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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

President Al-Bashir to address Parliament today

Local dailies report President Al-Bashir is to address today a joint session of the National Assembly and the Council of States which is the 9th and last session of the two houses, set to end on 5th July. A parliamentary source said the laws expected to be endorsed by this session include press Act, national security Act as well as the lands and human rights commissions Acts.

Parties' Council sets ultimatum

The Political Parties Affairs Council Chairman Mohamed Bushara Dousa has declared 5 May as a deadline for political parties to sort out issues of formal registration at the Council ahead of the February 2010 presidential and parliamentary elections, **Al-Raed** reports. Meanwhile, the NEC said that preparations for the elections such as drawing the electoral constituencies would kick off on 15 April.

NEC denies intent to rehearse voting

Al-Khartoum reports the NEC Deputy Chairman Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah has denied news circulated by the media that the Commission intends to conduct an experimental voting. Asked about source of funds for the upcoming elections, he said the exercise could be funded by the GoNU, GoSS or States governments, adding that party members and candidates could also contribute to the funding. Abdullah said the NEC intends to raise voters' awareness about the process and urged political parties to cooperate.

Sudan's population 39.1 million

Al-Sahafa reports Sudan's population amounted to 39.1 million. According to the source, Khartoum State population exceeded 5 million while Darfur population is 7.5 million and Southern Sudan population is 8.2 million but northern Sudan population is less than a million. The sources said differences emerged over number of the Southern IDPs in the north which is estimated at 500,000. According to the same source, differences within the Bureau of Statistics reached a deadlock and might be tackled politically.

Abyei Arbitration Panel awaiting budget

Al-Sahafa reports the Abyei Area Arbitration Panel asked Sudan's Presidency to make available by Tuesday the funds requested by SPLM to enable it to prepare for oral hearings. Meanwhile, SPLM failed to obtain from the Sudan government necessary information relating to Dinka area for use in the arbitration.

Government delegation to visit Paris to explain facts – NCP official

Al-Intibaha reports NCP official Mohamed Mandour Al-Mahdi as saying the prospective visit by the Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie to France is part of government's efforts to explain facts related to the ICC and Darfur, indicating the government would not make concessions that impinge upon national sovereignty. Meanwhile, Al-Mahdi has denied an Egyptian initiative to resolve the Darfur crisis.

GoSS protests oil share cut

Al-Khartoum reports GoSS has protested the Federal Ministry of Finance's allocation of SDG 9

million every month from the SPLM's oil share budget to fund elections scheduled for February. GoSS Presidency Affairs Minister Luka Biong told *Miraya FM* that the CPA provides that the elections process is funded by the GoNU. Meanwhile, SPLM spokesperson Yen Mathew said SPLM would determine its candidates for presidential elections and other posts during its politburo meeting Friday in Juba. He declined to give names but the paper's source said Kiir is SPLM's top presidential candidate.

US senator due in Khartoum on Wednesday

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports US senator John Kerry is due to arrive in Khartoum on Wednesday on 3-day official visit for talks with Sudan government officials and UNAMID. He is expected to meet with FVP Kiir, VP Taha, Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie, NISS DG Gen. Gosh and FM Deng Alor.

Meanwhile, informed diplomatic sources said there were no confirmed information about a plan by the US President Obama to visit Sudan but they did not rule it out. The sources said such a visit depends on success of the Sudan-US dialogue conducted by the US envoy Scott Gration. "If dialogue between the two countries succeeds and there is a favourable environment, Obama may include Sudan in his prospective African tour's itinerary," the sources said.

Al-Wifaq, quoting informed sources, reports that the US Administration is in the process of launching an initiative to achieve peace in Darfur. According to informed sources, the initiative will be purely American and separate from Doha-sponsored talks.

Government considering US proposals on INGO ouster

Ahdath reports the US Administration told Sudan Government that pending issues between the two countries could be addressed if the security situation in Darfur has improved and the ousted INGOs issue is resolved. According the paper's source, the US Envoy Scott Gration mentioned to the Sudan government that it is impossible to lift economic sanctions, to remove Sudan from the terrorist list and to normalize relations between the two countries unless the security situation in Darfur improves and the INGO ouster issued is addressed. The source said Khartoum is considering the proposals.

