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Highlights

Local News Headlines

Clashes between the Joint Units in Abyei market

Al Ray Al Aam reports the Joint Units in Abyei announced the killing of one soldier and the injury of eight others, three civilians, in a clash between forces yesterday in Abyei market. A statement issued by Abyei Administration noted that the incident was sparked by a clash between the Joint Units and that a number of injured people including some civilians were evacuated to Kadugli Hospital.

The UN Mission condemned the incident.

Dailies report SRSR Ahraf Qazi called on parties in Abyei as well as residents of the Diffra and Agok areas to remain calm. In a press release, Qazi called on the parties to fully cooperate with and support the Abyei Administration in the maintenance of peace and law and order.

Khartoum Monitor reports the violence started when a policeman was stabbed by a butcher from the Missereiya tribe who had refused to move to a new market. A police shot into the air to disperse the crowd, SAF soldiers fired back believing they were under attack. However another report says the two forces disagreed on how to deal with the butcher issue.

Al-Ahdath reports a meeting that chaired by Abyei Administrator Arob Moyak yesterday, the Security Committee decided to withdraw the Joint Units out of Abyei to avoid further confrontations. Press Adviser Shol Angwi informed the paper that the withdrawal would start today and continue over three days. Meanwhile, thousands of people fled Abyei town. Colonel James Moday of the Abyei Police Force told reporters yesterday that “residents fled in all directions and that a few people did not leave. He noted that markets were shut down and “no bread or meat were available”. A senior official also said that a curfew had been imposed on the area.

Al Sahafa reports the Local Government Minister in Abyei, Majok Yak, announced formation of three committees; the first is chaired by UNMIS and includes Heads of the Joint Units and the Legal Advisor of Abyei Administration, and is to preserve calm and collect arms; the second, chaired by Head of Infrastructure and the Acting Governor, is to prevent SPLA forces south of Abyei from entering the area; the third, led by the Minister, is to maintain discipline among the JIUs outside of Abyei and to prevent them from entering the town.

Deputy Administrator Rahama Abdel Rahman Al Nour informed *Al Sahafa* that the incident was sparked by misunderstanding between the Joint Units and the Police about their respective tasks and also to a disagreement that took place in the market two days

ago. “The Police, as a legal authority, believe the market is under their authority while the Army, as a military power, believes in its superiority over the Police”, he added.

Akhbar Al Youm reports the Chairman of the dissolved Abyei Liberation Front, Mohamed Omer Al Al Ansari, accused Edward Lino of mobilizing SPLA forces to affect the balance power in the area. He claimed Lino’s group used to mistreat the Arab ethnic group forcing them out of Abyei and treating them as persona non-grata. He also claimed that SPLM allowed a JEM force to use the land in order to target oil areas as part of a plot by foreign and external parties to put pressure on the central government to release detained JEM members.

Al Ansari attributed to an attempt by the SPLM Police force as a step to provoke military confrontations aimed at driving Arabs from the town.

Zakaria atim Garang, Abyei’s top NCP Official, informed *Akhbar Al Youm* that the town was almost deserted as residents had fled possible armed confrontations between Police and the JIUs. He warned of a potential crisis if the situation is not resolved quickly.

Demarcation Commission exerts efforts to resolve disagreement on boundaries

Akhbar Al Youm reports the North-South Boundaries Demarcation Commission is to launch new efforts this week to resolve disagreement related to eastern sector boundaries.

Opposition concludes drafts of alternative laws

Al Ray Al Aam reports Umma Party Political Bureau, Hassan Al Nour has announced that the Opposition Parties Forum has concluded drafting three alternative laws for Security, Press and Trade Unions. He added that members of National Democratic Alliance were expected to table the laws in the National Assembly when it convenes after Eid Holidays.

Meanwhile, the Opposition Party Forum warned that tribal clashes in Southern Kordofan might lead to a new crisis.

Governor denies killing of Darfur rebel

Khartoum Monitor reports the Governor of Western Bahr Al-Ghazal dismissed accusations by Darfur rebel faction about the killing of a rebel commander in the Southern Sudan State.

New term of de-mining in Peace Road convenes

Al Ahdath reports the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs represented by the National Mine Action Office kicked-off the latest phase of de-mining Peace road linking Fallouj, Malakal, Ayod and Bor sectors as part of the road’s construction.

