

24 May 2011

www.unmissions.unmis.org



# Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

## Headlines

- SAF will never withdraw from Abyei – Defence Minister (*Al-Rai Al-Aam*)
- Government ready to consider “serious talks” on Abyei (*Al-Sahafa*)
- Luka Biong resigns in protest at incidents in Abyei (*Al-Sahafa*)
- UN institutions are not neutral – NCP official (*Al-Rai Al-Aam*)
- VP office receives no request for a meeting with UNSC delegation – source (*Al-Akhbar*)
- Sudan opposition rejects military escalation between North and South (*Al-Ayyam*)
- SPLM excesses in Abyei embarrass the international community (*Al-Watan*)
- Sudan's Abyei region descends into chaos (*Los Angeles Times*)
- Over 15,000 fled recent fighting at Sudan's Abyei: UN (*AFP*)
- 197 troops killed, missing in Abyei attack (*AP*)
- US urges Sudan to withdraw troops from Abyei (*AFP*)
- MSF suspends health care provision in Abyei, UNMIS condemns looting (*ST*)
- US warns Sudan normalization of ties in jeopardy after Abyei seizure (*ST*)
- Sudan will not accept a derogatory normalization with US – Ministry (*Al-Watan*)
- Joint Chief of Staff visits Abyei (*Akhbar Al-Youm*)

**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

---

## **SAF will never withdraw from Abyei – Defence Minister**

*Al-Rai Al-Aam* 24/5/11 – Defence Minister Gen. Abdul Rahim Mohamed Hussein said the armed forces would never vacate Abyei, adding SAF is ready to take over any area if the political leadership so desires. “If orders are given we will fight” Hussein told the Parliament yesterday in response to an urgent question on incidents in Abyei. He said SAF is disciplined and it acts on political orders and it would enter any area if the political order is given.

*Sudan Vision* 24/5/11 reports that members of the Parliament yesterday unanimously approved the presence of SAF in Abyei because they have been called in to rid the area of enemies. MP Ahmed Al-Salih Saloha called for the termination of UNMIS mandate.

The National Assembly endorsed the statement presented by Gen. Hussein on recent incidents in Abyei and approved of SAF’s decision to remain in Abyei until new security arrangements are put in place, according to *Al-Akhbar* 24/5/11. The Parliament also described SAF’s action in Abyei as “legal and positive”.

"Abyei will remain a northern town until the population decides on their situation by themselves," Hussein said, according to *AFP* 24/5/11. "The (northern) army will stay in Abyei in order to maintain security and stability until a political decision is taken," he added.

The southern government has demanded northern Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) withdraw immediately. "The SAF must end their illegal occupation and leave Abyei," the south's information minister Barnaba Marial Benjamin said Tuesday.

Thousands of Abyei's residents -- mainly southern supporting Dinka Ngok people -- are reported to have fled across the border into the south, with houses set on fire and property looted in the northern-controlled areas.

Southern officials claim that pro-northern Misseriya, a cattle-herding people who traditionally move through Abyei each year with their animals for grazing, are now entering Abyei in large numbers.

"Misseriya tribes are being brought into Abyei with the support of the Sudanese government, with the intention of occupying the Dinka Ngok territory to justify their participation in the referendum," Benjamin claimed.

"Nobody can entertain the idea of a Kashmir or a Western Sahara scenario in Abyei," he added.

## **Government ready to consider “serious talks” on Abyei**

*Al-Sahafa* 24/5/11 – The Sudanese Government announced that SAF would withdraw from Abyei only if the JIUs are reviewed and the southern police and other unauthorized forces would not enter the Area.

Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Khaled Musa told reporters that the Sudanese Government had presented proposals with regard to the formation of the JIUs. Musa criticized the UNSC for failing to condemn the SPLM and declared the Government's rejection of the US' statement that normalizing its relations with Sudan depends on resolution of Abyei. Musa said the issue of Abyei could only be resolved through dialogue and negotiations.

