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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Sudan postpones general elections

Local dailies and Sudan Tribune website 02/04/09 reported that the Sudan National Elections Commission (NEC) resolved to defer the general elections due this July to February 2010 to give move room for preparations and resolution of some crucial outstanding issues, Abdalla Ahmed Abdalla, the NEC Deputy Chairman said in press statements.

GoSS VP Riek Machar welcomed the decision but expressed fears that it might delay the 2011 referendum for southern Sudan.

The SPLM spokesperson Yen Matthew told **Miraya FM** that delay of census results and North-South border demarcation led to the impossibility of holding elections this year. The United Democratic Front (UDF) urged all the political parties to comply with decision to postpone elections. The UDF Secretary General David William said that the elections can not be held before the census results are out, in addition to North-South border demarcation and return of IDP's from the north and improvement of the security status in southern Sudan.

According to **Akhbar Al-Youm** 4/4/09, the NEC's general elections postponement provoked diverse reactions. DUP leader Omer Suleiman said the NEC did not consult his party and described the elections delay as "unilateral decision". He stressed the need for an atmosphere conducive to the elections process. National Umma Party Politburo member Al-Wathiq Al-Bireir said his party would discuss the elections delay decision today, but emphasized the need for the government to allow a genuine democratic transformation and to address the Darfur crisis as well as all the pending issues related to the elections. NCP official Ibrahim Ghandoor welcomed the NEC's elections time frame. "NCP welcomes the elections schedule from May to February. We will do our best to ensure free and fair process with a greater popular participation" he said. Sudan's Communist Party official Siddiq Yousuf welcomed the elections time frame, but he stressed the need for a conducive atmosphere.

Sudan's Baath Party official Ali Al-Rayah said restrictive laws should be annulled, political parties' confiscated property should be returned and Darfur and CPA pending issues should be addressed to ensure free and fair elections.

SPLM Deputy Secretary General Yassir Arman said election postponement would necessarily mean delay of the democratic transformation process. He said three issues should be addressed before the new date is due: issues relating to the CPA (Border demarcation, census, South Sudan referendum law, popular consultation law for the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile and Abyei referendum) as well as the approval of all laws necessary for democratic transformation without which no free and fair elections could be conducted and solution of the Darfur problem.

However, PCP leader Hassan Al-Turabi criticized the NEC, saying its cadres lack necessary experience. "The time frame did not take into account the rainy season during which voter registration need to be done, a time when civilians will be busy with farming" he said. "The announcement of the election schedule before the census results is questionable"

According to ***Al-Intibaha***, SLM/MM lashed out against the NEC for a hint that upcoming elections might not include Darfur. SLM spokesperson Thu al-Noon Abdul Rahman said SLM reject any elections before the Darfur issue is resolved.

Meanwhile, ***Al-Watan*** reports the UNSG Spokesperson welcomed the February 2010 Sudan elections date and described it as an important benchmark in the implementation of the CPA. The UNSG urged Sudanese authorities to proceed with the necessary preparations in accordance with the timeframe proposed by NEC and encouraged all political parties to participate in the process.

Al-Ayyam cites sources that the Presidency will meet during the next two days to discuss and announce the census results. It will also discuss the election schedule set by the NEC and the status quo in the country.

“I can participate in UN meetings” – President Bashir

Al-Sahafa reports President Al-Bashir as saying the ICC decision “will end up into the dustbin of history”. He told ***Sudan TV*** yesterday that he would not stop traveling abroad if need be including to NY to take part in any international activity.

Meanwhile, ***Al-Rai Al-Aam*** reported that Djibouti invited President Al-Bashir and it would not abide by the ICC’s arrest warrant for him. Djibouti Justice Minister Mohamed Barkat said his country was committed to secure the visit.

Al-Ayyam reports NCP official Khaled Bilal Ahmed as saying President Al-Bashir will visit West Darfur State on Tuesday to address a rally in Zalingei and to inaugurate power and water projects in the city.

Al-Khartoum reports that Presidential Press Advisor Mahgoub Fadul has downplayed the ICC Registrar’s visit to the refugee camps in eastern Chad. He said the visit was not a surprise because the ICC Prosecutor Ocampo himself had also visited the camps to fetch witnesses. On the other hand, Fadul said the UNSG’s talk about difference between him and the ICC Prosecutor over the arrest warrant for President Bashir carries nothing new and the government is not concerned with such statements.

