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Media Monitoring Report

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Referendum Watch

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Highlights

Presidency met on referendum, set up committee to follow up on border demarcation

Al-Rai Al-Aam 30/8/10 – The NCP and the SPLM agreed at the Presidency meeting yesterday to form a joint political committee, headed by Presidential Aide Salah Gosh and SPLM SG Pagan Amum, to follow up on the demarcation of the border. The Presidency directed the committee to immediately begin to carry out its task and to see to it that the border is demarcated before the referendum is due in January. The Presidency also summoned the Referendum Commission for a meeting today to resolve pending issues hampering its work particularly the appointment of the Commission's Secretary-General and his deputy.

Mr. Gosh told reporters that the Presidency meeting had resolved some pending issues that have constituted obstacles to the Referendum Commission's work. He said the Presidency meeting also reiterated that referendum would be conducted on time and called on the international community to honour its pledges to monitor the process to ascertain that it is free and fair. The Presidency agreed to the Commission's request to amend the referendum schedules.

SPLM SG Pagan Amum said the purpose of today's meeting between the Presidency and the Referendum Commission is to implement those decisions.

Al-Ahdath reports Amum as saying that the Presidency would issue a decision on the immediate printing of voter registration forms abroad after the UN has agreed to provide funding.

Sudan Tribune website 29/8/10 reported that The Sudanese President Omer Al-Bashir held a meeting late on Sunday with his two Vice presidents Salva Kiir Mayardit and Ali Osman Taha to discuss impediments facing the January 2011 referendum which threatens to delay the key vote.

The state run news agency (SUNA) said that the presidency adopted a number of decisions and measures to overcome all the obstacles facing the referendum commission which has yet to officially begin its work.

According to SUNA, the participants urged the acceleration of border demarcation process between north and south and established a joint political committee "to provide political and technical support" to the boundary commission.

The presidential adviser Salah Abdullah Gosh said that the joint political committee filed a proposal to address the issue of appointing a Secretary General for the referendum commission and his deputy adding that this issue has been resolved.

Gosh said that the referendum commission could begin work immediately after establishing all rules and procedures to prepare for the vote. He pointed out that it was also decided that the technical committees are to resume their mission in demarcating the borders on the ground and matching maps.

Sudan's oil minister criticizes secessionist voices, supports unity

Sudan Tribune website 29/8/10 - The Sudanese oil minister Lual Deng became the first high profile Southern figure to publicly express his support for the country's unity.

"I'm a unionist in the footsteps of a unitary leader [late SPLM leader] John Garang de Mabior. We studied for PhD together at the University of Iowa. But I consider myself his disciple. The reason for this was that I was, initially, a separatist. But Garang convinced me on the virtues of one Sudan," Deng said in an interview with the London-based Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper during his private visit to Washington.

"He [Garang] used to say to me; look at the Americans they have whites, blacks, browns and yellows. They fought a civil war, and faced many problems but they insisted on the unity of the United States. Today, they have a great model for all the world in pluralism, racial and religious tolerance," he added.

The SPLM figure also pointed out that he is a believer in African Nationalism and the cause fought for by prominent leaders in the continent such as Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana and Leopold Senghor from Senegal.

The oil minister dismissed criticism directed against him by Southerners living in the United States for his stance in support of unity.

"Those [Southerners] who live in America, in this advanced democratic country should make use from the U.S. experience in unity [after the civil war], pluralism, ethnic and religious tolerance," Deng said.

"I used to be a separatist, but I grew up and learned and I am convinced that unity is better than separation for the North, and for the South. I hope the same thing [change in views] for young Southerners in America who want to secede. I tell them do not sit here [in America], and issue verdicts from over there. I tell them, please, do not open doors to a new war. I ask them, are you going to Sudan to fight, if war broke out again or sit here under air conditioners in America?" he asked.

Deng also suggested that U.S. officials privately support the unity option rather than secession for concern over the stability of the region particularly the Horn of Africa and the Greater Lakes region. Furthermore, he said that Washington does not want the emergence of new separatist movements elsewhere in the continent.

He acknowledged however, that if referendum was to take place today it will be in favour of independence but expressed optimism that confidence building measures between the North and South over the next four months may avert such outcome.

The Southern figure said that the people of South are already ruling their own with a substantial presence in the federal government with opportunities not even available for Northerners.

"What do we [Southerners] want more than that?" Deng asked.

NCP draws up referendum information plan

The Citizen 30/8/10 – The NCP yesterday discussed information plan for the South self-determination referendum and what it could do in collaboration with pro-unity national forces.

The NCP Political Sector chief Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir urged for positive, well balanced and effective information process to address southern voters to show them the benefits and gains of unity and dangers of secession.

Parliament faults plan to repatriate southerners ahead of referendum

Sudan Tribune website 29/8/10 - The speaker of Sudan's National Assembly has described plans by the government of south Sudan to repatriate some 1.5 million southerners from the north to the south, ahead of the south's vote on self-determination, as a violation of the referendum law and an obstruction to freedom of voting.

According to the head of Sudan's National Assembly, Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir, the plan is not in compliance with the referendum law.

“There is no clause or article in the referendum law indicating the move or transfer of southerners residing in Khartoum to the south so they can vote in the referendum” Al-Tahir said in statements reported yesterday by Sudan Media Centre (SMC), which is close to the northern security services.

