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Referendum Watch

Sir Plumby: Agreement on open borders between north and south

Al-Ayyam Khartoum, 20/12/10 – Sir Derek Plumby, the Head of the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, stated that the SPLM and NCP have reached an agreement to allow the free movement of people and goods across the borders between the north and south Sudan.

Sir Plumby urged the CPA parties to reach agreement on the remaining issues to help maintain security and stability all over the country.

Al-Bashir says North will transform into Islamic state

Sudantribune.com 19/12/10 - The Sudanese president Omer Al-Bashir was unapologetic over a You Tube video showing a woman being flogged by police that sparked outrage both domestically and abroad.

“These days some people are talking about the girl that was lashed in accordance with a divine penalty.....for those who say they are ashamed of this [punishment] they should wash up, pray twice and revert back to Islam,” Bashir told the harvest celebrations at Al-Gadarif State in East today (19/12/10).

The Sudanese leader stressed that those in disagreement should review their understanding of religion because Islamic Shari’a law “has always stipulated that one must whip, cut, or kill”.

“We say [to] our brother the head of the judiciary and our brothers in the police who said that they will investigate this issue. The investigation’s [focus should be] whether this girl was sentenced to lashing [or no?] This is the end of the story. Did the police implement a judicial ruling? The case here is finished” he said.

“[If the girl was sentenced to flogging and the police carried out the verdict] what is the probe for then?” the Sudanese president posed the question.

Bashir went further to announce that North Sudan will move fully into an Islamic law state after the likely secession of the South in next month’s referendum. “If, God forbid, the South separates [then] the constitution will be amended [and] a lot of things relating to the South will go away,” he said.

“If South Sudan secedes, we’ll change the constitution. There will be no question of cultural or ethnic diversity. Sharia will be the only source of the constitution, and Arabic the only official language,” Bashir said in a speech aired on national television.

In response, Deputy Secretary General for Northern Sector of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Yassir Arman said adopting Sharia Law as the only source of legislation will not be in favour of peace and stability in northern Sudan.

Speaking to *Radio Miraya* Arman pointed out that even in the case of separation, there will still be a geographic and political south in the northern state.

Foreign Ministry denies UN accusations on visa delays

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 20/12/10 – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has denied accusations by the UN that the Sudan Government is delaying the issuance of entry visas to some 4,000 international monitors for the referendum. Ministry Spokesperson Muawia Osman told reporters

yesterday that the Ministry is committed to granting entry visas to all official delegations, observers and journalists coming in to monitor the referendum.

In a related development, *Al-Ahdath* quotes the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson as saying that the ministry has granted entry visas to over 72 foreign reporters coming in to cover the referendum. Quoting sources, *Al-Ahram Al-Youm* reports that the ministry has granted visas to delegates from French, US, Egyptian, Bulgarian and Canadian media outlets, some of which have sent up to 7 delegates. He described the UN accusations that it is delaying entry visas to such delegations as “baseless and lacking transparency and credibility”.

Muawia pointed out that the Ministry issues visas to such applicants within 72 hours from a formal request and following consent from his ministry and the interior ministry. He noted that the visa procedures are no different from those in force in any other country.

New foreign policy strategies for Sudan should south secede – MoFA

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 20/12/10 – Foreign Minister Ali Karti says Sudan would chart a new foreign policy strategy should he south secede. The minister said that the policy would be based on increasing positive activities to consolidate Sudan’s foreign interests on the economic, development and human rights domains. He told a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Advisory Board that through the policy, Sudan would seek to face the challenges currently on the political landscape such as the referendum and the peace process for Darfur.

Opposition seeks to derail the referendum – NCP

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 20/12/10 – NCP Social Secretary Al-Fateh Ezzaldeen has lashed out on recent calls by Umma leader Sadig Al-Mahdi calling for the dissolution of the government should the south secede in order to make room for a national government. He pointed out that the current government came as a result of free and fair elections that were endorsed as such by the international and local communities. He further pointed out that northern Sudan would grow from strength to strength should the south secede and would continue reaping oil revenue from the pipelines passing through northern Sudan.

Constitutional Court receives cases against government and the SSRC

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 20/12/10 – A group of lawyers representing some political parties including the Alliance of People’s Forces, the Southern Sudan Democratic Front as well as sultans from the Nuer tribe, individuals from other southern Sudanese tribes and the Misseriya have yesterday filed a petition against the Presidency, Government of the Sudan, GoSS, SPLM and the SSRC.

Mohamed Hassan Makawi, one of the advocates, told the newspaper that the Presidency, he GoSS, the SPLM and the SSRC have committed constitutional and administrative violations by shortening the referendum schedules from three months to 15 days only.

