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Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN
Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200

Highlights

Local News

Williamson wraps up a visit to Abyei and heads for al-Fashir

(Al-Sudani) - The UN said that SAF and SPLA have not completely withdrawn from Abyei area as per the provisions of the map road which aimed at ending tensions arising from fierce fighting that was erupted in May. This comes at a time when the special US envoy to Sudan, Richard Williamson, ended a visit to Abyei and Agok to review steps taken to implement the last agreement between NCP and SPLM on the issue.

The US charge d' Affairs told *Al-Sudani* that the visit was positive and they saw progress in some areas, yet he expressed his country's disappointment at the total destruction of the town.

The American entourage received briefings from the UN representative, the JIU commander and ISS officers in the area.

Mr. Williamson is due to proceed to al-Fashir today where he is expected to hold talks with local officials before he starts his official talks with Sudanese government officials on Tuesday in Khartoum.

Baggan repeats his description of the State as (failure and corrupt) and demands apology

(Al-Ray Al-Am) - Baggan Amom, the Minister of State at the Council of Ministers and the Secretary General of SPLM, repeated what he said before describing the Sudanese State as a failure, corrupt, and immature. Baggan said that the State needed exceptional treatment since it is still immature and near sighted. Baggan added in a symposium held on the occasion of the International Youth Day that the State is at stake since public funds are spent on negotiations. He described the constitutional amendments that take place from time to time and the foreign intervention in the country as a failure of the State. He said that the country has been living in an interim stage since its independence. He demanded the State to apologize, recognize the other, ensure social justice, hand over the power to the people through the elections, and make unity attractive. Baggan said that unless these elements are fulfilled, there will not be Sudan. He called for forgetting the past.

Abdel Rahman Musa Abbashar passed away

(Akhir Lahza) - The Presidency announced yesterday the death of Professor Abdel Rahman Musa Abbashar, the Minister of State at the Council of Ministers and the President of Sudan Liberation Movement/Free Will. Professor Abdel Rahman Musa Abbashar, 54-year old died in France after suffering cancer, diabetes, and hypertension. He underwent several operations in France and Jordan.

Mr. Musa is considered one of the early Darfur movement leaders who joined Abuja Agreement signed in May 2006. The political bureau of the movement issued a statement expressing its sadness over the death of the movement's leader and describing him as the leader of the negotiations that culminated in Abuja Agreement. The political bureau conferred that it would follow the path of Mr. Musa in order to complete the march of peace together with the other parties inside and outside the country.

Shura Council of the Islamic Movement is holding its first meeting of 2008-2012 Session

(Akhbar Alyoum) - The National Shura Council of the Islamic movement held yesterday its first meeting of 2008-2012 Session. Professor Ibrahim Ahmed Omer was appointed Chairman of the Council and Dr. Zeinab Abdellah as his deputy. This is the first time a woman was appointed for this position in the Islamic movement.

It's worth mentioning that Professor Ibrahim is considered one of the historical leaders in the Islamic movement and is currently the Minister of Science and Technology.

Preparation completed in Blue Nile State to receive Al-Bashir for the inauguration of Rosé iris Dam Heightening Project

(Akhbar Alyoum) - The Wali of Blue Nile State, Malik Aggar, and his deputy, Ahmed Kurmino, oversaw the preparations for the visit of the President of the Republic aiming at the inauguration of a number of utilities including the Executive Administrative Unit for the Roseiris Dam Heightening Project. The Wali and his deputy also secured the progress of work in the maintenance of the internal roads in Ed-Damazin, the engineering work in the city airport, the lightening of Ed-Damazin and Roseiris, and the new electricity project in Ed-Damazin. All these projects are part of the development projects announced by the President of the Republic.

The tour made by the Wali and his deputy also included securing progress of work to maintain and rehabilitate the residential city allocated for the engineers and technicians.

On the other hand, in a meeting with a delegation from the National Program for Child Care, General Malik Aggar declared his full support for the programs of FGM eradication.

A new package of rules and procedures

The Council of Ministers is considering reduction of the official holidays

(Akhir Lahza) - The Secretariat General of the Council of Minister is considering reduction of the official holidays. At the same time, it announced the launching of the civil service campaign to improve performance and facilitate procedures.

Dr. Omer Mohamed Salih, the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers disclosed a package of administrative rules and procedures including restructuring them, avoiding queues, canceling the breakfast time, fixing the appropriate fees, using electronic fingerprint, controlling the staff movement within the official time of work, avoid use of government vehicles, and abolishing the administrative day. He called for a kind of partnership between the media and the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers that envisages improvement of performance in the civil service. He stated that Saturday holiday has helped 100% increase of bank operations and reduction of mistakes.