JDB meeting to focus on Malakal incidents

The violence in Malakal will top the agenda of the regular meeting of the Joint Defense Board early next week, reports *Al-Watan*.

Militia kills 42 in Bor

According to a senior GoSS official, Murle militias have killed 42 people in Bor in the latest skirmishes between the Murle and Bor Dinka that began on Tuesday, reports *The Citizen*. The victims were tracking Murle cattle rustlers who had stolen their cattle when armed Murle tribesmen in Bor South waylaid them.

Threats to cast vote against demolitions

The Citizen reports that Central Equatoria States in Juba are carrying out a major demolition of houses leaving thousands of people without shelter. The exercise is pursuant to a decree in January ordering the eviction of "unlawful occupants" and asking them to leave or face eviction. Disgruntled victims of the exercise hint to vote for unity in the 2011 referendum.

South money unlawfully transferred abroad – Tourism Minister

Al-Intibaha, quoting the London-based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, reports GoSS Tourism Minister Joseph Malwal has accused President Kiir of incapacity to combat corruption in southern Sudan. He said corruption was mushrooming and Southern Sudan money was unlawfully transferred to Australia and the USA. "Salva Kiir is incapable of doing anything to combat the phenomenon," he said.

NGO leading negotiation with aid workers abductors – MFA

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports UN as saying that the abduction of the two aid workers in South Darfur is unusual. The paper's source said the abduction left many INGOs in Darfur concerned and suspicious. They anticipated a negative impact on the humanitarian effort in Darfur especially that many of them are thinking of leaving the region. Meanwhile, Director of Protocol Ali Yousuf said the government was totally out of abduction picture because the abductors had demanded that Sudan government should not be involved but he was hopeful of a quick release.

Reuters 12/4/09 reported the kidnappers have threatened to kill abductees unless Paris retried members of a French group convicted but later pardoned over the abduction of children from Chad. "If the French government is not serious in negotiations with us and does not respond to our request, we will kill the two aid workers," he said.

The kidnappers allowed Joidon to speak to **Reuters**. She said they were being treated well but were looking forward to being released.

"We are OK, we have food and water and they are correct with us, but we can't wait to go home," she said.

According to **Sudan Tribune website** 12/4/09, the Abductors said they intend to send a signal to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who last year released the staff of Zoe's Ark. The kidnappers call themselves "Falcons for the Liberation of Africa," but according to **Radio Dabanga**, which interviewed the member of national parliament representing Ad el-Fursan where the abduction occurred, the abductors are former janjaweed of the Abbala tribe.

NEC praises coordination and monitoring processes in Darfur

North Darfur Governor Mohamed Yusuf Kibir has pledged to facilitate the visit of the NEC delegation to Darfur state, reports **Al-Rai Al-Aam**. He pointed out that stability in the state augers well for the elections. NEC Chairman Abel Alier who led the delegation stressed the importance of Darfur in the electoral process and said that their visit is to appraise preparations for the elections. According to **Al-Sudani**, the NEC delegation will brief the North Darfur Judiciary on Commission's programmes for upcoming elections and the role the judiciary can play to assist the process.

UN says ready to cooperate in housing projects

The UN has expressed its readiness to cooperate with Sudan in its national housing plans and to provide all possible technical and funding assistance, reports **Al-Sudani**. The Executive Secretary of UN-Habitat told **SUNA** yesterday that a delegation from the UN agency would visit the country for talks with officials on the issue.

Reporters barred from trial of suspected USAID officer murderers

The Khartoum North court that is trying the suspected assassins of the USAID officer John Granville and his Sudanese driver has barred reporters from the hearing of the testimony of a defense witness, reports **Al-Sudani**. An army captain working at the Military Industries who was summoned as a witness for the defense had earlier requested the judge to bar reporters from the hearings because he had "secret and sensitive" information.

Press bill faces more rejection

Al-Sudani reports that Rabie Abdelati, an Advisor to the Ministry of Information and Communications, has highlighted a number of observations related to a number of articles in the Press and Publications Bill and has called for a review of the language. Speaking at a

workshop on the Press and Publications Bill (2009) yesterday, he said that the immunities granted to reporters have to be clearly indicated in the law to enable reporters to better carry out their duties. UNMIS Rule of the Law representative underlined the need for the draft bill to include more liberties to enable reporters carry out their duties towards the community and towards development and progress.

