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Highlights

We will not change even a “comma” in the referendum bill – Kiir

FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit, in his speech marking Christmas in Juba, has said he would not allow the change of even a “comma” in the contentious bills (South Sudan and Abyei referendum bills as well as popular consultation for Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile), **Al-Ayyam** reports.

Meanwhile, SPLM SG Yassir Arman said the referendum bill could have restored confidence between the two parties but the NCP has destroyed the opportunity by introducing amendments.

According to **Ajras Al-Hurriah**, the SPLM Parliamentary bloc and other southern political parties have threatened to boycott the Parliament if the amendments they submitted are not considered. The SPLM parliamentary bloc Chairman Yassir Arman told a press conference that the amendments agreed upon between GoSS VP Riek Machar and GoNU VP Ali Osman Taha should be introduced in the bill.

For his part, National Assembly Deputy Speaker Atem Garang said the NCP wants the SPLM to make concessions on the referendum bills and popular consultation in return for concessions in the national security bill. “Our position is firm. We will not accept bargain. We have already given them 52% of power in the CPA,” he said.

The National Assembly will debate today on the referendum bills for South Sudan and Abyei Area.

NEC to receive presidential nominations during 12-22 January

The National Elections Commission (NEC) has announced that it would begin receiving nominations for the post of president of the republic, GoSS president and state governors during the period from 12 to 22 January 2010, **Local dailies** reports. According to **Al-Ayyam**, the NEC said a presidential candidate should be supported by 15,000 voters from at least 18 states provided the number of supporters in each state should not be less than 200 voters. NEC Electoral Roll Chairman Gen. Al-Hadi Mohamed at press conference yesterday called on the political parties to submit application for their candidates, saying the candidate can submit his nomination by himself or through a representative.

Meanwhile, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports the SPLM is in the process of formulating regulations on eligibility of candidates to contest South Sudan’s presidential and state governor elections. As per the proposed regulations, a candidate will be eligible to contest GoSS presidential elections if the person spends ten continuous years in the SPLM, four continuous years for the post of MP, three years for the post of MP in the South Legislative Assembly and one-and-a-half years for the post of MP in the Council of States.

Sudan Tribune website 26/12/09 reported the Sudanese opposition parties are preparing to name their candidates to run in the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections despite threats earlier this year that they would boycott the polls, citing repressive environment created by the NCP.

The leader of the largest northern opposition party Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi told the **London-based Al-Hayat** newspaper that fair and free elections would guarantee a landslide victory for his party

“on all levels”.

On Monday the commissioner of the elections board Abel Alier met with the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) spokesperson Yen Mathew and his delegation who confirmed the participation of the ex-southern rebel group in the elections.

The Secretary General of the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud ruled out the possibility of opposition parties running on one ticket saying that political powers want to find out their “true weight” among the people.

Nugud said that the SCP is a step away from naming its candidates saying he expects high turnout in the elections adding the ruling NCP will only win through forgery and deceit describing it as a party dependant on power and money.

Sudan opposition parties appear poised to take part in elections

Sudan Tribune website 26/12/09 – The Sudanese opposition parties are preparing to name their candidates to run in the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections despite threats earlier this year that they will boycott the polls citing repressive environment by the ruling National Congress Party.

The leader of the largest northern opposition party Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi told the London based Al-Hayat newspaper that fair and free elections will guarantee a landslide victory for his party “on all levels”.

The former prime minister said that the Umma Party has created mechanisms by which candidates are identified to run in the parliamentary elections. He also expressed confidence that his party has accommodated the changes in the political and social landscape enabling it to achieve strong results.

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NCP denies move to tap SPLM telephone calls

While the NCP has denied sending a letter to communication companies requesting tapping of SPLM telephones and mobiles, the SPLM announced a move to institute legal proceedings against the companies if the incident is proved true, **Ajras Al-Hurriah** reports. NCP Information Secretary Fathi Shella has questioned the letter-head appeared in the newspaper yesterday, accusing the paper of attempt to divert the attention of the two partners from the key issues.

