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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

NISS acknowledges growing “Takfir”, warns of violence

Al-Intibaha reports the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) has acknowledged the presence of Takfir (a religious group who declare people infidel) in the Sudan particularly among the youths, saying it could lead to violence. NISS officer Brig. Issa Adam Abbakr, speaking at a regular forum on Takfir yesterday, said the problem lies in the fact that a Takfir group is now established in Sudan to carry out criminal and terrorist acts. He said the phenomenon is growing especially among the youth, deploring the fact that some renowned religious figures have joined the group, citing Ansar Al-Sunna (Wahaabis), Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Movement. He revealed that 78 youths were arrested in the past in Al-Salama area in Khartoum where they had been planning to carry out assassinations against the NCP leaders, foreigners and some scholars.

Brig. Issa said NISS had worked out a plan to address the Takfir phenomenon on an intellectual and methodological basis with the help of clerics, psychologists and judges as well as a plan to push apart the extremist clerics from the youth.

Kiir orders SPLA to disarm Akol’s militias

SPLA C-in-C Gen. Salva Kiir Mayardit has ordered the SPLA troops to disarm Lam Akol-led SPLM-DC’s militias in Shiluk areas, **Al-Sahafa** reports. According to SPLA spokesperson Kuol Diem Kuol, Kiir made the instructions yesterday at a graduation ceremony of 454 SPLA officers in the central Rumbek County.

Meanwhile, **AFP** reports Security forces blocked roads in a dawn operation today in south Sudan's regional capital Juba, as police and soldiers searched houses for illegal weapons in a disarmament drive.

"It is a disarmament effort to take illegally held guns from the people," said Major General Kuol Diem Kuol, of the southern Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). "The SPLA is supporting the police who are the forces leading this action"

Residents were confined to their homes and an AFP reporter witnessed soldiers posted on street corners stopping traffic. United Nations staff were also ordered to remain at home until the operation ended.

It was not immediately clear if the disarmament drive was limited to Juba, or if it would be rolled out to other areas.

"This is an ongoing operation run by the Ministry of the Interior," added Kuol.

"It is aimed at improving people's security and safety by removing these dangerous weapons from civilian hands."

In a related development, **Al-Wifaq** reports the SPLM-DC revealed that the secretary of its office in Juba Mr. Peter Reka was detained yesterday upon return from Khartoum. Peter was picked up by SPLA agents while on a visit to the University of Juba campus. He was taken for investigation as to why he joined the SPLM-DC.

SPLA soldiers deployed to Western Equatoria to fight LRA militia

Radio Miraya 8/9/09 reported SPLM Spokesperson, Major General Kuol Diem Kuol, said SPLA troops have been deployed to Western Equatoria State to battle the LRA and provide security to the citizens in the area. Kuol did not elaborate on the number of troops deployed but said Southern Sudan was coordinating military activities with Uganda, the DRC, and the CAR to curb the LRA militia.

SPLM denies demand for Nile water share redistribution

SPLM spokesperson Yien Mathew yesterday dismissed reports carried by Egypt's Al-Shurooq newspaper alleging that SPLM would demand redistribution of the Nile water shares should the South secede, **Al-Wifaq** reports.

Border Demarcation Committee abides by schedule

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports that the technical committee tasked with demarcation of the North-South border has announced its keenness to complete drawing the line on paper by the end of this month, to be followed by demarcation of the same on the ground by the end of the current year. At its meeting yesterday which was co-chaired by GoNU VP Ali Osman Taha and GoSS VP Riek Machar, the committee heard reports on all stages of its work.

In a related development, **Al-Wifaq** reports that the Abyei Area Administration has blamed the NCP and the SPLM for impeding the work of the Abyei border demarcation committee. Abyei Chief Administrator Arop Moyak said the NCP and the SPLM would be held responsible for any impediment of the committee's work whether by the Dinka or the Misseriya. Moyak pointed out that PCA ruling was final and the two partners should abide by the Award and should not obstruct the committee's work.