Websites/International News Coverage

Sudan ruling NCP rejects Turabi's calls for transitional government

Sudan Tribune website 12/4/09 reported the Sudanese ruling National Congress Party (NCP) dismissed calls made Saturday by the leader of a Sudanese opposition party for the creation of a transitional government to prepare for the upcoming general elections scheduled for February 2010.

Yesterday Hassan Al-Turabi who heads the Popular Congress Party (PCP) criticized the current formation of the government saying that it is a "one man show" and stressed that the government he is calling for should consist of national figures, not a coalition government of political parties.

The NCP quickly dismissed Turabi's proposal accusing the Islamist leader of seeking to topple the government.

"This is a new attempt by Dr. Turabi for a regime change after the ICC plot supported by him failed" NCP political bureau Secretary General Mandoor Al-Mahdi was quoted by the official news agency (SUNA).

The NCP official said the formation of the government and its term is determined by the Naivasha agreement signed with the SPLM which governs the south.

"The duration of the parliament and according to the constitution ends next year and for that we consider the PCP proposal rejected and the current government will stay in power till the next elections" he said. Al-Mahdi however, did not rule out any dialogue with the PCP saying that the base of Turabi's party are not happy with his positions.

"There is no logical reason for the formation of a transitional government the present time....calling for a new government will trigger trouble in the country...the upcoming elections will be internationally monitored and administered by an independent commission guaranteeing that is fair and impartial" he said.

Kiir says politicians ignited South Sudan inter-tribal clashes

Sudan Tribune website 12/4/09 reports GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit, said there is serious tribal conflict among southerners today being perpetrated by some politicians who are obstructing peaceful living, despite having avoided tribal fighting during the civil war that lasted for 22 years.

"There was no tribal conflict when we were fighting in the bush," said Kiir during an Easter feast at St. Theresa Cathedral Kator.

Without mentioning names, the president emphasized that some politicians for their own benefit are out to instigate innocent southerners to fight each other, adding that there had been serious tribal fighting in Upper Nile, Jonglei, Eastern Equatoria, Warrap and Lakes states.

President Kiir's remarks today follow a recent meeting of southern opposition leaders in Kenana of White Nile State in northern Sudan, who slammed the South's ruling party for "the continuously deteriorating administrative, security and political situation in Southern Sudan."

In his address, Kiir appealed to southerners to focus especially on the upcoming general election and referendum in 2011 rather than embracing tribal fighting with their own brothers. He said also that without census results, it would be difficult to know the proper geographical demarcation of constituencies – a reference to the long-delayed publication of the census outcome.

The president further advised southerners to fully defend implementation of the CPA in letter and spirit. Otherwise, he warned "it seems some external enemies are instigating and would very much like to destroy the CPA the same way they did for the Addis Ababa accord of 1972."

He told the congregation of his successful mission in solving tribal conflict between Shilluk and Dinka in Malakal that occurred during the celebration for the fourth anniversary of the CPA in the presence of himself, the president of the Republic, and local and international invited dignitaries.

Despite heavy rain, tens of thousands faithful Christians turned out to celebrate the Easter feast at St. Theresa (Kator) Cathedral that started late at 12.10 p.m. Sudan local time instead of 11.00 a.m.

Among the faithful was President Salva Kiir Mayardit; Ambros Ringthik, former chief justice; and Samson Kwaje, former seminarian turned minister of agriculture.

Sudan says unable to go after Darfur war crime suspects

Sudan Tribune website, 12,4/09 (KHARTOUM) – Judicial prosecutions in the Western region of Darfur against war crimes suspects will not be possible under current circumstances, the Sudanese Justice Minister said today.

"Yes definitely there are war crimes in Darfur and when conflict erupts it has its consequences....no one can deny it. Whoever commits the crime and is unidentified should be investigated" Abdel-Basit Sabdarat told the Kuwait based **Al-Rayaam** newspaper in an interview.

"If you are able to know the person who committed the crime and able to pursue him, collect evidence that incriminate him but if you are unable to arrest [suspect] then you have undermined justice" Sabdarat said.

"However if these stipulations are impossible to attain and you cannot go after the people who commit the crimes, you do so whenever circumstances become favorable and then the state can pursue those people" he added.

