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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

South Sudan vote clears hurdle as ballot forms arrive

Reuters 22/12/10 - Millions of ballot papers were delivered to south Sudan on Wednesday, removing one uncertainty ahead of a referendum on southern independence scheduled for next month.

The Jan. 9 referendum has been fraught with delays and logistical problems, and organisers had feared snowy weather that has snarled air traffic in Britain might stop English printers from delivering the forms on time.

People from the oil-producing but underdeveloped south are widely expected to choose independence in the vote.

The plane carrying more than 7.3 million ballot forms landed in the airport in the southern capital Juba and was surrounded by security forces, U.N. officials a Reuters witness said.

"You cannot control winter, but this is what we believed would happen and it has. The ballots will be produced on time," said Anne Itto, a senior official with south Sudan's ruling party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

"All other complaints are minor now, the main thing is the ballots are here and the referendum can go ahead."

We will cooperate with south state if secession takes place – Al-Bashir

Al-Rai Al-Aam 23/12/10 – President Al-Bashir, addressing closing ceremony of school competition yesterday in Khartoum, announced that next tournament would be organized in the Blue Nile state, followed by southern Kordofan state and the 25th tournament would take place in Sennar, describing GoSS' cancellation of the competition in Wau as unpleasant surprise.

The President said unity or secession would not mean end of history. "We want unity but if the South opts for secession we will welcome it and we will cooperate with it in all fields," he said, reiterating that the referendum result would be accepted.

Xinhua 22/12/10 reported that President al-Bashir said Wednesday he would respect south Sudanese's choice for independence or unity, when they vote in a referendum slated on Jan. 9, 2011, as long as it would express their desire.

"If our people in the south want to separate and establish an independent state, we will respect and congratulate them. We however shall remain as brothers and live together, because what brings us together is much more than what divides us," said Bashir on a celebration of the national school tournament.

He meanwhile downplayed impacts of south Sudan's separation, in case it happened, on Sudan's political future, saying that "unity or separation after upcoming Jan. 9 will not be the end of the

history. Sudan will remain strong and intact."

Bashir further reiterated his adherence to the peace commitments between north and south Sudan no matter what the result of the referendum is. "When we agreed on self-determination, the goal was towards peace. We are keen to preserve and sustain peace," he added.

The south Sudan referendum is stipulated by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), inked between north and south Sudan in January 2005 to end the civil war for decades.

Sudan party to form north opposition group after split

Reuters 22/12/10 - South Sudan's main party said it would form a separate opposition group in the north if the country split in two after a referendum next month, and would seek support from marginalised people, even Darfur rebels...

Senior SPLM member Yasir Arman told reporters on Wednesday the party's northern sector would become an independent organisation in the north as soon as the south became a separate country.

"It is going to be a political force to be reckoned with ... The north is a very diverse place. It is a place that needs democratic transformation. It is a place that needs different policies from Khartoum to the different regions of Sudan."

Arman said the party would counter the vision of northern Sudan set out by the country's president Omar al-Bashir in a speech on Sunday.

Bashir, the leader of the north's ruling National Congress Party (NCP), told supporters in the eastern city of Gedaref he would bring in an entirely Islamic constitution, that had Arabic as the national language, Islam as the national religion and removed all references to recognising cultural diversity.

"If we travel this road, which we have travelled before ... it will incite hatred ...It is not about religion it is about dictatorship," said Arman, a northerner who was the SPLM's challenger to Bashir in April presidential elections before boycotting the race citing fraud.

"There will only be stability and development if there is recognition of diversity and social justice and democracy."

The SPLM governor of Blue Nile state Malik Agar said members of the movements caught up in north Sudan's seven-year Darfur conflict would be welcome to join.

"If they wish to be part of this, they will have to ... renounce their arms. We are for a political means, for a political mechanism."

Arman said the party would initially keep the SPLM name but remain independent from the party in the south.

"It will be like the relations between the green parties in Norway and in Britain. They are in different countries but they share the same vision."

2 killed, 4 wounded, many abducted in LRA attacks in Southern Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 22/12./10 - Four days before Christmas, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), now based in South Sudan's neighbor, the Central African Republic, is reported to have killed at least two people, injured four and abducted an estimated 50 people in a weekend attack on Zumaro village of, Mboroko locality in Western Equatoria's Maridi County.

Nineteen aid agencies have called for efforts to prevent mass killings by one of Africa's most feared rebel militias over the Christmas period.

