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(By Public Information Office)

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HIGHLIGHTS :

UN/ Agencies

Envoys Eliasson and Salim expected next Saturday

(*AlAyaam*) Envoys Eliasson and Salim are expected in Khartoum next Saturday.

UNMIS' Chief of Public Information George Somerwill is quoted as saying that the visit is within the framework of rejuvenating the political process and bolstering efforts for a peaceful solution to the Darfur crisis.

USG Holmes in Khartoum

(*AlSudani*) United Nations humanitarian chief Undersecretary-General John Holmes arrived Khartoum late yesterday in his first visit as Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

The head of the Sudan foreign ministry's Peace and Humanitarian Affairs Directorate said that the USG will spend a week in the country during which he will hold talks with officials in Khartoum and will travel to Darfur and southern Sudan.

HAC expels 58 local NGOs

(*AlRai AlAam*) The Humanitarian Aid Commission in South Darfur has issued an order yesterday to expel 58 local NGOs operating in the area.

The decision is based on the findings of an assessment committee.

The expulsion was on the grounds of non-compliance to agreements signed with the HAC, expiry of licence and administrative and resource incompetence.

CPA

President Bashir addresses mass rallies in Blue Nile State

(*AlRai AlAam, AlSudani et al*) President Bashir addressed mass rallies in Blue Nile State yesterday.

In his speeches, the President mainly commended the Parties to the CPA for their cooperation and harmony in implementing the CPA that has enabled development and stability in the state.

He assured that there will be no return to war as they strive for unity and harmony.

The President winds up his tour of the Blue Nile State this morning.

Meanwhile, *AlSudan* reports that the head of the National Congress Party side in the joint political committee set up of the National Congress Party and the SPLM will hold a press briefing early this afternoon.

Dr. Mustapha Osman Ismail will be briefing the press on the latest preparations for the forthcoming meeting next Saturday between the Parties to the CPA. The meeting takes place at 8:00a.m. at the Friendship Hall next Saturday and will be co-chaired by President Bashir and VP Kiir.

Tension as S. Kordofan braces itself for NRF attack

(*Allintibaha*) The spokesperson for the South Kordofan State says the NRF has issued a statement circulated in el-Mujlad, Babanousa and el-Foula threatening to strike these and other towns.

The spokesperson says the town is bracing itself for such attacks and has beefed up army and police patrols and dug trenches as precautions.

Southern Sudan/ GoSS/SPLM

SPLM SG rebuffs reports of his suspension

(*Rai AlShaab et al*) Briefing the press at the SPLM HQs in Khartoum yesterday, SPLM Secretary-General Pagan Amoum rebuffed recent reports of his suspension from the party's secretariat.

He called upon the paper that yesterday put out the report on his alleged suspension to issue an apology but pointed out that he will not sue the paper for that action [*Allintibaha daily did issue today Mr. Amoum's rebuttal*].

Commenting on the steps taken by the GoSS leader to clamp down on graft, Amoum called on the people to come up with concerted efforts to back the fight against corruption. He said that VP Kiir intends to take the fight against corruption to the GoNU. He said Sudan ranks 11th in the world, 5th in Africa and the first in the Arab World when it comes to corruption rates.

Amoum said he believes in the freedom of the press but called upon the media not to blow reports on corruption out of proportion. He pointed out that the fact the GoSS finance minister has been stripped of immunity does not count to a conviction to the crime.

Amoum did however confirm reports of the arrest of the SPLA Deputy Chief of Staff Martin Malwal but said it is a case for the GoSS judiciary.

Episcopal Church rebuffs report of SPLM torture of priests

(*Allintibaha*) The Sudan Episcopal Church has rebuffed recent press reports that the SPLM has carried out arrests and torturing of its priest in the Nuba Mountains area.

The report was issued earlier by the *Sudan Media Centre*.

In what could possibly be a related story, the weekly *Juba Post* adds that the SPLA in the Nuba Mountains area have finally released 9 Church workers who have been held in detention for the last 20 days for reasons that remain unclear.

The paper goes on to say that the Episcopal Church of Sudan had said that the nine were arrested for bringing in unlicensed drugs and pointed out that they had sought to establish a pharmacy and health center without consulting the concerned authorities.

Darfur/ Darfur Peace Agreement

SAF spokesman rebuffs reports of attack on el-Geneina airport

(*Rai AlShaab*) The official spokesman for the SAF has rebuffed recent pres report of an attack by armed elements on the el-Geneina airport.