UN affirms intent to maintain peace in Darfur

Al Ahdath reports UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon admitted that the arrest warrant against President Al Bashir announced by the ICC Prosecutor had impacted efforts exerted by the organization to resolve the Darfur crisis. The SG told a press conference Friday that his direct contacts with Al Bashir stopped because of the ICC warrant. However, he expressed readiness to continue his efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

GoSS receives \$80 million from the Multi Donors Fund

Al Sahafa reports Minister of Information and Spokesperson Gabriel Changson announced that GoSS received \$80 million from the Multi Donors Fund. The donation would be used for agricultural and livestock development projects five States in Southern Sudan.

Police forces deployed in oil areas

Al Raed reports Major General Police and Deputy Director of Operations Tarig Osman Al Tahir affirmed continued efforts in the deployment of Police forces in Southern Kordofan and Darfur three states to secure oil areas. He pointed out to deployment of police to maintain security on roads of commercial convoys and voluntary return. He pledged the Police forces would chase bandits pointing out to the plans adopted to prevent hijacking of humanitarian and diplomatic vehicles.

President Al-Bashir back home from Hajj

Dailies report President Al-Bashir returned home Saturday evening from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia after performing hajj (pilgrimage).

Parliament to resume sessions tomorrow

Al Ahdath reports the National Assembly convenes sessions tomorrow Monday.

LRA update

Al Intibaha reports GoSS Minister of Regional Cooperation Parnaba Benjamin said Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has reassured that he is ready to hold personal talks over the phone with LRA leader Joseph Kony to convince him of signing a peace deal. Benjamin added that the Ugandan Government gave green light to LRA delegation to open office in Kampala.

Failed assassination attempt on South Darfur Governor

Al Raed reports the Governor of West Darfur State Abu Algasim Imam survived a failed assassination attempt early morning yesterday after in an ambush between Al Geneina and Zallengei. According to the paper, two of his security guards who were suspected of being involved in the attempt, died under torture by intelligence of the Governor's movement.

CAR Government transports Darfur movement leader to Doha

Al Ayaam reports AU sources criticized Central African Republic Government for allowing Democratic Revolutionary Forces Front leader Salah Abu Al surra to accompany CAR President and his official delegation to the International Development Conference in Qatar.

Websites / International Headlines

Thousands flee fighting in Sudan oil flashpoint

(Reuters) Thousands have fled Sudan's volatile oil town of Abyei after fresh north-south fighting has reignited tensions over the contested area, officials said on Saturday.

At least one person was killed after shooting broke out on Friday between police and soldiers in the first significant violence since northern and southern troops clashed in the town in May, raising fears for a north-south peace deal.

Both Khartoum and its semi-autonomous south claim Abyei which is close to lucrative oil fields and a key pipeline. The borders of the town and its surrounding territory were left undecided in the 2005 CPA that ended two decades of north-south civil war. Both sides have refused to compromise over the demarcation.

Scores were killed, more than 50,000 were left homeless and Abyei was burned to the ground in the May clashes, which observers say may have started after a relatively minor confrontation at a checkpoint spiraled out of control.

Both sides eventually signed a roadmap agreement setting up a temporary administration, withdrawing troops and replacing them with integrated police and military units made up of both northerners and southerners.

Local officials said up to 10,000 Abyei residents had returned to the area to rebuild their homes before Friday's clashes. But a U.N. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said almost all the people who had moved back to the town had been forced to flee again on Friday. A night curfew was now in force for those who remained, the official added.

"The population fled in all directions," Colonel James Monday from Abyei's police force told reporters. "There are very few people left. The market is closed. There is no bread and no meat," he added.

Monday said the shooting started after a northern soldier in the joint military unit got into an argument with a trader in the town's market and police tried to intervene. "The army released bullets and the police released bullets and there was a fight. Two civilians were injured in the market," he said, adding that one northern soldier was killed and four other troops injured.

U.N. peacekeepers managed to separate the fighters and sent delegations to northern and southern army bases outside the town, urging calm.

A spokesman from the northern Sudanese army declined to comment on the clashes.

Major General Biar Ajang, from the SPLA, told reporters he had heard two northern soldiers had died in the fighting. He said the fighting had added to a broader build-up of tension in the region, citing recent reinforcements by northern troops in the Southern Kordofan region, north of Abyei.

Khartoum earlier this month said it was building up troops to counter moves from rebels in war-torn Darfur region.

But Ajang dismissed the explanation as "just excuses." "There is the border, there are other political issues that we assume to be the reason for the mobilization of troops in this area," he said.

