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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

SSRC crumbling from the inside

Sudan Tribune website 3/10/10 - The South Sudan referendum commission (SSRC) is facing deep divisions within its top ranks as they begin to question their ability to hold the key vote on January 9, 2011 as required by the CPA.

" SSRC's SG Al-Nijoumi himself wanted to leave as he is finding it increasingly difficult to work with SSRC chief Khalil and it was only after intense pressure did he agree to stay on," said the source who requested anonymity to discuss private conversations.

The source described the atmosphere among the SSRC administrators as "tense" and "loaded with mistrust and suspicion".

Fuelling the tension is Khalil's unpublicized conviction that it would be impossible to hold the referendum on time and his concern that this amounts to a failure would mar his career particularly as the whole world is watching how this process would unfold, the source added. But he acknowledged that Khalil's management style is "autocratic" putting him at odds with his aides who feel that they lack minimum decision-making powers.

One of the major frustrations expressed by the 90-years old commission chief, the source said, is the lack of cash at his disposal needed to carry out crucial functions related to registering voters and training poll workers.

FM, SSRC and Carter Centre sign memorandum of understanding

Al-Khartoum 4/11/10 – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the South Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) and the Carter Centre signed yesterday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the referendum process. Also, the Ministry signed a similar MoU with the EU in Khartoum.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Muawia Khaled told reporters yesterday that the memos aimed at facilitating all referendum-related procedures for the EU and the Carter Centre to enable them to carry out their monitoring task.

South Sudan's final moment of destiny is unstoppable – GoSS VP Machar

Sudan Tribune website 3/11/10 - The people of Southern Sudan will determine their political destiny on 9 January in a referendum and nothing is going to stop it, said Vice President of the Government of Southern Sudan, Riek Machar Teny on Wednesday.

In a meeting on Wednesday with France's Consul General to Juba, Christian Bader, Machar told the French envoy that the plebiscite will be conducted with or without the North-South border being demarcated in the next two months.

He said the eventuality of the country splitting into two independent states is a reality that the two regions of the country should positively prepare for. The Vice President stressed that it was important for both Southern and Northern Sudan to wake up to the reality of the situation and begin to work on creating future good relations and cooperation as secession is the most likely scenario.

The two regions, he said, should begin to create economic zones and promote trade and movement of people between North and South and allow for peaceful referendum and its outcome. They would prosper together as peaceful neighbors and join the other regional and international economic blocs, he further explained.

The Vice President and the French envoy also discussed bilateral relations between Paris and Juba, stressing the importance of reciprocally establishing a Southern Sudan Mission in Paris for promotion of diplomatic and economic relations.

He said Southern Sudan has raw resources and therefore wants to open up to all its neighboring countries and beyond in order to market its economic potentials.

Egypt fears refugee exodus if south Sudan opts to break away

AFP 3/11/10 - Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit expressed fear on Wednesday that a referendum on independence for south Sudan scheduled for January could spark violence and an exodus of refugees.

"We fear separation may be accompanied by some violent actions that affect Sudan's relations with neighbouring countries and Egypt, which circumstances may oblige to host Sudanese" fleeing unrest, the official MENA news agency quoted him as saying.

"This is a matter of concern that requires adequate preparations," he said.

"It is not a problem if the referendum is delayed for several months," MENA quoted the Egyptian minister as saying.

"Sudanese should take into account the priority of the importance of life over the importance of holding the referendum on time," he said.

Sudan faces hard cash shortage before independence vote

Reuters 3/11/10 - A shortage of foreign currency in Sudan ahead of an independence referendum in the south has left many banks unable to meet demand or provide importers with letters of credit, bankers and clients said on Wednesday.

Many Sudanese say they have moved money into foreign currency and stashed it at home ahead of a Jan. 9 referendum in the south of Africa's biggest country on whether to secede.

They fear the Sudanese pound could dive if the oil-producing south votes for independence as expected. Sudan gets about 90 percent of its foreign currency from oil. Central bank Governor Sabir Hassan confirmed there was a foreign currency shortage but said banks should manage their own hard cash rather than relying on what the central bank gave them.

"The problem of the lack of foreign currency is real ... it began with the global economic crisis in 2009," Hassan told Reuters.

Officials at three banks, who declined to be named, told Reuters that they were unable to give clients foreign currency.

A Bank of Khartoum official said they were giving out hard currency in "exceptional" cases but mostly could only provide Sudanese pounds.

