

23 Nov 2009

www.unmis.org



Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

Headlines

- NEC extends registration deadline, electorate exceeds 8 million (**Dailies**)
- Fourth batch of IDPs return to Abyei (**Ajras Al-Hurriah**)
- PDF will support Al-Bashir in elections – Defence Minister (**Al-Rai Al-Aam**)
- One killed and an SPLA officer captain injured in Jonglei (**Radio Miraya**)
- Root causes to Wonduruba Minister Shootings revealed (**The Juba Post**)
- French radio begins broadcasting in South Sudan (**ST**)
- More people suspected of swine flu – Health Ministry (**Radio Miraya**)
- UNAMID welcomes AU Peace and Security delegation (**ST**)
- Government pledges no child will be executed (**Dailies**)
- Eid Al-Adha holiday Thursday through Sunday (**Dailies**)
- **Commentary:** South Sudan Should Make Freedom of Expression a Priority (**SSRC BLOGS**)
- **Editorial:** Harassment of journalists reaches unprecedented levels (**The Juba Post**)

NOTE: Reproduction here does not mean that the UNMIS PIO can vouch for the accuracy or veracity of the contents, nor does this report reflect the views of the United Nations Mission in Sudan. Furthermore, international copyright exists on some materials and this summary should not be disseminated beyond the intended list of recipients.

Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN
Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200

Highlights

NEC extends registration deadline, electorate exceed 8 million

Local dailies report the NEC has announced the extension of the voter registration deadline until December 7th and the polling will start on April 11 instead of April 5 2010. **Sudan Radio** broadcasted that 8,600, 000 voters have so far been registered.

According to **Sudan Tribune website** 22/11/09, the NEC extended the deadline to allow more time for voters to register amid widespread criticism on the process. The NEC said it considered in a meeting today the observation of political parties and the impact on the current timeframe and the difficulties that led to the delay in the registration in some parts of Sudan. It added that the extension decision was aimed at pushing the people to register and for political powers and NGOs to play a role of encouragement to the citizens.

Meanwhile, **Al-Sahafa** reports that the coalition of opposition forces has called for the cancellation of the voter registration exercise and the start of a fresh internationally-monitored registration, citing numerous irregularities and lack of neutrality on the part of the NEC. The opposition said elections would not be free and fair if the current voter exercise is allowed to proceed. However, Presidential Adviser and NCP leader Mustafa Osman Ismail has considered the opposition's threat to boycott elections as "blackmailing" and advised them to prepare themselves for elections and refer their complaints to the NEC. The **Citizen** reports the opposition forces have said that the NEC has colluded with the NCP in registration fraud, adding they have concrete evidence about the involvement of the NCP in the fraud, including misleading citizens at the registration centres. They said the NEC chairman Abel Alier has shown lack of respect for the rule of law.

NCP, SPLM suspend talks on pending issues

Local dailies report the NCP and the SPLM have reached a deadlock on the pending referendum issues and consequently their dialogue has been suspended. **Al-Sahafa** reports Presidential Adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail as saying that the two sides would resume consultations after Eid. However, SPLM SG Pagan Amum said the two partners have resolved to solve their differences before the end of December.

Fourth batch of IDPs return to Abyei

A convoy of 39 trucks carrying the fourth batch of IDPs began their journey from Khartoum to Abyei, **Ajras Al-Hurriah** reports. Sultan Renk Deng Mok told the paper that the organizing committee would offer the returnees four meals and medical services.

PDF will support Al-Bashir in elections – Defence Minister

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports Defence Minister Gen. Abdul Rahim Mohamed Hussein as saying that the People's Defence Forces (PDF) would support the Government and President Al-Bashir in the upcoming elections. Gen. Hussein made the remarks at a ceremony marking the 20th PDF Anniversary in the White Nile State yesterday. National Security Adviser Gen. Salah Gosh told the function that the PDF was an institution loyal to the Government and it would join hands with other institutions to ensure democratic transition.

One killed and an SPLA officer captain injured in Jonglei

Radio Miraya 22/11/09 reported Jonglei State Governor Kual Manyang said unknown gunmen

killed one person and injured an SPLA captain in an attack in the state. Five children and a woman were also kidnapped.

