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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

Local News Headlines

- Sudan sentences 11 Darfur rebels to death (**Dailies/ST**)
- Government rejects SG report on UNAMID mandate (**Al-Khartoum**)
- Humanitarian situation in Darfur stable (**Al-Khartoum**)
- NCP to accept Abyei Arbitration Tribunal decision (**Al-Wifaq**)
- Dispute within SPLM heating up (**Local dailies**)
- Position on ICC will never change – Khartoum tells Paris (**Al-Rai Al-Aam/ST**)
- UN expresses concern over Jonglei clashes (**Dailies**)
- Parliament may exclude Darfur from elections (**Al-Intibaha**)
- GoSS to request federal help to control arms trafficking (**Al-Ahdath**)
- Opposition MPs question Energy Minister (**The Citizen**)
- Delegation from the Pentagon arrives today (**Al-Intibaha**)

Websites/International Headlines

- Peace pact unraveling could bring humanitarian catastrophe - SG (**UN News**)
- Government optimistic of releasing French abductees (**SMC**)
- Sudan makes offer for 1.6 million barrels of Dar Blend crude (**ST**)
- Cattle-rustling leads to warfare in southern Sudan (**Reuters**)
- Ethiopia, Sudan sign series of cooperation agreements (**ST**)
- SG calls for greater efforts to protect children in armed conflict (**UN News**)

Commentary

- Abyei ... and the declaration of war (**Akhbar Al Youm**)

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Sudan sentences more 11 Darfur rebels to death over May attack

Local dailies and websites report that Khartoum Court yesterday sentenced more JEM fighters to death by hanging. According to **Sudan Tribune** 23/4/09, a Sudanese Special Court yesterday sentenced to death eleven more Darfur rebels for their participation in an attack on Khartoum in May last year. Today's verdict brings to more than 70 the number of the rebels condemned to death. Abdel Aziz Abu Usher, a half brother of the JEM chairman is among those who are sentenced since last year in a series of trials following the attack.

"The court has found the accused guilty... and has decided to impose the harshest punishment, we sentence them to the death penalty by hanging" Judge Isam Ismail said on yesterday. The court also acquitted other five rebels. Also one defendant is referred to a juvenile court and another to mental hospital. The court stated that the rebels were found guilty of violence against the state and illegal possession of arms.

JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein Adam said last week that the death sentences breach the Doha agreement according to which the detained rebels are prisoners of war. He further added these sentences breach the Geneva Convention on the POWs

Observers say Sudanese government wants to show it is not affected by the arrest warrant for President Bashir on war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. They further stressed that the sentenced rebels still can be pardoned by the Sudanese President.

Government rejects SG report on UNAMID mandate

Al-Khartoum reports Sudan government has rejected the SG Ban Ki-moon's report about existence of food gap in Darfur following the INGO ouster and that the government refused UNAMID access to additional land to expand Zamzam camp. The government said the SG report was "unfounded". MFA spokesperson Ali Al-Sadiq said he was astonished by the SG's claim that the government refused UNAMID access to more land to expand Zamzam, saying this issue had never been raised at the Tripartite Mechanism meetings.

Humanitarian situation in Darfur stable

Sudan Government and UN's report for the Month of March after the INGO ouster indicate that the humanitarian situation in Darfur is stable, reports **Al-Khartoum**. Meanwhile, HAC Commissioner Hassabo Mohamed and the DSRSG and Humanitarian Coordinator Ameera Haq at a meeting yesterday agreed on the need to continue joint work and to strengthen field coordination between the government and the UN agencies. The meeting focused on the Darfur humanitarian situation, voluntary returns and integration programmes in Southern Kordofan, the Blue Nile, the Nuba Mountains as well as building capacities of national NGOs.

NCP to accept Abyei Arbitration Tribunal decision

Al-Wifaq reports the NCP has announced that it would accept whatever decision issued by the Abyei Area Arbitration Tribunal. NCP official Mohamed Mandour Al-Mahdi told reporters yesterday that the CPA Partners are resolved to hold a meeting to discuss some pending issues.

Dispute within SPLM heating up

Local dailies report that three SPLM officials have accused another SPLM group of seeking to break up the movement. According to **Al-Intibaha**, SPLM internal dispute is heating up. The paper said three SPLM figures Lam Akol, Ghazi Suleiman and Manu Eligu condemned the SPLM Leadership for not denying statements by SPLM Northern Sector official Yassir Arman which called for their expulsion from the Movement. The three leaders held a press conference yesterday where they launched an unprecedented attack on what they described as “small SPLM group of renegades” who seek to divide the movement.

Position on ICC will never change – Khartoum tells Paris

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports Sudan delegation to Paris told French officials that Khartoum’s rejection of the ICC would never change and called on Paris for more objective view of the general situation in the Sudan. The delegation also called on Paris to pressurize Abdul Wahid to join the Doha peace process.

ST reported that the Sudanese delegation ended their talks with French and British officials in Paris with neither sides appearing to reach common grounds on issues discussed.

