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Media Monitoring Report

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Referendum Watch

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Highlights

Egypt and Libya vow to respect south Sudan vote

Reuters 21/12/10 - Sudan, Egypt and Libya vowed on Tuesday to respect the outcome of an independence referendum in south Sudan that has sparked fears of a renewal of Sudan's civil war.

Southerners are widely expected to choose independence in the vote, due to take place from Jan. 9, but Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi have both called in the past for the nation to remain united.

The two leaders, both of whose countries share long, porous desert borders with Sudan, flew to Khartoum for more than two hours of talks with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and the leader of the semi-autonomous south, Salva Kiir.

After the meeting, the leaders issued a joint statement calling for a "peaceful, calm, transparent and credible environment that will reflect the will of southern Sudan's people", according to Sudan state radio.

They said they would respect the will of the southern Sudanese, whatever the outcome of the referendum.

U.S. President Barack Obama has written to Gaddafi, Mubarak and other leaders in the region stressing Washington's desire to see a peaceful and successful voting process.

North Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the main southern party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), have been talking for months about the course of the north-south border, how to split oil income and other issues.

But there has been little public sign of progress. Each side has accused the other of building up troops, and analysts say disputes over preparations for the vote could reignite conflict.

Xinhua 21/12/10 reported that the Sudanese government said Tuesday the summit held in Khartoum helps to promote the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between north and south Sudan, and resolve the outstanding issues between them.

In a communique released after the summit, the leaders expressed full support for all the endeavors aiming at reaching an agreement on the outstanding issues between the parties of the CPA, the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

"The summit has attached importance to finding a settlement for the outstanding issues between the two partners and strongly boosted the two parties to implement the CPA," Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Ali Karti said.

The Sudanese minister, meanwhile, said there were no secret proposals or messages, and "the

leaders held talks as they believe that Sudan is undergoing a tough period and there has to be an Arab-African role."

The summit, convened just 20 days ahead of the south Sudan referendum, commended the NCP and the SPLM for managing to resolve many of the outstanding issues and urged them to continue their efforts to settle the remaining ones.

20 killed, 50 injured in clashes between renegade general and SPLA

Al-Ahdath 22/12/10 – A breakout of bloody clashes between the SPLA and forces of the renegade Gen. George Athor left at least 20 soldiers dead and 50 wounded. SPLA spokesperson Philip Aguer said Athor's forces had ambushed SPLA soldiers in Jonglei state early last Saturday, adding that the attack took place at a time when talks were continuing with Athor.

"We are still investigating ... at least 14 people or more have been killed in the fighting," he said.

AFP 21/12/10 reported that twenty soldiers from the south Sudan army have been killed in clashes with rebels led by a former general, a military source said on Tuesday.

"The forces of George Athor laid an ambush on an SPLA company in Pigi County, south of Khor Fulous, in Jonglei state. Twenty SPLA soldiers were killed in the ambush ... We don't know if they have casualties," said Philip Aguer, a spokesman for the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

Athor, a senior general in the SPLA, had been rejected by the affiliated Sudan People's Liberation Movement to stand as its candidate for governor of Jonglei in this year's elections. He ran as an independent and was beaten.

Dozens of people have since been killed in fighting between the two camps...

However, *Sudan Tribune website* 21/12/10 reported that the SPLM leadership on Tuesday said the movement did not plan to initiate any reprisal attack against forces loyal to General George Athor Deng Dut after 14 people are thought to have died in recent clashes.

Speaking to Sudan Tribune on Monday from his base in the extreme north-western part of Jonglei, in an area close to Malakal town, capital of Upper Nile State, Athor accused the SPLA of attacking his forces twice over the weekend.

George Athor Deng Dut rebelled against the southern government after losing a race to become governor of his native Jonglei state in the last April's elections. He accused officials from the regional government predominantly SPLM members of fraud and votes rigging.

Since launching his rebellion, his forces have clashed on several occasions with SPLA forces until South Sudan president General Salva Kiir Mayardit issued an executive order pardoning him and leaders from other armed groups in October 2010.