Joint units to pullout of Abyei - chief administrator

(Sudan Tribune website) The newly appointed head of Abyei interim administration said today they decided to withdraw the Joint Integrated Units from the disputed area where two regular troops were killed on Friday.

The decision comes at a time when the few who returned recently after May's deadly fighting began to leave the area again.

"The local government has decided to withdraw the joint-forces by next morning to avoid further friction with police," said Arop Moyak, chief of Abyei's administration.

It is not clear whether the withdrawal would be definitive or provisory. The UN, national and international bodies dispensed a lot of money for training the JIUs and JPIUs and on their transportation to the area.

Yesterday two police officers were shot during a limited clash between northern soldiers from the Joint Integrated Units and southern policemen from the Joint Integrated Police Unit. A northern soldier is reported to have been killed.

The latest clash comes after six months relative peace in the disputed area following last May's fighting between northern and southern forces which resulted in some 50,000 people fleeing the area. Around 10,000 returned recently to Abyei but the traumatised population began to flee again yesterday.

Troops to leave Sudan oil flashpoint: town official

(AFP) Sudanese troops will withdraw from the oil town Abyei in central Sudan after two policemen were killed in clashes with soldiers, a local government official told **AFP** on Saturday.

Dozens of residents have fled the town after a dispute between policemen and a joint-patrol of the north Sudanese army and former southern rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) turned deadly on Friday, leaving two policemen dead.

"The local government has decided to withdraw the joint-forces by next morning to avoid further friction with police," said Arop Moyak, head of Abyei's interim administration. He did not say whether the withdrawal would be temporary.

Sudanese parliament to resume work on Monday

(Sudan Tribune / Dec 13) The Sudanese parliament will resume work next Monday but the proposed agenda does not include discussion of laws crucial for democratic transition before the 2009 elections. According to the National Assembly, the agenda will focus on issues related to economic projects for 2009 and reports filed by the MFA.

Last week, the SPLM expressed concern about attempts to end the current session before the revision of laws needed to conduct free and fair elections.

Bus attacker killed in Jonglei's Bor

(Sudan Tribune, Dec 13) A gunman has been killed by soldiers on Anyidi – Bor Town road, about two miles east of Bor Town airport, on Friday at Wun-ee-chuei. Soldiers, alerted by survivors of the ambushed mini-bus, engulfed the armed men, open fire and killed a gangster dressed in dark blue clothes as others sprint off for their dear life.

Experts, who examined a modified dental formula, scars marked on his skin and circular plastic won on arms and legs, say he is a Murle tribesman. The body remained for public parade at Bor Civil Hospital for hours before burial was commenced later on Saturday by State Police.

No relative were available to claim his remains.

The incident, at the vicinity of Jonglei capital, is the first closest tragedy since December, 2007 when a bus was ambushed on the same road. An earlier raiding in Baidit Payam in Bor County in November, 2007 ignited a wild mob in Bor Civil Hospital where four patients were killed by angry relatives of deceased.

Reports of surging raiding, counter killing and cattle theft have, however, being frequent in recent months but from areas relatively far from the State capital.

Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) soldiers, who rushed to the scene (Wun-ee-chuei) on Friday December 12, following driver's alert, successfully defeated the wrestlers who ambushed the bus. The soldiers on the other hand told reporters on Saturday that they did not kill the man but left him dead beside the bus.

Soldiers were safe after the brief operation, military officers said. The deceased gun was not captured by the army and believed to have been taken by the fearless raiders terrorizing Jonglei villages.

Government of Southern Sudan recommended a massive disarmament in May and effective as June 1, 2008 but the effort seem to have taken little effect on villagers' livelihoods. Reports from various corners, in Jonglei State, indicate that raiding is taking the traditional trend - common during winter, November and December.

Most of the raiding reports, including the recently Twic East's, are blamed on Murle tribesmen despite refusal for an open acceptance. However, rare occurrence indicted other communities specially Twic East Payam of Mar which allegedly raided Duk in November, 2008 but raiders lost five men when comforted by organized forces.

UN resumes refugee repatriation form Kenya to southern Sudan

(Sudan Tribune, Dec 13) The UN refugee agency resumed operations to repatriate Sudanese refugees from Kenya to southern Sudan.

UNHCR launched its assisted repatriation programme for South Sudan in December 2005 and an estimated 290,000 people have since returned from Kenya and other neighbouring countries.

The refugee agency has helped almost 140,000 of them to return, including 45,000 to Eastern Equatoria.

