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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

GoSS isn't happy with the census results – President Bashir

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports President Al-Bashir as saying that the Government of Southern Sudan is not satisfied with the fifth census results, saying GoSS is insisting on a percentage of 33%. Al-Bashir, who made the remarks in a widely circulated interview, said presently there were no political detainees in Sudan. "Hassan Al-Turabi, who secluded himself from national work, was the last political detainee to be freed," he said.

On the INGO ouster, he said the government has concrete evidence that these aid groups came under Zionist pressure and reiterated the government's rejection of their readmission but pointed out that the government has no objection to a compromise, to admit alternative INGOs.

According to **Sudan Tribune**, President Al-Bashir made the remarks in an interview with Egyptian independent newspaper **Al-Shurooq** published yesterday. The website reported that President Al-Bashir made surprising remarks downplaying the strength of his country's relations with Egypt.

Asked whether his attendance of the Qatar-hosted summit on Gaza despite Cairo's boycott had impacted relations with Egypt, he said, "The relations with Egypt are neither chilly nor warm but nonetheless they are positive. The understanding and mutual understanding is in place between the two countries and this is the most important thing" he added. "Sudan was the first to call for a summit when the aggression against Gaza took place and I phoned [Syrian] President Bashar Al-Assad for that purpose. So when Qatar offered to host the summit we were the first to accept it" he added.

On claims of the Hezbollah's plans for attacks in Egypt, he said "these are overblown" "We trust Hezbollah and its leadership and we consider them a genuine resistance deserving respect and honor" he said. "We know that they [Hezbollah] have never carried out activities against Arab or non-Arab countries. We hope to contain the crisis as soon as possible so that attention is not diverted from Israel which is the main enemy" he added.

President Al-Bashir disclosed that the arms used by Darfur rebels were found to be of Libyan origin. "They [rebels] get their weapons from Chad because of tribal ties and Chad gets theirs from Libya. We spoke to the Libyans in this regard and their response was that they give weapons to Chadian government and not to the rebels" he said.

On elections deferment, he said "the delay was caused by the fact that the preparations for elections in constituencies were not completed. Also the census results did not satisfy the Government of South Sudan which insists that the percentage be 33% but the scanning administered by Southern States showed that they are only 21%".

On referendum, he said "we are not worried about the referendum results in Southern Sudan. So far there are 40% of Southerners who want to stay as part of the united state. This percentage is increasing particularly in light of conflicts between Southern tribes some of which refuse to accept the SPLM. These conflicts did not stop in the last few years" Bashir said.

Criminal Code withdrawn from Parliament

The National Assembly and the Justice Ministry have agreed to withdraw the controversial Criminal Bill from the House, reports **Al-Sahafa**. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Joseph Okilu said the bill was submitted to the Parliament by mistake.

Government rejected Paris ICC conditions - Nafie

Al-Sahafa reports the Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie as saying the government has rejected Paris proposal that a transitional national government formed in Sudan led by Bashir provided he should not contest the upcoming presidential elections in change for resolving the ICC crisis. Nafie, who made the remarks at a forum yesterday at the University of Khartoum, accused the Turabi-led PCP, JEM and the Chadian government of politicizing Darfur issue.

Presidency meeting postponed

Al-Raed reports the State Minister for Information Kamal Obeid as saying the Presidency meeting, supposed to take place today, has been postponed, citing FVP Kiir's visit to Uganda as the reason for the postponement.

Government rejects conditional DDR support

Al-Sahafa reports Sudan government has rejected donors' conditional support for the DDR. NDDRC Chairman Gen. Bakri Hassan Saleh said yesterday that the programme was facing difficulties including the continuous flow of arms from the neighbouring countries. Gen. Bakri made the remarks at a meeting yesterday which was attended by 25 Ambassadors representing donor countries including the SRS in Sudan.

Government informs AU of Chad's movements at the border

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports Sudan Government officially informed AU of Chad troops' movements at the border. MFA spokesperson Ali Al-Sadiq told reporters yesterday that the Sudanese army would not hesitate to take a decisive action should Chadian troops enter the Sudanese territories.

SPLA unit mutinies

A group of SPLA soldiers at Sarkuer camp in the Unity State mutinied yesterday causing displacement of about 5000 civilians, who fled to the towns of Chok Yack and Faryang, reports **Al-Rai Al-Aam**. Reportedly, houses and markets in the two towns were burned. SPLM Youth Secretary Muyonk Bath has held GoSS responsible for the incident.

Websites/International News Coverage

SPLM figure Igga says party will win February 2011 elections

Sudan Tribune website, 28/4/09 — Hon. Jamas Wani Igga, the speaker of the southern region's parliament, predicted that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement party shall win the coming general elections scheduled for February 2010 with a majority of votes.

He said SPLM has a clear record that will account for its being given highest votes from exploited and marginalized Sudanese by successive governments in Khartoum.

Igga, deputy chairman of the party, made the remarks during his second visit to Eastern Equatoria state to explain the party's national elections strategy and the way to nominate candidates to represent the party at all levels in the country.

