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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

Top UN officials in Sudan to go to Bashir ceremony

Reuters 21/5/10 - The United Nations is sending its two top officials in Sudan to the inauguration next week of President Omar al-Bashir, the target of an international arrest warrant, a UN spokeswoman said on Friday.

Haile Menkerios, head of UNMIS and Ibrahim Gambari, joint head of UNAMID in Darfur, will attend the May 27 ceremony, spokeswoman Marie Okabe told reporters.

The United Nations said its leadership are under legal advice to keep contacts with Bashir to a minimum because of the arrest warrant.

But Okabe said Menkerios and Gambari "interact with the host government regularly on operational issues to ensure that their missions are able to function effectively and to address areas of mutual concern."

Another UN official, who asked not to be identified by name, said the two men were attending the inauguration as a "diplomatic courtesy."

In letters sent this week to the 111 countries that are parties to the ICC statute and to the United States, which is not a party, New York-based Human Rights Watch said they should not attend events with Bashir "unless absolutely essential."

"An inauguration is a ceremonial event that cannot be justified as an essential meeting," the letters said.

Human Rights Watch also quoted what it said was a legal opinion issued by the UN Office of Legal Affairs in 2006 as saying "The presence of UN representatives in any ceremonial or similar occasion with (individuals indicted by international courts) should be avoided."

Government welcomes UN participation at Al-Bashir's swearing-in ceremony

Al-Rai Al-Aam 23/5/10 – Sudan Government has welcomed the high-level participation of the UN at President Al-Bashir's swearing-in ceremony scheduled for Thursday which is also expected to be attended by a large number of African and Arab leaders besides officials from European countries. An unnamed government source described the UN stance on Al-Bashir's swearing-in ceremony as rational and "balanced", adding that relations between the Sudan and the UN are very good. The source indicated that SG Ban Ki-moon had contacted Al-Bashir on several occasions, saying the announced participation of SRSG Menkeriose and JSR Gambari comes within the framework of the good relations between Sudan and UN.

HRW urges boycott of Sudan president's inauguration

Sudan Tribune website 20/5/10 - Human Rights Watch urged governments Thursday, especially parties to the International Criminal Court, not to be represented at the inauguration of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir.

"Governments that are committed to justice for atrocities committed in Darfur should not attend the inauguration of President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan on May 27," the US-based rights group said in a letter.

"This includes the 111 states that are parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC), as well as the United States and other members of the United Nations Security Council, which referred Darfur to the ICC in 2005."

Elise Keppler, International Justice Program senior counsel at Human Rights Watch, said: "Al-Bashir is a fugitive from justice who should be arrested, not feted."

To attend his inauguration "would send a terrible message to victims in Darfur, and globally," she said.

Meanwhile *Al-Rai Al-am* reports that Sudan Government source has downplayed the call by the Human Rights Watch for boycott of the inauguration, saying the call is part of HRW's hostile approach towards Sudan.

NCP, SPLM intensive consultations ongoing to form new government

Al-Ayyam 23/5/10 – The NCP and the SPLM began intensive consultations since last week on formation of the new government including the percentage of the NCP's participation in the GoSS and the percentage of SPLM share in the federal government.

Reportedly, GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit will lead SPLM delegation to Khartoum to take part in President Al-Bashir's inauguration.

Kiir to visit Khartoum to take part in Presidency meeting on Tuesday

Al-Sahafa 23/5/10 – GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit is expected to announce the formation of his government within 48 hours in which the ministerial portfolios have been increased to 28. Reportedly, SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amum has refused to assume a ministerial portfolio despite the insistence of the SPLM leadership, preferring to keep his present post.

Meanwhile, sources said Kiir is visiting Khartoum on Tuesday to take part in the Presidency meeting for consultation on formation of the new government and to be sworn in as FVP.

Arab League respects southern Sudanese choice on referendum – Umr Musa

Al-Sahafa 23/5/10 – GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit yesterday received a letter from Arab League Secretary General Umr Musa in which he affirmed that the League would work with the international community, the UN and the AU for implementing the CPA and for conducting the referendum on schedule.

