

28 July 2010

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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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

Highlights

Government criticizes UNSG report on Darfur

Al-Ahdath Khartoum, 28/07/10 – The Sudan Government has downplayed a report presented by UNSG Ban Ki-moon to the Security Council which painted a grim picture of the situation in Darfur due to the violation of the ceasefire agreement by all parties. Sudan Ambassador to UN Abdul Mahmoud Abdul Haleem reacted by stating that the Sudanese authorities are placing no restrictions on UNAMID's movement, adding that the people who write such reports undermine the value and credibility of the UN. He pointed out that the tripartite mechanism confirms that the situation has indeed improved.

Khartoum and Juba vow to end LRA activities

Local dailies 28/7/10 – National Government VP Ali Osman Taha and GoSS VP Riek Machar officiated yesterday over the commissioning of the Maridi water plant.

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports that Taha affirmed the National Government's concern to sustain peace and unity in the country. "All of us are in one boat," he told the crowd. "This boat would ferry Sudan to safety," he added, pledging to address the issue of LRA to ensure security and stability for residents of the Greater Equatoria area. Taha also pledged protection of the country's borders, adding the time has come for the federal government and GoSS to cooperate to prevent instability in the South. He said the Maridi Dam would be the beginning of many such projects in southern Sudan.

Meanwhile, Riek Machar said that the project is one of many projects planned to boost the unity option. He called on businessmen to invest in infrastructure and hotels in Maridi. He promised residents that LRA activities would soon be brought to an end.

Aid group says Darfur conflict "gained in intensity"

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 27/07/10 - Fighting between government forces and rebel groups in Darfur has "gained in intensity" in recent months, making it "very difficult for international aid organizations to operate," an international aid group said yesterday.

A report released by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) about its activities in Darfur during the period between May and June noted the armed conflict in Sudan's western region has intensified over the recent months.

ICRC ringed the alarm bell about the situation in Jabal Marra, Jabal Moon and Jebel Si areas where it said it had been unable to deliver aid as a result of renewed hostilities between government forces and rebel groups.

"Armed violence and insecurity arising from banditry and crime continue to make it very difficult and dangerous for humanitarian organizations to operate in Darfur", said the ICRC report.

UNAMID reported that the number of confirmed fatalities in Darfur during the last month of June stood at 221. These figures reveal that the major cause of death was inter-Arab tribes fighting in western Darfur, which accounted for 139 fatalities.

South Sudan humanitarian situations alarming: ICRC

Sudantribune.com Juba, 27/07/10 – The humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains worrying due to increased cases of politically-motivated violence and inter-communal clashes, resulting into the displacement of large numbers of civilians, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has revealed.

In a detailed overview of its regional activities spanning from March to June 2010, ICRC cited Central and South Sudan, where tensions are allegedly slowly building in the run-up to next year's referendum.

Also mentioned are the increasing clashes between different groups in the oil-rich Abyei area in South Kordofan state. These have reportedly increased in recent months, already raising fears of more violence to come.

According to ICRC, the population in the semi-autonomous region have become vulnerably as a result of indiscriminate attacks attributed to the Lord's Resistance Army in regions bordering Western Equatoria state, all of which have affected food production.

Two German aid workers freed in Darfur

Local dailies 28/7/10 – South Darfur State Governor Abdul Hameed Musa Kasha received yesterday the two German aid workers kidnapped by armed groups on 13 June, saying their release was peaceful. Kasha however apportioned blame to the NGOs for such kidnappings because they do not abide by the government's directives with regard to their movements.

Reuters reported a UN official as saying that the two aid workers were in good health.

"They were released this morning...and they are with the International Committee of the Red Cross," said the UN official who declined to be named. The two men are now in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur State.

Russian helicopter crew member goes missing in Darfur

Sudantribune.com 27/7/10 - One crew member of a Russian helicopter operating under a UN contract in Darfur has gone missing after the helicopter suffered an emergency landing in southern Darfur, says a UN official.

Earlier reports by the Russian foreign ministry suggested that the helicopter belonging to the Russian airline UTair, which had four Russian crew members on board, was seized by Darfur rebels. However, this report was later denied by both the Sudanese authorities and UNAMID.

Speaking to *Sudantribune.com* from Darfur last night, UNAMID Spokesperson Kamal Saiki denied the assertions of the Russian foreign ministry.

Saiki explained that the helicopter in question had landed in a location where it should not have landed and one crew member had gone missing trying to find a way out. He added that the search for the missing crew member was still continuing, adding that the helicopter and the rest of the crew were safely back in Nyala town, the capital of South Darfur State.