The Governor said instability had prevented citizens from heading toward voter registration centers. He urged all citizens to register to exercise their rights in the upcoming elections.

Root causes to Wonduruba Minister Shootings revealed, Kwaje advised not to travel to Lainya

The **Juba Post** 23/11/09 – The Central Equatorial State Executive Committee headed by Clement Wani Konga on Wednesday said the shooting of the GoSS Minister of Agriculture Samson Kwaje was politically-motivated. The committee said the killing of the three innocent citizens and the wounding of the Minister was a result of a wrangle among leaders of Wonduruba Payam with regards to the Payam's position on where it should fall under the administration of Juba or Lainya Country.

Dr. Kwaje's request to the National Elections Commission (NEC) to annex the area to Lainya constituency rather than the Juba west constituency has irked many there. The issue has polarized Wonduruba community in two, those in favour of Kwaje's position and those who want Wonduruba to remain under constituency number 10, the Juba west constituency as decided by the state High Elections Committee.

Kwaje was reported to have insisted that Wonduruba area should remain under the constituency number 10. As the matter came to a head, the governor advised the minister through the commissioner of Lainya not to travel to the area until the matter was resolved satisfactorily but the minister did not follow the advice. Reports have it that misunderstanding arose between the Wonduruba Payam SPLM Secretary and Minister Kwaje who ordered the arrest of the Secretary for not having made arrangements to prepare the ground for him to address the citizens of Wonduruba.

Thus after leaving Mangkaro village where he had had a successful rally, he was ambushed apparently by locals, giving no credence to the claim of what Kwaje put on air on BBC pointing a hand to the Khartoum and the NCP whom he blamed were behind his attempted assassination. The central Equatorial state Cabinet has condemned the act and all its perpetrators, and has requested everybody in Wonduruba to remain calm while seeking to bring those responsible to justice. Meanwhile, the governor has issued decree 12/2009 for Wonduruba to be part of Juba until the matter is settled and has appealed to the citizens to continue with the registration.

Meanwhile, **Radio Miraya** 22/11/09 reported that GoSS announced the arrest of those involved in last week's assassination attempt on the Minister of Agriculture Samson Kwaje in Juba along Wanduruba-lanya road. GoSS Interior Minister Giir Shuang said the ministerial authorities and the Government of Central Equatorial are currently conducting investigations. However, he declined to name the accused.

French radio begins broadcasting in South Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 20/11/09 reported that "Radio France Internationale (RFI) began transmitting in south Sudan on FM, on 90.4. Broadcasting began with programmes in English and in French and broadcasts in Arabic are due to begin at the end of the week. The move follows a broadcasting agreement between the French Government-owned radio and the GoSS. RFI's Khartoum correspondent, Stephane Aubouard, is based in Juba for the launch where he is leading training workshops for journalists from south Sudan for the next two weeks. The French ambassador to Sudan, Patrick Nicoloso, was present in Juba on Thursday to open a new embassy office, the radio reported. All of RFI's English-language broadcasts will be aired on

90.4 FM in Southern Sudan, starting with the 0400 UTC morning programme, through to the evening programmes at 1600 and 1700 UTC.

More people suspected of swine flu – Health Ministry

Radio Miraya 22/11/09 reported that the Federal Ministry of Health disclosed that more people have been suspected of contracting swine flu but could not confirm the actual number of infections in the Sudan. The Director of Pandemics at the Ministry Dr Babiker Al- Magbul speaking to Miraya FM said that the vaccine for swine flu is available.

UNAMID welcomes AU Peace and Security delegation

Sudan Tribune website 22/11/09 reported that UNAMID today welcomed the visit of the AUPSC to the headquarters of the Mission in El-Fashir on Tuesday.

The 15 members of the AUPSC are expected in Khartoum on Monday where they would hold talks with Sudanese officials and the Sudanese electoral commission before proceeding to the UNAMID HQs on Tuesday. The delegation will also visit the capital of southern Sudan for consultation with GoSS on the peace implementation.

