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Media Monitoring Report

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New chance for Darfur (*NY Times*)

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Khartoum masses denounce Gaza massacres

Local dailies report Israeli aircraft yesterday carried out brutal massacres against Palestinians in Gaza killing more than 200 persons and wounding 700 others.

According to ***Al-Rai Al-Aam*** President Bashir called on the Arab countries to take a unified position and urged them to suspend normalizing relations with Israel. "We are in need of a unified position to review our relations with the US," he said.

SG Ban Ki-moon has called for an immediate cessation of what he described as violence in Gaza.

Masses in Khartoum took to streets yesterday to denounce Israeli aggression on Palestinians. According to some newspapers, they marched to UNDP and called for the expulsion of the western organizations and embassies supportive of the Israeli policies in the Middle East. They shouted slogans such as "*Shame on you Ban Ki-moon*" and urged Arab countries to open their borders to facilitate movement of the Mujahideen. "The purposes of coming here is not to submit a memo to UN but to attend the funeral of the UN and its institutions," NCP leader Badr el-Din Taha told the rally yesterday in Khartoum.

Government not to bow to pressures – President Bashir

Al-Khartoum reports that as the ICC indictment of President Bashir nears, Sudan government maintained its position of rejecting any deal with the Court.

President Bashir told ***Al-Jazeera TV*** that international pressures would not change Sudan Government's position. "The internal front will further become cohesive and unified should the President be indicted," said the Presidency's Director of Political Affairs Ambassador Osman Nafie. "The people are supporting the President and his government. There is no mechanism to enforce any decision from the court," he said. "The government will continue implementing the CPA and recommendations of the People of Sudan's Initiative Forum. The Government will only be changed through the ballot. Those who think it can be changed in this way are in the wrong. Government is serious to hold elections on schedule," he added.

NCP is also preparing for possible repercussions. The NCP leaders across the country met in Khartoum under the chairmanship of the Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie. They emphasized the need to strengthen the internal front and expressed confidence that the Sudanese people are supporting the President and his government.

Meanwhile, ***local dailies*** report NISS DG Gen. Salah Gosh told a rally in west Darfur that the ICC decision is intended to complicate Darfur issue and to block the Qatari initiative. "The

government will fight those who insist on war particularly those being exploited by foreign powers to prolong war in the country," he said. "If France is serious about peace, why not expelling Abdul Wahid as it has done with others," he wondered. "We will not allow Sudan's dignity and honour to be targeted. We will not allow any power to target the President," he told the rally organized to mark the inauguration of NISS offices in West Darfur State.

According to *Al-Ahdath*, Foreign Minister Deng Alor said, "We will be displeased by an ICC indictment of President Bashir. We want to resolve Darfur crisis so that it is easily to convince the court and the international community that the problem is over". The Minister said efforts are underway to make talks between the Government and Darfur movements a success. Moreover, he stressed that upcoming presidential and legislative elections should be preceded by demarcation of the N-S border as well as the announcement of the census results.

Technical committee to review Abyei budget

Al-Khartoum reports the Ministry of Finance and National Economy set up a technical committee to review the Abyei budget.

Abyei Area Minister of Finance Deng Ar said the formation of the committee is intended by the government to waste time until the fiscal year ends. He told the paper that the Abyei Administration, since assuming functions June, did not receive any fund. He called on the government to prove its seriousness and goodwill by approving the budget to enable the Administration to function.

SPLM demands reinstatement of sacked Minister

Akhbar Al Youm reports SPLM called on the Presidency to reinstate the southern Kordofan Finance Minister who was dismissed by the Governor within a period not later than a month if SPLM-NCP partnership is to continue. Southern Kordofan SPLM Secretary Arno Angetlo told a press conference yesterday in Kadugli that all options are open if the demand is not met. He said continuation of the partnership depends on reinstatement of the Finance Minister and the executive directors who were sacked by the Governor. He has called for the immediate withdrawal of forces outside the security zone and criticized the military buildup on the part of the government. He also called on UNMIS Southern Kordofan to observe complete neutrality, monitor the security situation and make facts available to the world. He said upcoming elections in the area depend on implementation of the voluntary returns programme to ensure democratic transformation. He said SPLM submitted memo of protests to UN and NCP to turn their attention to the excessive military presence in the area but no action was taken. He said he would send another memo to the Presidency and the UN Mission.

According to *Al-Ahdath*, the SPLM Secretary said the NCP's claim of JEM presence in Southern Kordofan is "a lie and a trick" to justify military buildup. He said SPLM possess documents proving SAF involvement in arming tribes in the area as well as withdrawing its personnel from the JIU. He said the CPA is not being implemented and the situation in the area is at its worst. He said the SPLM position is that the census exercise in the area should be repeated before elections are held.

