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# Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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# Highlights

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## Parliament passes Southern Sudan referendum bill

The National Assembly at a session yesterday endorsed the Southern Sudan referendum bill in its final form, *local dailies* report. According to *Al-Rai Al-Aam*, while the NCP Parliamentary Bloc Chairman Ibrahim Ghandour called on the MPs to work for unity, SPLM Parliamentary Bloc Chairman Yassir Arman called on the Government to focus on development in the South so that southerners vote for unity, saying the time remains is sufficient to make unity attractive.

Meanwhile, PCP leader Hassan Al-Turabi said the south would part ways with the North, saying his party would nominate Abdullah Deng Nyal (southerner) to contest presidential elections.

*Reuters* 29/12/09 reported that Sudan's parliament passed a long-disputed law governing a southern vote on independence on Tuesday, defusing a political crisis after months of wrangling between the north-south coalition government partners.

Analysts believe that the referendum in January 2011 will almost inevitably result in southern Sudan voting to separate from the north, with which it fought a civil war that cost the lives of two million people.

Analysts also warn that lingering distrust between the two sides could bring about a resumption of hostilities with the potential to destabilize much of east Africa.

"This law is not a law of separation for south Sudan but is a law for the referendum. We all need to unite Sudan and work towards unity," said National Assembly Deputy Speaker Atem Garang of the former southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

"This law has given southerners who came to the north fleeing the war a chance to vote," said top National Congress Party official Ibrahim Ghandour.

The law passed on Tuesday states southerners living in the north can vote there unless they were born before Jan. 1, 1956. Those born before 1956 would need to register and vote in the south.

Sudan analysts warn that any hint of meddling in the referendum would force the south to unilaterally secede and likely prompt a return to war.

The International Crisis Group think tank's Africa director, Francois Grignon, said a southern vote for independence was "almost certain", a sentiment echoed by many southerners.

*Sudan Tribune website* 29/12/09 reported that the Sudanese national assembly adopted the controversial referendum law after ironing out the disputed portions of the bill that led to political stalemate over the last couple of months between the dominant NCP and the SPLM.

Sudan official news agency (SUNA) said that the national assembly adopted articles 27 and 67 dealing with voter registration centres and the criteria.

Under the law, south Sudanese living outside the south and born before January 1, 1956, the date of Sudan's independence, must vote in the south.

But south Sudanese living outside the south and born after January 1, 1956 would be able to vote in their place of residence, whether in the north or abroad.

Both sides hailed the passage of the referendum law.

However, most observers anticipate a landslide vote by Southern Sudanese in favor of secession when the 2011 referendum is held owing to two decades of civil war as well as ideological, ethnic and religious differences.

There are some sticky items to be determined on a technical level on post-secession arrangements including the division of assets and liabilities, water share, status of South Sudanese living in the North and vice versa.

Also, the demarcation of the North-South borders has yet to be completed.

On Wednesday the national assembly will vote on a law governing the referendum in Abyei, which lies on the north-south border, on whether it wants to remain part of the north or join the south should it become independent.

Southern Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who moved to Northern States following eruption of the civil war in the south, have hailed the passage of referendum bill with consensus.

Speaking at Khartoum city center, Deng Chol Aweer, from Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, said glad to hear final adoption of the referendum bill without parliamentary boycott which obviously indicates no agreement has been reached.

"We were worried that parties to the agreement may not reach a consensus after the National Assembly hurriedly passed this bill by majority votes last week," he said.

### **Upcoming elections will be free and fair – Al-Bashir**

President Al-Bashir, addressing a function marking the National Martyr Day in a Khartoum suburb (Karrari) yesterday, promised free, fair and transparent elections, **local dailies** report. According to **Al-Khartoum**, the President reiterated the Government's commitment to implement all agreements concluded with parties and armed groups.

### **Al-Bashir enjoys no immunity during voting period – NEC**

The National Elections Commission (NEC) announced that President Al-Bashir would not retain his immunity as President during the voting period once his candidacy is filed to contest upcoming presidential elections, **Ajras Al-Hurriah** reports. NEC member Gen. Al-Hadi Mohamed Ahmed told journalists yesterday that the Commission would not be affected by the President's influence and that the President would be treated equally with other presidential candidates. "The NEC can summon the President and subject him to judicial or administrative measures in accordance with the law," he said.

However, NEC SG Jalal Mohamed Ahmed declined to elaborate on whether Al-Bashir's indictment would disqualify him. "Until now Al-Bashir is not a candidate. We should not preempt events or hypothesize. Once his nomination is filed, the NEC will look into the matter," he said.