As part of the continuous search for peace and stability, Kiir issued another executive order forming a high level committee comprising Episcopal and Catholic Bishops to mediate in order

to open direct links between the Southern President and General Athor.

On 15 December 2010, the delegation led by Episcopal Bishop Daniel Deng Bul met with Athor, describing the talks as successful.

However, Athor on Monday accused SPLA of launching attack on his forces; a charge SPLA spokesperson denied and accused Athor of having launched an ambush attack on their forces in the area.

With civilian caught up in the middle of the armed confrontation and counter accusations, many fear that the military tensions could have a negative effect on the region's referendum on southern independence scheduled to take place next month.

General Salva Mathok Gengdit, a presidential advisor on SPLA affairs in an interview with Sudan Tribune from Juba on Tuesday said he regretted the clash and that initiating another attack was not an option.

"The clashes that I am told occurred over weekend are regrettable because nobody had expected resumption of armed confrontation, while president has appointed a committee tasked to explore ways and modalities of how to implement the amnesty," said General Mathok.

Mathok, who previously served as a deputy chief of general staff for administration and finance, under the command of General Oyai Deng Ajak, said the president and chief of general staff are informed of the latest incident.

"The president of the government of south Sudan and general chief of staff of the SPLA forces are informed. They are aware of this incident and something good is being done about it," said Mathok.

On his part, the SPLA spokesman, Colonel Phillip Aguer said he still does not have clear information but received reports from the local command that forces loyal to General Athor laid an ambush for their forces that were in the area.

"The report we have is that forces armed personnel suspected to be supporters of George Athor laid an ambush for our forces in Pigi County in Jonglei state," said Aguer.

"He attacked while talks with him are in the progress," he said stressing that the incident will be treated separately and amnesty negotiations would continue.

The senior military officer said he still does not have accurate information regarding casualties but reports that some soldiers were among the dead and injured.

"I still do not have accurate figures and details of the clash. We are still gathering details of this incident because this happened in the remote area but there are reports that at least 14 people have died. Two of whom were those who sustained injuries on Sunday attack," said Aguer adding "there maybe more".

The figure of 14 is an increase on earlier reports, which said that 12 people died in the attack.

Britain to deliver ballots to Khartoum and Juba today and tomorrow

Al-Sahafa 22/12/10 – the SSRC has said that Britain would deliver the voting cards to Khartoum today and the consignment for the South would be delivered tomorrow in Juba.

SSRC spokesperson George Makuer said the British Printer confirmed that the ballots would be delivered to Khartoum and Juba and UN would assist in their transportation to the polling centres.

Meanwhile, the SSRC also said that it would respond to the petitions filed with the constitutional court against referendum on Sunday.

President Al-Bashir says foreign circles encouraging secession

Al-Ahdath 22/12/2010 – In a graduation ceremony of army officers, President Al-Bashir said that many foreign bodies were encouraging the south to secede. However he asserted that his government was committed to conduct the referendum and accepts the results so long as they reflect the free will of the southerners.

NCP, SPLM reach understanding on post-referendum issues

Miraya FM 21/12/10 - National Congress Party (NCP) and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) have reached an understanding on post referendum issues of security, citizenship, nationality and the international agreements, the SPLM Secretary General, Pagan Amum said.

Speaking to *Radio Miraya*, Pagan stated that there are still differences on the status of southerners staying in the North. A meeting will take place in Khartoum on Wednesday to discuss the rest of the disputed issues, he added.

“UN claim of visa delay incorrect” – Foreign Ministry

Sudan Radio 22/12/10 – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said that the UN claim about delay of issuance of visas by the Ministry is “incorrect, lacks transparency and credibility”.

2.8 million at risk if violence breaks out in Sudan - UN

AP 21/12/10 - The UN is planning for the possibility that 2.8 million people will be displaced in Sudan if fighting breaks out over the south's January independence referendum, according to an internal report reviewed by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

U.N. report said both the northern and southern militaries have been rearming, and that many southerners possess guns and light weapons.