Ambassador Samir Honi, Special adviser to the League Secretary-General, told reporters following a meeting with Kiir that the League would organize a conference in Bahrain on reconstruction of infrastructure in the South. Hosni confirmed the League's respect to the choice of the southern Sudanese in the upcoming referendum.

South Sudan army ceases cordoning ex-SPLA General turned rebel

Sudan Tribune website 22/5/10 – SPLA officers have said they have stopped deploying their forces to barricade former SPLA deputy chief of General staff, Lieutenant General George Athor, from moving out of his base.

Our forces previously deployed around areas suspected of hosting General Athor have received military instructions from the SPLA general headquarters never to conduct offensive reconnaissance, said an army officer who requested to remain anonymous.

"These instructions are helpful because they have reduced fear and tension in the area and the situation is now relatively calm. Athor is even moving freely in the area, the senior SPLA officer said. "His movement is not being restricted. I understand he was on Wednesday in Baliet County and there was no problem because he did not attack any military base on his way to Baliet," the military source stressed.

According to the source, the recent instructions from the SPLA General headquarters in Juba advised the army to only monitor his movements and react vigorously in self- defense in case he attacks any military base. Recent orders from the headquarters instruct the army to only fight back in self-defense in case he launches any offensive against any military base in the area, he said.

10 people killed in clashes between SPLA and Athor forces

Akhir Lahza 23/5/10 – Ten people were killed and three injured in clashes yesterday between George Athor and SPLA forces in Malakal. Sources revealed to the newspaper that a group of 610 SPLA soldiers commanded by colonel "Owej" defected and joined Athor forces. According to the sources, SPLA is determined to eliminate Athor.

Security operatives arrest several staff of Southern Sudan Radio in Juba

Sudan Tribune website 23/5/10 - In a surprising move on Friday, the day the elected President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, was sworn in, security operatives stormed the Southern Sudan Radio station and arrested seven staff members for allegedly leading the recent strike.

Speaking to Sudan Tribune on phone, one of senior staff who was present at the radio station during the time of the arrest said the seven arrested are members of the ten-member committee set up earlier by the staff to follow up with the GOSS ministry of information and the ministry of finance on the delayed payment of their 12-month arrears of housing allowances.

He said the arrested staff were forced into vehicles on Friday by the security personnel who took them to unknown location. He added that the security personnel were still looking for the other three members to arrest them too. Tanks were even rolled around the radio station to scare the staff, he said.

On Tuesday, Southern Sudan Radio and TV were briefed by the committee about the failure of the ministry to pay their 12-month housing allowance from 1st January to 31st December 2009 despite the intervening directive from the office of the President to pay the said arrears.

That meeting, according to him, resolved to effect the sit-in strike from Wednesday during which staff should report to the station at 8:00AM but do not work until 5:00PM when they go back home. However, Southern Sudan TV did not take part in the strike and continued to broadcast, probably fearing the reaction of the government.

Most of Southern Sudan Radio staff effected the strike and did not take part in the inauguration ceremony of Salva Kiir which was supposed to be broadcasted live on radio. "This has angered the security personnel who could have been directed by the ministry," said one staff.

"But they have unfortunately reacted emotionally and dictatorially by arresting our staff instead of taking into consideration the cause of our grievances that led to the strike," he lamented.

Our committee members should be released and our grievances looked into, he said.

LRA rebels commit new abduction in W. Equatoria

Sudan Tribune website 22/5/10 - Uganda's Lord Resistance Army rebels have abducted a young girl during fresh attacks carried out in Sudanese villages bordering the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The LRA rebels continue to maraud and loot food items in villages across Tambura and Ezo Counties, locals told the Sudan Tribune.

The list of LRA atrocities against the children of northern Uganda is endless. Since war broke out in 1986 the rebel group has routinely abducted children as young as seven, training them in southern Sudan and forcing them to fight on the front lines.

The LRA has targeted schools, churches and villages to abduct boys, whom it uses as soldiers, and girls, who are often used as sex slaves for LRA commanders. Over the one and half years, as many as hundreds Western Equatoria children are believed to have been abducted by the rebel group.