Eastern Equatoria was one of the hardest hit states during the 21-year-long North-South civil war that ravaged southern areas until the signing of a peace pact in January 2005. But the state bordering Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda is now one of the highest return areas in the south.

The return rate picked up earlier this year before UNHCR suspended returns in July, when the rainy season began. The operation resumed last month. Last week a bus brought 77 refugees from north-west Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp to Kapoeta in Eastern Equatoria.

Next year, UNHCR plans to put even more effort and funding into projects aimed at easing the reintegration of the returnees in South Sudan, where infrastructure and services were devastated by the years of conflict and neglect.

The agency has implemented more than 680 reintegration projects since 2005, including vocational training, rehabilitation and construction of schools and health centres and drilling of water wells.

Sudan: Rebel group says ready for "unconditional" talks with government (*SUNA website, Dec 13*) The Sudan Liberation Movement, Reform wing, has welcomed the joint Arab initiative led by Qatar to resolve the Darfur issue and stated its readiness to hold unconditional dialogue with the government.

SLM-Reform leader Fathi Ibrahim told *Suna* it was important to have dialogue with the people of Darfur and to pave the way for unconditional dialogue with the government. His movement was monitoring what was going on with regard to Darfur by paying close attention to the activities of UN, AU and Arab League leadership and those working behind the scenes.

Fathi Ibrahim said resolving the ongoing problem in Darfur required a cease-fire between the government and armed movements in the region, disarming the militia, the repatriation of displaced people and refugees from camps and returning them to their villages and cities by providing secure roads and stability through public services.

Over 50 people killed in tribal clashes in Darfur

(*Sudan Tribune, Dec 12*) Tribal fighting killed over 35 people and displaced hundreds of civilians in South Darfur on Friday. Elements from Fallata attacked their rival Habaniya tribe. Armed cattle rustlers, from the two tribes, wage regular against each other.

Equipped with heavy weapons, the assailants who came from Tullus attacked the rival tribe at mid day. Thirty-five members of Al-Falata tribe died in fighting with the Habaniya tribe while 17 tribesmen were wounded in the clashes.

Six policemen, including an officer, were among the killed people. They were attempting to stop the tribal conflict. Three of the attackers' vehicles were destroyed.

The region is home to the Arab tribe, Habaniya, which is embroiled in a dispute with the ethnic African Falatta tribe which lives nearby. Both tribes are herders. Besides the cattle theft they also clash over the area's resources.

Issa Mohamed Abdallah, a local official in Buram said the police is now totally controlling the area. He also said that more police troops were deployed between Buram and Tullus. The governor declared the state of emergency, he stressed.

Jaafar Ali Al-Gali, one of the Habaniya leaders called on the "uncontrolled groups" not to attack unarmed citizens and abide by the signed agreements. He further urged the government to beef up security and achieve justice.

UNAMID provides equipment to anti-carjacking Sudanese police

(Sudan Tribune, Dec 11) The joint UN-African Union mission in Darfur (UNAMID) last Sunday has handed over equipment for two new Sudanese police posts in the vicinity of UNAMID's Headquarters in the city of Nyala, South Darfur.

The two posts are installed in addition to the current post after the increase of carjacking of UN and International NGOs. Last week, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes told the Security Council that 261 vehicles had been hijacked and 172 compounds broken into so far this year.

The posts will serve as permanent checkpoints, mainly in supporting the night patrolling carried out by the Sudanese Emergency Police and National Security forces around the UNAMID compound.

The basic equipment handed over to the police personnel includes beds, tables, chairs, large and small water containers, mattresses and other items to facilitate their accommodation.

Hundreds of humanitarian and peacekeeping vehicles have been hijacked or stolen thus far this year in both government- and rebel-held areas.

Holmes told the UN security Council that rebel movements, or those linked to them, appear primarily responsible for the majority of "these terrifying incidents" in rural areas, but many also occur in main towns in Government control, he added.

By the end of last November the AU-Un peacekeeping mission launched a specialized unit to conduct night security patrols to prevent carjacking in El-Fasher capital of North Darfur. The night patrol "is a pilot project that in time will be replicated in other areas of Darfur once UNAMID's capacity allows," the mission said.

Sudanese foreign minister to visit Syria 13 December for official talks

(Sudanese Media Centre website, Dec 13) MFA Deng Alor has begun a two-day official visit to Damascus. He will hand over a verbal message from President al-Bashir to Syrian President Bashar al-Asad and he will hold talks with his counterpart Walid al-Mu'alim.

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