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Media Monitoring Report

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Referendum Monitor

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Highlights

Sudan delays referendum registration to November

Reuters (Khartoum) 28/9/10 - Sudanese authorities on Tuesday announced a three week delay in registering voters for a referendum on southern independence, raising tensions just over 100 days before the vote is scheduled to take place.

Commission chairman Mohammed Ibrahim Khalil told Reuters on Tuesday he still hoped to make the Jan. 9 deadline, but registration of voters might now start three weeks later than planned in November to allow staff to deliver forms to 3,600 registration centres.

"We are now expecting the forms to arrive in the registration centres by November 15. By then the staff will be trained," said Khalil.

Referring to the date the vote is scheduled to begin on, Commission member Lual Chany added: "If people work day and night, it will still be possible to meet the Jan. 9, 2011 deadline."

The announcement came as the commission cleared one hurdle in the preparations by approving a \$370 million budget for the referendum.

Khalil said Sudan's finance ministry had confirmed it would pay its share -- international donors will foot half the cost and Sudan's government, together with the semi-autonomous government in the south, the other half, he said.

The U.S. Carter Centre said on Tuesday it had sent out its first 16 observers across Sudan to start monitoring preparations for the vote.

The commission still needed to take several important steps, the Carter Centre said in a statement, including the distribution of funds, training of staff and publication of a detailed calendar.

Both northern and southern leaders last week assured Washington and the United Nations that the vote would take place peacefully and on time.

But within days the former civil war foes ramped up their rhetoric. Analysts say trust between the two sides has hit a post-peace low.

Ministers from the north's dominant National Congress Party (NCP), led by President Omar al-Bashir, have threatened to reject the vote unless the south meets a list of conditions, and suggested southerners living in the north could be stripped of their citizenship and right to do business.

The spokesman for the south's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) on Monday countered by accusing the north of building up 70,000 troops in contested areas close to their ill-defined border and plotting an attack.

Border Demarcation Committee decides to reschedule agenda

Al-Sahafa (Khartoum) 29/9/10 – The North-South Border Demarcation Committee held a meeting yesterday attended by all members at which it decided to reschedule items on the agenda for discussions.

Head of the Committee Abdullah Al-Sadiq said an agreement was reached among all members to prioritize six to seven items on the agenda for discussion, adding the Committee also agreed to resume meetings tomorrow for debate on contentious issues based on the rescheduled agenda to reach a final agreement on the border demarcation issue.

In a related development, *Al-Rai Al-Aam* (Khartoum) 29/9/10 reports deputy head of the Border Demarcation Committee Col. Ric Degaulle as saying that only 25% of 2000 km border needed to be demarcated is agreed upon, dismissing claims that an agreement is reached on 80% of the border to be demarcated. He also ruled out success of the committee in demarcating the border ahead of the upcoming referendum.

CPA partners to discuss Abyei in Addis Ababa next week

Al-Ahdath (Khartoum) 29/9/10 – US State Department adviser on Sudan Ambassador Princeton Lyman has revealed a meeting between the NCP and the SPLM in Addis Ababa next week to discuss Abyei issue.

Ambassador Lyman said in a telephone interview Monday that Abyei is the most serious issue still to be resolved particularly the referenda.

He said officials from political parties from the North and South - the National Congress Party and Sudan People's Liberation Movement - met last weekend over the issue of Abyei. "It was a very fulsome discussion, but they didn't reach agreement, so they've agreed to meet next week in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where they intend to complete the arrangements for Abyei at that meeting," he said, according to PBS Newshour.

"When you're talking about a possible division of a country, it's a very traumatic experience for everybody," said Lyman, "so I think this is very tough, but I do think it's doable" as long as there is an understanding on the basic issues, if the referendum is carried out in a way that reflects the will of the people, and the north recognizes that result, he said.

In a related development, *Reuters* (Washington) 28/9/10 reported that negotiators for northern and southern Sudan have agreed on a framework for how to run a plebiscite in the disputed oil-rich region of Abyei and should reach a final deal next month, the U.S. State Department said on Tuesday.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said negotiating teams from the two sides met through the weekend in New York in U.S.-mediated talks and saw some progress toward resolving a key issue ahead of the January vote, which is due to take place alongside a larger referendum on independence for southern Sudan.

"We thought that they were useful meetings. They established a foundation for resolving the Abyei challenge," Crowley told a news briefing.

He said the two sides were due to meet again next month in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa "and we would expect that the parties should come to the meeting prepared to reach an agreement on Abyei."

The New York talks, mediated by the U.S. special envoy for Sudan, Scott Gration, and another senior State Department official, took place after last week's mini-summit on Sudan at the United Nations attended by U.S. President Barack Obama and other world leaders.

Crowley said the U.S.-led peace effort was focused for now in Abyei, a disputed central region which is being given its own vote on whether to join the north or the south.

Crowley gave no details on which specific issues had made progress in the New York talks, which followed meetings between U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Vice President Ali Osman Taha of Sudan's national government of Khartoum and Salva Kiir, president of the semi-autonomous south, last week.

But he said the United States remained committed to helping Sudan resolve a range of issues -- including questions of eventual borders, citizenship, and oil revenue sharing -- ahead of the January referendums.