According to *Al-Ahdath* 24/5/11, Musa said the UN reacted positively to the Government's proposal to engage in security negotiations to address the situation in Abyei as an important step towards defusing tension.

### **Luka Biong resigns in protest at incidents in Abyei**

*Al-Sahafa* 24/5/11 – SPLM leader Luka Biong who is serving as Cabinet Affairs Minister has tendered his resignation to GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit in protest at incidents in Abyei and SAF's seizure of the territory.

*AFP* 24/5/11 reports that Luka Biong resigned Tuesday from the Khartoum government in protest at what he called "war crimes" in Abyei, occupied by northern troops at the weekend.

"We had hoped that we could form two viable states in good relationship with each other, but those in Khartoum do not seem interested in peace," Biong said.

"But with war crimes being committed in Abyei at the hands of (Khartoum's ruling) National Congress Party, I could not in good faith continue to take part in such a government," he said.

### **UN institutions are not neutral – NCP official**

*Al-Rai Al-Aam* 24/5/11 – NCP Political Secretary Al-Haj Adam said UN bodies are not neutral.

Adam, who made the remarks while commenting on incidents in Abyei, said the UNSC's intervention in the Abyei issue is unfortunate.

### **VP office receives no request for a meeting with UNSC delegation - source**

*Al-Akhbar* 24/5/11 – Informed source in the office of VP Ali Osman Taha said the office did not receive a written request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UN or any other government or UN body for an appointment to meet with the UNSC delegation.

"The desire to meet with VP Ali Osman Taha was expressed in the media only" the source claimed.

### **Sudan opposition rejects military escalation between North and South**

*Al-Ayyam* 24/5/11- Sudan opposition political parties have rejected military escalation between the North and the South, calling the NCP and the SPLM to engage in dialogue to address issues.

The political parties, in a joint statement issued yesterday, stressed the need to use all available mechanisms such as the Presidency and JDB to calm the situation until the end of the Interim Period.

The statement, signed by the National Umma Party, SPLM, PCP, DUP and the Communist

Party, emphasized the importance of the role of the international community and guarantors of the CPA to deter an outbreak of war between the North and the South.

### **SPLM excesses in Abyei embarrass the international community**

*Al-Watan* 24/5/11 – The NCP has lashed out against the SPLM for failing to respect and abide by all agreements on Abyei including the recent Kadugli agreement.

NCP Political Secretary Al-Haj Adam said what happened in Abyei had embarrassed the international community and exposed the SPLM's inability to run its domestic affairs.

### **Sudan's Abyei region descends into chaos**

*Los Angeles Times* 24/5/11 - Sudan's disputed oil-rich central region spiraled further into chaos Monday, as armed looters set fire to the main town in the Abyei area, residents and humanitarian groups fled and northern troops dug in for what could be a prolonged conflict with southern forces.

The northern army appears to have sent thousands of troops to Abyei town, according to satellite images, although army officials denied the number was that high.

Thousands of those displaced by the fighting arrived in neighboring areas to the south, where schools were converted into shelters. Some took to the streets to protest what they called an "unjustified invasion" of Abyei by northern forces.

Tanks from northern Sudan began arriving in Abyei in recent days, confronting southern troops that had been patrolling the area as part of a joint security force. A U.N. compound was hit by mortar fire, and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council called for an immediate end to the violence. Late Monday, the United Nations issued a statement condemning looting and burning in Abyei by armed men.

On Monday night, witnesses in Abyei town reported hearing gunfire and warplanes overhead. Northern army officials said the area was under their control. They did not say how many casualties they suffered in clashes with southern forces. The military hospital in Khartoum reportedly received dozens of wounded soldiers flown in from Abyei.

Many organizations active in Abyei evacuated staff and suspended operations over the weekend, including Doctors Without Borders.

"Nearly the entire population of Abyei town fled the city, which is now almost empty," the humanitarian group said in a statement, adding that the group had shifted to Agok to provide treatment at mobile clinics to those displaced by the fighting.

President Al-Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court in connection with genocide in Sudan's Darfur region, gave a speech Monday saying northern Sudan wanted to end the violence in Abyei.