### **Disagreement over voter delays debate on Abyei referendum**

Disagreement between the NCP and the SPLM over article (24) of the Abyei referendum bill

postponed their debate on the law to today, ***Al-Ayyam*** reports. While, GoSS VP Riek Machar has announced an agreement between the two partners on article (24), Misseriya MP Mohamed Abdullah Adam has warned the two partners that tampering with destiny issues would mean the start of a war. However, Adam explained that the Misseriya have no objection to the amendment of article (24) provided that the phrase "Ngok Dinka and other Sudanese" should be repealed and replaced with "Sudanese".

NCP official Ibrahim Ghandour said there was still disagreement on article (24) but would be addressed, adding the current Parliament session would come to an end today but the House will remain on standby for any eventuality.

### **Misseriya rejects amendment to Abyei referendum bill, threatens to resist**

Misseriya representatives in the National Assembly have threatened to resist and to take to streets to protest if any changes are introduced by the two partners in the current Abyei referendum bill to deprive them from exercising their rights in the area, ***Al-Wifaq*** reports. "We categorically reject any amendment to the bill. We have our ways and means to resist on the ground," Mohamed Abdullah, Misseriya MP, told reporters. Joseph Marina, member of the SPLM parliamentary bloc described the disagreement over the article (24) of Abyei referendum bill as "serious and controversial" but the NCP and the SPLM are determined to resolve it.

### **Five S. Sudan soldiers, two pastoralists killed in gunfight in Lakes state**

***Sudan Tribune website*** 29/12/09 – Forces from the SPLA under local commander Colonel Mou Wol Lueth clashed with armed civilians in Akot payam of Rumbek East County on Monday afternoon, according to a county official. Five SPLA soldier were killed and eight wounded, while two pastoralists were also killed during the three hour gun battle.

The commander of the SPLA disarmament operation in the state, Colonel Mou Wol Lueth who is well known as Muoranyar, has been seriously wounded in both of his legs. The wounded people are admitted at Yirol West County hospital.

SPLA official Spokesman Maj-Gen. Kuol Deim Kuol said that their operations room confirmed that 5 soldiers were killed and 8 were wounded in the raids carried out by pastoralist inhabitants of Rumbek East County at the payam of Akot. One officer is among the dead, according to Kuol.

He said, "There were civilians carrying guns; they were not disarmed, they shot at our forces and these civilians belonged to Chief Dut Malual. Our forces were two platoons, they attacked them. Those civilians resist the disarmament. Then civilians organized an attack".

Kuol noted that SPLA has since sent reinforcement forces to Akot and the situation is now calm. "These soldiers are carrying out disarmament in Lakes state and they are from the unit Division Five," he said.

In separate incident in Juba yesterday evening, confirmed by Kuol, SPLA Sergeant Abraham Machar Mading quarreled with his Kenyan girlfriend and killed at least three Kenyan nationals. This soldier took the gun of his colleague and used it to kill his girlfriend, and then he left his gun in Mapel barracks.

"Abraham killed these innocent Kenyan civilians at Haj-Nyakama residential area in Juba on Monday," the SPLA spokesman affirmed, saying that Southern Sudan leadership seriously condemned the killing of these Kenyans.

The dead were two men and a woman, reported the Kenyan Daily Nation. Two others were seriously wounded.

The sergeant, who is originally from Yirol West county of Lakes state, was undergoing academic training for non-commissioned officers at Mapel. "The leadership of the SPLA has condemned the act committed by the SPLA soldier and a court marshal is due to be formed to carry on an investigation and action must taken against this soldier if found guilty," said Kuol.

The SPLA military police in the morning managed to arrest the culprit and he is now in custody at Juba's Monki prison. The Commander-in-Chief, who is the President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), has ordered a military court marshal to immediately carry out an intensive investigation.

### **Al-Bashir travels to Saudi Arabia today, meeting with Deby likely**

In response to an invitation from the Saudi Monarch, President Al-Bashir will travel to Saudi Arabia today on three-day visit for consultation with the Saudi King on bilateral relations and issues of mutual concern, *local dailies* report.

According to *Akhir Lahza*, Presidents Al-Bashir and Deby of Chad are likely to meet tonight at dinner to be hosted by King Abdullah.

*Sudan Tribune website* 29/12/09 reported that this is the third visit by Al-Bashir to Saudi Arabia since an arrest warrant was issued for him by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Persian Gulf state is not a state party to The Hague-based court with no legal duty to arrest him.

