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Highlights

Pagan Amum & Yasir Arman released - Police released over 140 arrested protesters

Al-Ayam daily reports that the Khartoum State Police released yesterday the SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amom and his Deputy Yassir Arman and 140 other demonstrators including five journalists and a number of lawyers and activists who were led to various police stations.

Al-Sudani newspaper reports that FVP and GoSS President Salva Kiir said the two partners should reach an immediate solution to all outstanding issues. He reiterated commitment of his movement to peace and stability in the country.

Akhir Lahza reports the Director of Khartoum State Police, Gen. Mohammed Al-Hafiz Hassan Attiya said that the Police forces dealt with the procession of as an illegal act and a flagrant violation of article (127) of the 1991 Criminal Law as the organizers did not obtain the necessary permit from the authorities.

The SPLM Spokeswoman in Khartoum, Keiji Jeremiah had earlier told **Miraya FM** that Yasir Arman sustained severe injuries after being beaten up by police while in custody. She said Arman had been taken to hospital. Meanwhile, students of the Western Bahr El Ghazel University went on the rampage in Wau and set on fire the office of the National Congress Party. The Governor of the state condemned the students' action and urged the police to protect NCP property and personnel. GoSS President, Salva Kiir Mayardit, and Chairman of SPLM, said the security personnel that arrested Amum and Arman should be held accountable for their action.

Opposition calls for dismissal of Director of the Police, Interior and Justice Ministers

Al-Sudani daily reports that the Juba forces announced they would continue peaceful demonstrations in the coming days. The coalition called for dismissal of the Ministers of Interior and Justice and the Director of the Police. The official Spokesperson of the coalition Farouq Abu Issa revealed that a meeting of the leaders of the political forces scheduled today at the SLM/Minni premises will decide on the date and place of the next demonstration.

Presidency holds an emergency meeting tomorrow

Al-Akhtar and Al-Ray Al-Aam dailies report that the Khartoum State Governor Abdelrahman Al-Khidir told reporters that the Presidency will hold a meeting on Wednesday to discuss the relations between the two partners.

Opposition rally is a plot to overthrow the regime, government said

Al-Ray Al-Aam reports that Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie said the opposition was hoping for leading an insurgence as advised by the leader of Popular Congress Party Hassan al-Turabi and to ultimately change the regime.

The paper adds that reliable government sources revealed that the call for demonstrations was part of a well-planned plot. The source added that this plot which was disclosed by Al-Turabi's statement to TV stations aimed at creating a chaos, block elections and lead to foreign intervention.

Sudan's ruling NCP politically weakened after crackdown on opposition demos

Sudan Tribune says that for many observers and analysts even pro-government ones the ban was unjustified as the purpose of the demonstration was to deliver a memorandum to the speaker of the parliament containing demands for amending series of laws deemed necessary to prepare for the April 2010 elections and the process of democratic transformation.

The editor in chief of the independent *Al-Tayar* newspaper Osman Mirghani wrote that the government will be ill-advised if it resorts to the same tactics it used over the last twenty years since it took power in a coup led by president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir. Mirghani said that the government is fundamentally opposed to the principle of people taking the streets as a new approach by opposition parties fearing that it could spread to other sectors of the society.

The Islamist columnist Al-Tayib Zein Al-Abdeen speaking to the London based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* lashed at the government saying that the NCP is allowed to stage demonstrations without restrictions or permission requirements. Al-Abdeen said the NCP "is very weak in front of any political alliance against it".

The Sudanese foreign ministry summoned representatives of foreign missions to brief them on the situation delivering the same message, the protest was illegal and the authorities dealt with it accordingly.

But Amum speaking to various TV stations said that they are only required to "notify" the authorities about their plans as opposed to getting permission. He told *Associated Press* that fair and free elections appear to be impossible citing "lack of freedom" displayed today.