“The focus of this visit is to talk about bilateral ties. We gave the French our views on issues that prevent the normalization of ties and fruitful cooperation. We don’t see that our dialogue on Darfur or the peace agreement or even the ICC can lead to positive contribution in these same items without discussing the bilateral issues clearly” Nafi said.

Sudan wants France to expel Al-Nur from its territory but it appears unlikely that this will happen anytime soon.

UN expresses concern over Jonglei clashes

Commissioner for Akobo County, Duyak Chol, said the death toll of the recent tribal clashes in Jonglei State has reached 250, according to **Al-Ahdath** and **Al-Ayyam**. He also revealed that 33 children have been abducted during the clashes.

Meanwhile, **Akhir Lahza** reports that UNMIS, in a press statement yesterday, expressed deep concern over renewed tribal clashes in the Jonglei area and urged GoSS to do its utmost to ensure the safety and security of civilians and to find solution to the hostilities in the area.

Parliament may exclude Darfur from elections

Al-Intibaha reports the Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Affairs, Justice and Public Liberties Al-Tijani Mustafa as saying the Parliament might allow exclusion of the Darfur region from the upcoming elections.

GoSS to request federal help to control arms trafficking

Al-Ahdath reports that GoSS intends to request Federal Government’s help to combat arms trafficking to southern Sudan. GoSS VP Riek Machar also deplored the clashes in Jonglei State.

Opposition MPs question Energy Minister

Opposition MPs are demanding that Energy and Mining Minister appear before the Parliament to answer questions on the deteriorating state of electricity in the country especially that the country has recently inaugurated Merowe Dam, **The Citizen** reports.

Delegation from the Pentagon arrives today

A delegation from the US Pentagon’s Legal Department is to arrive today for talks with Sudanese officials on the possible release of Sudanese detainees in Guantanamo, reports **Al-Intibaha**.

Websites/International News Coverage

Unraveling of peace pact could bring humanitarian catastrophe - SG

UN News, 22/4/09 – Should the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the long-running north-south civil war in Sudan collapse, a humanitarian catastrophe could ensue, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said yesterday, calling on the international community to remain focused on ensuring its implementation.

In his latest report to the Security Council on Sudan, Mr. Ban wrote that the expulsion of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the country and the closure of three national groups, following the issuance of an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir for war crimes, could result in a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

The United Nations will work with the Sudanese Government to bridge gaps, “but available capacity for immediate alternatives are limited given the sheer size of what has been the world’s largest humanitarian programme,” he said.

The Secretary-General called on the Government to reconsider its decision, stressing that “anti-NGO rhetoric threatens not only the security of [the expelled organizations] and the humanitarian community that remains in the Sudan, but also the continued delivery of vitally-needed humanitarian services and human rights activities.”

The vacuum left by the ejection of the aid agencies has left large areas of the Three Areas of Abyei and eastern Sudan with little humanitarian, recovery or reintegration support, the report pointed out, warning that this could hurt peace efforts.

The key benchmarks of the CPA include census results, border demarcation, and referendum preparations.

In his report, Mr. Ban said that he is encouraged by strides made in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and also by the parties’ cooperation on the issue.

The initiative could spur confidence and progress towards putting the CPA into place, he said, urging donors to continue funding the scheme.

The Secretary-General welcomed the announcement of an electoral timeline, pledging the UN’s assistance in helping the National Elections Commission to organize and hold free, fair and peaceful polls, a key element of the CPA.

He also repeated the world body’s commitment to help the parties hold referendums in 2011 in Southern Sudan and the disputed town of Abyei, which lies in an oil-rich area close to the boundary between the country’s north and south.

“This goal must remain a priority for the parties regardless of other developments, and I restate my call on them to put in place the necessary legal and institutional frameworks for the vote and post-referendum stability,” Mr. Ban said.

The Secretary-General recommended that the Council extend the mandate of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) for a further 12 months, until 30 April 2010.

Government optimistic of releasing French abductees

SMC 22/4/09 reports Government said it was optimistic of an eminent release of the two French and Canadian hostages kidnapped in Darfur two weeks ago. Southern Darfur governor Ali Mahmoud Mohamed Affirmed the crisis of the two hostages was about to be resolved. The governor explained that the abductors have shown flexibility and assured the two hostages are in good health. Similarly the state police commissioner Gen. Fathelrahman Osman said they were exerting efforts to ensure the release of the two hostages.

Sudan makes offer for 1.6 million barrels of Dar Blend crude

Sudan Tribune website, 22/4/09 (TOKYO) — Sudan has issued a new tender to sell 1.6 million barrels of heavy sweet Dar Blend crude for June loading, traders told **Reuters** today.

This brand of crude is usually heavily discounted due to its highly acidic content, while US sanctions against the purchase of Sudanese goods also keeps many companies away.

However it is mainly used to for fuel oil blending. This tender will close on April 28, traders said.

The Malaysian state oil company PETRONAS managed to sell three cargoes of May-loading Dar Blend crude with the most recent one at a discount of \$11.40 a barrel to dated Brent oil.

Sudan is heavily dependent on oil exports which have declined sharply in terms of proceeds and volume in the wake of a financial crisis that swept developed nation and caused demand to plunge.