It is worth mentioning that the paper yesterday published a letter allegedly from the NCP addressed to the communications companies requesting them to list numbers of all SPLM telephones and mobiles in order to tap them on grounds that the movement liaises with circles

hostile to Sudan.

Messeriya call on their MPs to withdraw from the Parliament

The Messeriya tribe has warned against passing of a bill (Abyei referendum) it described as “racist”, saying it will make them second class citizens, **Ray Al-Shaab** reports. At a meeting with MPs Mohamed Abdullah Wad Abok and Al-Tahir Al-Ragig yesterday, the Messeriya called on the Area’s representatives to withdraw from the National Assembly.

Umma Party leader receives death threat

Akhir Lahza reports the Umma Reform and Renewal Party as saying that its leader Mubarak Al-Fadil Al-Mahdi has received a death threat from an “official” for his approach which is seen as hostile to the Government due to his repeated calls for democratic transition and his chances to win in presidential elections.

NCP favors Sudan’s unity in 2011 referendum – official

Sudan Tribune website 26/12/09 – The NCP stressed today that it is working towards making the choice of unity a dominant one among Southerners in the 2011 referendum.

Mohamed Mandoor Al-Mahdi the NCP’s VP in Khartoum state, said that the party’s leadership is in favor of Sudan’s unity, saying that the discussions with the SPLM focused on the required percentage of voters in the referendum to declare the south an independent state.

The NCP official told reporters today that the NCP sought to increase the percentage to bolster hopes that unity option would be possible adding that this issue was thoroughly discussed with the ex-Southern rebel group.

Al-Mahdi denied reports that the national assembly will look into the entire bill but rather at the article in dispute which the parties sat down and agreed on its resolution.

He acknowledged that the referendum law makes secession easier noting that some SPLM figures have publicly expressed their opinions in favor of independence.

On Friday the Ezekiel Gatkuoth, head of South Sudan’s mission to the United States told the Washington Times that the US financially is helping South Sudan to be a viable state should it decide to secede in 2011.

The NCP official slammed the SPLM questioning the fate of \$8 billion sent to the south to be spent on development adding that this would have contributed towards making unity attractive.

NCP, SPLM expected to overcome dispute over census today

Al-Sahafa reports that the NCP and the SPLM are preparing to amend the Elections Act to incorporate an agreement they reached to add 60 seats in the National Assembly in favour of the South, Southern Kordofan and Abyei in order to overcome their differences over the census results. Sources told the paper that according to the agreement, the South will get 57 more seats; Southern Kordofan will get two and Abyei one seat. The SPLM representation in the judiciary and the executive will also increase to 30%. The two partners are reportedly putting the final touches to the agreement and are expected to overcome their dispute over the census result today.

NCP, SPLM resolved to adopt referendum bill without alteration

Sudan Tribune website 25/11/09 – Leaderships from the two peace partners, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), and the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM), have agreed to adopt the Southern referendum bill without alteration.

Speaking to the press in Khartoum, Atem Garang, National Assembly Deputy Speaker on SPLM ticket said that both NCP and the SPLM have agreed to adopt Southern referendum bill without changes to the previously-agreed-upon draft by presidency.

However, NCP official, Ibrahim Ghandour, Secretary of Political Affairs revealed that the two parties have reached another consensus to introduce additional article allegedly intended to explain where southerners should vote but did not provide details.

The SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum said that the two parties have agreed on the necessity to identify southern Sudanese who settled in the north before 1956 based on their regions of origin in the south.

He went further to say that voting centres will be distributed as one centre for every twenty thousand southern Sudanese all over the country, and if there are fewer voters than 20,000 in an area, there will be a polling centre in the capital of the state of the county. He said that the right to vote for all southerners is guaranteed.

Amum also confirmed consensus to adopt southern referendum bill as previously approved by National council of ministers and presidency. He said SPLM parliamentary bloc members, who walked out of parliament during hours leading to passage of the bill on Tuesday, will now resume their functions to attend passage of all referendum bills and popular consultation bills for Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile area.

