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Highlights

Southerners look forward for separation of religion from state - Alor

Local dailies report that the closing session of a two-day symposium organized by UNMIS in collaboration with the Future Trends Foundation turned stormy when the NCP and the SPLM traded charges.

According to **Akhir Lahza**, Foreign Minister Deng Alor, speaking at the wrap-up session yesterday said the Islamic Sharia destroyed the last hope for a united country. He added that southern Sudanese are looking forward for a unity in which all citizens are treated equally and religion is separated from state. He stressed the need for further concessions and to convince the Sudanese people to vote for unity. He accused Khartoum of fighting a proxy war in the South. "Why does it do that with a people with whom it wants to unite?"

However, Presidential Adviser Ghazi Salah reacted, accusing Alor of an attempt to twist facts and categorically denied claim of Khartoum's hand in the tribal conflicts in the South. "If the South chooses secession that is its right but it will not be in the interest of the South or the North," he said.

AEC Chairman Derek Plumbly called on the NCP and the SPLM to pass the referendum bill in the current Parliament session and to form the referendum commission.

Al-Ahdath reports the symposium witnessed heated debate when Alor and Ghazi exchanged harsh words in presence of US envoy Scott Gration, SRSG Ashraf Ghazi and other international personalities. Alor lashed out against the North and the GoNU for not assisting the South to accept unity, saying the Government did not implement a single development scheme in the South. He said the remaining time is insufficient to make unity attractive unless there is a "miracle", calling for a "peaceful divorce" between the South and the North. But Ghazi reacted by describing Alor's statement as "nonsense" and accused GoSS of failure to run the South, adding referendum will only be held under an elected Government.

SRSG Ashraf Qazi called on the two partners to utilize the remaining time to work for making unity attractive, saying FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit's recent statement was taken out of its context.

"We have no objection to remain united if the North gives up its Islamization policies. No southern Sudanese will vote for unity if this situation persists," Alor said, according to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**. Ghazi said Alor has been repeating these ideas for last twenty years. "We welcome the SPLM's idea of a new Sudan. Mistakes can be corrected" he said, but stressed the need to work to preserve unity. **Al-Ayyam** described the debate as the "most stormy and unprecedented confrontation" between the NCP and the SPLM.

Reuters 3/11/09 reported Sudan's foreign minister said on Tuesday the country's oil-producing south "overwhelmingly" wanted to declare independence in a looming referendum.

Deng Alor, a southerner, also accused the north of fighting a proxy war and destroying hopes of a unified state.

The comments were made at a highly-charged symposium on Sudan's future that analysts said lifted the lid on a growing political rift in Africa's largest state. His statements were dismissed by

a leading northerner.

Alor told the U.N.-sponsored conference that north Sudan's dominant National Congress Party (NCP) continued to oppress southerners and was arming southern militias behind a recent wave of tribal violence.

NCP presidential advisor Ghazi Salaheddin responded by accusing Alor of paranoia, saying the south had also failed to hold up its part of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Analysts at the conference said the statements underlined the political distance between the NCP and Alor's former rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) just 14 months ahead of the referendum, saying hopes for a southern vote to stay in Sudan were now as good as dead. "I don't think their positions can be reconciled," said Sudan expert Alex de Waal.

"Southerners if asked now ... they will overwhelmingly vote for separation," Alor told reporters after the symposium. He said there was still a remote chance of a unity vote if Khartoum changed its approach and treated the south as an equal.

"You don't give them services ... and you fight them by proxy. How can these people vote for unity?" Alor asked the Khartoum audience. "It is sad for many of us to see our country disintegrate before our eyes"

"It is not in the interest of our people whether in northern Sudan or southern Sudan to be paranoid, to be under the spell of illusions of persecution, to be despondent to the extent of going for secession,"

In a related development, ***Al-Intibaha*** reports Presidential Adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail as saying that Southern Sudan's secession does not mean the end of the north-south war, warning that a series of civil wars might outbreak among southern tribes and that could develop into a north-south war at the border areas. Ismail made the remarks in Cairo yesterday.

Asked whether Khartoum has contingency plans should the south secedes, he said that Khartoum is considering all possibilities including a confederation between north and south. However, he warned that southern Sudan's secession would be the first violation of the AU Charter and would constitute a threat to Egypt's share of the Nile waters.

Sudan's ruling NCP says close to agreement with SPLM

Sudan Tribune website 3/11/09 – The NCP announced it was nearing a deal with the SPLM on disputed items of the CPA, a senior NCP official said today.

NCP political secretary Ibrahim Gandour was quoted by Sudan official news agency (SUNA) as saying that the joint committees of both parties have reached an agreement on issues including referendum law and that would be announced within two days.

Gandour accused the SPLM of backtracking on the referendum agreements reached few weeks back between SPLM Vice President Riek Machar and Sudanese 2nd Vice President Ali Osman Taha.

Voter registration continues for third day

Al-Hadi Mohamed Ahmed, the head of the NEC's technical committee, revealed that nationwide voter registration is progressing well on its third consecutive day, reports ***Al-Ayyam***. He said there was a rise in turnout and that in response to the people's requests working hours for

registration centres in Khartoum have been revised to start from 09:30 am to 18:30 pm. He said that the NEC has authorized the state elections committees to amend the registration hours.

However, **Reuters** 3/11/09 reported that election observers expressed concern on Tuesday over the harassment of political parties and funding delays as voters began to register for Sudan's first multi-party elections in 24 years.