Both militaries have reinforced their positions along the border in recent months, hindering aid work, the report said. If either the north or the south doesn't accept the results of the Jan. 9 referendum, the result could be a "war-like" situation, it said.

"A deterioration of the North-South relationship, as well as tensions within northern and southern Sudan could lead to large-scale outflow of people to neighboring countries," said the U.N.'s humanitarian contingency plan, which is stamped "Not for wider distribution" but was

obtained by the AP.

Underscoring the precarious security situation, southern military spokesman Col. Philip Aguer said Tuesday that 20 troops were killed and 50 wounded in an attack Saturday by forces loyal to a renegade army commander in the remote and militarized state of Jonglei.

Aguer said the attack was a surprise because amnesty discussions between the south and commander George Athor are under way. The south's president offered Athor and other dissident military figures amnesty in September in an effort to promote southern unity ahead of the January vote.

The north and south ended a two-decades-plus civil war with the signing of a 2005 peace accord that also guaranteed the south the right to hold an independence referendum. Some 2 million people died in the war, which left southerners scarred and suspicious of Khartoum's Muslim Arab rulers.

In Sudan's capital Khartoum on Tuesday, the leaders of Egypt and Libya met with Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir and southern Sudanese President Salva Kiir to discuss the future of Sudan after the vote.

If worst-case violence scenarios play out after January, the U.N. plan anticipates an estimated 2.8 million internally displaced people within Sudan and an additional 3.2 million people who may be affected by a breakdown in trade and social services...

Another challenge is the influx of southerners returning home from northern Sudan, where an estimated 1.5 million have lived since before the 2005 north-south peace agreement was signed. The U.N. refugee agency said Tuesday that 55,000 southern Sudanese have returned to the south in the last few weeks.

The influx is straining aid capacity. Lise Grande, who heads the United Nations' humanitarian operations in the south, said officials are worried the pace of returnees "may inundate us."

Vulnerable returnees arrive in Rumbek, Lakes state

Sudan Tribune website 21/12/10 - The government of Lakes state have received 36 returnees from Khartoum on Monday, most of whom are disabled, blind and elderly, according to Lakes state minister of Legal Affairs, Margaret Samuel Aru.

The returnees were received from Rumbek airport by Lakes state Governor Chol Tong Mayay with his cabinet and Lakes State Assembly speaker John Marik Makur.

This is the first arrival of displaced people in Rumbek, the capital of Lakes state, from Khartoum, apart from 380 people who arrived on Monday after travelling on 21 buses.

Minister Aru added that the state government had hired five aircraft to return internally displaced people (IDPs) from Khartoum to Rumbek before the south's referendum on independence.

She said lack of funds is hampering the return of IDPs from Khartoum but they hope to return more people before voting in the plebiscite begins on January 9.

Speaking to Sudan Tribune at Rumbek airport Aru said: “They are 36 returnees and most of them are disable people and we have five flights, this is the first flight to arrive Rumbek today. There is lack of fund between humanitarian affair and the commission but we thank god everything is OK”...

MPs criticizes Kiir for requesting Uganda’s military support

Al-Ahdath 22/12/10 –NCP MPs have lashed out against FVP and GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit for requesting Uganda’s military and diplomatic support, describing the request as further violation of the CPA.

National Assembly Defence and Security Committee Chair Gen. Mohamed Markazo called on the parties to the CPA to respect the agreement and avoid breaching the security arrangements. “If the request is true, it is a clear violation of the agreement,” he said.

MP Mahdi Babu Nimir (NCP), who is also a Misseriya leader, has lambasted the reported request saying, “... If Musevini has the capacity to support he should keep it for defeating Joseph Kony”.

SPLM should leave Blue Nile in the event of separation - NCP

Al-Raed Khartoum, 22/12/10 – NCP Information Secretary Fathelrahman Shilla said the SPLM has to leave Blue Nile area should southern Sudan secede. Speaking at a symposium organised by the Sudan Media Centre (SMC) yesterday, Shila called on the National Assembly to do away with all that is linked to southern Sudan should that region secede from the north.