The Sudanese justice minister said today that there are no charges against Haroun and added that Kushayb is currently being detained and investigated by a national commission of inquiry.

Asked about the arrest of opposition leader Hassan Al-Turabi earlier this year the Sudanese justice minister said that he ordered his arrest for "political reasons" and in accordance with powers conferred to him by the national security law.

"If a person being outside prison becomes a breach of security he is detained and whenever those reasons disappear he is released" Sabdarat said without elaborating.

Kidnapped Darfur aid workers alive and well-treated - hostage

AFP, 12/4/09 two female foreign aid workers, a Canadian and a French national, kidnapped in Darfur last week are alive and are being treated well, the Canadian hostage told **AFP** in a phone call on Sunday.

"We are being treated well. We do not know where we are," said the Canadian hostage, who identified herself as Stephanie Joidon, over a satellite phone.

Armed men had kidnapped the pair, who work for French aid group Aide Medicale Internationale, from their office in South Darfur's capital Nyala, about 100 kilometres (65 miles) from the border with Chad, on April 4.

The Canadian hostage, who did not sound under duress during the phone call, identified her French colleague as Claire Dubois.

Their names, which have been published in the Sudanese media, have been confirmed by a Western source.

"We wish (our families) much courage. We hope that all ends well," Joidon said during the call, which was facilitated by Sudanese sources.

One of the kidnapers, who refused to give his name, named his group as the "Falcons for the Liberation of Africa", saying it was composed of former rebels and members of Arab tribes in Darfur.

He said a French group had been targetted to "send a message to the French government to try the people who kidnapped children from Chad."

Chadian authorities had arrested six workers with a French aid group in 2007 and accused of them of illegally trying to take 103 Darfuri children to France.

They were sentenced to eight years in jail, and then pardoned by the Chadian Prime Minister Idriss Deby Itno three months later.

"Our problem is with (French President) Nicolas Sarkozy and Idriss Deby," said the kidnapper.

A Sudanese foreign ministry official told AFP on Sunday the government was pursuing efforts to free the aid workers.

"We are working for a peaceful release of the hostages," said foreign ministry protocol chief Ali Yusef.

But a local Dafur official said the French negotiators and the aid group had assumed responsibility for the negotiations.

Contacted by AFP, Aide Medicale Internationale spokesman Frederic Mar declined to comment.

The kidnapping of the two aid workers was the second such act in Darfur since the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant on March 4 for Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir for

alleged war crimes, including genocide, in Darfur.

Four workers with Doctors Without Borders (MSF), three of them foreigners, were kidnapped at gunpoint from their Darfur home on March 11.

They were all released four days later, with no signs of violence or a ransom being paid, Sudanese and MSF officials said.

Sudan had expelled 13 aid agencies immediately after the ICC issued the warrant for Beshir.

In February, two Sudanese workers for AMI were shot dead when their bus was attacked by men on horseback in southern Darfur. Four others were wounded in that attack.

On March 23, a Sudanese man working for a Canadian aid group was shot dead at his home in Darfur, reportedly because his attackers wanted his satellite telephone.

Sudan kidnapers threaten to kill aid workers

KHARTOUM, 12/4/09 (**Reuters**) - Kidnappers holding two aid workers in Sudan's Darfur region said on Sunday they will kill them unless Paris retried members of a French group convicted but later pardoned over the abduction of children from Chad.

An unnamed member of a group holding the two female aid workers captive and calling itself the Freedom Eagles of Africa also threatened to target French interests in Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic if their demands were unmet.

Stephanie Joidon, a Canadian, and Claire Dubois, a French national, working for Aid Medicale International (AMI) were seized at gunpoint from their compound in the south Darfur settlement of Ed el Fursan on April 4.

"We demand France open the case of the Zoe's Ark criminals and judge them through a fair court," one of the abductors told Reuters by telephone.

"If the French government is not serious in negotiations with us and does not respond to our request, we will kill the two aid workers," he said.

Six members of humanitarian group Zoe's Ark were jailed in 2007 for trying to fly children, aged between one and 10, out of Chad to Europe. Chad said they had no authorisation to take the children out of the country.

The six, who denied the charges, were sentenced to eight years' hard labour by a Chadian court, but were pardoned in March 2008 by Chadian President Idriss Deby.