US Congress delegation to visit Sudan

Local dailies report a US Congressional delegation headed by the Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Karri is to visit Khartoum from 12 to 14 April for talks with Sudan government officials. Director of the Two Americas Ambassador Nasreldin Wali said the delegation would also visit Darfur to familiarize itself with the situation on the ground.

Meanwhile, SPLM delegation currently visiting Washington has concluded agreements with US Administration to assist GoSS to overcome the impact of the global financial crisis besides supporting the SPLA. The head of the delegation, Pagan Amum described the visit as successful, noting that discussions focused on the CPA, the humanitarian situation in Darfur, the global economic crisis and support for GoSS and the SPLA.

Al-Ayyam reports MFA State Minister Ali Karti expressed hope that Washington would receive a Sudanese envoy to convey to the US Administration Sudan government’s stance. “We hope the US envoy Scott Gration’s mission will coincide with a visit of a Sudanese envoy to talk to the US Administration directly,” Karti told the ***BBC***.

Kiir asks SPLA to restore security in Jonglei State

Akhir Lahza reports GoSS President Salva Kiir has confirmed commitments to restore security in Jonglei State. Addressing a peace and reconciliation conference in the state yesterday, President Kiir called on the SPLA to restore security and the rule of law in southern Sudanese states.

Fighting in Warrap leaves 24 dead

The head of the Committee on Security and Public Order in the Lakes State Legislative Assembly, Joseph Mathiang, confirmed on Thursday that 24 people were killed and 22 critically injured in clashes over livestock between pastoralist groups of Warrap and Lake State, reports **The Citizen**.

De-mining concluded by 60% - Sudan

Sudan announced yesterday that 60% of areas affected with landmines have been cleared, reports **Akhir Lahza**. Humanitarian Affairs State Minister Charles Manyang told celebrations to mark the International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action yesterday that Sudan was committed to complete de-mining by 2014. He expressed gratitude for the national partners, the UN and the donor community for their support.

African Panel to meet with ICC Prosecutor

Al-Sahafa reports the African Elders Panel delegation headed by the former South African President Thabo Mbeki announced it would meet with the ICC Prosecutor Ocampo to study his reports about violations in Darfur as well as the reports prepared by UNHCR and the Sudan's Inquiry Commission. Mbeki told a press conference yesterday that the delegation would also meet with Darfur movement leaders and would also visit Libya, N'djamena and Asmara to gather more information about the crisis to achieve a comprehensive solution. Mbeki's commission visited Darfur yesterday where it raised the issue of individual and collective compensations, nomad migration routes, trials of those involved in tribal conflicts, voluntary return and the presence of female fighters in Darfur movements.

According to **Al-Khartoum**, the African Panel will submit their report to the AU by mid July. The committee is focusing on three issues in Darfur: peace, reconciliations and justice.

Suleiman Jamoos, 28 field commanders join JEM

Akhir Lahza 4/4/09 reported SLM (Unity Command)'s Humanitarian Affairs Coordinator Suleiman Jamoos and 28 SLA field commanders joined Khalil-led Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). According to **Akhbar Al Youm**, Jamoos told **Al-Jazeera TV** that he took this step to unify Darfur resistance factions to address the humanitarian situation.

Temporary tents for Palestinian refugees in Khartoum

Al-Ayyam reports Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail as saying that the Refugees Commission would set up temporary tents in a Khartoum suburb to shelter Palestinian refugees stranded at the Syrian-Iraqi border.

Websites/International News Coverage

US, France unhappy about Arab & African support for Bashir

Sudan Tribune website, 4/4/09 (PARIS) – The Saudi owned **Al-Hayat** newspaper quoting a source familiar with talks said that the US president Barack Obama and his French president

Nicolas Sarkozy discussed the indictment of Sudanese president Omer Al-Bashir by the ICC last month.

The source said that both Obama and Sarkozy were disappointed at the backing of the Arab League and African Union (AU) to Bashir.

Both organizations have expressed dissatisfaction at the ICC move against Bashir and alleged double standards in dealings with crimes worldwide.