GoSS has done nothing to disarm militias in the South

Sudanese Media Centre 8/9/09 - UN Regional Coordinator for Southern Sudan David Grassly said at least 1200 persons were killed in tribal violence this year in the south. However he said the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) has done nothing to disarm the militias' since the war was over in 2005, adding UN is racing against time to consolidate the role of police and army before the elections.

UN adds that tribal clashes in Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Lakes states have displaced 250,000 persons since the beginning of this year.

Gang leader arrested in Juba

Radio Miraya reports the chief of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) military police operation in Juba, Major Deng Acouth, said a gang leader has been arrested in Juba. The gang was operating for some time in Juba area, and was involved in a number of killings, robberies and other criminal acts, mainly during night hours. The gang leader is now under investigation by the military intelligence in Juba.

Human rights violated in southern Sudan – Parliament

Deputy Chairman of the National Assembly's Committee on Human Rights, Hamadto Mukhtar, has expressed concern over increased human rights violations in southern Sudan caused by conflicts, **Akhir Lahza** reports.

He said the committee intends to intervene to address disputes among the various parties.

Governor dissolves Government of Southern Kordofan

Southern Kordofan Governor, Ahmed Haroun, issued a decree yesterday dissolving the regional

government but the Minister of Finance was spared, **Ajras Al-Hurriya** reports. The Governor also issued decrees appointing new advisors to the government, members to his cabinet and county commissioners.

Government accused bodies of seeking to reignite Darfur crisis

Al-Intibaha reports the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a statement accusing unnamed circles of attempts to reignite the crisis in Darfur by blocking the positive security and humanitarian developments the region is witnessing. The statement, a copy obtained by the paper yesterday, welcomed the remarks by the former UNAMID FC Martin Luther Aqwai. The statement said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was determined to turn the international community's attention to the fact that some circles were working covertly and overtly to block positive developments in the region.

Al-Turabi, Al-Mahdi and Nugud to participation in Juba forum

Al-Sahafa reports the SPLM has extended invitations to the CPA partners, UN, AU and IGAD as well as to a number of neighbouring countries to take part in the political parties' conference scheduled for Friday in Juba. Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi, PCP leader Hassan Al-Turabi and Communist Party leader Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud are among the participants.

According to **Sudan Radio Service** 8/9/09, while the Sudanese opposition political parties are preparing to meet in Juba for the Juba Conference, a prominent Sudanese political analyst describes the meeting as "suspicious".

Dr. Taysir Muhammad Ahmad, who is also the director of the Peace-Building Centre for the Horn of Africa, spoke to Sudan Radio Service from Asmara on Tuesday." The meeting in Juba has a special flavour and a special importance. It was supposed to take place a long time ago, but it didn't happen for many reasons. This delay really makes one suspicious, there were many opportunities over the years in southern Sudan but no meeting was ever convened. To be logical, this should raise some question and people should try to find the answers. If we try to ignore these questions and we say that it is good for these parties to meet, it would show extreme optimism. People are coming to meet now because of the following questions. Will there be elections, and will there be a referendum, or not? All these questions make one confused. My worry is will this meeting come out with real results? And what sort of results? My real worry is that the people will congratulate themselves that they at last managed to meet in Juba and they will make nice statements and we will continue in the same old way," he said.

Ahmad accused the participating opposition parties of not presenting political agendas that would meet the challenges facing the country.

"I hope people, when they ask what are they going to do in Juba, ask first what have they done in Darfur? Apart from the SPLM, because they are partners in GoNU, but the rest of the parties, have they ever come out with a road map for Darfur? The political parties that are coming to meet in Juba on Friday, have they done their homework? They say they have some papers, I have gone through some of the papers and there is nothing new in them," he added.

However, Ahmad said that if the Juba Conference comes out with a clear road map, it could be the beginning of the end of conflict in Sudan.