He declared the formation of the Higher Council for Administrative Reform specifying that this Council would enjoy wide powers to follow and implement the decisions issued by the Council of Ministers.

Armed Forces Shooting exercises in Omdurman

(Al-Ray Al-Am) - The Armed Forces are carrying out today nocturnal shooting exercises that will continue until next Thursday. Brigadier Osman Aghbash, the Armed Forces Spokesperson said that the exercises will be carried out by the air and defense forces in West Omdurman in the context of the periodical training program carried by the Armed forces.

Participation of more than 150 artists;

The Biggest Cultural and Artistic Forum Launches Today

(Ajras al-Huria) - Autumn 2008 Exhibition, an artistic festival, will be launched today at the Exhibitions Ground in Burri. More than 150 artists will participate in the event, including graduates from the 1970s up to 2007. Arab guest artists include Saeed al-Alawi, Abdallah Nawawi and Faiyz Abu Haris from Saudi Arabia, Mohamed al-Atiq and Hisa al-Miftah from Qatar and Suzan al-Aboud from Syria.

The event which will also include dances and musical works will be launched in collaboration with the General Union of Sudanese Artists under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the National Council for Arts. Various functions, including workshops and galleries will be ongoing until next Thursday.

Website/International News Headlines

Sudan former foes not fully withdrawn from Abyei

(Reuters) - Sudan's north and south armies have not fully withdrawn from the disputed oil-rich Abyei region as called for under a plan aimed at defusing tensions behind deadly clashes in May, U.N. sources said on Sunday.

The fighting killed dozens of people, drove 50,000 from their homes and burnt most of the town. Analysts said it created the biggest threat to Sudan's landmark 2005 north-south peace deal that ended decades of civil war in Africa's largest nation.

Ending years of deadlock over the critical oil-producing region the former foes agreed an administration for Abyei on Friday, the final part of a June road map, with Abyei's borders to be decided by an international court and a joint armed force taking over security.

But the head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission for the north-south deal, Ashraf Qazi, in a statement on Saturday said the final withdrawal was not yet complete.

"(Qazi) encourages the two parties to continue to move ahead with implementation of the remaining road map provisions (including) ... final withdrawal of the forces of the two sides from the area."

U.N. sources, who declined to be named, on Sunday explained the northern SAF still had a small contingent near the oil areas and that the former southern rebel SPLA also had some military police in the peripheral Agok area, both of which contravened the spirit of the June road map which asked for full withdrawal.

"The joint military mechanisms are looking at dealing with these issues," one source said. The accord established joint north-south military committees to supervise implementation of the security protocols.

U.N. spokesman Brian Kelly said the peacekeeping mission could confirm that the main forces from both sides had withdrawn from Abyei town, the site of the fighting in May.

"The SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army) withdrew from the area and the SAF (Sudan Armed Forces) Battalion 31 is also fully gone," he said, but could not comment on the remaining contingents.

About 150 members of the joint police force were on the ground and the joint army unit was patrolling regularly, he added. The United Nations was providing them with training, tents and food.

Senior SAF official Abdel Rahman Mohamedain said SAF encountered redeployment delays because heavy rains had swamped roads but that he was sure they had fully withdrawn. "We will check on any outstanding troops but our information is that there are no SAF troops in Abyei other than in the joint integrated unit," he said.

Disarmament to top agenda of Abyei authority – chief administrator

(Sudan Tribune) — Newly appointed Chief administrator of Abyei area Arop Mayak has said restoration of security and disarmament of civilians will be among the top priorities of his interim administration. In the coming three months, they would focus on efforts to collect arms from civilians in an attempt to boost confidence among those civilians who suffered so much during the recent fighting.

Mayak told **Akhbar al-Youm** in Khartoum that he would also request the northern and southern Sudanese armies and the UNMIS peacekeepers to evacuate any troops from Abyei.

Ashraf Qazi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Sudan and UNMIS head, urged in a statement released on Saturday the Sudan's peace partners to complete "the final withdrawal from the area of the armed forces of the two sides."

A U.N. official told **Reuters** that the northern Sudan army still had a small contingent near the oil areas and that the southern Sudan army also had some military police in the peripheral Agok area.

Mony Toc said he will ask the two deputies of the Sudanese president, Salva Kiir Mayadrit and Ali Osman Taha to support his efforts to achieve this mission. He also stressed that demining the area a crucial part of the security plan before the town's displaced can return. He said he would be taking this up with the relevant authorities as soon as possible.

Sudan expert accuse UN official of concealing information on Darfur

(Sudan Tribune) The UN is withholding information on the current humanitarian situation in Darfur, a leading Sudan expert said in an article today.

