion of Chinese debt is related to a 1995 loans extended to Sudan interest-free.

The Minister of Finance and National Economy Ali Mahmood Hassanein said that this accord is a reflection of the strong relations between the two nations and enforcement of the mutual cooperation.

The Chinese ambassador in Khartoum Li Chengwen who signed on behalf of Beijing said that this is a step in support of the economic cooperation and stressed that his country is keen on the stability and security of Sudan.

Chengwen assured that the strong relations will continue irrespective of the results of the referendum in South Sudan which will take place next January and is widely expected to create the world newest state.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) puts Sudan's external debts at about \$35.7 billion, of which less than half is the original amount borrowed and the rest is divided between interest and late payment penalties. According to IMF, the figure is projected to reach \$37.8 billion in 2010.

Thousands of South Sudan children in “desperate” condition

AFP 15/12/10 - Thousands of children in south Sudan are living in "desperate" conditions due to serious malnutrition, as well as a lack of access to medical care and education, the UN children's agency said Wednesday.

"By any international standards, the situation of children in South Sudan is really desperate," said Yasmin Ali Haque, who heads Unicef's bureau in the region.

Malnutrition is one of the major problems of the region where 90 percent of the 9 million inhabitants live with less than a dollar a day, said the UNICEF official.

Around 1.2 million people were dependent on food aid in 2009, the UN agency said, noting that more than 40,000 children in the region are treated every year for malnutrition.

After years of conflict with the Arab-dominated north, "generations of children (in south Sudan) have not had access to schooling or proper health care," she added.

South Sudan also has one of the highest levels of maternal mortality in the world, with more than 2,000 women dying in every 100,000 births.

Due to the lack of access to healthcare, one in every seven children "don't live until their fifth birthday," Haque said.

In addition, only one out of five children aged six enters school.

In the past five years, the situation has improved with the end of the conflict with the north, said Haque, although she acknowledged that "still a lot more need to be done."

She said the referendum on independence planned for January 9 could worsen a humanitarian

situation which is already complicated by "floods, drought, inter-tribal conflict or attacks" by Ugandan rebels.

"There is a constant humanitarian situation in South Sudan and there is the potential that it gets worse," she added.

South Sudan is widely expected to opt for independence in the referendum, which would split Africa's largest country in two.

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