The Arab League leadership summit held this week in Qatar issued a resolution rejecting of the ICC warrant and called on its members not to cooperate with the court.

AU officials said that African states who are ICC members will hold a meeting in June to discuss possibility of removing themselves from the court by unsigning the Rome Statute.

The source said that the US and French leaders agreed to give their backing to the ICC warrant.

Obama also underscored the need to get Bashir to rescind his order expelling a dozen aid groups from Sudan last month after he accused them of collaborating with the ICC.

This week US President Barack Obama "faces an immediate crisis" over expulsion of the groups.

"We have to figure out a mechanism to get those NGOs back in place, to reverse that decision, or to find some mechanism whereby we avert an enormous humanitarian crisis" Obama said.

Darfur on brink of deeper crisis - U.S. envoy

Reuters Khartoum, 4/4/09 - Darfur is on the brink of a deeper humanitarian crisis following Khartoum's expulsion of aid groups and needs a new relief push within weeks, the US Special Envoy to Sudan, Scott Gration, said on Saturday.

He told reporters by phone while en route to North Darfur that he had just visited Zamzam refugee camp, where buildings run by the ousted aid groups remain closed, health services were hit and water reserves were close to running dry.

"I was very concerned with what I saw. We are on the brink of a deeper crisis in Darfur," Gration said.

"We have to increase the capacity and number of aid agencies that are able to move aid assistance from the warehouses to the distribution points and then to the hands and mouths of the people in these camps." Gration said Sudan needed to fill the gap left by the expelled groups by bringing in new organisations from Arab countries and the west and by building up local groups. He called on Khartoum to return about 400 vehicles and other seized assets and to speed up visa applications for new aid workers.

"I don't think that the prospects for returning the 13 NGOs ...are very strong or very high," he said.

Gration will travel to Qatar at the end of April to meet the UN-AU joint mediator for Darfur, Djibril Bassole.

SPLM delegation received at White House, State, and Pentagon

Sudan Tribune website Washington, 04/04/09 – The SPLM delegation to the US has reportedly requested US government assistance with the shortfall in the GoSS budget, but there

are no signs of a positive response from Washington.

In a barely veiled slap at the SPLM visit, Sudan presidential assistant Nafi Ali Nafi was quoted by the official news agency (SUNA) as saying the US Administration must establish direct channels of communication with the NCP.

According to a statement from the GoSS office in Washington, the delegation met the US Special Envoy, Scott Gration on Tuesday – just a day before his journey to Khartoum — and discussed the implementation of the CPA, Darfur Crisis as well as the economic and military support package to the GOSS.

Speaking at a gathering of the Sudanese community on Friday, SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum disclosed that the delegation had been sent on short notice with the intention of meeting US Special Envoy to Sudan, Scott Gration before his journey to Khartoum.

The SPLM team also held an interagency meeting attended by representatives of the State Department, Department of Defense, USAID and US Congress. On Friday, the SPLM team met the Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, a GOSS official affirmed.

The delegation was received at the White House by Michelle Gavin, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for African Affairs in the National Security Council. Together they discussed the current political situation in Sudan, said the GOSS statement.

The SPLM leaders also met with officials in the Department of Defense led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Theresa Whelan and discussed GOSS-US military cooperation in the field of security sector reform.

Gration, who traveled to Darfur on Saturday, said today that Darfur is on the brink of a deepening crisis in the wake of the expulsion of 16 aid groups.

Commenting on the same situation during a public event Wednesday at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Foreign Minister Alor echoed remarks made earlier by other SPLM officials, saying that he was not consulted about the government's decision to expel the groups from North Sudan.

Alor noted that he had read the news in the newspaper like anybody else and that he had been angered by the move.

Sudan says US must conduct dialogue exclusively with ruling NCP

Sudan Tribune website Khartoum, 03/04/09 – The US administration must establish direct channels of communication with the National Congress Party (NCP) as it is the main component of the government, a senior Sudanese official told the visiting US envoy today.

The Sudanese presidential assistant Nafi Ali Nafi met with the newly appointed US Special Envoy to Sudan J. Scott Gration who is on a week long visit that will take him to Darfur and Juba.

Sudan official news agency (**SUNA**) quoted Nafi as saying that any other dialogues Washington conducts “will not suffice”.