According to *Akhir Lahza* 22/12/10, Shilla said the NCP would not be surprised by secession as it has already prepared itself for that scenario. He said there would be no room for the SPLM in North’s territory after secession, adding that governor of the Blue Nile state, Malik Aqar is now closer to the NCP than the SPLM.

VP Taha, GoSS VP Machar to brief parliament on referendum

Local dailies Khartoum, 22/12/10 – The National Assembly has requested the Presidency of the Republic to summon Vice-President Ali Osman Taha and GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar to update the House on development of talks on the post-referendum arrangement. Lawmakers seem to have lost hope in the country’s unity but have stressed that the country would not go back to war.

Dinka Ngok, Misseriya fail to reach agreement

Al-Ayyam Khartoum, 22/12/10 – A meeting between representatives of the governments of Southern Kordofan and Unity State has failed to reach agreement over outstanding issues between the Dinka Ngok and the Misseriya. Participants have resolved to refer the issue to the Presidency.

Southern Kordofan Governor Ahmed Haroun said that a meeting of the security committees from the two states has managed to resolve lots of differences between them that claimed a number of lives and caused loss of cattle. He expressed determination to ensure that the tribes in the area co-exist peacefully.

Border demarcation committee ceases work

Al-Ahdath 22/12/10 – Deputy Chairman of the Border Demarcation Committee who is also GoSS representative in the committee Mr. Reec Degaule has ruled out that the North-South border would be demarcated before the upcoming referendum takes place. Speaking to the newspaper yesterday, he said the committee did not hold a meet since early last month to discuss border demarcation-related issues, adding that things within the committee seem unmoving due to lack of communication amongst the members.

Meanwhile, Committee Chairman Abdullah Al-Sadiq said the Committee has completed some reports and tasks and is awaiting new directives from the Presidency.

Russia to redeploy peacekeepers to Sudan

Xinhua 21/12/10 - Russian military units in the United Nation's peacekeeping operation in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) will leave these countries, Interfax news agency reported on Tuesday.

Part of the Russian armed contingent will be redeployed to Sudan, following an order of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the report said.

"The units of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation participating in the U.N. peacekeeping operation in the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic have been ordered to withdraw from the territory of these states together with their weapons, military equipment and material reserves and to return to the Russian Federation," a presidential decree said.

Twenty-five Russian servicemen and four Mi-8MT transport helicopters remains in these two African countries upon departure of the main contingent.

Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains say will reject Sharia law

The Citizen 22/12/10 – Head of delegation of Youth for Popular Consultation Attia Atroun reveled yesterday that the people of the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile would not accept Sharia law if imposed by the Khartoum government, as popularly expected, should the South secede. Attia made this controversial statement at Nyakuron Culture Centre in Juba yesterday, at a youth gathering. "The Government in the North is threatening to strengthen Sharia law after the referendum, but we urge the people not to accept it," he said. "We are going to determine our destiny after the referendum because the people of Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile have the right to choose where they belong to," he added.

Analysts have expressed their opinions that the region is set to separate. Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains have been major allies of South Sudan, with a common goal of de-marginalizing their people.

Sudan Tribune website 21/12/10 reported that Darfur rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) slammed statements by Sudanese President over the instauration of an Islamic state in northern Sudan saying it might hinder peaceful settlement to the seven year conflict.

Sudanese government and JEM rebels started negotiations on a ceasefire agreement before to hold talks in order to reach a negotiated solution to the conflict. The rebel group delivered today

its position on a draft ceasefire deal handed by the mediation.

"Bashir statements on an Islamic law state constitute a set back towards the instauration of a democratic state in the country but also send a negative signal to the process in Doha to end war in Darfur," said JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein Adam.

"We reject any intention to establish a religious state in the Sudan. What Bashir said is a declaration of war against the non-Muslim Sudanese in southern Kordofan and other parts of the country."

"JEM's fundamental position on this respect is opposed to the religious state and supportive to the citizenship state where the authorities are neutral towards the religion"..

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