"LRA fighters surrounded Yangiri and were relaxing just around Eyat camp. On Friday the Ugandan rebels crossed between Yaa River and Eyat camp where they abducted one lady, and purported towards Naandi," a local resident, requesting anonymity, at Yangiri Payam told Sudan Tribune.

A Local chief in Yangiri says one old woman was beaten to coma, as grannies watched. A lady who was travelling on a boda-boda motorcyclist on Friday morning from Yambio to Tambura using the Mupo-Tambura, close to Mabilia met with 2 guys, one dressed in uniform another without shirt, the suspected LRA guys arrested the boda-boda rider, and freed the lady to continue her journey.

The motor bike and the owner were taken back to Yambio; fortunately World Vision vehicles that were coming from Tambura did not meet those suspected LRA.

The lady revealed that, "the two-could be suspected LRA rebels were deep black and talked to them in Arabic.

Shiluk chief killed, SPLA blames the incident on SPLM-DC

Al-Akhbar 23/5/10 – an armed group yesterday killed Shiluk tribe Chief Peter Aluke and seven people escorting him in an ambush near Malakal.

GoSS source accused the SPLM-DC and George Athor of coordinating the assassination, a charge dismissed by SPLM-DC source.

GoSS authorities are tracking down the attackers to bring them to justice. Reportedly, the slain chief is close to the Shiluk King who maintains strong relations with the SPLM.

PCP to request Kiir intervention to release Al-Turabi

Ajras Al-Hurriya 23/5/10 – PCP political secretary Kamal Omer announced that the party would request GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit to intervene to release Hassan Al-Turabi.

Meanwhile, Advocate Barood Sandal is preparing to submit a constitutional appeal against NISS decision shutting down Rai Al-Shaab newspaper.

South Sudan resolves to pay TV staff arrears

Sudan Tribune website 22/5/10 - The GoSS has today said resolved to fully settle one year arrears not paid to staff members of the Southern Sudan Radio and TV who have twice gone on peaceful strike over nonpayment of their rental allowances.

I have in most follow up meetings with ministry of finance and economic planning of the southern Sudan raised and discussed the issue of rental allowances of the southern Sudan TV and radio at length long before attempts to go on strike, Arop Bagat, Direct General of southern Sudan Radio and Television, told Sudan Tribune by phone from regional capital of Juba.

The ministry took it up long before any pressure to follow up procedures to pay these arrears to staff members at southern Sudan Radio and TV. All communications and procedures with ministry of finance and economic planning have been shared with leaders of the staff members; Mr.Bagat said adding he does not understand why staff decided to go on strike again.

Kiir directs internal affairs ministry to professionalize key departments

Sudan Tribune website 22/5/10 - The Newly elected President of the government of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, has on Saturday directed internal affairs ministry to professionalize key ministerial departments ahead of referendum.

The president who turned congratulatory visit by senior officers at the internal affairs ministry into senior security meeting, said he would be pleased if the ministry of internal affairs prepare and present plans at the next cabinet meeting.

"I would love to see important plans regarding how you intend to professionalize key departments of the ministry in the next cabinet meeting for discussions before taking them to the parliament for endorsement," Kiir reportedly told three top officers at the ministry of internal affairs at his residence this afternoon.

On Friday, at his inaugural ceremony, president Kiir pledged to make security of the region one of his top priorities in the new administration by all means possible through encouraging reconciliation initiatives.

He is equally reported to have advised the three senior police officers to work on operational and motivational allowances of police forces in all the ten southern states.

The president is also alleged to have regretted continuous delay in salary payment saying it was unfortunate that he received reports that some soldiers including officers did not receive the April salaries on time due to some setbacks beyond police control.

President Kiir however said these are challenges his new administration would address at earliest possible in the coming months.

He assured officers that top executive organ in consultation with high police and other armed forces command will do everything possible to ensure soldiers on national duties are motivated to fairly and professionally discharge their duties.

He also added his government intends to make necessary arrangement to prepare armed forces towards the conduct of the southern referendum scheduled for January 2011.