Nafi was likely referring to southern ex-rebel group Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) whose officials manage to meet regularly with senior US officials including former president George Bush.

Nafi said that the US envoy affirmed his country's respect to the sovereignty of Sudan and his willingness to carry out dialogue with him unconditionally with a number of issues.

This week the US special envoy appeared to be striking a conciliatory tone with Sudan saying that he is in Sudan “to look, listen and learn”.

He added that he came “with my hands open” and hoped that Sudan's government will respond

“with a hand of friendship,” saying that “like all my American colleagues, ana ahib Sudan,” or “I love Sudan.”

Nafi welcomed the “new approach” of the US administration saying that both sides will engage in “deep” discussions.

The US envoy also met with Sudanese opposition leader, Hassan Turabi but did not make statements afterwards.

Turabi speaking to reporters afterwards slammed Sudan’s decision to expel more than a dozen aid agencies last month in response to International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant against president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir last month.

“What will happen to these people? Everyone is now of course [going on about] the president [saying] ‘We should all campaign to protect our president’”.

“People in Sudan have forgotten Darfur and the human problem and the crisis” Turabi said.

UN teams assess impact of expelled NGOs in the Three Areas

Sudan Tribune website UN, 03/04/09 – The UN has sent a mission to the Three Areas to carry out a humanitarian needs assessment following the expulsion of 13 foreign aid groups working in the country.

UN OCHA said that the mission to the Three Areas of Sudan started work on Thursday in the Blue Nile State to review programmes which were run by the expelled NGOs and to identify gaps in the aid effort. Some of the banned aid groups were involved in significant recovery and development operations, which benefited populations in the Three Areas of Abyei, southern Kordofan State, and southern Blue Nile State.

Egypt was aware of air strikes in Sudan when it happened: FM

Sudan Tribune website, 2/4/09 (CAIRO) – The air strike launched inside Sudan earlier by suspected Israeli warplanes earlier this year was known to Egypt when it happened, its foreign minister said today.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul-Gheit told **Al-Mehwar television** on an interview that even though Cairo knew about the attacks “from when they happened” they maintained silence over the issue to avoid embarrassing Khartoum.

“The foreign act against Sudan is denounced and our response to it must be strong” he was quoted as saying without giving any details.

An unknown number of air strikes this year were launched in Eastern Sudan by what is widely believed to be Israeli fighters against suspected arm smugglers.

An Israeli source told the ‘**TIME**’ magazine last week its foreign intelligence agency (Mossad) found out that Iran was planning a major delivery of a substantial amount of arms and explosives to Hamas controlled Gaza including anti-tank rockets and Fajir rockets with a 25 mile range and a 45 kg warhead.

Based on the Intel, Israel decided to strike the convoy inside Sudan in an operation that involved drones, fighter bombers and naval vessels.

The Israeli sources said that several Iranians were killed in the raid, along with Sudanese smugglers and drivers.

Hamas denied that the convoy was Gaza headed or that they were expecting any weapons.

The Sudanese government reportedly suspected that the US carried out the attack and some officials even inquired from Cairo whether they took part in it.

Khartoum said it withheld any disclosure of the bombing in Eastern Sudan pending its own investigations, No official statement was made on the subject.

Aboul-Gheit said that Egypt was informed that there were two separate strikes but acknowledged that his government was unaware of how Israel carried out them out.

The **Wall Street Journal** (WSJ) reported last week that Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak personally warned his Sudanese counterpart on the growing trend of arm smuggling from Sudan.

The **WSJ** said that Mubarak was also echoing US complaints on the same issue who sent a formal letter demanding Sudan's government "cease smuggling arms into Egypt".

The WSJ cited the official as saying that Washington and Cairo in the last few weeks raised with Sudan's government their concerns that Sudan "has become a major facilitator for Gaza-bound weapons being smuggled into Egypt".

The report said that Egyptians are particularly concerned that Sudan is becoming an arms partner of Iran and aiding Tehran in moving weapons to the militant group Hamas which controls the Gaza Strip.

The US & Israel have blamed Cairo in the past for not doing enough to stop arms smuggling on its borders to Gaza.

However the Egyptian government dismissed the criticism saying that it has taken robust measures to close a network of smuggling tunnels, mostly used for food and fuel, linking it to Gaza.