Eric Reeves a professor at Smith College in Massachusetts who has published extensively on Sudan accused Ameerah Haq, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, of "emboldening Khartoum". "Ms. Haq is the UN official most responsible for allowing the Khartoum regime to quash publication and dissemination of numerous reports on malnutrition, by both the UN and international nongovernmental humanitarian organizations (INGOs)" Reeves said.

"By remaining silent about such actions, officials such as UN humanitarian coordinator Ameerah Haq succeed only in convincing Khartoum that it can continue its brutal ways with impunity" he added.

This month the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, John Holmes, called on Khartoum to take action to protect humanitarian aid workers in Darfur, where the deteriorating security situation has forced aid agencies to reduce rations for hordes of hungry people there.

Last June Hussein Abu Sharati, the spokesperson of Darfur displaced and refugees told (**Sudan Tribune**) that IDPs face water shortages due to the lack of fuel for the water pumps. Abu Sharati also spoke about the shrinkage of milled grains distributed to the displaced in Darfur. He said in addition to the cuts planned by WFP, lack of fuel exposed IDP camp population to starvation.

Professor Reeves also blamed Ashraf Qazi the head of the UN mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and AU-UN Joint Special Representative for Darfur, Rodolphe Adada for not speaking up on the situation. "Ashraf Qazi, UN special representative of the secretary-general to Sudan, has been no better in speaking with sufficient urgency about humanitarian or political developments... Rodolphe Adada, AU/UN Joint Special Representative for Darfur, has also been almost completely useless and is far out of his diplomatic depth" he said.

Reeves warned that Darfuris "have entered the most perilous season of destruction since the advent of major humanitarian operations in summer 2004.... Significant malnutrition is already in evidence according to numerous confidential reports from the ground in Darfur and from well-informed humanitarian officials".

Sudan's east risks war if soldiers not paid - official

(**Reuters**) - Sudan's eastern fighters may return to war if they do not receive money and training to rejoin society as required under an eastern peace deal, a presidential advisor warned on Sunday. Amna Dirar, one of the leaders of the Eastern Front which fought Khartoum for years before they joined a coalition government after a peace deal in 2006, also said only a fifth of the cash promised for developing the impoverished east had emerged in 2008.

"Whenever people are expecting to get their jobs and they feel...no justice from previous experience in Sudan and eastern Sudan that means people can take again their weapons and can fight again," she said in an interview. "That is what we are afraid of," she added, claiming that almost 2,000 soldiers have been waiting in camps in the east to be disarmed, demobilised and reintegrated into society, a process called DDR. Another 1,200 have already joined Sudan's police or armed forces.

The east is one of the poorest parts of Sudan with rural malnutrition rates as high as in other conflict areas in Africa's largest country. The population is often afflicted by drought. The east contains much of Sudan's gold reserves, has its only seaport and it is where the oil pipelines also export crude from.

Ms. Dirar said the government should fund projects for the demobilised fighters like training them for farming or giving them cash to open private businesses. However, no money had yet been allocated by the ministry of finance and the fighters were becoming frustrated, she added.

Developing the region was a key reason the Eastern Front took up arms like rebels in Sudan's more famous western Darfur region and the north-south conflict which was Africa's longest civil war. The deal specified \$600 million to be paid over four years with \$125 million due in 2008. But Dirar said the \$25 million so far paid this year for development was not enough. "We are the (most) marginalised of the marginalised," she said. "The \$25 million itself cannot solve any kind of problem."

She said the government was struggling to find the cash for all the peace deals it had signed and urged all those who had joined the government to unite efforts to implement the accords rather than all fighting separate battles. "Although we have stopped fighting with weapons still we are fighting ...by words and by committees and meetings to ensure that the peace agreement will be implemented," she said.

Dirar also said many in the east claimed they had not been counted in a national census this year and that the results should be revised so people would accept them.

The census results are due towards the end of the year and are sensitive as they will help decide development quotas and constituencies ahead of Sudan's first democratic elections in 23 years due in 2009.

Dirar said she was not very optimistic the elections would happen on time because the Darfur conflict was still unresolved and that the west had to be included for any vote to be acceptable.

She said her party was open to electoral alliances but may decide to field its own presidential candidate. So far the former southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement are the only party to declare they will compete with President Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

Bush urges China to use clout with Sudan on Darfur

(**Reuters**) - President George W. Bush said on Monday he used talks with China's leaders during the Beijing Olympics to press them to use their influence with Sudan to help end the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

Wrapping up his Olympics tour, Bush said that in Sunday's meetings with President Hu Jintao and other officials he raised U.S. concerns, including human rights and religious freedoms in China and the situation in Sudan's troubled Darfur region.