"There has never been such a political gathering since 1995. Since 1995, the NCP has been dividing, scattering, and separating people. All of a sudden, all that NCP scheming appears not to be working. So the NCP is worried about this meeting, and your question is very good. Will these people really come out from the Juba meeting with a clear road map and a clear strategy?

If that happens, the NCP has the right to get scared, because this will be the beginning of the end of the suppression, oppression and all the problems we suffered during the past 20 years," he said.

NCP official slams SPLM

NCP official Qutbi Al-Mahdi has criticized the SPLM and its leaders which continue to call for secession, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports. In press statements yesterday, Qutbi said the SPLM had presented the worst example of secession throughout the term of its rule in the South, citing corruption, mismanagement and lack of development. He said those who push for secession represent a small group of elites whose internal and external interests are closely connected with separation, adding the majority of southerners are for unity.

Meanwhile, **Al-Khartoum** reports al-Mahdi refuted SPLM's charges over oil revenue sharing, saying the SPLM charges about oil revenues being tampered with were intended to cover up its failure to use the revenues to effect development and services in the South.

CPA partners to meet in Juba on referendum and census results

Local dailies report the tripartite mechanism between the SPLM, the NCP and the US envoy will meet in Juba on Wednesday. According to **Al-Khartoum**, the two-day meeting will focus on the referendum and the census results.

Sudan Tribune website 8/9/09 reported the US special envoy to Sudan Scott Gration will begin tomorrow a five-day visit that will take him to Juba, Boma, Darfur and Khartoum, the US State Department said today.

The main purpose of the visit will be to bridge differences between the SPLM and the NCP on key elements of the CPA that include census results and the South Sudan referendum process...

The US State Department said that Gration will fly to Borna to "observe conservation efforts and see an example of the untapped eco-tourism and development potential in the South".

The US special envoy will also tour Darfur IDP camps after skipping it in his last visit for unknown reasons.

The US State department said that while in Darfur Gration "assess the humanitarian situation, meet with camp administrators and IDP's, and engage with women leaders in the camps about gender-based violence and programs to address this dire problem".

He will travel to El-Fasher and meet with African Union – United Nations mission in Darfur (UNAMID) newly appointed force commander General Patrick Nyambumba. He will also meet with civil society leaders in North Darfur village of Ain Siro.

In Khartoum, he will meet with members of the African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD) formed by the AU last February in the wake of the imminent issuance of an arrest warrant by the ICC for Sudanese President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir.

According to **Reuters** 9/9/09, the U.S. envoy to Sudan said he would push the country's former civil war foes to clear two stumbling blocks in their faltering peace deal as he visited the state's oil-producing south on Wednesday. North and south Sudan fought a two-decade civil war that ended in a 2005 deal, but relations have remained tense and the accord is facing key tests --

national elections in 2010 and a referendum on southern independence in 2011. Envoy Scott Gration said north and south Sudanese leaders needed to resolve wrangling over a census, a building block to elections, and preparations for the referendum. Gration said he would meet northern and southern leaders in south Sudan's capital Juba in the latest in a series of three-way conferences to try and resolve their differences. "We will concentrate on finding a path forward on the two remaining unresolved sticking points for full ... implementation (of the 2005 deal)," said Gration in an emailed statement. "These are fundamental issues that must be resolved soon." The envoy's open engagement with Khartoum has drawn criticism from human rights campaigners, who accuse Sudan of committing genocide during the conflict in its Darfur region. A coalition of rights groups published an open letter to U.S. President Barack Obama on Wednesday, saying Gration's Sudan meetings amounted to a renegotiation of key parts of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that would undermine the accord. They urged Gration to take a tougher line with north Sudan's dominant National Congress Party (NCP), accusing it of using the process to postpone decisions and of encouraging tribal violence in the south. "Left unchecked, the NCP's behaviour will trigger a war in the south and make it all the more difficult to resolve the still-simmering crisis in Darfur," said the letter, signed by members of the U.S.-based Sudan Now advocacy umbrella group. The south's dominant Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) has accused the NCP of manipulating the figures of the 2008 census and says it will reject any attempt to use the findings to demarcate constituencies. Both sides are also discussing the terms of a long-delayed referendum bill. Insiders say one of the sticking points is what proportion of the southern electorate would have to vote for secession for it to be granted. Most southerners, who have bitter memories of the civil war, are thought to favour independence. Many northern officials are nervous about the prospect of losing the south, which produces most of Sudan's oil wealth. Any return to civil war would have a devastating impact on Sudan, its oil operations and the surrounding region. A surge in tribal fighting in the underdeveloped south has raised fresh fears for its stability, and the prospects of holding fair elections across its vast territory. Gration got a taste of the insecurity in the south, as southern soldiers shut down large parts of Juba on Wednesday to carry out a door-to-door search for illegal guns. His planned press conference at a Juba conference centre had to be postponed as staff and journalists got caught up in the curfew.