Misseriya leader Abdul Rasoul Al-Nur has called for cancellation of the registration process on the grounds of violations to the Interim Constitution and the CPA.

Speaking to the press following the filing of the petition, Al-Tayeb Abbas, the lead counsel for the case, said that the case has been filed to “protect the country from collapse and the impacts of war”, reports *Akhir Lahza*.

David de Chand, the leader of the Southern Sudan Democratic Front (SSDF), argued that not all southern Sudanese were given the opportunity to register for the referendum. He noted that the referendum would neither be free nor fair in light of the security challenges faced in the south such

as George Athor's rebellion and the LRA menace.

In a related development, the Constitutional Court dismissed yesterday a petition against the Sudan Government seeking a five-year delay of the 2011 referendum. *Al-Ahram Al-Youm* reports that the case was dismissed because the courts saw it as a petition to amend the 2005 Interim National Constitution. The petitioner, Muawia Al-Khidir, described the reasons for the dismissal as "lacking since all articles of the constitution advocate for national unity".

INTERVIEW-U.N. fears mass migration if Sudan vote sparks war

Reuters Cairo, 20/12/10 - Hundreds of thousands of Sudanese may flee to neighbouring countries if fighting breaks out after southern Sudan holds a referendum on secession next month, according to a United Nations assessment.

Contingency plans drawn up by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) suggest up to 100,000 southern Sudanese could be displaced to Uganda, 100,000 to Kenya, 80,000 to Ethiopia and 50,000 to Egypt in 2011 if war breaks out after southern independence.

"We hope that nothing will happen ... but indeed it's felt that some forms of displacement may happen from Southern Sudan into the neighbouring countries of asylum," Mohamed Dayri, regional UNHCR representative, said in an interview.

Security problems after the referendum might push some of the roughly 1.5 million Southern Sudanese living in and around the Sudanese capital Khartoum to flee north to Egypt, he said.

Egyptian officials have suggested a big influx of migrants might be unwelcome in a country already home to tens of thousands of refugees and whose own growing population has strained infrastructure and social services.

Egypt hosts about 18,000 registered Southern Sudanese refugees, many displaced during decades of civil war in which an estimated 2 million people were killed and 4 million fled, destabilising much of east Africa.

Dayri said the UNHCR was preparing to issue an appeal next month to raise money for the possible costs of dealing with potential displacement after the referendum.

"We hope that an all-out war wouldn't happen in Sudan, because this is the worst scenario that we could contemplate," he said.

"But most likely, forms of displacement may happen within Southern Sudan, from Southern Sudan into the neighbouring countries of asylum, and maybe from Khartoum to Southern Sudan and to neighbouring countries like Eritrea or Egypt."

Other Highlights

Dead and injured in fighting between George Athor and SPLA in Jonglei

Al-Ahram Al-Youm 20/12/10 – Renegade Gen. George Athor said his forces killed 63 and wounded 108 SPLA soldiers that attacked his forces in their stronghold in Khorflus, Jonglei State. The fighting reportedly took place on Sunday evening.

In an exclusive to the newspaper yesterday, Athor said his forces had arrested a number of SPLA soldiers and seized a number of heavy artillery and machine guns from the SPLA.. He said that he lost 10 men and 15 of his soldiers were injured in the battle.

Athor, who is delegated by the breakaway groups to negotiate on their behalf with GoSS, has ordered all the groups that broke away from the SPLA to launch anti-SPLA military operations from their positions across southern Sudan, adding that the SPLM has now become their legitimate target. He said the attack on their positions by an SPLA division led by a Mjr. Gen. Peter Paul has completely derailed prospects for talks.

It is worth mentioning that the fighting that broke out between Athor's forces and SPLA since last Thursday left 82 dead and wounded from both sides, pushing up to 278 the number of soldiers killed and injured from both sides.

Abyei Administration says SAF deployed troops in the region

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 20/12/10 - A local administration official in Abyei on Saturday reported that the northern Sudanese army has deployed troops in Southern Kordofan state, which borders southern Sudan.

The daily newspaper *Al-Akhbar* quoted the press secretary of the Abyei Area Administration, Shul Angok, said that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) was continuing to increase its military presence in the Southern Kordofan region.

Angok claimed that the 31 battalion of SAF was currently present in the areas of Niama and Laffat al-Tumsah, adding that the battalion was receiving large reinforcements.

The press secretary, who warned of a military escalation in the area, said that only SPLA presence in the area is in the form of its contingents in the Joint Integrated Units.

