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Highlights

Electoral constituencies by the end of June

NEC Acting Chairman Prof. Abdullah Mohamed Abdullah yesterday said the Commission had already started the process of distributing geographical constituencies for upcoming elections, adding the process could take up to a month, but likely to be announced by the end of June, reports *Al-Wifaq*. He said that SPLM's hint to reject census results was something that concerns the movement and the Presidency but the Commission, would not be affected by the reservations. He said the Commission would continue its work as per the elections schedule.

SAF rules out retaliation to Chad's air strike

Local dailies report SAF spokesperson Brig. Osman Al-Aghbash as saying that "SAF is awaiting the political leadership's signal to retaliate, dismissing claims that SAF is in a weak position," However, according to *Al-Akhbar*, Al-Aghbash ruled out military response to Chad's air strike since such retaliation could affect the situation in Darfur and could also be used as a pretext for foreign intervention.

Reuters report Sudan accused its neighbor Chad of a third air strike on its territory on Saturday and signaled it might be open to a political solution to the growing conflict.

"There was another air strike this morning at around 10am," said Ali Youssef Ahmed, head of protocol at Sudan's Foreign Ministry. "This aggression continues (and) this makes the situation graver," he added.

On Friday, Sudan accused Chad of launching two bombing raids on its territory, saying they constituted an "act of war." Chad has said Sudan sent rebel forces over its border earlier this month, raising fears of the collapse of a recent peace deal. "These (raids) are beyond Chad's capability and that means Chad was not alone," he said.

Sudan Tribune website 16/5/09 reported Sudan said that Chadian army planes raided yesterday for the third time the region of Darfur but toned down its rhetoric calling for political solution to the political crisis in the neighboring country.

"This morning at 10:30 local time, another raid took place on the same location and using the same method," Sudanese army spokesperson Osman Al-Aghbash told reporters during a press conference held jointly with Abdallah Masar, a Sudanese presidential adviser.

However, Masar urged the Chadian president to solve his internal problem through political means and to avoid military escalation. He denied Sudanese involvement in the Chadian affairs saying relations between the two peoples are solid and Sudan supports Chad economically.

New Southern Kordofan governor launches reconciliation initiative

Sudan Tribune website 15/5/09 — The newly appointed governor of Southern Kordofan, Ahmed Haroun launched Thursday an initiative for reconciliation and tolerance in the forgotten Nuba homeland since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The Southern Kordofan state, which is the geographical centre of Sudan, encompasses Nuba ethnic group accounted for approximately three quarters of the state's inhabitants and the Arab Baggara from the Missiriya and Hawazma tribes.

Both the NCP and SPLM are resorting to ethnic mobilization in preparation for the upcoming 2010 elections, a matter that made difficult ethnic reconciliation between the two groups.

Ahmed Haroun, who is wanted by the ICC on Darfur crimes, was received by important number of local leader and dignitaries from the NCP as well as the SPLM. He arrived to Kadugli accompanied by Presidential Adviser Ali Massar and Governor of Blue Nile Malik Aggar.

Addressing a public rally of some thousands of Kadugli population, Haroun said he wants to work with all the political and social forces in the state to establish security in the region, create favourable climate for the organization of upcoming elections and to boost the unity of state groups.

He further said he had agreed with his deputy governor (SPLM) Abdel Aziz Hilu to enforce a true partnership for the short remaining time, stressing that the situation in the state is very critical and all the political forces should work together to overcome differences.

More than three years after the CPA was signed, integration is not a political reality in Southern Kordofan. While a joint government has been established at the state level, the administration of government and SPLM-controlled areas remains separate.

Two local government systems currently operate in parallel, with separate policies for education (two languages, two systems), judicial and security systems, and local government structures. "Passing from one area to the other involves passing through armed checkpoints," said Small Arm Survey in a report issued last year.

The Deputy Governor Hilu, reiterated his full commitment to strengthen partnership and to develop the region. "We came with a new spirit and we agreed to work together in order to provide the best services in this limited time, and we agreed that the priorities will be to establish security, political and social stability."

Hilu also was appointed last month following divergences between the SPLM members in the state.

Bleu Nil Governor, Aggar, told the rally that everyone has a role to play to implement the CPA. He also praised Haroun and Hilu saying he worked with them in the past and he knows they are honest and truthful.

He encouraged them to work together for the benefit of the region. Haroun who was state minister for humanitarian affairs worked with the SPLM officials to end Abyei and to Blue Nile raw as well as recent Malakal troubles.

The CPA gave the Nuba limited regional autonomy and a 'popular consultation' on the CPA—devoid of enforcement mechanisms. Many Nuba considered this inadequate, fearing for their fate in the event of South Sudan separating following the 2011 referendum.

Many also accused the SPLA leadership of compromising the political rights of the Nuba and Southern Blue Nile State in order to get self-determination for Abyei, which was the only one of the three border 'transitional areas' to be granted a referendum to determine whether it would be part of North or South Sudan after 2011.

SPLM SG calls for UN-monitored ceasefire in Darfur

Speaking to thousands of supporters in Blue Nile State yesterday, SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum has renewed accusations against the NCP for “delaying the reintegration of the JIUs”, reports **Al-Ahdath**. According to **Ajras Al-Hurriah**, Amum also called for UN-monitored ceasefire in Darfur.

Presidential Adviser calls on SPLM to create conducive atmosphere

The Presidential Adviser Ghazi Salah Al-Din has called on the SPLM to create a conducive atmosphere to elections in southern Sudan by putting in place a civilian government and sending troops back to barracks as stipulated in the CPA, **Al-Sahafa** reports. Ghazi also welcomed the announcement by the SPLM of its intention to investigate the fate of more than six billion dollars deposited in GoSS account.