Sudan news agency (SUNA) quoted the Sudanese ambassador to Riyadh Abdel-Hafiz Mohamed as saying that the visit comes as a show of solidarity with Saudi Arabia and its right to defend its territorial integrity.

The Sudanese envoy is referring to the military campaign waged by Riyadh against Shi'ite Muslim insurgents who crossed the border into the kingdom. The Yemeni Government is also battling with the same rebels believed to be backed by Iran.

Bashir has twice phoned his Saudi counterpart over the last few months to voice his support to Riyadh. The Sudanese head of state also told the visiting Iranian foreign minister Manoucher Mottaki that the insurgency of Yemeni rebels is a threat to the stability of the region.

He also said that the countries in region including Iran should all cooperate for the purpose of maintaining stability.

During Bashir's visit, both sides will discuss agricultural cooperation and food security as well as incentives to encourage investment in Sudanese farmland to supply the Saudi market.

### **US welcome Sudan-Chad normalization process**

*Sudan Tribune website* 29/12/09 - The US State Department hailed the contacts between Sudan and Chad to normalize relations, and urged the two countries to speed up the implementation of border monitoring mechanism.

"The United States welcomes the continued engagement between Chad and Sudan to normalize relations as discussed during meetings last week with Chadian Foreign Minister Moussa Faki and Sudanese Presidential Advisor Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin," said a statement

issued in Washington today.

The State Department further urged the parties to fulfill the signed agreements and "set up an appropriate and effective border monitoring mechanism on their shared border as soon as possible."

The two countries have to meet in N'djamena on January 7, to finalize technical details related to the deployment of joint security patrols. The head of Sudan's delegation to Darfur peace talks said they would implement within four weeks the security protocol between the two countries.

According to the signed Dakar agreement they have to carry out aerial reconnaissance patrols they also have to seek foreign assistance to conduct satellite monitoring.

Washington said normalization between the two neighbors and the end of support to rebel groups on both sides, are key element to achieve peace in the restive Darfur region.

### **UNAMID, Sudan agree to boost blue helmets' security**

UN News Centre 29/12/09 – The joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping mission in the war-torn Darfur region and the Sudanese Government have taken the first steps to bolstering the safety of peacekeepers due to a surge in attacks against blue helmets in recent months.

A signing ceremony between the mission, known as UNAMID, and the Government was held today, following a working session in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, on 20 December to discuss how to reduce the number of incidents.

Earlier this month, five Rwandan peacekeepers were killed in two separate incidents, bringing the total number of blue helmets who have lost their lives in Darfur since UNAMID deployed at the start of 2008 to 22.

Those attacks follow the shooting and wounding of three other peacekeepers, also by unidentified gunmen, in West Darfur in October, and the killing of another in South Darfur in May.

The number of ambushes, kidnappings and carjacking against UNAMID has also risen rapidly in the past few months.

The agreement signed today "will provide additional measures to cap the growing trend of insecurity in Darfur," UNAMID Force Commander Lieutenant-General Patrick Nyamvumba said.

### **UN brings Sudanese tribes together for historic peace talks**

**UN News Centre** 29/12/09 – The United Nations has paved the way for historic talks between clashing tribes to bolster the fragile peace in the disputed oil-rich area of Abyei, close to the border between Sudan's north and south and where a referendum on its future is scheduled to be held in 2011.

Recognizing the need for dialogue at this critical juncture, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and the Abyei Area Administration joined forces to bring the leaders of the two tribes together for the first time in the conflict's history.

During the 14 December meeting, which kicked off to cheering, drumming and dancing, top officials from the tribes discussed border security, arms control and migration issues.

Over 2,000 people from both tribes attended the talks to accelerate reconciliation and to dispel misconceptions, such as the rumour that the Dinka intend to build a barrier to prevent the Misseriya from herding their cattle between pasture and water.

“Peaceful co-existence is not a matter of choice, but is prerequisite for the continued existence of the two communities because the Misseriya and the Dinka will always remain neighbours irrespective of the 2011 referendum results,” said Amir Kwol Arop Kwol, Paramount Chief of the Dinka Ngok tribe.

The dialogue was also the first in the history of peace building in the Abyei area in which women took an active part in the talks.

“Women bear the heaviest burden during conflict situations,” according to Nyancuk Truk, a representative of the Dinka. “We not only lose our sons and husband in the fighting, but we also lose our dignity.”

UNDP stressed in a press release that “only through the support to community reconciliation dialogues in Sudan that bring together women groups, youth and traditional leaders will the region be able to ensure its hard-won peace.”