Journalist Lubna Hussein released

Local dailies report that at an initiative launched by the Sudanese Journalist Union, journalist Lubna Hussein was freed yesterday. According to **Al-Rai Al-Aam**, a delegation from the Union headed by its chairman Mohi El-Din Titawi, visited the court and paid the fine. Lubna has thanked the Union but said her preference was that the fine should not be paid.

Reuters 8/9/09 reported a Sudanese woman jailed for wearing trousers deemed indecent was freed on Tuesday after the country's journalists' union said it had paid 500 SDG fine on her behalf.

Lubna Hussein was convicted of indecency charges on Monday in a case that has attracted a worldwide outcry. She was ordered to pay a fine or face a month in jail, but was spared a possible penalty of 40 lashes.

Hussein said after her verdict that she refused to pay the fine, preferring to go to jail instead as a means of challenging the law's legitimacy.

"They just came to me in the prison minutes ago and told me I have to go. I have no idea why. I am not happy. I told all my friends and family not to pay the fine," she told Reuters. "But I have been freed."

"I am also not happy because there are more than 700 women still in the prison who have got no one to pay for them."

Hussein's supporters say thousands of women have been convicted of similar offences under Sudan's Islamic decency regulations in recent years and sentenced to beatings. They say she is the first to challenge such treatment.

She was arrested at a Khartoum party in July with 12 other women, 10 of whom pleaded guilty to similar charges and were flogged, she has said.

Hussein however decided to fight the accusations, arguing that her "indecent" clothing, a pair of green slacks that she wore in court, were respectable and did not break the law.

Hussein, a former reporter working for the United Nations at the time of her arrest, said she believed there had been political pressure to free her and bring an end to a high-profile case.

Mohieddin Titawi, chairman of the journalists' union, said his group had paid the fine because it had a responsibility to "protect journalists when they are in prison". His organization is seen by many journalists as having links to the government.

Many women activists complain Sudan's decency regulations are vague and give individual police officers undue latitude to determine what acceptable clothing is for women. Hussein's lawyer has said he plans to appeal against her sentence.

The United Nations human rights office said Hussein's conviction violated international law.

"Lubna Hussein's case is in our view emblematic of a wider pattern of discrimination and application of discriminatory laws against women in Sudan," U.N. human rights spokesman Rupert Colville told a news briefing in Geneva.

"No defence witnesses were heard. It is not clear there is a chance to appeal," he told Reuters.

The U.N. rights office later welcomed Hussein's release but said that did not change its view that she should not have been arrested or convicted.

Hussein has said she resigned from her U.N. job to give up any legal immunity so she could continue with the case, prove her innocence and challenge the decency law.

U.N. officials had argued that Hussein was immune from legal proceedings as she was a U.N. employee at the time of her arrest. But Sudan's foreign ministry advised the court that Hussein was not immune from prosecution.

AFP 8/9/09 reported France paid tribute on Tuesday to the "brave battle" being fought for women's rights in Sudan by Lubna Ahmad al-Husayn who has been jailed for wearing trousers deemed to be "indecent".