Saiki's statements were corroborated by those of the Spokesperson of the Sudan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muawiya Osman Khalid, who told reporters in Khartoum yesterday that the helicopter was not taken by rebels and had only suffered an emergency landing.

Khalid said that the crew members were rescued by an aircraft sent by the authorities in Al-Fasher town.

The Sudanese army spokesperson gave a detailed account of the incident.

"This plane took off from El-Fasher airport in North Darfur State and was supposed to land at Kas airport in South Darfur, but for unknown reasons, it landed at another place some 11km from the airport," SAF Spokesperson Al-Sawarmi Khalid Sa'ad told Chinese *Xinhua* news agency.

"The plane could not take off from its mistaken landing place because of the mud; a military force came to their rescue, but its passengers are missing," he added.

Later Tuesday the Russian airline company confirmed that the helicopter returned safely.

"The helicopter with its crew on board returned to its permanent base, the community of Nyala, Sudan, at 7:39 p.m. Moscow time (1539 GMT) on July 27," said the company as quoted by the *Intertass* news agency.

"None of the crew members or passengers has been harmed, and the aircraft has not been damaged," it added without making any reference to the reports that the pilot was missing.

In New York, UNAMID said contact had been established with three of the four crew members.

Ibrahim Gambari, UNAMID joint special representative, told the UN Security Council that the pilot remained unaccounted for.

"Earlier today we have been able to establish contact with three of the four crew members of the helicopter, as well as one international staff who reported to be in safety" at a Sudanese government location south of Menawashi, Gambari said.

He said UNAMID was working with the government and rebel groups to try to locate the missing pilot.

According to *Reuters* 27/7/10, Sudan's army grounded a Russian-operated U.N. helicopter in Darfur after it landed off target because of bad weather, according to U.N. officials who denied earlier reports that it had been seized by rebels.

The helicopter lost contact after landing in a mainly Arab tribal area in Sudan's troubled west on Monday. It was carrying three Darfur rebels on their way to peace talks, a United Nations spokesman said.

The helicopter returned to its base in Nyala, South Darfur, on Tuesday, though the pilot was still missing, U.N. officials said.

The Sudanese army confirmed it had met the helicopter but said it had landed in mud and was initially unable to fly.

Russian media had earlier said the helicopter and crew had been held hostage by Darfur insurgents, something both the United Nations and the army later denied.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said the helicopter belonged to Russian aviation firm UTair and had been working in Darfur on a contract to supply the UNAMID peacekeepers. Initially the pilot was reported to be missing, but UTair later issued a statement saying that all crew members were safe. U.N. special envoy Ibrahim Gambari told reporters in New York that the whereabouts of the pilot remained unknown.

UTair said the helicopter with crew returned to its permanent base in Nyala on Tuesday evening, without casualties to crew members or passengers or any damage to the aircraft, and that U.N.

officials were investigating the incident.

The grounding of the helicopter due to the weather coincided with increasing complaints about restrictions the government of Sudan has been imposing on the movements of UNAMID in Darfur, including the flying of helicopters.

In his latest report to the U.N. Security Council, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said more than 90 flights had been denied by the Sudanese government between March and June.

This prompted angry words from the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, who spoke to reporters after a closed-door council meeting with Gambari at U.N. headquarters in New York on Tuesday.

"The government of Sudan's continued restrictions on UNAMID's movement, its access, its ability to fly its helicopters in defence of its mission, including protection of civilians and evacuation of UNAMID peacekeepers under attack, is absolutely unacceptable and needs to be halted," she said.

Sudanese Ambassador Abdalmahmoud Abdalhaleem told *Reuters* that Khartoum "has no restrictions to place on UNAMID, which enjoys the best of cooperation as repeatedly confirmed by the Security Council itself."

Rice also expressed "grave concern" about the continued flow of arms into the region in violation of a U.N. embargo in place for Darfur. She also said Washington was alarmed by the "dramatically deteriorating security situation in Darfur."

Pre-Referendum Monitor:

Talks on post-referendum arrangements postponed

Ajras Al-Hurriya Juba, 28/07/10 – The GoSS delegation to the just-concluded AU Summit Meeting in Kampala is back in Juba. GoSS Minister for Peace and CPA Implementation, Pagan Amum, told a press conference on arrival in Juba that they were at the summit meeting to muster regional support for the southern Sudan referendum and to seek AU participation in monitoring the exercise.

Amum also revealed that the parties to the CPA have agreed to delay to 7th August the resumption of talks on post-referendum arrangements scheduled to have resumed yesterday. He said that the two sides agreed, at the request of the Egyptian Government, to send their respective delegations to Cairo for a meeting on how best to implement the remaining benchmarks of the CPA.