The Carter Center, which with the United Nations is providing the only international observers for the vote due next April, said its monitors had faced restrictions and many had not been given accreditation to start their work.

"Sudan's National Election Commission (NEC) must act immediately to accredit national and international observers as well as political party agents, and lift restrictions on observers' freedom of movement," the center, founded by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, said in a statement.

Sudanese newspapers have commented on the low turn-out since registration began on Sunday, saying many people did not know that the process had started or where to go to register.

The former southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) said it was concerned there was confusion in registering in the south, and that some centres were not open yet.

"If things go like the way they are going now, I believe less than 10 percent of the total (southern) population will be registered," said senior SPLM official Anne Itto.

Parliamentary, presidential and state-level elections are due in April 2010, followed by a southern referendum on independence in January 2011, both part of a 2005 north-south peace accord that ended two decades of civil war.

Even as the electoral process began on Sunday, doubts remained over whether the election would go ahead because of a threatened boycott by the SPLM and opposition parties unless a package of democratic laws are passed.

These include bills guiding referendums on secession for the south and the oil-rich Abyei region and on reform of the intelligence services.

The SPLM and the north's dominant National Congress Party (NCP) are also in dispute over the results of a census which should be the basis for electoral constituencies.

"Unless we reach an agreement in the next two or three weeks, it will be very difficult to arrange for the elections," said NCP official Amin Hassan Omer.

U.S. envoy Scott Gration, who has shuttled between the two sides to break the deadlock, said he hoped to see some "positive trends" in the next few days.

Defence and security gets 6.5 billion; referendum and elections 790 m

Finance Minister Awad Ahmed Al-Jaz tabled before the Parliament yesterday the draft fiscal budget for 2010. **Al-Intibaha** reports that he told the House in his briefing that no extra taxes have been introduced in the draft. The budget has a SDG23.7 billion projection for revenues against projected expenditures to the tune of SDG23 billion. Budgetary deficits amounting to around SDG9 billion would be covered through external grants and debts from the banking sector, he said.

Meanwhile, budgetary allocations for the referendum and elections are estimated at SDG790 million while security and defence have been allocated SDG5.6 billion in the proposed budget.

Upper Nile seeks lasting settlement for tribal clashes over border issue

Sudan Tribune website 3/11/09 —The Government of the Upper Nile State seeks permanent settlement for repeated tribal clashes over border issue in the region between two ethnic groups.

Some 33 people were killed in tribal clashes since last September between Shilluk and Dinka ethnic groups, which have, for quite some time since last year, been engaged in tribal boundaries disputes.

The Shilluk claims Malakal town belongs to them, a word Dinka do not want to hear questioning authenticity of their claims.

The wrangle over town ownership denies appointment of a citizen vying for Malakal county commissioner position from both Dinka and Shilluk leaving it to none of them.

The same is also being experienced in the state parliament where two communities fights over Malakal constituencies.

Thon Mum Kejok, an official spokesperson and a minister of information and communications in the Upper Nile State Government, told Sudan Tribune that his government is fully determined to permanently settle these repetitive tribal clashes over tribal boundaries.

Intellectuals and influential groups have been dispatched to communities currently engaged in the tribal fight to defuse the growing tension, he adds.

The minister further stated bringing these communities together remains an issue which should not be left to state government alone but it needs involvement of both state citizens and neighbors who knows tribal boundaries that exists between the two communities.

Asked about his government reaction to current incident and tension, he said, as usual, the state authority has on Monday sent in security forces which are already trying to identify culprits between the two sides.

On Sunday October 31, a fight broke out in the village of Adakdiar, east of Malakal town, leaving eight confirmed dead and sent many more fleeing.

“A conspiracy behind Mbeki’s report” – Lawyers Union

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports the General Union of the Sudanese Lawyers, in a press statement has criticized the report by the Mbeki-led Panel on Darfur which recommended the formation of hybrid courts to try perpetrators of alleged crimes in Darfur. The statement said there was a conspiracy behind the report, adding that the Union came to know of a meeting held by the panel at Al-Fateh Tower in Khartoum with non-African foreign elements. It said the recommendation for formation of hybrid courts is a result of a plot in which the panel secretariat, individuals from **UNMIS military** and other Sudanese lawyers have participated.

Government regrets slow donor response

Sudan Vision reports the Sudanese Government has expressed deep regret over the slow

response of donors in supporting the implementation of CPA programmes. Presidential Affairs Minister, Chairman of the National Council for DDR Coordination, Lieutenant General Bakri Hassan Salih said that the donors had announced in the first donors conference to provide \$ 430 million while it committed in the second one, held in Juba to provide \$88 million but it had provided only \$ 27 million. He made the remarks at a roundtable conference held in Kadugli yesterday with the participation of the UN and donor countries.

The Minister called on the UN to meet the budgets allocated for the said programmes for the last years and the current one and the necessity of participation of both the North and the South Commissions in choosing the UN cadres in implementing the said programme.

SRSG Ashraf Qazi affirmed the importance of implementing the DDR programmes for its importance in maintaining security and stability indicating the efforts exerted by both Sudanese commissions in the said regard.

SPLM says it may leave the Parliament for good

While National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir has announced that he would strictly apply Parliament rules on the MPs who boycott sessions, the SPLM has hinted that it might leave the Parliament for good, *Al-Sahafa* reports. Al-Tahir told a Parliament session yesterday that the SPLM MPs are left with only one session and if they also absent themselves then the rule would be applied including suspension of their entitlement.