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Media Monitoring Report

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Post-Referendum Watch

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Highlights

Government calls on international troops to pack their bags to leave

Al-Rai Al-Aam 23/5/11 – Addressing a press conference after a meeting with the UNSC delegation, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amin Hassan Omer, said the army entered Abyei to provide protection to civilians and to maintain security on a northern territory, adding that the SAF would stay in the area until the situation is addressed. He said SPLM's disregard for the Kadugli agreement would cost it dearly particularly that the South is still part of the North. He declared the Government's rejection of pressures from any quarter for withdrawal of the army from the Area unless the provisions contained in Abyei Protocol and Kadugli agreement are fully respected.

Meanwhile, Omer has called on UNMIS to pack its bags; pointing out that July 9 is a "sacred day" for the Government.

Omer has characterized the role of Abyei Administration as negative, saying it is part of the crisis rather than the solution.

Sudanese officials snub meetings with UNSC delegation

Sudan Tribune website, 22/05/11 - The Sudanese 2nd Vice President Ali Osman Taha and foreign minister Ali Karti have cancelled appearances with the visiting delegation of UNSC in a sign of tension between Khartoum and the international community. Sudanese officials attributed Karti's absence to a sudden illness but did not provide a similar explanation to scrapping the meeting with VP Taha.

The US ambassador to the UN Susan Rice expressed regret over the cancellations saying that Sudan forfeited a chance to exchange views with the UNSC on the Abyei crisis. Speaking to reporters Rice said that the UNSC could use different tools to resolve the crisis in Abyei. The UNSC is now expected to head towards South Sudan capital of Juba for talks with Kiir and other officials in the semi-autonomous region.

Taha cancels scheduled meeting with UNSC delegation

Al-Akhbar 23/5/11 – VP Ali Osman Taha yesterday cancelled a scheduled meeting with a visiting UNSC delegation.

Also, State Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Amin Hassan Omer turned up to represent Foreign Minister Ali Karti who was supposed to meet with the delegation. Karti regretted on grounds of illness but informed sources told the newspaper that the Minister was not ill, saying the government did not want high level discussions with the delegation.

SAF would remain in control of Abyei until settlement reached - official

Xinhua 22/5/11 A Sudanese minister on Sunday said that the Sudanese army would remain in control of Abyei until a settlement, guaranteeing that no forces belonging to Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) would enter the region, is reached.

"The Sudanese army does not seek to impose a new reality, but tends to clean the area from outlawed forces," Amin Hassan Omer, Sudanese State Minister at the Presidency, told reporters after talks between Sudanese government and members of UN Security Council (UNSC) delegation in Khartoum Sunday.

"We are committed to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and Abyei protocol, but now a new reality must be instituted to guarantee that no illegal forces enter the area. Until that time, the army will perform its responsibilities in Abyei," he added.

Sudan not seeking unilateral solution on Abyei

Sudan Vision 23/5/11 - The Sudan Armed Force (SAF) affirmed that it has already moved beyond Abyei boundaries southwards of Bahr Al Arab so as to regain security, affirming adherence to all areas under its control in accordance with constitution till an appropriate resolution on current crisis is reached.

The SAF issued a statement pointing out the SPLA has been capturing Abyei since last December in deliberate violation of the CPA. The statement indicated that SPLM sent a large armed group to Abyei which resulted in undermining security and restricting the role of joint troops.

The statement clarified that SPLM has kept the force under the name of Abyei Police Force. The statement pointed out that SAF has entered Abyei so as to preserve stability recently threatened by serious violations in Bahr al Arab area.

Khartoum rejects UNSC's criticism, offers new security arrangement

Al-Ahdath 23/5/11 – The Sudanese Government expressed readiness to engage in urgent negotiations to reach an agreement on new security arrangement to end the crisis over Abyei.

Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Khaled Musa, told reporters yesterday that Government officials informed the SC members about the right of SAF to remain in Abyei in the absence of JIUs. Musa expressed astonishment over the SC's condemnation of SAF and its silence on the SPLA's repeated breaches.

Musa said the dissolution of Abyei Administration was a sovereign decision, adding the Administration has become part of the crisis.

SC urges expeditious resolution of pending issues before July

Al-Sahafa 23/5/11 – the SC has condemned the attack on the UN convoy in Abyei and called for the immediate withdrawal of troops and reestablishment of the Area Administration. The SC also expressed grave concern over deteriorating security situation in Abyei and called for the immediate withdrawal of armies.

Meanwhile, the Council deplored that it could not meet with Sudan's Foreign Minister and VP Ali Osman Taha, saying the Government missed an opportunity to express its view on the current crisis known.

GoSS to hold a meeting today to assess situation

Al-Rai Al-Aam 23/5/11 – The GoSS is to hold a meeting today in Juba to assess the situation. A source told the newspaper yesterday that the meeting, to be chaired by Salva Kiir Mayardit, is intended to assess the situation in the light of recent developments.

The sources said a press conference would be held on the outcome of the meeting.

Presidency to hold a meeting within hours

Akhir Lahza 23/5/11 – AUHIP Chair Thabo Mbeki, speaking to reporters after a meeting with President Al-Bashir yesterday, disclosed that he had submitted proposals to resolve Abyei issue but did not elaborate. Mbeki is also scheduled to meet with Kiir in Juba today as part of efforts to defuse tension in Abyei.

The newspaper has learned from sources that President Al-Bashir informed Mbeki about his Government's reservation on the six proposals to address the issue.

Meanwhile, sources expected the Presidency to hold a decisive meeting within hours to discuss tension in the territory.