"We are trying to solve the remaining issues and remove tensions in Abyei and pursue a peaceful solution for Abyei," Bashir said.

## **Over 15,000 fled recent fighting at Sudan's Abyei: UN**

**AFP** 24/5/11 - More than 15,000 people have fled clashes at Sudan's flashpoint town of Abyei to find refuge further south, the United Nations said Tuesday.

Elisabeth Byrs, spokeswoman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said: "We have a rough estimate of 15,000 people displaced in and around Agok town."

Agok is about 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of Abyei.

According to **Reuters** 24/5/11, at least 20,000 people have fled Sudan's Abyei region to Agok in the south after the northern army seized the disputed area, the United Nations said on Tuesday.

"We don't know exact figures... Around 20,000 are in Agok," said U.N. spokeswoman Hua Jiang, adding that a U.N. team was assessing the situation on the ground.

## **197 troops killed, missing in Abyei attack**

**AP** 24/5/11 - A Sudanese official says 197 northern troops were killed or are missing after an attack last week by southern forces near Abyei that kicked off the latest tension between north and south Sudan.

Kamal Ismail Saeed, Sudan's ambassador to Kenya said Tuesday that last Thursday's attack caused the northern forces to move into the flashpoint zone of Abyei in what he said was self-defense.

U.N. troops were escorting the northern forces during the attack, which the U.N. called a "criminal act" and a breach of north-south agreements.

The fight over Abyei threatens to send north and south back to war only two months before the south is scheduled to declare independence.

Saeed said the north is committed to a peaceful resolution.

## **US urges Sudan to withdraw troops from Abyei**

**AFP** 23/5/11 - The United States Monday called on Sudan to withdraw its forces from the flashpoint town of Abyei, which was ablaze with gunmen looting properties after being captured by northern troops.

Princeton Lyman, the US envoy for Sudan, said the "occupation" of Abyei by northern troops is "an extremely disproportionate response by the government of Sudan" to an attack on a UN convoy escorting the troops last week.

The "attack on the UN convoy was deplorable and wrong, but we feel the response of the government was disproportionate and irresponsible," Lyman told reporters. "We think those (northern) forces should be withdrawn."

## **MSF suspends health care provision in Abyei as UNMIS condemns looting**

**Sudan Tribune website** 23/5/11 - Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), an international medical humanitarian organization, has suspended its primary health care activities in the disputed oil-

region of Abyei in the aftermath of violent clashes over the last week.

Valerie Babize, MSF's field communications advisor said their staff has instead been placed on standby to respond to any influx casualties who may have been wounded during the attacks.

"MSF teams have suspended primary health care activities in Abyei and have now reached the fleeing population in Agok. MSF teams in Agok are on standby to respond to a further influx of those wounded," Babize said.

Agok is situated south of Abyei in the southern state Bahr al Ghazal. Abyei town was occupied by the northern Sudanese army (SAF) on Saturday after it was attacked by the southern army (SPLA) on Thursday.

The SPLA have apologized for the incident, saying it had not been intentional, and have called for the dispute to be resolved diplomatically. Thousands of Abyei citizens fled the town as it became clear the SAF were approaching.

The UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) strongly condemned the looting and burning in the region by "armed elements, saying the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) should maintain law and order in the areas under their control.

"UNMIS calls upon the Government of Sudan to urgently ensure that the Sudan Armed Forces fulfill their responsibility and intervene to stop these criminal acts," partly reads the May 23 statement.

### **US warns Sudan normalization of ties in jeopardy after Abyei seizure**

*Sudan Tribune* 23/5/11 - The United States on Monday warned the Sudanese government that the process of normalizing ties will come to a halt unless it withdraws its forces from Abyei which lies on the North-South borders.

U.S. special envoy to Sudan Princeton Lyman said actions undertaken by Khartoum in Abyei endangers the North-South negotiations on post-referendum issues before the South officially becomes independent next July.