"My attitude is if you've got relations with (Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir), think about helping to solve the humanitarian crisis in Darfur," Bush said in an interview with NBC Sports. "That was

my message to the Chinese government."

Letter to National Telecommunication Corporation about YouTube access

(Reporters sans Frontières (Paris) PRESS RELEASE)

Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Robert Ménard has written to the head of the National Telecommunication Corporation voicing concern about online free expression in Sudan and the fact that his clients' access to the video-sharing website YouTube has been blocked since 22 July.

Dear Sir,

Unlike the clients of other Sudanese ISPs such as Canar Telecom, your clients have not been able to access the video-sharing website YouTube since 22 July. Reporters Without Borders, an organisation that defends press freedom worldwide, would like draw your attention to this situation, which violates your clients' freedom of expression.

This is the first time that YouTube, one of the country's most popular websites, has been blocked in Sudan and we find it hard to imagine that this is just a technical problem. We strongly hope that it is not a deliberate act of censorship that you have carried out on the grounds that certain videos could be regarded as shocking. If this were the case, it would suffice to ask YouTube to withdraw the videos that pose a problem. We call on you to explain why YouTube has been blocked.

YouTube is a website on which information of a visual nature is exchanged. It is censored in countries such as China, Turkey and Pakistan, which try to control sensitive subjects on the Internet. Some of YouTube's videos may be violent, and it could be necessary to request their withdrawal. But blocking the entire site is a disproportionate measure.[End of the letter]

In Sudan Tribune interview, Ocampo dismisses Sudan special courts on Darfur

(WASHINGTON) – ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo today dismissed the recent move by Sudan to probe Darfur war crimes through the appointment of a special prosecutor. Ocampo said that Khartoum established special courts before but "end up investigating no one".

In his interview with **Sudan Tribune**, the ICC prosecutor insisted that the main focus of his work in Darfur is to prevent future crimes against the 2.5 million people in the camps. His duty was to present his case against Sudan's President Al-Bashir to the judges and that if an arrest warrant is issued the world has the challenge to stop the ongoing crimes in Darfur. The prosecutor stressed the need to end impunity, saying there should be no immunity for Al-Bashir or any other officials who commit crimes.

On the charges of genocide, Ocampo said his findings are not inconsistent with those of the UN commission of inquiry (UNCOI) that went to Darfur in 2004. He said that the commission concluded that there are no acts of genocide if the government put the people affected by the conflict into camps.

The ICC prosecutor said that the Sudanese government is carrying out a "massive rape campaign" against women in the camps and hindering the delivery of aid to the displaced who are mostly from the African tribes of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa groups. This he said falls under the definition of genocide.

Ocampo added that he hoped his investigations would put an end to crimes committed against people in all cases he is investigating including Northern Uganda and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). He rejected the notion that the ICC is targeting the poorer nations, saying that the ultimate goal of the court is to apply the law equally in the cases where it has jurisdiction. However he acknowledged that double standards exist in the world but said he is trying to work towards a "different world with less double standards".

A sample of the Q&A exchange follows:

Q. Some diplomats at the UN alluded that you would be willing to drop the case if Sudan handed over Haroun and Kushayb. Is that true?

Ocampo: No. In December 2007 I said Haroun and Kushayb have to be arrested and spoke about my upcoming cases. Now there is a pending case before the judges. What I say publicly is always what I say privately.

Q. ICC judges return Monday from judicial recess. How confident are you that they will endorse your application particularly with regards to the genocide charges?

Ocampo: I present a case to the judges because I am convinced that my case is strong. Before this case I have requested 12 arrest warrants to date since I took office and we secured all of them. Of course judges are judges and they don't need to follow what the prosecutor says. They can dismiss my entire case or some of the charges. This is the normal judicial process but I believe we have a very strong case.

Q. Haroun is now unable to leave the country fearing apprehension. Do you foresee same fate for Al-Bashir?

Ocampo: If the judges issue an arrest warrant for Al-Bashir, he can choose to appear voluntarily and we said that in our application. If he refuses then arresting him will be a challenge not to the court but to the international community. How the other states will secure to stop the crimes by arresting an individual. But if the world accepts that a leader can commit crimes and nothing happens then this is a difficult world to live in.

Q. Sudan appointed special prosecutor. Are you willing to give the Sudanese judiciary a chance to investigate Darfur abuses?

Ocampo: They did it many times. They end up investigating no one. They even appointed Haroun to head a committee on Darfur human rights. This is part of the cover up and they have been saying this for years. The only individuals prosecuted are those who resist illegal instructions to attack people in Darfur such as pilots or soldiers.