"France deeply regrets the ruling of the Khartoum court to find her guilty of an affront to morality and to sentence her to pay a fine or spend one month in jail," deputy French Foreign Ministry spokesman Christine Fages told the media.

A representative of France was in court on Monday and France "will continue to pay the utmost attention to the legal proceedings" against the young woman "who has revealed her intention to

appeal to the Constitutional Court", she added.

"We reiterate our appeal to the Sudanese authorities to sign and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and to ratify the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment which it signed in 1986," the spokeswoman said in conclusion.

Europe, UK press Sudan to return seized aid

Reuters 8/9/09 - Britain and the European Commission have urged Sudan to return hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of assets they funded that were seized by Khartoum during a mass expulsion of humanitarian agencies.

Sudan said on Tuesday it had acted within regulations when it took the assets from ousted groups, and said it now had the right to re-distribute the seized funding to other humanitarian programmes as it deems fit.

The European Commission and Britain, who are major donors to relief efforts in Sudan, told Reuters many of the seized assets were paid for by their taxpayers and had been targeted at specific programmes shut down by Khartoum.

Both organizations said they wanted the assets that they had donated back so they could choose how to redeploy them to other humanitarian projects in Sudan.

Sudan's state minister for humanitarian affairs Abdel Baqi al-Jailani on Tuesday dismissed their claims as "illogical" saying he was not bound by any direct contract with the donors.

"The donors may have had specific agreements with specific NGOs but I had nothing to do with those agreements.

"According to our law, if an NGO is expelled its assets should be redistributed to other NGOs working in the field ... They (the donors) don't have the right to control the assets."

The demands come at a sensitive time for Sudan which is trying to improve relations with the West, in a bid to get crippling trade sanctions from Washington lifted or relaxed.

"It is estimated that around £500,000 (\$820,000) of British-funded goods were included in the seizures," a spokesman for Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) told Reuters in an email.

The Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO) told Reuters it was still calculating how much of its funding was taken in the expulsions.

"The European Commission continues to draw the attention of the Sudanese authorities to the fact that assets seized have been funded by the European taxpayer to whom the Commission is accountable," said Commission spokesman John Clancy.

Oxfam and Medecins Sans Frontieres' operations in Holland and France told Reuters in August that Sudan's government had taken about \$5.2 million of their assets and more than \$9 million in enforced payments to local staff who lost their jobs because of the government shut-down. Aid workers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they were concerned Sudan might redistribute their assets to organizations without the necessary experience or adherence to international humanitarian principles.

The March expulsions hit humanitarian efforts across northern Sudan, particularly in Darfur and the tense border regions of Southern Kordofan, Abyei and Blue Nile. Projects in Sudan's mostly Christian south were not affected.

“Ocampo’s witnesses admits fabrication”

Local dailies report a group of Darfurians who have been used by the ICC to incriminate Sudanese leaders admitted fabricating reports for the Court. According to **Al-Raed**, the group comprising professionals, witnesses and translators, held a press conference yesterday in Addis Ababa to declare the birth of what they call “the National Group for Correcting the Track of the Darfur Crisis”. The group told journalists that they had fabricated reports and figures to assist the ICC in incriminating Sudanese leaders, promising further update in due course.

According to **Sudan Tribune website** 8/9/09, a group of Darfuri figures announced from the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa today the establishment of a new advocacy group with the goal of opposing foreign intervention in the six year conflict in the troubled province in Western Sudan.

The news drew an unusual extensive coverage by the Sudan official news agency (SUNA) and the Sudanese Media Center (SMC) website widely considered to be run by National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS).

The National Group for Correcting the Track of Darfur Crisis (NGCTDC) as it was named by its founders is chaired by Suleiman Ahmed Hamed, a former leading member of the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM)-Unity and head of Zaghawa community in Europe.