Government pledges no child will be executed

The UN confirms it has received clear commitment from the Sudan Government that none of the children involved in the JEM attack in the May 2008 attack on Omdurman would be executed, **local dailies** report. Ms. Radhika Coomaraswami, the UNSG's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, also revealed at a press conference yesterday that the SPLA has agreed to release child soldiers within its ranks and agreed to their reintegration.

Ms. Coomaraswami also said that she held talks with armed groups in Darfur that also expressed commitment to the demobilization of child soldiers within their respective ranks.

She also said that she found great progress in respect for human rights and the rights of the child within the regular forces and armed groups but pointed out that there were still challenges need to be addressed.

Reuters 22/11/09 reported that Sudan sentenced six children to death for taking part in a Darfur rebel attack on Khartoum but has since promised not to execute them, a top United Nations official said on Sunday.

A Sudanese government official said he could not comment on the case but added child executions were not allowed under the law and there were checks to keep youngsters off death row.

"We have six from the attack on death row," said Radhika Coomaraswamy, the U.N. Secretary-General's special representative for children and armed conflict.

"The government claims that a military panel has found that these were not children. But the assessment of the international agencies is that they are children."

"I was assured today by the minister of justice that they will not be executed," she told reporters at the end of a trip to Sudan.

Coomaraswamy said U.N. staff had identified another six children among the remaining convicts, but Sudan's government had said some of them were over 18 at the time of the attack.

Coomaraswamy said there was evidence that JEM was continuing to recruit child soldiers, as were other rebels and pro-government militias known as the janjaweed inside Darfur.

She said she had also met in southern Sudan children forced into fighting by Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels. "I would say the light had been completely erased from their eyes after years of abuse."

The special representative said there was no evidence that Sudan's official armed forces, or the southern Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) were recruiting children, but some children had been seen living around military camps.

Eid Al-Adha holiday Thursday through Sunday

Local dailies report that the Council of Ministers has announced that Eid holiday will Thursday through Sunday. Employees will report for duty on Monday November 2.

Commentary: South Sudan Should Make Freedom of Expression a Priority

By **Brian Adeba**

SSRC BLOGS - The Government of South Sudan (GOSS) has announced that it intends to establish a news agency that will cover areas of the south starved of mainstream media coverage [1]. The idea for establishing the News Agency of South Sudan (NASS) was endorsed at a cabinet meeting chaired by President Salva Kiir at the end of October.

NASS is envisaged as an agency that will replace the Sudan News Agency (SUNA), managed by the government in Khartoum. Overall, it is also seen as a vehicle for consolidating free expression in South Sudan. Southern Sudanese nationalists and proponents of media plurality and free expression are likely to welcome this announcement because it contains promises to fund the training of journalists and wean the Southern public of the services of the Sudan News Agency (SUNA), which is largely seen as a mouth-piece of the Khartoum government.

But regardless of the grandiose statement affirming free expression, two troubling issues come to mind regarding the intended news agency.

First, the news agency will purportedly "support news and information programming at public and private domestic media outlets" in South Sudan. Secondly, the ministry of information and broadcasting will be tasked with developing and managing the news agency.

Lessons to learn about news agencies

At this point, it is pertinent to pause and reflect on the history and role of news agencies in most African countries. The history of government-run news agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa, paints a rather dismal picture of free expression. Seen as an extension of the state-controlled media, news agencies are used to buttress control by the powers that be and mold obeisance to leaders.

SUNA is a good case study of this type of control. Following President Jaafar Nimeiri's nationalization of the Sudanese media in 1970, ostensibly to ward off the influences of some newspapers that had become "stooges of foreign powers," [2], private news outlets were all grouped under SUNA. This facilitated absolute government control on all media in Sudan [3]. Twenty-three years after the demise of the Nimeiri regime, successive Khartoum governments continued to wield absolute control over SUNA.

To date a cursory review of the news distributed by SUNA indicates that the agency is nothing

more than a mouth-piece of the government. Its editorial policy is defined by that hallowed mantra favoured by repressive regimes the world over: news is when a government minister speaks; which in essence means an absurd devotion to covering the top echelon of the government [4].