Q. How close are you to completing your case against the rebels?

Ocampo: We are progressing. As soon as I have enough evidence I will present my case. It is extremely important that I receive support from the government of Sudan as well as rebels. It is time to stop the crimes. Whoever commits the crimes must be stopped. I hope our intervention will contribute to putting an end to these crimes.

[For full text of Ocampo interview go to <http://www.sudantribune.com>]

Darfur rebels signs MOU with Kushite Nubian group

(Sudan Tribune) – The Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) led by Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur issued a statement revealing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) reached with the Kushite Nubian Rally in Washington earlier this month.

Signed by Al-Nur and Nuraddin Ahmed Abdul-Mannan, the head of the Kushite Nubian Rally, the statement says both sides agreed to “work together to create Secular Democratic United Sudan based on equal citizenship rights”.

The Kushite Nubian Rally has been campaigning to block the Kajbar Dam being built in Northern Sudan saying it will "inundate one of the most precious and invaluable archaeological sites of the world". Nubians in the region opposing the dam clashed with the police injuring several people.

Both groups said that they will "stand forthwith against all attempts of destruction and dismembering the state, through policies of genocide, ethnic and cultural cleansing, displacement, and forcible relocations of the indigenous people and resettle foreigners in their lands as the case in Darfur, Nubia and other parts of Sudan".

SPLM delegation to attend GOP & Democrats conventions

August 10, 2008 (**KHARTOUM**) –SPLM will send a delegation to Washington next week to attend the Republicans and Democratic conventions taking place in Minnesota and Colorado. The SPLM officials are expected to also hold talks with US administration officials on the upcoming 2009 elections and the Darfur crisis.

The delegation will include Luka Biong, minister of presidential affairs in the government of southern Sudan (GoSS), Dr. Shriilo Itang adviser for SPLM chairman, SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum and his deputies for northern Sudan Yasir Arman and Dr. Ann Ito for Southern Sudan.

Sudan partners agree Darfur national peace conference

(Sudan Tribune)The two main partners of the GNU have agreed on the objectives and the mechanism of a national initiative to end the five-year Darfur conflict. NCP and SPLM conferred yesterday in Khartoum. Sharati Jaafar Abdel-Hakam said the aim of the meeting was to arrive at a singular vision on the initiative before sharing it with other political forces. Yasir Arman, the SPLM deputy secretary general, told reporters that all the Sudanese political forces and social forces should take part in this national issue. He said there was a need to speed up national efforts in order to reach a comprehensive solution.

The NCP delegation included Mandour al-Mahadi responsible of Darfur affairs, former south Darfur governor Al-Haj Atta Al Mannan and Shartai Jaafar Abdel-Hakam. The SPLM delegation included SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum, his deputy for northern Sudan Yasir Arman and Abdel Aziz Hilu who is charged with Darfur file.

In a separate statement, NCP member Atta Al Mannan outlined the main objectives of a national conference on Darfur, saying it should find a lasting political solution and address the social root causes of the conflict. The initiative intends to bring justice for Darfur people, fight the violence and restore security in the region, he said. He added that it should also adopt a plan to reconstruct and develop the economy of the three states in Darfur. The ex-governor said the conference must address the humanitarian aspect of the crisis including the issue of security, plus repatriation of the displaced and refugees to their villages after receiving their due compensations. In addition, he said, the conference must address the issue of the nomadic tribes and their needs.

Taha accuses Turabi party of stoking Darfur conflict

(Sudan Tribune)Vice President Taha and Secretary General of Sudanese Islamic Movement lashed out at Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi's Popular Congress Party (PCP) accusing it of being behind war in Darfur. He also said President Bashir's call for that national ranks unify wasn't directed at the PCB.

The Sudanese Islamic Movement wrapped up its seventh convention at the weekend and re-elected Taha as Secretary General.

PCP members "ignited the war in Darfur and turned it from a conflict between tribes into a conflict against the state, and they have sent cadres to manage the war" said Taha in a direct attack on former comrades and partners who split in 1999 following differences over the way forward for those in power.

Earlier, Hassan al-Turabi termed Bashir call for reunification of Islamic movement as an attempt to mobilize "religious feelings" to generate popular support after his indictment by the ICC.

In a 16 July press statement, the PCP voiced opposition to the ICC prosecutor's indictment of the President and urged the government to hold talks with the non-signatory rebel groups to end Darfur conflict. The party also said all responsible for Darfur crimes should be tried by Sudanese judges.

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United Nations Mission In Sudan - Public Information Office

Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN
Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200