The aid agencies vigilant of LRA atrocities included: Broederlijk Delen, CAFORD, Christian Aid, Conciliatino Resources, CORDAID, Danish Refugee Council, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Intersos, Norwegian Refugee Council, OXFAM, Pax Christi Flanders, Peace Direct, Refugees International, Resolve, Society for Threatened Peoples, Tearfund, Trocaire, War Child UK, World Vision.\

The aid agencies say a concerted effort is needed to stop the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from committing what have become known as "Christmas massacres".

Speaking on the phone to Sudan Tribune, Enosa Sette Aguno the Commissioner of Maridi County said that the "LRA clandestinely attacked Zumaro village at 12:00AM killed two people and wounded another four, and estimated 50 people are believed to have been abducted."

Sette said that the four wounded civilians, including two women and a small child, were treated at Maridi Hospital.

The commissioner said that eyewitnesses estimated the "LRA forces that attacked last night at about one battalion."

Commissioner Sette said that the southern army – the SPLA – and a local vigilante group established to protect communities from the LRA, known as the Arrow Boys are pursuing the LRA rebels. He said that the "situation is under control" with the, SPLA and Joint Integrated units of soldiers from Sudan's southern and northern army have received reinforcements.

The armed forces are attempting to reach another village where night time attacks were reported to see if anyone was hurt or killed.

Unity state closes border with southern Kordofan after returnees detained by Misseriya

Sudan Tribune website 23/12/10 - Unity State's governor Taban Deng Gai and his southern Kordofan counterpart Ahmed Haroun have called for the release of 27 buses carrying displaced southern Sudanese, detained 23 kilometer north of Hegilig oil field in Unity State.

Haroun has called for the immediate release of the returnees but has denied that the group involved is from his state of southern Kordofan, which borders Southern Sudan's Unity state.

The displaced people from Khartoum were intending to travel to Bentiu and Wau in South Sudan ahead for the region's independence referendum in January.

Officials in south Sudan have accused the Misseriya for being responsible for detaining the convoy since December 16. Relations between the Misseriya and the southern states that border the north, where the group spend some of the year looking for pasture for their cattle, remain tense despite the end of north-south conflict with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Gideon Gatpan Thaor the official spokesperson of Unity State government said that between 2001 and this year the Misseriya have killed 31 people in the Abeimhnom County, seriously injured 13 people and stolen 140 cows, 57 goats as well as looting two cars.

Thaor added that Unity state authorities compensated the Misseriya with 134 cows for the five people the SPLA killed in the incidents. He said this was intended to restore a peaceful border crossing.

The spokesman went on to say that three weeks ago six SPLA soldiers were killed and seven seriously wounded by Misseriya on the Mayom- Rubkotna road.

Thaor, who is also the states minister for information said, the closure of this route would help improve the security threat to returnees in the entire state. He said there were suspicions in the south that the “Misseriya are being influenced by the Khartoum government to disrupt the referendum process”.

The minister called on Sudan’s president Omar Hassan Al-Bashir to find a solution to the instability the Misseriya were bringing to the south.

Sudan Tribune contacted local Misseriya chief Rahma Abdul Rahman but he refused to comment on the issue of the detained returnees on the Unity and South Kordofan border.

South Sudan leadership meets key stakeholders in independence referendum

Sudan Tribune website 22/12/10 - The GoSS has conducted a series of meetings this week with various parties involved in the region’s upcoming referendum on independence, which is due to take place on January 9, 2011.

The southern leadership has expressed its commitment to conduct a free, fair and transparent referendum in a peaceful environment and urged all the stakeholders in the process to play their roles in supporting or monitoring the exercise.

In subsequent meetings chaired by the region’s Vice President, Riek Machar, the leadership urged the Southern Sudan political parties, as well as those from the north, to have a strong presence at the polling stations by deploying their agents to monitor the exercise. There are around 24 political parties operating in Sudan’s south.

The meeting with the political parties and heads of referendum taskforces in the ten states of Southern Sudan and international observers in the presence of the leadership of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission reviewed the progress and challenges of the process.

In a separate briefing with the heads of diplomatic missions in Juba, the Vice President stressed that it was important for all parties involved to recognize the outcome of the referendum. In particular he stressed the importance of presence in the polling centers of party agents of the

Sudan's ruling National Congress Party (NCP) the partner in peace deal with the former rebels who now govern the south, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), so that the outcome will be clear to all...