"We feel that the attack on the UN convoy was deplorable and wrong, but we feel the response of the government was disproportionate and irresponsible. We think those forces should be withdrawn; the civilian administration, which President Bashir unilaterally dissolved, should be recreated; and we have urged that President Bashir and Vice President Kiir, who is head of the Southern Sudan administration, immediately come together and calm this situation down and restore the level of cooperation they talked about after the January 9th referendum. They have not been meeting recently and so far have not been in direct touch, and we feel that's an extremely important thing for them to do" Lyman told reporters at the State department today.

Lyman further said that normalization of relations is now complicated by the SAF takeover of Abyei.

"[I]n our roadmap toward normalization, it includes specifically a resolution of the Abyei problem, which has to be a negotiated solution, and it involves full implementation of the

Comprehensive Peace Agreement. So this action complicates both of those conditions, and what it means is that our ability to move toward normalization is going to be complicated as well" he said.

"We had started the process, as you know, of looking at how to take them off the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. We've been working with the World Bank and others on the debt situation. We've been looking at the prospect of naming a full ambassador after July 9th in Khartoum. All of these are important steps in normalization. They can't be fulfilled if we don't have a successful CPA" Lyman added.

A senior U.S. official, who spoke to The Washington Times on background citing the sensitive nature of the developments, said the United States had offered a road map to the Bashir government for delisting.

It required Sudan to meet specific conditions to get off the list of state sponsors of terrorism and regain full diplomatic relations with the United States. The criteria included a political settlement for Abyei.

"Abyei was probably the most important element of [the conditions] if you had to rank them, and [recent developments in Abyei] are a serious setback," the U.S. official said.

Fatahelrahman Ali Mohamed, deputy chief of mission at the Sudanese Embassy in Washington, said it is "unfair" for the Obama administration to link the removal of Sudan from the terrorism list to Abyei.

"Our country is ready and committed to work with the United States, but it is not helpful if the U.S. is perceived as being tilted toward the south," he added. "The Sudanese military forces went into Abyei to restore peace."

However, U.S. and Sudanese officials, from the north as well as the south, downplayed fears of a bigger conflict.

The senior U.S. official noted that northern forces easily pushed out southern troops from Abyei and that the south lacks the ability to respond to northern aggression.

"I don't think that the south is prepared for a full-scale war. That said, I don't think the north is, either," he said, describing the northern Sudan Armed Forces as a "broken institution."

Enoch Awejuk, acting head of the Southern Sudan mission in Washington, agreed that there was "no opportunity for war".

"Neither side is blameless," said the U.S. official. "Our first order of business is calming them down and getting them to talk to each other."

Another U.S. official speaking to the New York Times said the South is treading carefully for fear of disrupting their breakup process from the North.

"They really don't have any good options," said an American official who works on Sudan but was not authorized to speak publicly. "They're so close to getting what they worked so hard to

get, and a war could risk all that. But I can tell you they're very, very mad, at the highest levels.”

### **Sudan will not accept a humiliated normalization with US – Ministry**

*Al-Watan* 24/5/11 – Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Khalid Musa, told reporters yesterday that Sudan would not accept a derogatory normalization with the US. “Without foreign pressure we will be able to resolve the Abyei issue” he said. He called on the US to use its political clout and influence to pressurize the SPLM, adding that singling the North out for pressure encourages the SPLM to commit further breaches.

Musa said the UNSC asked the Government to pull out the army from Abyei but the SAF would stay in the territory. “We have proposed a political solution and we are ready to review the situation provided the GoSS police elements do not reenter Abyei and the JIUs reestablished” he said.

### **Joint Chief of Staff visits Abyei**

*Akhbar Al-Youm* 24/5/11 – Gen. Esmat Abdul Magid, Joint Chief of Staff, accompanied by several SAF officers visited Abyei. He praised the role of SAF towards the liberation of the territory.

Gen. Esmat also visited UNMIS compound in the area and met with UNMIS Force Commander and Sector Commander.

-----

### ***United Nations Mission in Sudan - Public Information Office***

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