Joidon, who was allowed by the kidnapers to speak to Reuters, said she and Dubois were being treated well.

"We are OK, we have food and water and they are correct with us, but we can't wait to go home," she said.

The French foreign ministry declined to comment on the case.

Eric Breteau, the leader of the Zoe's Ark group who lives in France, said he was ready to return to court if that would help. "If a trial of Zoe's Ark can help matters, I'm up for it," he told Reuters

by telephone, adding that he hoped a new hearing would cast light on where the children actually came from.

Breteau has always maintained that the children had escaped from Darfur and needed help. "There isn't the slightest proof that the children came from Chad," he said.

AMI said on Sunday it was leading negotiations to free its staff but declined to give details "given the delicate nature of the affair and out of respect for the families concerned".

Tensions have risen in Sudan since the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir over alleged war crimes in Darfur and Bashir ordered the expulsion of 16 aid groups.

Last month, four members of aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres were held for three days by a group that, Sudanese government officials said, was protesting against the warrant.

Before the two incidents, kidnappings of foreign aid workers in the Darfur region were rare.

Land around Ed el Fursan, about 90 km (55 miles) southwest of the South Darfur capital Nyala, has seen an upsurge of fighting in recent weeks between members of the rival Habbaniya and Fallata tribes.

The clashes, rooted in long-standing disputes over land and other traditional rights, have escalated because of the supply of arms that has flooded in during the six-year Darfur conflict.

INTERVIEW: Sudan Ambassador to the US

Below are excerpts from an interview with Sudan's Ambassador to the US, Ambassador John Akej Koj (***Akhir Lahza***)

On how the US regards the Darfur issue:

Most Americans depend on the media as a primary source of information on any issue. Aid agencies are the lobby groups when it comes to the Darfur issue. They believe that the government is directly responsible for the political and security problems in Darfur. The media portrayal of the issue is also inaccurate and misguides their American audience who then look at Sudan with dissatisfaction. The US is a large country and we try to counter that through organizing symposia and information Sudanese and the US public of what is happening in Darfur but we could not reach all areas of the country because of the large expanses and the limited amounts of money earmarked for media outreach.

Commenting on VP Taha's portrayal of the Darfur issue as a media concoction:

US citizens have an impact on their government and its policies. It is important to talk to the US into understanding the facts about Darfur. Then the pressures on the US Administration will gradually ease and it will be able to counter western media. The Darfur consortium has indeed played a negative role on our media campaigns and has served to confuse the US public who receive conflicting information from Sudanese. A comprehensive solution to the Darfur issue is therefore the best option.

On the what percentage of Sudanese in the US are from Darfur:

Darfurians make up about 10% of the Sudanese population in the US. What troubles me is that they are always present wherever their presence would further their objectives.

On what plans the embassy has in place should a referral be granted for the ICC warrant to the UNSC:

We do not want a referral of the warrant to the UNSC or to anywhere else. We seek a revoke of the warrant in order to continue dialogue with the armed groups.

On prospects for the Doha talks:

The Doha talks could be successful but all stakeholders including Dr. Khalil and Abdulwahid Nur have to participate.

On whether the US would not block the peace process:

The Bush Administration was against the realization of peace in Darfur but things have changed with the Obama Administration that has expressed hopes to see peace realized in Sudan. The fact the Obama Administration has dispatched Special Envoy Scott Gration and the delegation from the US Senate is a positive sign.

On whether Special Envoy Gration has come up with something more than the “diplomatic niceties” he made in Khartoum:

Special Envoy Scott Gration was on a fact-finding visit but his message. John Kerry and the delegation from the US Senate will follow up on his message. This is the beginning of a new spirit of cooperation between Sudan and the US. Special Envoy Gration was here to highlight three key points that are: reminder of the US proposal presented following the expulsion of the aid groups from Darfur, to underline the need to adhere to implementation of the CPA and to work to resolve the Darfur crisis.

Sudan will then list to the US its views on those three issues and then the two sides will sit to draw a road map for cooperation on those issues. Gration will be back in Sudan after 20 days to follow up on those three issues and means to improve bilateral relations.

On bilateral relations

Bilateral relations between the two countries may improve if there is progress on the first issue (humanitarian issue).