Misseriya to hand over anti-PCA ruling petition to UN today

Al-Sahafa 29/9/10 –The Misseriya are to stage a peaceful demonstration in Mujlad today to deliver a petition to the United Nations in rejection of the PCA Award on Abyei and the threats by the deputy head of Abyei Locality.

Reportedly, the Misseriya leaders held a lengthy meeting to formulate the petition that reflects the tribe's position on developments in the area.

SPLA will not interfere with referendum – Gen. Matuk

Al-Rai Al-Aam 29/9/10 – Head of the Post-Referendum Security Arrangements Committee (SPLA) Gen. Salva Matuk who is also GoSS Adviser for security affairs said the SPLA would not intervene in the referendum process and would not influence the voters. He said the future of the South would be decided by the vote but anticipated that 95% of the southerners would vote for secession. He denied claims that SPLA senior commanders are putting pressure on the SPLA leaders to push voters to vote for separation. "If southerners want to vote for unity the generals can not do anything and likewise if they want to vote for secession the generals can not prevent them from doing that," he said in an interview to the newspaper.

Matuk said he does not know the position of the senior SPLA commanders on referendum but his position is that he supports secession.

UN Security Council to visit Sudan - diplomats

Reuters (United Nations) 29/9/10 - The U.N. Security Council will go to Sudan next week to press officials in the north and south to speed up preparations for a referendum on southern independence, diplomats said on Tuesday.

"We want to encourage the north and south to do everything in their power to hold the January 9 referendums on time and to ensure that there is a peaceful transition afterwards if the south chooses secession," a council diplomat told Reuters.

"We also want to see the situation on the ground in Darfur, which has been worrying" the diplomat added. The council has 15 members, five of whom -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- are permanent members.

The council has been planning the trip for months but almost called it off over concerns in the United States and elsewhere that ambassadors would have to meet and shake hands with President Omar al-Bashir, who has been indicted for genocide and other war crimes in Darfur, U.N. envoys said.

In order to make the trip possible, Security Council diplomats said on condition of anonymity, the 15 council members agreed not to ask for any time with Bashir.

"The Security Council has not requested a meeting with Bashir nor has the government of Sudan proposed one," a council diplomat told Reuters.

Another envoy said that Bashir, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, may be out of the country when the council arrives in Khartoum next week.

Among those expected to travel to Sudan are U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, French Ambassador Gerard Araud and British Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant, envoys said.

The council trip will begin in Kampala, Uganda and move to Juba, the capital of semi-autonomous south Sudan. The diplomats then plan to visit Sudan's conflict-ravaged western Darfur region and end up in the capital Khartoum.

Carter Center deploys foreign observers for south Sudan referendum

Sudan Tribune website 28/9/10 - The US-based Carter Centre has deployed foreign observers to monitor the referendum process in southern and northern Sudan where southerners are expected to cast their vote.

"The Carter Center deployed 16 long-term observers from 12 nations this week to assess the referendum process in Southern Sudan and in the areas in the North where voting will occur," the Center said in a statement put out today.

"Four two-person observer teams have been deployed in Southern Sudan, three teams in Northern Sudan, and one team in Abyei."

The monitors will observe all stages of the process, including the voter registration, campaign period, polling, tabulation, and the resolution of disputes.

Only three months remain before the referendum and preparations are behind schedules, voter registration will only start next month. While Abyei referendum commission is not yet formed.

The Center however hailed the "encouraging progress" made recently including the appointments of the members of the state high committees in all 10 Southern states, the appointment of the secretary-general of the SSRC, and the commencement of printing of the voter registration materials.

Joint Defence Board sets plans for referenda

Al-Ayyam (Juba) 29/09/10 – The Joint Defense Board (JDB) agreed in Juba last Monday on the status of the forces in the country taking into account the possible outcome of the 2011 referenda. Their decision would be tabled before President Al-Bashir for endorsement.

JDB Spokesperson, Awin Alier, said that the meeting discussed the status of the forces in both cases of unity or secession.

SPLA says NCP is preparing for war

Al-Ayyam (Juba) 29/09/10 – The SPLA has described the demand by the NCP for withdrawal of the southern army from a number of border areas between the North and the South as a “unilateral declaration of war”. SPLA Spokesperson Kuol Deim Kuol condemned the calls for an SPLA pullout from these areas in which they have been deployed since 2006.

“The border has not been demarcated yet so we can not claim that this or that area falls within the North or the South,” he said. He pointed out that SPLA forces that withdrew from the Blue Nile area are now in Al-Guffa in Upper Nile and others are in Renk.

“Since when has Renk become part of northern Sudan for the NCP to demand the withdrawal of our forces”? He wondered.

“This means, in another way, that the SAF may attack those SPLA forces if they do not pull out of those areas,” he said.

Other Highlights

President Al-Bashir to look into petition for resumption of *Al-Intibaha*

Al-Rai Al-Aam (Khartoum) 29/09/10 – President Al-Bashir has promised to consider a request by a delegation of the Union of Sudanese Journalists for resumption of *Al-Intibaha* daily newspaper and to review the sentences against journalists of *Rai Al-Shaab* newspaper. The President made the remarks at a meeting yesterday with a delegation of the Sudanese Journalists Union where he also praised the role of the Sudanese media.

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