"We have to provide local currency for those transferring (money) from outside the country because there is not enough foreign currency here," the official told Reuters.

The Lebanese Byblos Bank in Khartoum denied any foreign currency problems, but four customers told Reuters they were denied both euros and U.S. dollars over the past four days.

An official at the National Bank of Abu Dhabi's Khartoum branch told Reuters they depended on hard currency provisions from the central bank and sometimes suffered shortages.

Governor Hassan has previously blamed the decline of the Sudanese pound against the dollar on speculation.

He said the central bank's policy of curtailing imports had helped ease the forex crisis.

We will ask UN to protect southerners in the North – SPLM official

Al-Intibaha 4/11/10 – A symposium organized by the Sudanese Media Centre (SMC) yesterday on secession witnessed an exchange of harsh words between National Assembly Deputy Speaker Atem Garang and lawyer and human rights activist Ghazi Suleiman forcing the former to walk out from the symposium. Reportedly, Garang was infuriated by Suleiman's remarks that the North's position on the South would be determined by the South's position on the issue of the Middle East.

Atem said if an independent south state is established it would not be a racist state but said it was certain that the northern state would be a racist and failed state. He has called on the UN to protect the southerners in the North should a racist state is established in the North. "We will request the UN to protect southerners in the North," he said. He warned the Government in the North that if it expels southern students from universities in the North they would be sent to Arab countries such as Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia.

The Citizen 4/11/10 reports that Atem Garang stated that the state of south would be a civilian state that would not practice any racial discrimination against any minority. He welcomed the presence of northerners in the South, stressing that they would be under government protection and would enjoy full rights of citizenship. Atem pointed out that the South would be open without any need for entry visas, indicating that the South would have special consideration for the common ties between the North and South.

SPLM Arman fears Rwanda-like violence

Al-Sahafa 4/11/10 – Head of SPLM northern sector, Yassir Arman, said in a conference organized by women politicians in Khartoum that violence similar to what Rwanda had

witnessed in '90s might erupt in the country as a result of NCP policies. He called for peaceful coexistence between the people of the Sudan regardless of the referendum outcome.

SPLA arrests three SAF soldiers in Boru Almadina

Khartoum Monitor 4/11/10 - SPLA arrested three SAF soldiers who attempted to infiltrate into Boru Almadina in Raja County on Tuesday. SPLA spokesperson, Kuol Deim Kuol said the three SAF soldiers were arrested on the suburbs of Boru Almadina while eleven others escaped. Upon interrogation, the three soldiers admitted that they had come from SAF-controlled Kafia Kenji in South Darfur to gather information about SPLA deployment. He added that they have reported the case to the Joint Defense Board and described the incident as attempt to fan the flames of war.

Secession will have negative impact on the African Continent- Karti

Al-Rai Al-Aam 4/11/10 - Sudan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Kati, said he appreciated the efforts of Senegalese President Abdullah Wade aiming at preserving the unity of the country. Karti stated that Wade's move was within the framework of what had been agreed upon in the Afro-Arab summit convened last month in Sirte, Libya. He said Wade's efforts were in line with the African Union charter calling for preserving the inherited borders because secession in the Sudan would have negative impact on the African Continent.

Referendum results neither abolish Interim Constitution nor elected institutions – VP Taha

The Sudan Vision 4/11/10 - VP Ali Osman Taha stated that the outcome of the referendum on South Sudan self-determination, whatever it was, would neither interfere with the Interim Constitution nor abolish the State institutions based on the recent national elections.

"Whatever are the results of the referendum, that would not mean the abolishment of the interim constitution or April elections outcome," Taha said. "If the vote outcome supports unity, then some chapters in the interim constitution may need modifications," he said.

Taha made the above statement while addressing a workshop at the Friendship Hall in Khartoum yesterday.

“UNMIS, a picnic and décor costing millions of dollars”

Op-ed by Taha Al-Noman
Akhir Lahza 4/11/10

(Gist) It is my right and so does the right of any observer to ask the UN and the international community which is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on UNMIS which manages over 10,000 troops. What is the real role of this military mission which is holed up in high walls with barbed wires and cement barriers in Khartoum and in all the areas of its presence, with its vehicles bearing UN emblem going in and out of these fortes?

The question sprang to our mind due to the tense relation between SAF and SPLA and their accusations and counteraccusations over military buildup as the upcoming referendum approaches. What is UNMIS role towards what is happening between SAF and SPLA? SAF claims SPLA attacked Zamali area in Sennar state which was denied by the SPLA.