UN chief calls for immediate end to military operations in Sudan's Abyei area

Xinhua 22/5/11 - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Sunday strongly condemned "the ongoing escalation of violence" in Abyei, a disputed area in central Sudan, and call on the security forces of the governments of Sudan and South Sudan to immediately end military operations and withdraw all forces and armed elements from Abyei.

A statement, issued here by Ban's spokesman, said, "The secretary-general strongly condemns the ongoing escalation of violence in Abyei which has included increased troop movements and exchanges of heavy and small arms fire between the security forces of the governments of Sudan and South Sudan."

"The secretary-general remains deeply concerned for the safety of the civilian population of the area, the vast majority of whom has been forcibly displaced due to the fighting," the statement said.

The secretary-general "deplores the actions of those responsible for the shelling of the United Nations compound by mortar rounds which wounded two peacekeepers and calls on those responsible to be held to account," the statement said. "The secretary-general calls on both sides to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground."

"The secretary-general also reiterates his call to investigate the attacks on United Nations troops in Goli on May 10 and the UN escorted convoy on May 19 in order to bring the perpetrators to justice," said the statement.

"The secretary-general calls on both parties to immediately cease their military operations, withdraw all forces and armed elements from Abyei and desist from further acts of antagonism," the statement said.

"He calls on the parties to uphold their previous commitments to maintain peace and security in

the Abyei area through mechanisms already agreed upon and engage in serious discussions to find a final settlement to the Abyei issue before July 9," the statement added.

South Sudan seeks to defuse crisis in Abyei through non-military means

Sudan Tribune website 22/5/11 - The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) appealed to the international community for help following the military takeover by the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) of the disputed border region of Abyei yesterday.

At a press conference in Juba GoSS spokesperson and minister of information Barnaba Marial Benjamin said that the SAF's seizure of Abyei is "illegal".

"It is the responsibility of the United Nations and the Security Council to see that they are withdrawn," Benjamin said.

The GoSS official said that the SAF "invasion" has endangered the life of thousands of citizens accusing the Northern army of "burning houses on a rampage of looting" adding that the South "will respond in self-defense".

"Women and children are suffering at the hands of an invading army that doesn't care....they are hungry, in need of medication and out in the heavy rains without shelter".

Sudan Tribune journalist Ngor Aguot who was locked at a UN compound in Abyei during SAF's operation confirmed looting and burning in the region.

The Abyei resident said that he has lost all his belongings that were in his house during a rampage following the takeover.

"They are entering houses and taking everything away," Aguot said in an email adding that there was no intervention by UN peacekeepers in the region.

GoSS spokesperson has appealed for UN peacekeepers to "come out of their bunkers".

Southern military spokesman Col. Philip Aguer told the London based Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper that the SPLA "will not be drawn into war".

Meanwhile the Sudanese government expressed its willingness to enter into immediate negotiations on new security arrangements to end the crisis in Abyei but insisted that Southern police must withdraw from the region before that could happen.

The visiting United Nations Security Council (UNSC) delegation has condemned seizure of Abyei and also the attack by Southern forces last Thursday on a SAF convoy and United Nations Peacekeepers.

The state minister in the presidency Amin Hassan Omer who headed the government's side in the talks with the UNSC stressed that SAF will stay in Abyei until new security arrangements are put in place.

Omer said that SAF entered Abyei as a response to "continuous violations" by the South to the

existing agreements.

"Until we reach a new security arrangement the army will remain the guard of the region so as to ensure no infiltration by SPLA forces again," he said.

"We are ready to negotiate and are committed to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Kadugli accord signed between the two sides on the region," adding that the duty of SAF is to expel the force outside the boundaries of Abyei and deal with it as an illegal force.

GOSS apologizes to UNMIS over recent Abyei incident

Radio Miraya, 22/05/11 - The Government of Southern Sudan has apologized to UNMIS for any injuries inflicted on UN peacekeepers during the recent incident in Abyei. Addressing the press in Juba on Sunday, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in the Government of Southern Sudan, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, said that the incident was not intentional.

Marial also called on the Khartoum government to immediately withdraw SAF from the Abyei Area.

Other Highlights

Sudan and LJM finalizing details of a peace deal in Darfur – top negotiator

Sudan Tribune website 22/5/11 - The government and the rebel Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) are finalizing the details of a peace agreement as the parties have agreed on the major issues, said Sudan's top negotiator on Sunday.

State Minister Amin Hassan Omer, head of Sudan's government delegation to the peace talks with Darfur rebel groups stated Sunday in Khartoum that the two parties are developing the necessary arrangements on LJM's political and military participation in the government in order to complete the peace agreement.

Amin further said they expect the mediation would present a draft peace agreement at the Darfur stakeholders' conference, or through the African Union Panel on Sudan led by Thabo Mbeki or the state of Qatar, the official SUNA reported.

After his return from Qatar on Saturday, Presidential adviser Ghazi Salah Al-Deen told reporters that the mediation agreed to present the final draft agreement to the conference on 27 May. But the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) said he visited Doha to put pressure on the mediation to prepare a final peace deal with LJM.

Sudanese government and JEM stopped talks because the rebels demand to bring a delegation from Darfur, and to open new discussions on different chapters based on the position papers they filed to the mediation and not on the draft agreement discussed with LJM.

The top negotiator further said that JEM and the other rebel movements will get opportunities to join the political process. He said that they stressed during a meeting held with the visiting UN Security Council on Sudan's keenness to achieve peace in Darfur.