CPA partners possess will to conduct a free and fair referendum - NISS

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 28/07/10 –Director-General for the National Intelligence and Security Services, Mohamed Atta-el-Moula, is convinced the CPA partners have a strong political will that will enable a free and fair conduct of the 2011 referendum despite the complexities involved. The security chief who was speaking at a discussion session in Khartoum yesterday on the challenges facing the conduct of the referendum and the role expected of the security, said that among the role of the security forces are to preserve the constitution, law enforcement and to see to it that the exercise is transparent and fair and is an expression of the will of the people of southern Sudan.

National Security Advisor Salah Gosh said on his part pointed out that if unity could not be preserved, then it is imperative that all parties concerned work to guarantee a sustainable peace. He said that the two parties also have to work together at this time to ensure that the referendum takes place in time. Gosh pointed out that Abyei has caused a rift between the partners at some times because there has been no holistic solution to the problems of that area. He noted however that the border demarcation exercise has to be put to rest ahead of the referendum.

Presidential Affairs Minister, Luka Biong, said meanwhile that there are major challenges ahead of unity and these have to be faced by the two partners and the Sudanese people at large. He assured that the SPLM would not accept the conduct of the referendum to be a cause for the two sides to go to war again. He also assured that the two sides are committed to the conduct of a free and fair referendum.

There is hope for unity even after secession – Kiir tells OIC delegation

Al-Sudani Juba, 28/07/10 – FVP and GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit says there still is hope for north-south unity even after secession. Talking to a joint delegation of the OIC and the Islamic Development Bank in Juba yesterday, the GoSS leader said that the federal government and the GoSS are both working for unity but the final say lies in the hands of the people of southern Sudan. We welcomed investments from these blocs especially in infrastructure projects for southern Sudan.

Unity can be achieved as long as there is a strong will – presidential aide

Al-Khartoum Khartoum, 28/07/10 – Presidential Assistant Musa Mohamed Ahmed says the GoSS has welcomed the unity support initiative from the Government of Eastern Sudan. Speaking at a press conference yesterday, the presidential aide said that the referendum is an issue of concern to all walks of Sudanese society and it is therefore important to inform the people of the virtues of unity and the ills of secession. He also revealed that they have formed committees that would then travel to southern Sudan on health, cultural and sports campaigns.

He called on the partners to the CPA to exert major efforts for unity and expressed optimism that unity can yet be achieved as long as there is a strong political will.

Foreign Ministry urges UN to assist in the conduct of the referendum

Al-Khartoum Khartoum, 28/07/10 – Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Rahmatulla Mohamed Osman, has called on the UN to help provide the logistics necessary for the conduct of the referendum as it did for the elections. Following his meeting with visiting representatives of the UN General Assembly's Fifth Committee yesterday, he reiterated Sudan Government's commitment to the conduct of the referendum on schedule.

He also outlined the various levels of coordination between the Sudan Government and the UNMIS and UNAMID, pointing out that there are no problems between them.

UN Secretary-General calls for greater expansion of democratic space

UN News Centre UN, 27/07/10 - "I strongly encourage both Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) partners to work with all political parties in a transparent manner to maintain and expand the nascent democratic space, including, in particular, law reform consistent with the CPA and the interim constitution of the Sudan, which is critical for the remaining CPA processes, especially the referendums," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in a **report** to the Security Council on the implementation of the CPA.

In his report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General says that the referendums will require significant international support to be viewed as credible, but notes that while both parties have indicated their desire for extensive United Nations involvement in the processes, they have yet to agree on the precise scope of the UN role.

Mr. Ban says in the report that a joint request by both parties detailing the required additional support and role for the UN is a precondition for precise planning and timely delivery.

“I urge the parties to take full advantage of UNMIS and other international partners’ offers of material, technical, logistical and ‘good offices’ assistance,” the Secretary-General says.

He notes that the CPA foresees international monitoring of the referendums, and both parties intend to request the UN to provide monitors to work alongside the observers whom they plan to invite from several governments and international institutions.

“International monitoring, which is stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement as necessary, will be critical for the credibility and acceptance of the referendum outcomes and for subsequent peace,” Mr. Ban says.

The report says that the need for a workable agreement on post-referendum arrangements remains acute, and welcomes both parties’ agreement on a procedural framework and African Union (AU) facilitation for bilateral talks on post-referendum arrangements.

“I emphasize that efforts will have to be accelerated to provide the necessary clarity on critical questions within the time remaining. UNMIS and other international partners stand ready to assist the parties during the negotiations and to support the implementation of agreements they reach,” the Secretary-General says.

The Secretary-General deplors continued restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNMIS by both parties, which he says violated the Status of Forces Agreement and seriously compromises the ability of the mission to monitor and verify the implementation of security arrangements and to assist the parties in preventing conflict and instability.

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