Kiir to visit US in January

Al-Ayyam reports SPLM Chairman Kiir is to visit Washington in January to meet with senior officials in the new US Administration and SG Ban Ki-moon. GoSS Presidency Minister Luka Biong will lead a delegation to Washington on 30 December to prepare for Kiir's visit on 5 January. The delegation will discuss with the new US Administration and the SG progress of implementing the CPA, Darfur issue and the ICC.

Websites/International News Coverage

Sudan's calls for united Arab stand against Israeli aggressions

(**PNA/Xinhua**), 28/12/08, Khartoum -- President al-Bashir on Saturday called for a united Arab stand against the ongoing Israeli aggressions on the Gaza Strip. In an interview with **Al-Jazeera TV**, al-Bashir also called for an urgent Arab summit, hoping that such a meeting would issue a strong statement to condemn the Israeli action. Arab countries normalizing their ties with Israel must stop the process, the Sudanese president said, since this reflected attempts by Israel "to split the Arab and Palestinian parties." Al-Bashir also urged the Arab countries to review their relations with the U.S. The Sudanese government also issued a statement strongly condemning the Israeli air raids on the Gaza Strip, and urging the Jewish state to immediately stop the aggressions.

MFA urges International Community to press Darfur Rebels

(**SMC website**) MFA urges the international community and countries hosting Darfur rebel leaders to use their influence to convince them to attend peace negotiations in Qatar to address Darfur crisis. The ministry said the pressure on Darfur rebel leaders is important because it is neither Qatar nor Sudan has mechanism to force them to come to the negotiation table. The MFA spokesperson Ali Al Sadig Told **SMC** that the major challenge for Sudan in the year 2009 is to resolve Darfur, to continue to implement CPA, to meet aspirations of the Sudanese people and to achieve economic development in order to build the country. The spokesman affirmed Sudanese foreign policy for 2009 will endorse and adopt cooperation with regional and international communities particularly neighboring countries and UNSC.

Arab-African ministerial meeting on Darfur in January in Qatar

(**SMC website**) The African-Arab ministerial committee on Darfur, led by Qatar, is due to meet in the first week of January in Doha. Sources told **SMC** that the meeting would be chaired by the Qatari prime minister and foreign affairs minister, Shaykh Hamad Bin-Jasim al-Thani, with the participation of the head of the AU Commission, the Arab League secretary-general, foreign affairs ministers of Arab and African member states and the AU/UN mediator, Djibril Bassole.

According to these sources, the committee is to prepare the agenda for the mid-January Darfur reconciliation conference.

UN mission denies saying ICC decision "soon"

(**ST website**) In response to the misleading reports that were published on 25 December, UNMIS issued a statement dismissing media reports attributed to the head of the mission, Ashraf Qazi as saying that the ICC would issue soon an arrest warrant for the Sudanese president. According to UNMIS, the reports appear to stem from a recent erroneous and misleading report on the **Al-Jazeera.net** web site that the mission has requested be retracted. UNMIS stated that SRSG Qazi never predicted a date for any action by the ICC, an independent institution. **Al Jazeera** had reported Qazi as saying at a Cairo symposium earlier this month that the ICC would soon decide on the indictment of President al-Bashir.

Umma Party leader calls for democratic change of regime

(**Al-Jazeera TV**) "Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, head of the National Ummah Party, has warned of the consequences of attempting to change the ruling party in Sudan by force. He told **Al-Jazeera** that efforts to arrest President al-Bashir may be driven by certain political agenda, whereas he

favoured changing the regime by democratic means. "We are for changing the regime; not by force, but through elections, because we believe this is the only safe way. Any other means will cause bloodshed in Khartoum."

In the interview, Al-Mahdi said: "The decision [to arrest Al-Bashir] is imminent and inevitable. The question is when it will be issued and what we will do. The UNSC has the authority to postpone this decision for renewable 12 months. This cannot happen automatically. Unless certain reform measures take place, the UNSC will not freeze this decision."

State Minister, Dr Kamal Ubayd at the Sudanese Information Ministry, then commented to **Al-Jazeera**: "Whoever observes politicization by the ICC on the Darfur issue will come up with the same conclusion as Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, and this will not be surprising." He rejected any "Western" efforts to "undermine the sovereignty, security, and stability of Sudan" and noted: "Under the existing constitution, pluralism means that political forces can assume power through agreed-upon mechanisms and constitutional regulations, and any political entity has the right to look forward to replacing the incumbent regime."

LRA reportedly shot down Ugandan helicopter

(**ST website**) Juba – LRA Spokesman David Matsanga claimed to Radio Miraya that the rebels had shot down a Ugandan military helicopter gunship inside the DRC during ongoing fighting with Ugandan forces on Christmas Day. He also re-affirmed the LRA's desire to reach a final peace agreement with the Ugandan government. Meantime, GoSS VP and Chief Mediator of the Ugandan peace process, Dr Riek Machar has rejected LRA claims that the SPLA is involved in the joint regional military offensive. "Southern Sudan is not an independent country that can involve in fighting in another country without the approval of the president of the republic," Machar said.