The leader of the Umma Reform and Renewal Party (URRP) Mubarak Al-Fadil accused the Sudanese president of exercising de-facto emergency law powers. "They arrested SPLM members of the cabinet who enjoy immunity. This is an unconstitutional measure that can only be taken under emergency law which has to be approved by First Vice president Salva Kiir in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)" Al-Fadil said. Al-Fadil said that political parties held a meeting today and issued statements calling for the firing of the ministers of justice and interior as well as Khartoum police chief over the law breaches that occurred today.

He said that an agreement was made to conduct political rallies this week at the headquarters of the Umma party and SPLM and new demonstrations are planned for Thursday all over the country.

The heavyweight Sudanese officials from the executive branch and the NCP maintained silence and avoided reacting to today's protests. Several sources told Sudan Tribune that there were deep divisions within the NCP on how to deal with the opposition rally and saying that the powerful presidential assistant Nafi Ali Nafi prevailed being the main proponent of a security crackdown. Human right groups, NGO's and the UN condemned the wave of detentions by Sudanese security forces. The UN representative to Sudan, Ashraf Qazi, expressed concern over the violence and said it comes at a "very critical" stage in Sudan. "These developments could have adverse implications" on the north-south deal, he said.

John Prendergast, head of a Sudan program at the Washington-based Center for American Progress, said the U.S. should reconsider financial assistance to the Sudanese elections.

"Today's reaction by the ... security services demonstrates further that the U.S. should not be financing this electoral charade unless the laws are amended to allow the basics of a credible election," Prendergast said.

The president of south Sudan, Silva Kiir, called the detentions unjustifiable. He vowed to "use all the necessary means to ensure the country does not reverse to war."

London-based Amnesty International also condemned the Khartoum crackdown, saying it was an example of the "culture of violence" adopted by al-Bashir's government.

But diplomats and analysts say there are doubts about whether Bashir's regime will allow either to happen in a free and fair way. Khartoum is concerned about its access to oil wealth and has limited tolerance for dissent.

Protesters burn NCP office in Warrap

Sudan Tribune reported that a crowd of protesters in support of arrested senior members of the SPLM in Khartoum, entered NCP office in Tur-Alei County, Warrap State, burnt it down to ashes and beat officials to the street. An NCP official who escaped narrowly to Abyei, said protesters came yesterday afternoon with determination to kill and destroy properties of any individuals or group of people with political affiliation to the NCP in the area. "Because we are known members of NCP, they came straight to our office chanting "Ocampo, Ocampo, where are you, take Bashir to Charles Taylor", he said. In Abyei, Zacharia Atem, Deputy Abyei local legislative council said his house is full with NCP colleagues escaping target from protesters in Twic. Northern Bahr el Ghazal says deployed police forces to guard NCP facilities from being targeted and provide security of the officials. In Fuloj, Melut County, Upper Nile State, SPLA forces are reported to have closed the airstrip for emergency.

Al-Mahdi discusses elections with SRSG Qazi

Al-Akhbar daily reports that the leader of National Umma Party Al-Sadiq al-Mahadi met yesterday with the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Edmond Mulet and the SRSG Ashraf Qazi. Mulet told reporters that they "discussed the elections and the challenges facing it besides the CPA implementation and the kidnapping of our employees". Under the headline "Dr. Nafie briefs Assistant SG on yesterday's incidents".

Akhbar Al-Youm reports that the Mr. Mulet was briefed on the recent political and security developments in Sudan on top of which are the implementation of the CPA, the efforts to achieve peace in Darfur and the elections. NCP official Ibrahim Ghandour said the Mr. Mulet was briefed on yesterday's incidents in Khartoum.

Al-Raed newspaper carried a report that the ASG Mulet applauded NCP's efforts in achieving peace in Darfur.

Akhir Lahza daily reports that Mr. Mulet revealed that there is a joint plan with the Government to reinforce and protect members of the mission in the states of Darfur.