Al-Tahir went on to say that any attempt by the SPLM, which governs south Sudan, to move southerners back is considered “an obstruction to the freedom of southerners to exercise their right safeguarded by the referendum law to vote wherever they are in all states of Sudan.”

He accused the SPLM of trying to “control all southerners in the north in a clear indication of its intention to obstruct and hinder the referendum in a non-transparent and underhanded manner by overstepping the law.”

Other Highlights

Two Russian pilots abducted in South Darfur - army

Sudan Tribune website 29/8/10 - Two Russian pilots were abducted Sunday by unknown gunmen in the capital of South Darfur state, the Sudanese army said this evening.

The two pilots are working for Badr Airlines, a private airliner based in Khartoum and known for operating cargo and passenger air services for humanitarian aid provided by UN agencies in the restive region of Darfur.

The abductors captured the pilots and escaped into the neighborhood embarking on a Land Cruiser.

Government forces have cordoned off the suspected places in Nyala in an attempt to find the abducted pilots and their kidnappers, Sudan Armed Forces spokesperson Al-Sawarmi Khalid told the official news agency (SUNA).

South Darfur state also mobilized all its security apparatus to arrest the offenders.

According to *Itar-Tass Cairo*, 30/08/10, several Sudanese military units surrounded several residential areas in the city Nyala, South Darfur, where Russian pilots are supposed to be kept, the colonel noted.

For his part, the Governor of the South Darfur State noted that the government had mobilized all the police and many law enforcers for the search operation.

Eyewitnesses stated that the kidnappers had taken away the hostages in a Toyota Land Cruiser jeep.

Sudan appreciates stances of Kenya and Chad on ICC

SUNA 29/8/10 - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday issued a statement praising the governments and peoples of Chad and Kenya for their support to the Sudan by committing themselves to the decisions of the African summits that rejected the ICC indictment of President Al-Bashir.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also appreciated the statement of the African Union, issued on August 28, which expressed its regret over the refuse of the Security Council to respond to its call for suspension of the ICC procedures against the President of the Republic, a matter which affirms disregard of the United States and the western countries to the values of justice and the spirit of objectivity.

Meanwhile, *Reuters* 29/8/10 reported that the ICC chief prosecutor has accused Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of abusing African hospitality and threatening the West as he seeks to avoid arrest on genocide charges.

"President Bashir is fighting for his freedom using different tactics," ICC Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo told Reuters in an interview on Saturday during a visit to London.

Those tactics included "abusing African hospitality" by going to neighbouring countries, "threatening Western countries with affecting the south (Sudan) and offering carrots to foreign business, to French, American and English companies," he said.

UN Security Council members should implement a strategy to counter Bashir's tactics, Moreno-Ocampo said.

Moreno-Ocampo said he hoped Bashir would travel further a field so the arrest warrant against him could be implemented "in the air" - presumably meaning a diversion of his plane.

Sudan's U.N. ambassador called Moreno-Ocampo a "terrorist" in 2008 after an ICC spokeswoman said the court had planned to arrest a wanted Sudanese minister by diverting a plane he was traveling on to Saudi Arabia. The minister called off the trip.

But Moreno-Ocampo said the best solution would be for Sudanese authorities to arrest Bashir. That would be a clear sign Sudan was changing its behaviour, the Argentine said.

He said Bashir had kept his plan to visit Kenya secret.

"As soon as the judges informed the Security Council, he left Kenya. So he is a fugitive president ...," he said.

GoSS declares Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal a disaster zone

Al-Ayyam 30/08/10 – The Government of Southern Sudan has declared Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State a disaster zone following heavy rains and flash-floods that wreaked havoc across vast parts of the state including the state capital, Aweil. The declaration came following a visit by a regional delegation headed by GoSS Health Minister Luka Monoja. The state's Minister for Social Welfare, Busaina Michael, said that the floods have rendered over 10,000 people homeless in the state.

Sudan Vision meanwhile reports that FVP Salva Kiir was briefed yesterday on the situation and has ordered an assessment of the damages in Aweil.

Opposition warns government against barring consultation meeting

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 30/08/10 – Opposition parties have warned that they would take "alternative measures" if the government refuses to grant them a permit to hold a consultative meeting on unity, Darfur, freedom and the economic crisis.

Mohamed Dhia-el-Din, a member of the opposition and Spokesperson for the Arab Baathist Party, revealed that some 40 political organizations have so far confirmed they would participate at the consultative meeting and efforts are underway to convince the NCP to attend. "If the parties to the CPA attend and the meeting ends with strong resolutions, then this would save the country from slipping into conflict at a time when common views and mechanisms are required to salvage the country from different challenges," he said.

Dhia-el-Din however noted that the alliance is yet to decide on when the meeting should take place.

US Aid Worker Released in Darfur: Sudan Official

Reuters 30/8/10 - A US aid worker was released in Darfur on Monday after more than 100 days in captivity, the Sudanese foreign ministry spokesman said.

"She has been released this morning. She is in good health. Right now she is in the state governor's residence in Nyala," the spokesman Moawia Osman said. The woman was working for U.S. charity Samaritan's Purse in Darfur.

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