So as the Southern government contemplates the setting up of a news agency, it is important that such an agency should not mimic SUNA and be used as an instrument for muzzling free expression. Generally, media practitioners and civil society have noted that the SPLM-led GoSS is quite “liberal” in its attitudes towards free expression compared to its National Congress Party counterpart in Khartoum. But these same observers have also noted that tolerance for free expression is only prevalent among top-level government officials. At the lower ranks, and among the civil service, a “militaristic mind-set” curtails respect for free expression, notes a recent report on the state of the media in South Sudan [5].

Apart from an intended omnipresent government role in NASS, other worrying issues regarding the creation of the news agency arise from the fact that there is no concrete legal framework on the formulation, establishment, and management of publicly-funded media in South Sudan. For instance, since the news agency will be set up using public funds, should it be managed by an independent body that’s not subservient to the SPLM-led government or not?

Conclusion

South Sudan has long harbored secessionist ambitions dating back to 1955. At no time in its entire history has the South inched closer to an independent nation-state status than now. The momentum for independence continues to galvanize Southerners, as echoed by Salva Kiir recently when he urged a vote for succession during the referendum slated for 2011[6]. The intention to create a news agency in the South is driven by this momentum.

It is therefore imperative that a new state in Sub-Saharan Africa heed lessons about respect for free expression if it is to join the civilized world. The SPLM has long chanted that the armed struggle it waged was for freedom. While the task of creating a conducive atmosphere for free expression in South Sudan is daunting, given limited resources, poor infrastructure, and lack of capacity, the earlier the seeds are sown, the better.

Currently sitting before the South Sudan Legislative Assembly, are a raft of progressive and democratic media legislations crafted more than a year ago by civil society and government officials. The bills address some of the crucial issues pertaining to free expression, including questions about the management of publicly-funded media.

The Right to Information Bill (RTI) would give Southern Sudanese the right to access government documents and other information about the workings of government. The Public Service Broadcasting Bill and the Broadcasting Frequency Management Bill will respectively create modalities for the establishment of a public broadcasting system and distribution of frequencies. These bills have been endorsed by cabinet but still await adoption and ratification by the legislative assembly.

It is now three weeks since the assembly resumed its sitting after the long summer recess. Since the creation of the news agency has the blessing of President Salva Kiir himself, it would be prudent that the president uses his influence to ensure that these bills pass to pave the way for free expression in South Sudan.

Brian Adeba is a journalist with research interests on the role of the media in South Sudan. He can be reached at brian.adeba@gmail.com.

Editorial: Harassment of journalists reaches unprecedented levels

The *Juba Post* 23/11/09 – Once again journalists have been shown the door. This time it happened under the very eyes of the minister responsible for the media, and Araop Baggart was there to see his boys thrown out. Their crime was to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. The President was expected from the long tour to the Netherlands where he has been to discuss CPA-related matters. The public hungrily waited for the remarks of the President at the airport. The President did make his speech but there was no one to take notes as all media houses were hounded out of the reception area just before he could touch down and deliver his speech. Some of the poor journalists who were thrown out had rushed to the airport missing out their morning tea and braved the wait till 11:00 am only to be told to go home empty handed.

Relations between media houses and state security apparatus have never been anything but hostile. Journalists are frequently harassed, detained etc. for committing no crime worth the mention. But now that this is happening in broad daylight with plenty of eyewitnesses and responsible, the matter needs to be urgently addressed.

Security concerns are important in their own right but there must be limits to what they can do. What harm could journalists possibly do to their President? Besides, if there is some concern and fear, why not give journalists a thorough frisking before they can be allowed into the vicinity of the dignitary they are seeking news from? The arbitrary arrests of journalists has also got to be checked especially when they do so in the course of their duty. It seems, members of the security family are unaware of the role of the media as the fourth estate in the separation of powers. In this case, there is a glaring need to give them adequate training in handling media personnel. In fact, the case in north Sudan where specific security personnel are made to handle media houses is worth copying. Although they have also infringed upon journalists' rights, they are intentionally done so, not out of ignorance. In fact these security personnel are probably more versed in the National Press and Publications Act than journalist themselves. The case in southern Sudan is a fairy tale right out of the world of ignorance.

The journalists Union, AMDISS and AIM should pick the matter of the treatment of journalists in this last incident with concerned authorities. They should use this incident as an entry point to discuss a broad range of concerns with the concerned authorities in internal security organs.