What are UNMIS troops exactly doing in the Sudan? The same question should necessarily be directed to UNAMID. It is known fact that if UN dispatches any peacekeepers to conflict zones, their responsibility is to keep peace even if not to provide protection to civilians when military conflict erupts. They should monitor what is happening and report any breaches to the concerned bodies, in our case is the Joint Defence Board (JDB) and the Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC). But from what is happening on the ground and what we watch on TV channels and read in the newspapers suggest that UN peacekeepers in Sudan have left that task to the spokespersons of the two armies.

If these “expensive troops” do not carry out even their simplest duty which is to monitor and verify movements and breaches then their presence in our country is nothing more than a “picnic and décor” on which millions of dollars have been spent. This leads us to another question: do we really need additional “idles and picnickers like these ones?”

The writer can be reached at: Tahanuman50@gmail.com

Other Highlights

Sudan police killed in clash with Darfur rebels

BBC 4/11/10 - Several Sudanese policemen have been killed in a battle with rebels in Sudan's western Darfur region, the Sudanese government says.

Reports about the clash differ, with both sides claiming a crushing victory.

The government says its forces killed many rebels, while rebels from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) claim they killed about 50 police.

The joint UN-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur called on both sides to stop the fighting.

The battle started when JEM rebels attacked a government fuel and food supplies convoy in southern Darfur, the interior ministry in Khartoum said.

Police forces killed many of the rebels, the ministry added. It said several policemen had been killed, but gave no further details of casualties on the government side.

A JEM spokesman said his forces had killed about 50 men and "only a few" rebels had been injured.

The BBC's James Copnall in Khartoum says the clash is significant because it took place in southern Darfur, far away from what is usually recognised as JEM's stronghold in the north-west of the troubled region.

The fighting follows complaints from Sudanese and international human rights groups that more than a dozen Darfuri activists have been arrested in Khartoum in the last few days, our correspondent says.

Reuters (Khartoum) 3/11/10 reported that Darfur rebels clashed with government troops in South Darfur on Wednesday marking the resumption of fighting after heavy rains had largely subdued hostilities in Sudan's war-torn west.

"The rebels attacked a commercial convoy...and the Central Reserve Police protecting the convoy engaged them, suffering several losses," Sudan's Ministry of Interior said in a statement. It added the police were still chasing the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) forces.

Senior JEM commander Suleiman Sandal told Reuters from Darfur the government had attacked them in the east of South Darfur and they had routed the attackers. "We have only a few injured," he said.

Sudan Tribune website 3/11/10 reported that Sudanese government forces and rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) clashed today in South Darfur state for the first time since several months, the two parties said.

The fighting took place at Khor Taan, 50km east of South Darfur state capital, Nyala. None of the two belligerents provided the details of human casualties but JEM claimed capturing 13 vehicles.

JEM "captured 13 vehicles and destroyed many more. Three of JEM fighters were injured in the combat, none of them seriously," said JEM military spokesperson Ali Alwafi.

The rebel group said clashes erupted when the government troops attacked one of their mobile units while the Sudanese police said the rebels ambushed a commercial convoy escorted by its forces.

The police, in a statement released today in El-Fasher, stressed that its troops from the Central Reserve forces repulsed the rebels who suffered heavy losses. It further said the assailants were unable to capture any of the contents of the convoy and the government troops pursuing them.

Sudanese security arrests another Darfurian journalist in Khartoum

Sudan Tribune website 3/11/10 - Sudanese security service today arrested another journalist keeping up pressure on Darfurian activists in the capital Khartoum.

The National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) on Wednesday arrested Jaafar Subki Ibrahim, who works for *Al-Sahafa* daily newspaper. His detention took place after a crackdown on journalists and rights activists from Darfur region.

"Jaafar was interrogated by the security service today morning and they returned to arrest him during the evening from his office," a source close to the journalist told Sudan Tribune.

Sudanese security forces raided the office of the Human Rights and Democracy Network arresting several Darfur activists and a journalist working with Holland-based Radio Dabanga on October 30.

Abdelrahman Adam is accused by the Attorney General several charges including "crimes against the state," said Radio Dabanga in a statement released yesterday.

In a statement put out today, the hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur, UNAMID, said concerned by the arrest of the journalists and human rights journalists and called "for a swift resolution to the matter".

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