Meantime, **AFP** reports a Ugandan army spokesman as saying that LRA rebels killed at least 35 people during the last week in the DRC and in south Sudan. "Our ground forces have discovered nine civilians were killed in Faraje on Thursday," Chris Magezi told AFP, referring to an area in north-eastern Congo.

However, LRA spokesman Matsanga denied the claim, saying he had been told by rebel leader Kony that his troops could not be responsible since they are not in the DRC. "Kony told me those involved in killings are from the 105 brigade of the UPDF [Ugandan army] who comprise ex-LRA combatants who have been recruited to go and kill civilians and blame it on LRA."

COMMENTARY

A New Chance for Darfur

New York Times, Op-Ed Columnist Nicholas D. Kristof, 27/12/08 -- If Barack Obama wants to help end the genocide in Darfur, he doesn't have to look far for ideas of how to accomplish that. President Bush and his top aides have been given, and ignored, a menu of options for tough steps to squeeze Sudan — even destroy its air force — and those will soon be on the new president's desk.

The State Department's policy planning staff prepared the first set of possible responses back in 2004 (never pursued), and this year Ambassador Richard Williamson has privately pushed the White House to squeeze Sudan until it stops the killing.

Mr. Williamson, who is President Bush's special envoy to Sudan, wrote a tough memo to Mr.

Bush this fall outlining three particular steps the United States could take to press Sudan's leader, President Omar Hassan al-Bashir:

- The United States could jam all communications in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital. This would include all telephone calls, all cellular service, and all Internet access. After two days, having demonstrated Sudan's vulnerability, the United States could halt the jamming.
- The United States could apply progressive pressure to Port Sudan, from which Sudan exports oil and thus earns revenue. The first step would be to send naval vessels near the port. The next step would be to search or turn back some ships, and the final step would be to impose quarantine and halt Sudan's oil exports.
- The United States could target Sudanese military aircraft that defy a United Nations ban on offensive military flights in Darfur. The first step would be to destroy a helicopter gunship on the ground at night. A tougher approach would be to warn Sudan that unless it complies with international demands (by handing over suspects indicted by the International Criminal Court, for example), it will lose its air force — and then if it does not comply, to destroy all its military aircraft on the ground.

Officials frustrated by the administration's passivity shared these possible steps with me, partly to make clear that Mr. Obama can do more if he has the political will.

Mr. Williamson has been one of the unsung heroes of the Bush administration, fighting tenaciously and secretly — even twice threatening to resign — to redeem American honor by confronting genocide. President Bush himself seemed open to tougher action, officials say, but Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Stephen Hadley, the national security adviser, always resisted, backed by the Pentagon. Ms. Rice and Mr. Hadley tarnished their own honor and America's by advocating, in effect, acquiescence in genocide.

The naysayers' objection was simple: Those are incredibly serious steps, with grave repercussions.

They're right. But then again, genocide is pretty serious, too.

That's something that Mr. Obama and his aides understand. Partly for that reason, Sudan fears the Obama administration, and now for the first time in years, there's a real chance of ousting President Bashir and ending his murderous regime.

Several factors are coming together. The leaders in Khartoum feel their government wobbling, particularly after rebels clashed with government soldiers on the outskirts of Khartoum earlier this year. They know that the International Criminal Court is expected to issue an arrest warrant for President Bashir, probably in February, but that no other top leader will be indicted after Mr. Bashir.

China, which for years has been President Bashir's most important international supporter, now seems to be backing away — just as it eventually abandoned genocidal friends like Slobodan Milosevic and the Khmer Rouge. And an Arab state, Qatar, is now leading a serious diplomatic initiative to try to end the slaughter.

Thus there are growing whispers that key figures in the Sudanese regime may throw Mr. Bashir overboard in the coming months. The other leaders are ruthless and have blood on their hands

as well, but some of them have in the past proved more willing to negotiate deals than Mr. Bashir has.

Hovering in the background is the risk that the north-south war in Sudan will resume, leading to a slaughter even worse than Darfur. One ominous sign is that Sudan is now stockpiling cash and weapons, apparently so that it can wage war on the south even if Port Sudan is blocked.

Mr. Williamson has suggested providing surface-to-air missiles to the separate government of South Sudan. Such weaponry would reduce the chance that Sudan would attack the south.

If Mr. Obama and his aides can work with Europe, China and Qatar to keep the heat on — and to make clear that Sudan has no choice but to hand over President Bashir once the court issues the arrest warrant — then we just might avert a new war and end the first genocide of the 21st century in the new year.