The governor of Sudan central Bank Saber Al-Hassan told Reuters today that growth rates have dipped because of drop in oil revenues.

Cattle-rustling leads to warfare in southern Sudan

Reuters, 22/4/09 - An attack by southern Sudanese tribesmen on rival villages in which about 250 people may have been killed has raised concern that a dispute over cattle-rustling has erupted into open warfare.

Around 500 armed Murle tribesmen burned 16 Lou Nuer villages to the ground in a series of raids over the weekend.

Women and children were among the estimated 250 Lou dead, Akobo county commissioner Doyak Chol told Reuters.

U.N. official David Gressly said a death toll of more than 100 seemed credible.

Gressly, who is southern coordinator for the United Nations Mission in Sudan, said he was worried about the potential for a cycle of revenge attacks to take place. "The violence can escalate to a new level," he told a news conference.

The bloodshed appeared to be a reprisal for attacks on Murle villages by Lou Nuer in March that killed at least 453 people, most reported to be women and children.

In turn, that attack was in retribution for large scale theft of Lou cattle by the Murle in January.

The two communities have long been locked in a pattern of cattle-raiding violence which has also involved child abduction. But officials are concerned the conflict has shifted.

"We have seen attacks on civilian settlements, not just cattle raiding," Gressly said. "It is a new dimension."

Such violence could disrupt national elections currently planned for next February, he said.

The area is thought to have large oil reserves in a concession owned by French Total (TOTF.PA).

The southern army has not intervened to protect civilians in either this weekend's attacks or during the March violence.

The deputy governor of Jonglei state, Hussein Mar Nyuot, said the army was under orders from southern President Salva Kiir to keep out of civilian problems.

"Our national army should not be involved with this," Nyuot told Reuters. The lack of action has been criticised by officials from both communities who said their areas lack adequate police to protect villagers.

Government attempts to disarm heavily armed areas after more than 20 years of north-south war have been patchy and at times violent when communities have fought back.

Ethiopia, Sudan sign series of cooperation agreements

Sudan Tribune website 22/4/09 (ADDIS ABABA) — Ethiopia and Sudan on Wednesday concluded their two-day high level joint commission meeting by the signing a number of agreements.

Some of the cooperation agreements signed today after the end of the two-day Ethiopia-Sudan Second High-Level Joint Commission Meeting includes - trade exchange, the production of natural glue, and forest development and protection agreements.

The two countries have also signed memorandum of understandings on quality and standard control, and human resource exchange.

They have also signed principle of implementation on culture and tourism, youth and sports, health, higher level education and science research sectors.

SG calls for greater efforts to protect children in armed conflict

UN News, 22/4/09 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on the Security Council and judicial systems to step up action in the fight to end abuse of children in conflict zones around the world.

In his latest report on the issue, the Secretary-General encourages national and international justice systems to take strong action ending impunity for crimes against children committed within their jurisdictions.

Among other recommendations aimed at halting violations committed against the young caught up in war zones and bolstering their protection, the Secretary-General urged the Security Council to put measures into place against repeat offenders.

"Accountability for perpetrators will create a sense of justice for the victims and it will also have

a deterrence effect,” noted Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict.

“Persistent violators have to realize that their crimes will not remain unpunished,” she added.

The Secretary-General’s annual report to the Security Council explicitly lists in its annexes 56 parties, both State and non-State, who have committed grave violations against children, including 19 persistent violators who have been listed for more than 4 years.

The report covers compliance and progress in ending six grave violations against children caught up in armed conflict: the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access to children.

Noting that while progress has been made through plans to release child soldiers in several countries, such as in Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda, children continue to suffer in many conflicts.

The report also documents grave violations against children in 20 countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, CAR, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, DRC, Georgia, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand and Uganda.

Ms. Coomaraswamy stressed that the child protection community was waiting for a strong signal from the Security Council on its commitment to tackle the protection of children during armed conflict when it discusses the report on 29 April.

Commentary

Abyei ... and the declaration of war

(Al-Sawarmi Khalid, *Akhbar Al-Youm*) Time flows while the Parties to the CPA continue to wrangle over Abyei at the Abyei Arbitration Tribunal in The Hague with each party trying to secure ownership of Abyei. It is strange that this should happen when the Parties had agreed to make unity attractive. Could this wrangling make the unity option attractive? Of what use would the findings of the arbitration be should southerners vote for unity? It is difficult to ignore or transcend the tribal ideology in Abyei as in most parts of Africa; the Misseriya and the Dinka share ownership of the area so the arbitration would of no use as no one would heed to it and each tribe will fight the other should the arbitration favor one of them against the other.

Isn’t it better to defer this arbitration until the referendum takes place – or have we already despaired of unity?

The Abyei issue is neither an international issue nor a south-north issue but is rather an issue of two tribes that have co-existed in peace and harmony until their region was politicized and dragged into the CPA. The Arbitration Court is the second spark on the issue.

From the above, it is clear that any ruling on the issue by the Arbitration Court will amount to a declaration of war.