Over 14 millions voters registered for elections

Al-Khartoum daily reports that General Police Al-Hadi Mohamed Ahmed said 14,200,000 had registered inside and outside the country according to reports submitted to the commission. In another story, the paper reports that NEC announced over 73% of the targeted 19 millions had registered for elections. Prof. Mukhtar Al-Assam stated that registration in the ten states of Southern Sudan reached 81% while it reached 56% in the states of Darfur.

Akhbar Al-Youm daily reports that Senior Elections Officer at Khartoum State Ahmed El-Ajab Ahmed announced that 1,773,915 voters had registered in Khartoum, which represents 60% of the targeted number.

Reuters reports that almost three quarters of adults in Sudan have registered according to Sudan's elections commission. The commission told **Reuters** 14,020,482 people had registered to vote at the start of Monday and it was expecting that to climb to 14,200,000 as final figures came in. "That constitutes 73 percent of people who are eligible for registration -- people who are more than 18 years old," said commission deputy chair Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah. "This is a good result by any standards" Joint U.N./African Union peacekeepers said there had been a large turnout to register to vote in Zamzam displacement camp near El Fasher, capital of North Darfur, on Monday. "Women and youth, in particular, were well represented," said a statement from the UNAMID force. "However, registration teams expressed concern that many IDPs (internally displaced persons) might not have been able to register before the closing, leaving them without a voice in next year's ballot." Abdullah said there had been variations from state to state, although he did not have an exact breakdown of figures.

Conference on coexistence between South Darfur and North Bahr El-Ghazal starts on Thursday

Akhbar Al-Youm daily reports that Presidential advisor Abdalla Ali Masar would lead a delegation to Aweil, North Bahr El-Ghazal, to attend a three-day conference on coexistence between South Darfur and North Bahr El-Ghazal scheduled Thursday. The conference would discuss papers on economy, movement of people between the two states, security issues and coexistence between residents of the two states.

Contentious laws to be tabled in front of the Cabinet and Parliament

Al-Khartoum daily reports that the Speaker of the Parliament Ibrahim Ahmed El-Tahir said that sessions would continue in order to approve all laws especially the Referendum Act. Meanwhile, the Minister of Justice, Abdel Basit Sabdarat, tabled Monday the draft 2009 Trade Unions' Act before the National Assembly for ratification. The Minister said he would submit on Thursday the bills on Southern Sudan Referendum, the Abyei Referendum and the Popular Consultation to the Council of Ministers. He added that bills would be transferred to the National Assembly to decide on the contentious articles on next Monday's session.

Ban urges Sudanese President to help secure release of abducted staff

(UN News) 7 December - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to become directly involved in securing the release of two staff members of the joint African Union-United Nations mission in Darfur who have been held hostage now for over 100 days, stressing that the situation is critical given that one of them is gravely ill.

The two staffers – one man and one woman – were abducted at gunpoint in West Darfur state on 29 August. "The Government has been attempting to secure their release but they have not as yet been released," UN spokesperson Martin Nesirky told reporters in New York. "The President assured the Secretary-General that everything possible was being done."

Mr. Ban also urged that the perpetrators of the two weekend attacks on UNAMID peacekeepers in North Darfur that killed five Rwandan peacekeepers be brought to justice.

"Mr. al-Bashir indicated he had issued instructions to his security agencies that the perpetrators be apprehended as soon as possible," Mr. Nesirky stated.

Strongly condemning the attacks on 4 and 5 December, the Security Council today "took note of the action taken already by the Government of Sudan and encouraged it to ensure that all the perpetrators are swiftly identified and brought to justice.

In a statement read to the press by Ambassador Michel Kafando of Burkina Faso, which holds the Council's rotating presidency for this month, the 15-member body also reiterated its full support for UNAMID and its call on all parties in Darfur to co-operate fully with the mission, including to secure the release of the two abducted staff.