SAF Spokesperson Al-Sawarmi Khalid Saad has however pointed out that the 31 battalion deployed in the area was permitted under the security arrangements protocol. He said that the battalion was inside the city and had now been re-deployed to the area.

South requests assistance to return 62,000 civilians

Al-Ahdath 20/12/10 – The GoSS has revealed that over 62,000 southerners in the North have expressed willingness to return to southern Sudan and called on the federal government and international organizations to provide assistance to enable them to return to their areas.

GoSS Information Minister Benjamin Barnaba told the newspaper yesterday that the GoSS Cabinet has contributed SDG3 million to assist those who want to return. He said around 50,000 southerners have returned but are facing accommodation challenges, adding the government is forced to accommodate them in schools and tents.

The Minister said that his government has requested some organizations to assist, adding that

these returns are not linked to the forthcoming referendum or secession but are rather motivated by the stability the south is witnessing.

Sudan VP warns against manipulating prices of commodities

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 19/12/10 – Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha has warned of a zero-tolerance policy towards attempts to manipulate prices of basic commodities and spreading panic among citizens, in an effort to quell rampant fears of unrest ahead of south Sudan vote on independence.

In a speech delivered on Sunday on the occasion of declaring Sudan's independence from inside the parliament back in 1955, Taha strongly instructed state authorities to hit hard at those trying to amass illicit wealth by hoarding commodities in order to cause increase in prices.

"I declare in the name of the president of the republic that there will be no toleration for toying with people's livelihoods...manipulation of commodities or spreading panic and fear among people," Taha said.

"We would like to direct a message that the security situation is stable, we are vigilant and the sword is sharp," VP Taha said in his speech yesterday marking 56th Anniversary of Sudan's Independence, reports *Al-Ahram Al-Youm*

Obama lobbies regional leaders as Sudan vote looms

Reuters 19/12/10 - President Barack Obama, who has pushed Sudan over an upcoming referendum and the crisis in Darfur, has written to leaders in the region stressing US. Commitment to a peaceful vote, the White House said on Sunday.

"President Obama has made it clear that Sudan is one of the administration's top priorities; we have a vision of hope, peace and prosperity for the people of Sudan," said White House National Security Council spokesman Mike Hammer.

Confirming Obama had written to a number of leaders about the referendum and the situation in Darfur, Hammer said this was part of an ongoing diplomatic push to emphasize the importance that Washington places on a peaceful Sudan.

"We believe an on-time referendum is the best means to prevent a resumption of full scale war between north and south Sudan," said White House spokesman Tommy Vietor.

The letters were recently sent to leaders of Libya, Egypt, Chad, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Nigeria and Rwanda, as well as to the African Union, Vietor said.

"We have, and will continue to, put an enormous amount of effort towards ensuring that the referendum goes off on time, peacefully, and that the results are respected," said Hammer.

Egypt, Sudan and Libya to confer ahead of key vote

AP Khartoum, 20/12/10 - Leaders of Sudan's two most powerful neighbours will be meeting with the president in Khartoum Tuesday to discuss the future of the country ahead of a referendum that could well split Africa's largest nation in two.

News of the summit, which would bring together Sudan's Omar al-Bashir, Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, has been circulating for days in the Arab media but was only confirmed late Sunday by the official Sudan News Agency.

In Cairo, officials said southern Sudanese leader Salva Kiir was likely to join the three leaders in the Khartoum meeting. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicize the information.

Museveni and Kiir discuss new dam on River Nile

The New Vision [via BBC Monitoring] Kampala, 20/12/10 - President Yoweri Museveni and his southern Sudanese counterpart have discussed possibilities of building hydroelectric power stations in Sudan. In a meeting held at State House Entebbe over the weekend, Museveni and Salva Kiir discussed ways of generating power along the River Nile to enhance development.

Museveni noted that his government wanted to generate 3,800 megawatts of power within the next five years. He emphasized that only locally-generated revenue would be used in the project.

"We also have plans to generate 17,000 megawatts by 2025," Museveni is quoted as having said.

According to a statement from State House, Museveni urged Kiir to focus on industrialisation and construction of roads to boost his country's economy and the welfare of his people.

Southern Sudan in grips of worst disease outbreak in eight years

Al-Rai Al-Aam 20/12/10 - Epidemic compounds existing medical humanitarian crisis. As southern Sudan heads towards a January 9, 2011, referendum on secession, it is battling to contain the biggest kalazar outbreak in the region in eight years.

The severity of the outbreak is just one symptom of the wider medical humanitarian crisis facing the region, including abysmal lack of access to health care, chronic malnutrition, regular outbreaks of preventable diseases, and insecurity that displaces communities and destroys lives, the international humanitarian medical organization MSF said.

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