

5 January 2011

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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

Referendum Watch

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Highlights

“We will not mourn secession” – President Al-Bashir

Local dailies 5/1/11 – President Al-Bashir said during a visit to Juba yesterday that the North would not mourn if the South opts for secession but, he indicated, it would be sad to lose the region.

AFP 4/1/11 reported that Al-Bashir told southerners on a rare visit to Juba on Tuesday he would celebrate the result of Sunday's referendum on southern independence, "even if you choose secession."

"I personally will be sad if Sudan splits. But at the same time I will be happy if we have peace in Sudan between the two sides," Bashir said in a speech to senior southern officials at the start of his one-day visit.

"I am going to celebrate your decision, even if your decision is secession."

"Anything you need in terms of technical, logistical or professional support from Khartoum, you will find us ready to give it," he said. "The benefit we get from unity, we can also get it from two separate states." ...

The President also pledged to demarcate Sudan's contested north-south border by July, when the south would gain independence if it votes that way, and called for free border movements.

"The demarcation of the border will be completed before July 9, but that does not mean building a separation wall. It means a delimitation that allows the movement of citizens from both sides," according to the laws in force, the official SUNA news agency quoted him as saying in Juba...

IGAD to participate in monitoring referendum

Al-Intibaha 5/1/11 – IGAD announced that it would participate in monitoring the South Sudan referendum by dispatching 55 observers to monitor the process.

This was revealed by IGAD executive secretary Mahboob Mua'lim at meeting yesterday with SSRC Chairman Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil. Mua'lim also pledged IGAD full cooperation with the SSRC so that the process is smooth and peaceful.

South Sudan braced for independence referendum

AFP 5/1/11 - South Sudanese go to the polls on Sunday in a referendum that marks the culmination of decades of war and six years of peace, that could see the mostly Christian south break from historical domination by the Muslim north...

"We are really 100 percent prepared for the great day," Chan Reec, deputy chairman of the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC), said on Monday.

"They are almost two independent states already," said a diplomat in Khartoum speaking on

condition of anonymity.

Senior politicians in Khartoum, including Bashir himself, have recognised in recent weeks that independence will be the likely choice of southerners...

Opposition conference postponed until after the referendum

Local Dailies 5/1/11 – The opposition national consensus forces have postponed their conference slated for today until the referendum is conducted.

Sudan Tribune.com 4/1/11 reported that over 32 north Sudanese opposition parties will hold a crucial one-day meeting on Wednesday to discuss a set of agendas related to the overall political situation in the country as well as the upcoming referendum on south Sudan independence, in an effort to increase pressure on the ruling party to accept demands of reforms.

The headquarters of the Umma Party in Khartoum's adjacent city of Omdurman is due to host "the Sudanese Comprehensive Conference" which features representatives of the mainstream Sudanese opposition parties. The most notable participants are the Umma Party led by Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) and the Popular Congress Party led by the veteran Islamis Hassan al-Turabi.

Meanwhile, the governing National Congress Party (NCP) in north Sudan says it has not been invited to participate, conditioning its recognition of the conference's outcome on them being free of narrow political agendas.

The SCP's senior member Sidiq Yusif said on Tuesday that more than 32 political parties would meet in Omdurman to embark on deliberations concerning a host of issues including the referendum, democratic transformation, the economic situation, the peaceful coexistence between north and south Sudan as well as Darfur crisis.

According to Yusif, opposition parties would issue a final communiqué of the meeting's outcome and later hold a political rally to be addressed by leaders of the main parties...

The London-based *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* reported on Tuesday that the opposition parties claimed they were intending to invite the NCP to the meeting but the latter preempted the invitation by declaring its refusal to participate. But the NCP's political secretary Ibrahim Ghandour claims otherwise. According to him, the opposition did not invite the NCP despite the party's "consistent commitment" to open channels of dialogue on all issues.

"The opposition has been planning this meeting for a long time and did not invite us despite its claiming it will not exclude any party," Ghandour was quoted by the pro-government website Sudan Media center on Tuesday.

He said his party would only deal positively with the outcome of the meeting on the condition that they are free from narrow political agendas.

"We can deal with the outcome of the meeting in a fashion that satisfies everyone if we are to make sure that the agendas are free from narrow political and party-centered interests because they do not serve the interests of the wider country in the coming period," he concluded.

Popular consultation in Blue Nile postponed

Al-Wifaq 5/1/11 – Parliamentary Commission for popular consultation in the Blue Nile state has announced the postponement of the kick-off of the process for two weeks. Commission official Ms Siham Hashim told reporters yesterday that the state Legislative Assembly had turned down the Commission's request to suspend sessions of the Assembly to enable MPs to participate in the popular consultation process.

"I will vote for secession" – SPLA chief of staff

Al-Ahdath 5/1/11 – SPLA Chief of Staff Gen. James Hoth has said he would vote for secession but pointed out he would do that as a citizen of the South.

In an interview to the newspaper, Hoth has praised the efforts of the joint security committee between the two CPA partners which, he said, did its work in an excellent manner.

Hoth said southerners in SAF would return to the South and the GoSS would treat them in the manner it deems appropriate.

On Darfur movements, Hoth dismissed charges that the GoSS is backing them, citing the incident of an aircraft impounded by southern authorities in Falluj airfield which, he said, no body is willing to claim it.

Athor is hampering referendum in Khor Flous

Al-Ahdath 5/1/11 – Police in Jonglei admitted security challenges in Siji and Pibor Counties but expressed readiness to secure the referendum.

Director General of Jonglei police Kosia Kadit told Al-Shurooq TV that there are some security difficulties in Khor Flous and Pibor caused by renegade Gen. George Athor and David Yuyao respectively.