Sudan state media said that the co-founders also include Salah Al-Deen Mohamed Mansur a translator with a group that is part of the ICC, Abdel-Rahman Saleh Yusuf a "main witness" for 2003 events in Darfur used by the ICC and International Justice Group, Ismail Mohamed Yusuf a "main witness" for Shataya incidents, Arbab Ishag Ali another witness, Sharif Siyam Adam a witness of the 2004 events, Abu Al-Gassim Zakariya, a translator for Human Rights Watch (HRW).

In a founding declaration released today, the NGCTDC said it is not a rebel faction or a political party but an awareness and advocacy group seeking to campaign for a national solution to Darfur crisis without foreign interferences.

"Disagreement with the government in Khartoum, should not lead us to drag the Sudan into [disorder and division] and transform it into another Yugoslavia or Iraq," said Mr. Kamal Al-Deen Ibrahim, the Secretary General of the group.

"The group will also seek to identify the objectives of those who attempt to distort the image of Sudan," he added. Ibrahim also was presented as former member of the rebel SLM and an economist.

The group said it aims to achieve goals such as opening the door for national reconciliation in Darfur and resolve the differences through the popular and national laws that already exist in Sudan.

The translators and witnesses said they were lured by international organizations to exaggerate the numbers of victims and killings that occurred in the region.

The Sudanese ambassador to the UN Abdel-Haleem Abdel-Mahmood was quoted by SUNA as lauding the formation of the group saying it “exposed the methods and techniques used to criminalize Sudan”.

Darfur peace mediator Djibril Bassole said yesterday he would convene a consultation for Darfur civil society groups next month in Doha, before holding peace talks between the government and the rebel groups at the end of October.

Russia to hold conference on Sudan next month

Sudan Tribune website 8/9/09— Russia will hold an international meeting on October 6-7, to discuss Darfur crisis and the CPA, announced today Mikhail Margelov who is a presidential envoy to Sudan.

He said the conference which involve politicians, scientists and lawyers have to make an extensive expertise, "to help the conflicting sides look at the events more objectively and find ways for reconciliation"

Moscow will present "a friendly and creative ground to those who are practically engaged in pacifying the warring sides and those who are interested in general problems of conflictology," Margelov said in a statements published by the Russian Itar-Tass.

The fact is that conflicts in Sudan "have a multi-factor nature, and it is sometimes hard to determine the essence of clashes unambiguously". The upcoming conference will focus on these issues, he underlined.

“Such conference of politicians, scientists and lawyers will be held for the first time” since the start of a violent conflict in Sudan, said Margelov, who is the chairman of the international affairs committee at the Federation Council Upper House of Parliament.

Margelov said Sudan is one of the few conflicts where the members of the U.N. Security Council have similar view.

Envoys for Sudan from the United Nations, the European Union, China, the Netherlands, the USA, Finland and Sweden as well as the African Union, the League of Arab States, international humanitarian organizations, rectors of higher educational establishments and research institutes have already confirmed their participation.

Reports that LRA’s Joseph Kony is on his way to Darfur

Reuters 07/09/09 - Ugandan military intelligence units have been hunting the LRA rebels in t since last month with the permission of the CAR Government, Uganda's army said on Monday.

A Ugandan-led offensive late last year targeted guerrilla hideouts in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, dispersing LRA fighters but failing to strike the rebels' top commanders, three of whom are wanted by the International Criminal Court.

Uganda's military spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Felix Kulayigye, told Reuters that officials from southern Sudan, Kinshasa, Kampala and Bangui met a month ago and agreed to allow Ugandan army units into CAR to fight the insurgents.

"(Ugandan army) squads entered Central African Republic under the auspices of the joint security meeting," he said.

"It was agreed that since (LRA leader Joseph) Kony is a regional problem, he should be

pursued into Central African Republic where he had gone."

Kulayigye said several dozen intelligence officers were operating in CAR and eastern Congo, and that Kampala believed Kony was making his way to Sudan's restive western Darfur region. CAR officials were not immediately available to comment.