War zone could be new Serengeti

(CNN.com) Boma, Sudan, December 7 - Flying high above the dry, sweeping plains of southern Sudan, Paul Elkan is a man on a mission. The director of the region's Wildlife Conservation Society, he is tasked with surveying a wilderness that has been off-limits to international researchers for the best part of 30 years. "It's one of the last wilderness areas in Africa, one of the last great wilderness areas in the world," Elkan told *CNN*. "You have a very large savannah ecosystem that is adjacent to the largest wetland in Africa. So there are a lot of superlatives here in southern Sudan."

For many years, conservationists feared the distinctive wildlife documented by researchers in southern Sudan before the conflict had been hunted to extinction.

But recent surveys in the region have revealed that not only did many animals survive, they are thriving.

CNN filmed exclusive footage in Sudan of the wildlife that inhabits a wilderness largely unseen by the world before now.

Elkan told us of the euphoria when he and his colleagues rediscovered large numbers of elephants.

"We were ecstatic and moved, really. People were saying elephants were finished in southern Sudan, so initially it's people cheering and yelling in the plane. A bunch of scientists, normally very focused people everyone just whooping and hollering - can you believe there's elephants here?"

"Then you get your composure back and start taking your photographs to count them. We came across 150 elephants, there were people writing articles saying there are no more elephants in so Sudan, so hey, what about these 150? We saw a big bull elephant, and you know it's a celebrity elephant, a survivor of 25 years of civil war."

Both sides in the war killed elephants for meat and for their ivory but several thousand escaped the tanks and bullets and disappeared into the vast expanses of bush.

And it's not just elephants -- the region boasts the largest savannah in Africa, immense fresh water wetlands, soaring plateaus and a million-strong antelope migration.

Not all animals survived as well as the elephants and antelope. Thirty years ago the area was thickly populated with wildlife including 30,000 zebra. Now, they have counted just seven.

Elkan can see the day southern Sudan is mentioned alongside the Serengeti, the Masai Mara, Kruger National Park. The Wildlife Conservation Society is working with the Government of Southern Sudan to try and secure key wild spaces. The U.S. Government, through USAID, provides substantial funding to the project, but the task ahead is immense.

"It could be just as significant as the Serengeti," said Elkan. "In many ways it's more special because it's more isolated. You have species here which are found nowhere else in Africa and nowhere else in the world."

"I certainly think it can be viable wildlife area. If you're looking for revenue, there's a lot of oil in southern Sudan, so tourism doesn't need to generate all the wealth."

But viable tourism could be at least a decade away, admits Elkan. And, in peace, animals face more immediate threats.

Southern Sudan has 80 percent of Sudan's oil and oil companies are moving into the upper White Nile areas to explore drilling options. Logging companies want to exploit the teak forests. Road construction and water diversion projects are under way.

Human encroachment could be the greatest threat. Nomadic tribes are pushing into wildlife areas, bringing with them cattle -- which compete for limited grazing areas and water -- in the past they used bows and arrows to hunt --now, they have automatic weapons.

Nyanyo, a Murle herdsman toting an AK-47 puts the conflict in stark terms, "I have a question for you: You say we must not kill the wildlife because otherwise they will be finished. Now I have to slaughter one of my cows. So in a few years I will have no cows. So you want me to kill all my cows and have nothing?"

To protect the wildlife zones, fighters from the civil war are being turned into rangers tasked with protecting the land and stopping poachers. They are being set up in remote outposts with radio communication. Often, they are the only law-enforcement in the area for miles.

But they are usually outmanned and outgunned, and for the people here -- among the poorest in the world -- protecting wildlife comes a distant second to survival.

"When I was young I was used to eating meat from wildlife but now people give me conditions," says Nyanyo, "If you kill animals we find you, we take your gun, with which I'm also defending my life. It looks like you want to finish me."

The conservationists argue that without the wildlife they will have nothing. Elkan says that the Southern Sudan has a brief window of opportunity to come up with a strategy for conserving the land and, ultimately, helping the people.

"They will be much more poor if they don't have a wildlife resource base. The poorest people in the world are those who live in environmentally degraded places."