In the meeting on Monday, Machar reiterated the Government of Southern Sudan's (GoSS) commitment to continue building a good relationship with the north irrespective of the outcome of the plebiscite, pointing to the importance of two viable states even if the south secedes and forms its own independent state.

"Regardless of the referendum outcome, GoSS will persist in its determined efforts to build a new "win-win" and peaceful relationship with the North based on mutual respect and recognition of our common economic interests."

"GoSS is committed to reaching an agreement with the North that will allow for a peaceful transition and cooperative post-referendum relationship in the areas of citizenship, security, economic and financial issues (including issues related to the division of debts, and assets, banking and currency, water and the oil sector), and international treaties and agreements."

"It is in the mutual interest of all the peoples of Sudan that, if there is a vote for secession in the referendum, there should be two strong, stable and viable future states joined by economic, cultural and social cooperation," Machar read in a statement to the diplomats.

Machar criticized the speech made by Sudan's President Omer al-Bashir on Sunday, in which he declared that the North would fully implement Islamic Sharia' law and impose Arabic as the national language in the north should the South secede and form an independent state.

The head of the SPLM's Northern sector Yasir Arman responded that Bashir's statements would encourage repression in the north.

"This type of discourse is preparing the ground for a police state. The north, whether alone or with the south, is an extremely diverse place."

Arman said it was the north's hard-line stance that had pushed southerners towards separation.

"If it [the north] continues like this it will encourage other areas like Darfur, the Nuba mountains and eastern Sudan to walk out as well," he added, referring to areas on the peripheries of northern Sudan.

Echoing Arman's comments Machar said that it was not the South alone that formed the diversity of Sudan. He further explained to the diplomats that northern Sudan, even without the South, will remain predominantly non-Arab with various languages and religions, adding that the President's speech in which he declared the north's future as Islamic state would be problematic for the future of the region.

The Vice President also briefed the delegation of the United Nations Secretary General's Panel on the Referenda (Abyei is due to decide whether it will join the south in a separate referendum), headed by the former President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mpaka, on the referendum exercise.

The Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau chairman, Chan Reec Madut, announced during the Monday meeting with the diplomats that more than 3.5 million southerners have been registered. Around 3.5 million were registered in the South, over 116,000 in the North and 59,700 plus in the Diaspora. The figures from registration in the United States have not yet been submitted.

He also informed the meeting that the ballot papers would arrive in Juba by Wednesday and distribution to polling centers would begin immediately.

SSRC to organize debates on unity and secession in Khartoum and Juba

Al-Sudani 23/12/10 – The SSRC announced that it would organize debates on unity and secession choices on 29 and 30 October in Khartoum and Juba. Prof. Al-Tayeb Zain Al-Abideen, member of the independent information committee, told a workshop yesterday in Khartoum that the first debate will host SPLM leader Dr. Luka Biong and NCP leader Bakri Osman Saeed on 29 October at the Friendship Hall and the second debate will take place on 30 October in Juba between NCP leader Prof. Ibrahim Ghandour and SSRA Speaker and SPLM leader James Wani Igga.

Sudan clerics say referendum illegal and participation in it is “haram”

Al-Sudani 23/12/10 – “the Association of Sudan’s Clerics” have declared the upcoming referendum “illegal”.

The association, at a press conference yesterday in Khartoum, said participation in a referendum that leads to separation of the South is haram (forbidden); warning of the danger that would encounter Islam in the South should the region secede and called for revocation of the CPA.

Sheikh Mohamed Abdul Karim, member of the group, told the press conference that application of Islamic Sharia over the past period was incomplete, stressing the need for full application of Islamic Sharia during the coming period.

UN calls on Sudan to pay funds allocated for referendum

Al-Ayyam et al Khartoum, 23/12/10 – The UN has called on authorities in Sudan to immediately release funds allocated for the referendum to enable the SSRC meet the logistics and administrative costs of the referendum.

Benjamin Mkapa who heads the UN Secretary-General’s Panel on the Referenda in Sudan told a press conference in Khartoum yesterday that the release of such funds would facilitate the voting process.

He cited lack of awareness on the part of the voters to participate in the referendum and the distance to registration centres in some areas as some of the challenges the referendum faces.

The head of the Secretary-General’s Panel underlined the need for transparency in vote counting and the results of the exercise.

Mkapa also called on the Constitutional Court to expedite the process for the cases tabled before it against the referendum process, *Akhir Lahza* 23/12/10 reports.