LRA fighters have made sporadic attacks in areas bordering southern Sudan, eastern Congo and CAR since Kinshasa allowed Ugandan troops to hit rebel bases in eastern Congo in December. That offensive followed two years of negotiations with Kony that collapsed when he refused to sign a final peace agreement to end more than two decades of civil war.

WHO warns of epidemics in conflict areas of South

IRIN 8/9/09 - Conflict-affected areas of Southern Sudan, such as Ezo County in Western Equatoria State where Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels have been active, are facing a high risk of epidemics, the World Health Organization (WHO) warns.

Conflict in Southern Sudan, WHO said, had damaged health facilities, displaced health workers and prevented people from accessing facilities that were still functioning.

LRA rebels have continued attacks in Western Equatoria, looting and ransacking homes, churches and health facilities, stealing food, killing innocent civilians and abducting children.

In recent weeks, the rebels have forced 80,000 people out of their homes. On 13 August, they looted and burnt local houses and churches in Ezo, ransacked health facilities, killed and wounded civilians and abducted 10 girls.

"The total number of people displaced following the recent attacks in Ezo is unclear," WHO said. "Many IDPs [internally displaced persons] are still hiding in the jungle due to persistent fear of LRA attacks, while most displaced are now living in camps organized by local authorities or host communities."

Humanitarian workers were evacuated following the attacks. "The humanitarian situation remains serious," the agency said. "Local churches have asked for emergency supplies of food, safe drinking water and medicines.

"The severe shortage of food may lead to malnutrition in children and pregnant women. Many healthcare workers were among the displaced, and very few health facilities are operational... National Immunization Days scheduled to take place in August were not conducted due to the insecurity."

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the LRA has triggered widespread panic and fear in areas along the borders of Southern Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR).

"There are some 3,500 refugees from the DRC and CAR and an estimated 25,000 IDPs in Ezo and neighbouring districts," it said on 21 August. "These people are now without protection or assistance."

Altogether, an estimated 360,000 Congolese have been uprooted in successive LRA attacks in Orientale province of northeastern DRC while 20,000 have fled to neighbouring Sudan and the CAR.

During a recent visit to Dungu in northeastern DRC, Ann Veneman, and Executive Director of

the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), referred to the "Christmas Massacre" of 26 December, when the LRA attacked a Catholic church, hacking to death innocent worshippers.

"The population of Dungu lives in constant fear of attacks from the LRA, who inflicted 20 years of terror in Uganda and other neighbouring countries," she said. "The LRA is notorious for kidnapping children, forcing them to kill and maim innocent victims and enslaving young girls as their concubines."

An estimated 320,000 people have been displaced from their homes since December 2007. In July, the rebels were believed to have been responsible for approximately 1,200 civilian deaths.

"The people are stuck between a rock and a hard place," Katharine Derderian, a humanitarian adviser for the aid agency Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Belgium, said recently. "They are too scared to return to the rural areas, so they are unable to cultivate their fields, or to even send their children to school because they fear the LRA will attack."

Hamas leader in Khartoum

Local dailies report Hamas Political Bureau leader Khaled Mashaal arrived in Khartoum yesterday on one-day visit. According to **Al-Rai al-Aam**, Mashaal was received at the airport by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Karti.

"Zakat El-Fitr SDG 3.5"

Sudan's Islamic Jurisprudence Complex announced that Zakat El-Fitr (donation paid to a poor by a person observing Ramadan) for this Ramadan would be 3.5 SDG for each person, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports. For those who do not observe Ramadan on health grounds they have to donate SDG 2.00 against each Ramadan day.

Employees demand salary payment before Eid

Local dailies report the Sudanese Workers Trade Union Federation has called on the Federal Ministry of Finance to pay all the Government employees their salaries for September before the Eid.

Deputy Chairman of the Federation Bashaar Hamadnallah Khameez told journalists that the Federation demanded that the salaries be paid not later than September 17 to allow the employees time for Eid shopping. Reportedly, the Ministry agreed to consider the request.

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