The spokesman pointed out that what did occur on Monday 19 March is that two vehicles working in the construction site of the new el-Geneina airport were robbed on the road outside the airport and that the airport itself was not affected.

Minnawi welcomes Kiir's overtures with non-signatory groups

(*AlSahafa*) Senior presidential aide Mini Minnawi has welcomed VP Kiir's moves towards peace in Darfur.

Minnawi who was at a meeting with the head of the AMIS committee on the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue underlined the need to streamline efforts for peace in Darfur.

NRF military council to hold emergency session

(*Rai AlShaab*) NRF Deputy Commander Abdalla Banda has called for an emergency meeting of the NRF Military Council.

Banda who is also the commander of the JEM says the meeting will discuss electing a new leadership council for the NRF military and a final position on Dr. Khalil Ibrahim's leadership of the NRF.

It is worth noting that Dr. Khalil had earlier drawn the ire of some of the movement's commanders when he had accused a number of the field commanders of corruption and spying on behalf of the government.

The commanders, on their part, have accused Dr. Khalil of focusing his attention on some trivial partisan issues thus causing cracks in the NRF.

Sudan rejects EU project for closer monitoring of rights in Darfur

(SudanTribune.com) Sudan has reaffirmed its rejection of an European project of resolution to the UN rights body calling for closer international surveillance of human rights in Darfur. Sudan tries to persuade Islamic countries to propose to re-send a new mission to Sudan

The Minister of Justice, Mohamed Ali Al-Mardi, rejected a proposal made by the European group at the UN Human rights Council to form a team of experts to keep pressure on Khartoum to honour past recommendations on respecting the rights of civilians in Sudan's Darfur region.

The Sudanese minister told the official SUNA after his return from Geneva that this report was "part of a series of continuous plotting against Sudan which is being woven by European countries, as well as a part of pressures against many African states with the aim to compel them to support the stance of the European countries."

European and African delegations proposed two near-identical resolutions on Darfur. Both call for the establishment of an expert group to work with Sudan on protecting Darfur civilians from violence.

The EU proposal by Germany expressed concern over ongoing rights violations committed by both the government and rebel groups in Darfur, while the African Group's resolution, presented by Algeria, praised Sudan for its readiness to improve human rights in Darfur. Al-Mardi said that Sudan delegation will never allow approval of the European resolution's project, and will have a firm stand in this regard.

He pointed out that Sudan delegation is working to convince the member states of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to forward their project before the Human Rights Council.

He explained that the major aspects of the OIC countries' draft resolution include re-formation of the fact-finding mission for human rights in Sudan, representation of the different groups in this mission and its authorization by the Human Rights Council.

The Minister of Justice referred to attempts of the Arab and Islamic countries to convince a number of African states to change their stance for the interest of Sudan and to reject the European draft resolution.

Protect us or arm us, Darfur rebel leader says

(SudanTribune.com) "Either UN forces come to protect our people or the international community has to arm us to defend our people from genocide," Abdul Wahid Mohammed Nur said in an interview with AFP on Tuesday. "These are the only two options."

Nur, who is on a visit to Europe to draw attention to the situation in Darfur, is leader of one faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement. His faction has refused to sign a peace agreement with the Sudanese government and he called Mini Minnawi. Leader of the signatory SLA faction, a “puppet” of the Sudanese government.

He said that his faction refused to sign the peace deal for security reasons and will continue in its position " as long as there is no clear disarmament of Janjaweed."

Nur, who is also a lawyer, warned that history would judge Western countries if they did not act on Darfur.

"I do appreciate the international community for their resolutions, but action speaks louder than words," he said [*click on the link for the full text* [Protect us or arm us, Darfur rebel leader says](#)].

French presidential candidates commit to protect Darfur people

(*SudanTribune.com*) Main candidates for the French presidential election have committed themselves to protect Darfur civilians and to impose sanctions against Khartoum, if they are elected.

In an important public meeting organized Tuesday evening by a French advocacy group, "Urgence Darfour", the main candidates for May elections signed an eight-point engagement to act for the protection of Darfur people through the UN Security Council.

The commitment signed by the Candidates says France will vigorously act for the vote by the UN Security Council of a resolution under the Chapter seven of the UN Charter to impose effective protection of civilians in Darfur with Khartoum consent or not. A non-fly zone, the creation of protected humanitarian corridors and targeted sanction against the Sudanese officials were among the proposed measures [*click on the link for the full text* [French presidential candidates commit to protect Darfur people](#)].