But he made no mention of the resumption of the other Southern Sudan political forces and alliances which walked out the parliament protesting changes made to the bill.

Egypt cautions against South Sudan secession

Sudan Tribune website 26/12/09 – The Egyptian government reiterated its position opposing the choice of South Sudan independence in the 2011 referendum, its top diplomat said today.

The Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Aboul-Gheit in a TV interview described the implementation of the CPA between North and South as “tense”.

“We in Egypt believe that the separation [of South Sudan] will incur dangers on the people of the South and its relations with the North” Aboul-Gheit said.

“There may be fighting or civil war and maybe both sides will not be happy with the outcome” he added.

Aboul-Gheit also expressed his government concern with the continuation of the conflict in Darfur.

“Sudan is going through a very difficult period because the resolution [talks] between the central government and the rebel groups in Darfur region did not achieve the desired goal which is a threat to Sudan” he said.

Government to poll Darfurians on peace, justice or reconciliation

Al-Ahdath reports a senior government official as saying that the government is determined to poll the Darfurians to find out whether their priority is for peace, justice or reconciliation. Director of African Union Ibrahim Ahmed Abdul Karim told the paper that the people of Darfur would take a decision on the proposed hybrid courts, saying they would be surveyed to know whether their priority is for peace or justice and the Government would abide by their decision, citing peace as Sudan Government's top priority.

Sudan and Chad agreed to end hostilities - official

Sudan Tribune website 27/12/09 — Sudan and its neighboring Chad have agreed to end hostilities against each other, said spokesperson of the foreign ministry in Khartoum today.

The Chadian foreign minister Moussa Faki Mahamat, heading a high level security delegation, was this week in Khartoum where he met Sudanese Omer Al-Bashir on Thursday, and held talks with presidential adviser Ghazi Salah Al-Deen Attabani and intelligence chief Mohamed Atta Al-Moula.

Moussa said they had agreed to implement the already signed agreements which deal mainly with the control of joint border and presence of rebel groups in their respective territories.

"Chadian-Sudanese relations will witness a major breakthrough in the coming days," said Sunday Muawiya Osman Khalid Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who further said that the two countries had agreed to stop all forms of hostilities between the two countries at both the military and the media levels.

Khalid also said they agreed to increase the political engagement between the two countries through exchange visits at the different levels including the border towns.

He also indicated that a Sudanese military delegation would travel to N'djamena within two weeks to discuss implementation of security and military issues as it is agreed in the signed agreement.

According to a non-aggression pact signed in the Senegalese capital, on the sidelines of the Islamic Conference summit on March 13, 2008, the two countries agreed to deploy a monitoring force to ensure stability on the joint border and to establish a contact group composed of Congo, Eritrea, Gabon, Libya and Senegal.

According to the deal, Chad will supply its own soldiers to patrol its own border, Sudan will supply its own soldiers to patrol its own border, and the peace and security force will become a mechanism for observing the two countries.

According to Dakar agreement, an aerial and satellite surveillance would be used to identify the troops movement across the border.

Speaking to Miraya FM on Sunday, the Chadian Consul in Khartoum Hussein Jeddah said his country would ban the activities of the Sudanese rebels inside its territories in implementation of the signed deals between the two countries.

The diplomat disclosed Sudan had evacuated the Chadian rebels at four hundreds kilometers from the joint border.

During the last four years, Sudan and Chad traded accusation of supporting rebel groups who attacked the two capitals and remain active along the border areas.

Khalid stressed that the recent move between the Chad and Sudan is not tactical or related to Darfur peace process in Doha but rather expresses a strategic issue for the two neighbors that have interdependent interests.

145 of 300 suspected cases of swine flu confirmed

Al-Ahdath reports Undersecretary of the Federal Ministry of Health Kamal Abdul Gadir as saying that the confirmed cases of swine flu in Sudan reached 145 out of 300 suspected cases, with five fatalities. He said that medicines were available and the situation was so far under control. He pointed out that all the said cases were passengers coming from abroad.