South Sudan swears in first elected president

Reuters 21/5/10 - South Sudan swore in Salva Kiir as its first elected president on Friday and the former rebel is likely to lead the semi-autonomous region to independence after a referendum in less than eight months.

Kiir won the April election against his only rival and former ally Lam Akol with almost 93 percent of the vote.

"The entire system that has continued to underpin the Sudanese state from the dawn of independence, continues today and is presently at an advanced stage of rotting completely," Kiir told a gathering of about 3,000 people including Ugandan President and close ally Yoweri Museveni and former Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi.

In the searing heat, the heavily guarded dignitaries were sheltered by cloth tents in a field near the parliament building in southern capital Juba.

Kiir will also become the national First Vice President, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir's deputy, and the two will form a new government expected to be announced in early June.

Kiir acknowledged there had not been enough development in rural areas and promised to do more to fight corruption. The United Nations estimates half the population in the south is short of food.

Security remains a major concern also. Sudan's people are heavily armed, refusing to give up their weapons voluntarily after decades of civil war. Deadly tribal clashes are frequent - mostly over cattle raiding.

South Sudan "might" declare unilateral secession if referendum vote delayed

Al-Sahafa 22/5/10 (BBC Monitoring) Sudan People's Liberation Movement Secretary-General Pagan Amum said that the secession of south Sudan is the scenario most close to reality in light of the pulse of the street.

According to Amum, south Sudan's parliament might declare unilateral independence of the region in case any delays or tampering with the date for the referendum occur.

He, however, reiterated SPLM's commitment to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, saying that the decision of self-determination was up to the people of the south.

UN identifies most persistent users of child soldiers in armed conflicts

UN News 21/5/10 - The United Nations for the first time named the military forces and rebel groups that are the most persistent violators of children in armed conflicts, identifying groups in Asia, Africa and Latin America which continue to recruit child soldiers and use them to wage war.

The annual report of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict shows that 16 different armies and insurgent groups – in conflicts ranging from the Philippines and Myanmar to Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Colombia – have recruited or used child soldiers for at least the past five years.

The report also identifies the groups which subject minors to the most brutal violence, such as killings, maiming, rapes and other sexual assaults.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, warned that “we still live in a world with those who would use children as spies, soldiers, and human shields.

“The shifting nature of conflict has put many children on the front lines. Too often children become collateral damage during military operations. Every year the release of this report should give us pause. Let us remember that we must protect the most innocent and most vulnerable,” she added.

The persistent violators include Abu Sayyaf, the New People’s Army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), three insurgent groups that are active in the Philippines. Myanmar’s national army, known as Tatmadaw Kyi, and the rebel Karenni Army and Karen National Liberation Army were also identified.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) continue to recruit and use child soldiers in their fight against Government forces and paramilitary groups in the South American country, the report noted.

In the DRC, the report named violators on both sides of the conflict still flaring in the east – the national army (known as the FARDC) and the rebel Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), Nationalist and Integrationalist Front (FNI), the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and various militias that are known as the Mai-Mai.

In Sudan, pro-Government militias in Darfur and the southern-based Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) were included in the list, while Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was also named.

But the report, which has been sent to the Security Council, makes clear that progress has been made with some groups which have recently signed action plans in which they aim to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The MILF, the SPLA and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist have all signed such plans.

Burundi has been removed from the annexes to the report following UN verification that all children associated with the National Liberation Forces (FNL) have been reunited with their families and that the group has ceased recruitment.

By contrast, some groups have been named for the first time as recruiting or using children in armed conflict. These include the Afghan National Police, the rebel Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Somalia’s Hizbul Islam militia.

Somalia’s Al-Shabaab, an Islamist rebel force, and the TFG both stand accused of killing and maiming children in the Horn of Africa country.

Several groups involved in fighting in the eastern DRC were named as being responsible for rapes and other forms of sexual violence against children. They are the FARDC, LRA, FDLR, the Patriotic Resistance Forces in Ituri district (FRPI), the FNI and the Mai-Mai.

The report lists several recommendations to the Security Council for consideration, including more vigorous measures against those groups and individuals who persistently commit grave violations against children. The Council will discuss the report at an open debate next month.