However, he warned that any failure of the SPLM in Eastern Equatoria would be the

responsibility of the elected state chairman and secretary general.

As leader of the South Sudan Legislative Assembly, he called for balanced geographical representation of all political parties, noting that greater Upper Nile state was represented by the clerk of the assembly, greater Bahr el Ghazal by the deputy speaker and greater Equatoria by himself.

Kidnappers say may release Darfur aid workers

Reuters, 28/4/09 – Kidnappers holding two foreign aid workers for more than three weeks in Sudan's western Darfur region said on today they may release them because of their deteriorating health. "We are going to hold a consultative meeting today. Maybe, because of health circumstances, we can carry out this step (of releasing them)," a kidnapper who declined to be named told **Reuters** via satellite phone. "In the next few days, you might hear some good news about the hostages."

The group, which calls itself the Freedom Eagles of Africa, is demanding that Paris retry members of Zoe's Ark, a French humanitarian group, convicted but later pardoned over the abduction of children from Chad. "We may free them for humanitarian reasons but it does not mean that we are giving up our cause. And we may kidnap even more important figures after that," the man said.

Arab audiences vote for Bashir trial by the ICC

Sudan Tribune website, 28/4/09 — In unexpected move an Arab forum approved efforts by the ICC to try the Sudanese President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir on war crimes in Darfur.

Some 350 people participating in Doha Debates TV show on Monday evening supported a motion calling on the Arab states to hand President Al-Bashir to the ICC. The audience voted 55 to 45 percent in favor of a motion.

Broadcasted by the **BBC** World Service every Saturday and Sunday, the Doha debate is funded by the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development.

The motion in favor of the ICC comes just three weeks after the Arab Summit rejected the ICC's arrest warrant, issued on March 4, against al-Bashir for "international war crimes" and "crimes against humanity".

The motion was supported by Ahmed Hussein Adam, spokesperson of the rebel Justice and Equality Movement, and Hani Shukrallah, co-Editor and columnist for the Egyptian daily Al-Shorouk. While Ghazi Salahuddin Atabani, a Sudanese Presidential adviser, and Roland Marshal, senior research fellow at the National Center for Scientific Research in France, spoke against the motion.

First to speak for the motion was Ahmed Hussain Adam, who said that Bashir's indictment and trial was essential for the region and for the world. He further said that "Sudan would be a better place if Bashir was taken to trial."

"This is the only way to fight impunity and give a strong message to other dictators that violations of human rights will not be tolerated," he argued, adding "we cannot let people kill in the name of national sovereignty."

Adam also underlined that President Bashir can not be held accountable under the current

interim constitution, and that the National Congress Party, which holds a majority in the parliament, would not allow any change to this provision. He also said the penal law does not include crimes against humanity or genocide, adding it would be very difficult to introduce the principle retroactively.

Hani Shukrallah, who also supported the motion, said the Arab world "as a whole is obliged to atone for the shame of having stood by the massacres of Darfur.

"I see no reason why we should be outraged by Israel and not show the same outrage over crimes by Arabs against fellow Arabs."

He said Arab nations could not accuse the West of double standards "when we have double standards in our own backyard".

Arab and African leaders supported Bashir and sought to convince the UN Security Council to defer the prosecution of the Sudanese President for one year.

UN experts say at least 300,000 people have been killed and more than 2.7mn driven from their homes in almost six years of ethnic and political fighting in Darfur.

Roland Marchal, who was the first to speak against the motion, argued that the Arab states should not hand over Bashir at the current time because of the lack of expertise of the ICC, the timing of its intervention and the fact that the ICC seemed only to respond to complaints about African countries.

"The ICC could play some role in transitional justice after the conflict has been resolved, but now is not the appropriate moment for intervention," he argued, saying 13 NGOs had been expelled from Darfur and activists and journalists throughout the country were now being threatened and arrested in attempts to protect the president.

"We have got to get back to basics. If we don't get the legitimacy for international justice, there is no justice. It is not proven that Bashir is to blame and the complexity of events needs careful investigation.

"We are not talking about an isolated dictator here. The actions of the ICC may have consequences far beyond Darfur and this is what we need to consider."

The final speaker was the Sudanese presidential adviser, Ghazi Salah Eddin Atabani who gave three arguments as to why Bashir should not be handed to the ICC.

"This is a very weak case, with flimsy evidence – the prosecutor never even set foot in Darfur and had to rely on others testimonies," he gave as his first argument, with the second being that "the ICC is an instrument of politics rather than justice."

His third argument was that the "guardian of peace" according to the current peace process was the President, and his arrest would derail the country's peace efforts.

Most of the questions posed by the audience were directed to the supporters of the motion. The result of the debate was a surprise. Speaking after the result JEM spokesperson hailed the success of their motion adding that it happens in the same place where Arab leaders shamelessly supported Bashir.

The 350-strong audiences are drawn mainly from Qatar's student body and come from all over the Arab and Islamic worlds.