Le Nuer tribe threaten to attack Bor

Al-Intibaha 5/1/11 – Le Nuer tribe has threatened to attack Bor County in Jonglei state should the SPLA insist on launching further attacks on George Athor's positions.

A Le Nuer tribe leader who spoke to the newspaper yesterday on condition of anonymity has expressed concern over rising violence between the SPLA and Athor in densely populated areas. The leader also complained of long siege imposed by the SPLA on those areas and its adverse impact on civilians. He said the Le Nuer would attack Bor if the SPLA continues military action against Gen. Athor which negatively affects their tribal areas.

Bashir comments "extremely encouraging" - Kerry

AFP 5/1/11 - US Senator John Kerry on Wednesday in Khartoum hailed as "extremely encouraging" latest remarks by Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir on the upcoming referendum on southern independence.

"The speech by President Bashir here (on December 31) as well as his comments in Juba yesterday are extremely encouraging," Kerry told journalists, after a meeting in the Sudanese

capital with influential presidential adviser Ghazi Salaheddine.

"They're very positive, very constructive, and I think it sets a good stage for the events that begin in the next days," Kerry said.

"We look forward to a successful referendum which is the precursor to a stronger and new relationship with the United States and other countries," Kerry added.

US President Barack Obama announced in November that the United States had extended economic sanctions on Sudan for at least one year, saying the circumstances which led to their imposition some 13 years ago had not been resolved.

Shortly afterwards, however, Kerry said Washington had offered to remove Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terrorism early if the referendum on southern independence went on track, though he added that this would not affect US sanctions against Khartoum related to Darfur.

Sudan faces huge economic problems, with soaring inflation, caused by the sharp devaluation of the Sudanese pound over the past three months, large external debts, and the collapse in oil prices three years ago.

"Obviously there are huge economic challenges (in Sudan) and that's something that we discussed today," Kerry said on Wednesday, without elaborating.

South Sudan referendum: could it be tip of iceberg of other issues?

Xinhua 5/1/11 - No doubt that the south Sudan referendum, set for Jan. 9, 2011, would not be the decisive cure for a ten-year tensed relations between north and south Sudan, but it could be a tip of an iceberg of other issues awaiting this African country.

Observers and analysts believe that Sudan in 2011 would face great challenges, particularly if the referendum resulted in separation of the oil-rich region which constitutes a quarter of Sudan's total area.

"Great security, political and social challenges are expected to arise after the referendum that could negatively affect on stability of Sudan, both in its north and south," Dr. Mohamed Zelnoun, a Sudanese lecturer of political science, told *Xinhua*.

"Regarding the security side, a war could break up between north and south Sudan because of the issue of demarcation of 1956 borders, besides the existing difference over the Abyei area in addition to post-referendum issues such as nationality, currency, public service, joint forces, external debts and sharing of oil fields," he added.

He went on saying that "infection of self-determination and separation of south Sudan is expected to extend to the Darfur region which is suffering a civil war, particularly after failure of the Qatari-hosted peace talks to reach a comprehensive peace agreement for the region's crisis."

As for the security threats in the south, Zul-Noun said that " south Sudan is suffering from tribal violence and this violence is expected to aggravate after the referendum and separation of south Sudan because population groups from other tribes will not accept the influence of the Dinka

tribe from which the leaders of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) descend."

"In case a new wave of tribal violence erupted in the south after the referendum, the SPLM would likely to directly resort to accusing the north of supporting and feeding the violence in the south and would try to support the Darfur armed movements in turn," he added.

Concerning the political challenges which would likely to face north Sudan should the south separate, Zul-Noun said that "separation of the south would lead to negative political consequences in north Sudan and would open the door before other turbulent regions to demand for self-government and wealth-sharing"

"Separation of south Sudan would widen the gap of difference between the central government in Khartoum and its opponents who hold the National Congress Party (NCP) responsible for dividing Sudan and separation of the south," he added.

Zul-Noun further expected that Sudan would suffer from increasing international pressures due to files of the International Criminal Court (ICC), human rights and implementation of the remaining items of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), particularly with regard to the issue of Abyei and the popular consultation of the areas of Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

With respect to the economic axis, Zul-Noun expected that separation of south Sudan would cause north Sudan to lose around 80 percent of its oil resources.

"Separation would mean that more than half of the oil revenues would be dropped from the general budget for fiscal 2011, which would likely to cause great economic problems for the north, which would be demanded to develop its other resources to make it up for the lose of oil revenues," he explained.

Suleiman Abdel-Jalil, a Sudanese political analyst, for his part, told Xinhua that the relation between north and south Sudan would be measured by the way in which the referendum would be conducted and accepting of its result.

"If the referendum is conducted smoothly and peacefully and if its result is accepted by each party, then the north and the south would manage to settle their outstanding issues and find a means to preserve the historical bonds between the two peoples," he said.

"However, if the referendum is conducted in a hostile and tensed atmosphere and if accompanied by violence or its results were doubted, then this would mean creation of another tensed relation between the north and the south that could lead to confrontation between them or return to war square again," he added.

It seems that south Sudan referendum, slated for Sunday, would be the major test for firmness of the CPA, inked between north and south Sudan in January 2005, which ended a two-decade civil war between the two sides.

The Sudanese government partners, the NCP and the SPLM, have not yet agreed on members of the Abyei referendum commission or the identity of the voter who is eligible to vote in the Abyei referendum, where the area is shared by the southern Sudanese tribe of Dinka Ngok and the

northern Arab Misseria tribe who drive their cattle for grazing across the area.

Other Highlights

GoSS expels Darfur movements

Local dailies 5/1/11 – The GoSS has announced it would expel all Darfur armed movements from the South. GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit told a joint press conference with President Al-Bashir that his government had taken a decision to oust all Darfur movements from the South and to implement the remaining CPA benchmarks.

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