Opposition parties to meet on Sunday

Al-Ayyam 23/12/10 – Leaders of the opposition parties are to hold a meeting on Sunday to discuss the status quo as the upcoming referendum nears. The newspaper has learned that the leaders would meet at the National Umma Party's HQs in Omdurman for debate on Sudan's post-referendum political future and the deteriorating security situation in Darfur.

Clashes renewed between George Athor and SPLA

Al-Intibaha 23/12/10 – Fierce fighting broke out yesterday between SPLA and Gen. Athor forces in Khor Fulous in Jonglei state. Seven SPLA soldiers were reportedly killed and tens wounded.

Speaking to the newspaper yesterday, Athor said SPLA attempted to attack his positions via Le Nuer road linking Yirol and Khor Fulous and a blood fighting ensued for hours yesterday evening in which SPLA suffered heavy losses.

Athor calls for reopening of investigation into Garang helicopter crash

Al-Ahram Al-Youm Khartoum; Jonglei, 23/12/10 – George Athor says that as part of his conditions to accept the conduct of the southern Sudan referendum, investigations have to be reopened on the John Garang helicopter crash and the culprits brought to the book. This, he said, is in addition to the two earlier conditions by his group: the formation of a representative national government to oversee the conduct of the referendum and the convening of a comprehensive conference for southern Sudan political parties.

“The people of southern Sudan have the right to exercise their right to self-determination through a referendum but only after they know who was behind the death of their leader, John Garang,” he told *Al-Ahram Al-Youm* last Wednesday.

North-South border dispute to be resolved next week

Al-Raed 23/12/10 – Chairman of the North-South Border Demarcation Committee Prof. Abdullah Al-Sadiq said the parties had agreed on 80% of issues while 20% of points remain contentious and were referred to the Presidency for decision. He said the demarcation of the border on paper would be completed by 100% before the referendum but pointed out that it would be impossible to draw the line on the ground before the process takes place.

National Umma Party to stage peaceful demonstration tomorrow

Al-Wattan Khartoum, 23/12/10 – Sources said that the National Umma Party and the Ansar Al-Sunna group are planning a peaceful demonstration in Omdurman tomorrow. The march would take place shortly after a meeting of Umma party regional representatives with the party leadership and would be in a show of support for the party's proposal for the formation of a national government in the north in the event of southern Sudan separation.

In a separate development, *Al-Rai Al-Aam* reports that the leader of the Communist Party of Sudan, Mohamed Ibrahim Al-Nugud, has called on political parties to convene and seek measures to guarantee multi-party democracy prevails. Addressing a symposium organised by his party yesterday, Nugud joined calls for the formation of a national government and called upon the masses to pressure government into curbing the rising prices of essential commodities.

SPLM rejects talk of constitutional amendment without consultation

Al-Ayyam Khartoum, 23/12/10 – The SPLM insists that any constitutional changes in northern Sudan should be done in consultation with the political parties and leaders of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. SPLM Vice-Chairman and Governor of Blue Nile State, Malik Aggar, told a press conference at the SPLM-North offices in Khartoum yesterday that the SPLM would continue to exist in the north even if the south secedes. Separation of southern Sudan does not mean the CPA is finished.

Deputy Governor of Southern Kordofan State, Abdul-Aziz Al-Hillu (SPLM), said that they would not allow a delay in the popular consultations for the two states. He said that gubernatorial and legislative elections for Southern Kordofan would take place on 9th April next year. He further pointed out that nobody could wipe out the country's diversity.

Other Headlines

Security measures in place to secure New Year celebrations – Police

Al-Akhabr 23/12/10 – Khartoum state police Director Gen. Mohamed Al-Hafiz Hassan has announced that a comprehensive security plan is in place to secure Christmas, New Year and Independence celebrations, saying the plan is intended to enable civilians to enjoy the celebrations in peace and security. However, Al-Hassan pointed out that the plan is also intended to control public appearance and to prevent other practices such as throwing of eggs, use of fireworks etc.

Meanwhile, *SUNA* 22/12/10 reported that Khartoum State decided that the celebrations of the Independence Day and the New Year will continue until 01:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 1st, 2011.

The Ministry of Culture and Information of Khartoum State issued a statement congratulating the Sudanese people on the Independence Day anniversary.

The ministry called on the citizens to attend the people's festivals, singing and the theatre shows and the arts, flowers, books and tourism exhibitions which will be organized by Khartoum State along the Nile Street.

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