Northern Kordofan faces a food gap – Governor

The Newly-appointed Northern Kordofan Governor Mohamed Ahmed Abu Kalabish yesterday said his State was facing a serious food shortage but the Presidency promised to redress the gap, reports **Al-Sahafa**.

War may resume between north and south - SPLM

Al-Intibaha 16/5/09 In an interview with **Cairo-based Al-Ahram** newspaper, the head of the SPLM office in Cairo, Nasreldine Musa Kasheib, cites some reasons that may reignite war between the SPLA and the Sudan Government. These, he lists, as follows:

- Non-implementation of the CPA
- The NCP position over Abyei
- Arming southern Sudanese tribes to fight the SPLA

He also criticized the appointment of Ahmed Haroun as Governor of Southern Kordofan and accused the government of sending 6,000 troops to Southern Kordofan with the justification of fighting the JEM forces in the area. He also said that lack of seriousness from the government side to resolve the crisis in Darfur through adherence to reconciliation agreements signed with Chad may also reignite war.

On elections, he said that the SPLM strategy is based on strengthening the fundamentals of Sudan’s unity through the five goals of equitable distribution of power and wealth in all “marginalized areas” in the country, improving the country’s economy, normalizing relations with neighbouring states, finding solutions to the Darfur crisis, rebuilding the institutions of the state and strengthening the fundamentals of federal governance in the country.

Kasheib further pointed out that the CPA gives the SPLM the right to register as a political party and to maintain its army under the command of First Vice-President Salva Kiir Mayardit.

The President of the GoSS had earlier hinted that violations of the CPA may reignite war that would spill out to neighbouring states.

FVP calls on AU Panel to achieve peace in Darfur first

Local dailies report the AU Panel on Darfur will submit its final report and recommendations on Darfur to the AU by mid July. According to **Al-Sahafa**, the FVP Salva Kiir who met with the Panel in Juba stressed the need to achieve peace in Darfur first since it would be the basis for justice. Kiir also said peace in Darfur requires roles of the neighbouring countries especially Chad, Libya, Egypt and Eritrea. GoSS Presidency Affairs Minister Luka Biong told the paper yesterday that the meeting between the FVP Kiir and the Panel focused on the task of the Panel

on Darfur, national reconciliation and justice.

According to **Sudan Tribune website**, the Panel visited Juba to acquaint themselves with steps taken by GoSS to address Darfur. Mbeki told journalists that the positive discussion focused on issues affecting the Darfur crisis, but did not provide details.

Arab-Islamic meeting on Darfur tomorrow

Al-Ayyam reports the Arab League Secretary General Umr Musa is to visit Khartoum today to take part in a meeting on Darfur. Musa's office announced that the meeting, which will be attended by the Arab League SG Amr Musa, AU Commission Chairperson Jean Ping, the OIC SG Akmal al-Din Ihssan and Sudan government will discuss the humanitarian situation in the wake of the INGO expulsion, coordination of stances on the ICC, Darfur peace talks and relations between Sudan and Chad.

Eritrean President criticizes SPLM performance in southern Sudan

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports the Eritrean President Issias Afwerki has criticized the SPLM performance in southern Sudan, saying the departure of its leader John Garang has affected the movement's organizational capacity. In an interview to the paper, Afwerki said insecurity in southern Sudan continues and the SPLM's stance on unity or secession remains vague.

James Wani accuses unnamed parties of triggering tribal conflicts

Miraya 16/5/09 - The Speaker of South Sudan Legislative Assembly, James Wani Igga, has accused unnamed political parties of instigating conflict between the Bari and Mundari tribes in Jebel Ladu area of Central Equatoria State.

During a press conference in Juba, Igga said these parties do not want stability for south Sudan, adding they are instead working against peace.

He further called on the Bari tribe to withdraw from the Mundari lands, and urged the warring tribes in the south to exercise self restraint and work on solving the difference through peaceful means.

Meanwhile, the Speaker of Jonglei State's Legislative Assembly, Judi Jongolei, has criticized SPLA's stance during the recent tribal violence in the State, by describing it as a "mere spectator."

Speaking to Miraya FM Jongolei said the state's police fell short of its duties due to poor armament and qualification against the armed civilians.

On the other hand, the Speaker of the Assembly, Jongolei also stressed there is a great shortage of food and water in Pibor and Akobo Counties, due to the closing down of river and land transports which lead to the two Counties.

He further warned of deterioration of humanitarian conditions in the region if the routes are not re-opened before the autumn season.

France says concerned by rising Sudan-Chad tension

Sudan Tribune website 16/5/09 — France on Saturday expressed concern over the rising tensions between Chad and Sudan, following three Chadian raids in 24 hours inside Sudanese.

"France is concerned about the growing tensions between Chad and Sudan. It urges the parties

to avoid any escalation," said the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement issued Saturday evening.

In its communiqué, the French foreign ministry called the Chadian government to engage dialogue with "Chadian rebels in the Sudan", in accordance with what was agreed in Sirte, Libya, under the auspices Colonel Muammar Gadhafi.

Meanwhile, Chadian President Idriss Deby has said Saturday "determined to get rid once and for all" of the rebels and will continue to exercise his "right of hot pursuit" in Sudan, which accuses Chad of bombing raids on its territory.

"We used our right of hot pursuit and the use of right will continue with the support of the Chadian people," Deby told reporters during the inauguration of a bridge in Lai, Southern Chad.

The army is determined to get rid once and for all of the mercenaries paid by the Sudan," he added.

Mahamat Hissene, the spokesperson of the Chadian government said on Friday that the air strikes aim only to get rid of the rebels "instrumentalised" by Khartoum.

Sudan briefs Security Council members about Chadian raids

Sudan Tribune website 15/5/09 – Sudan has informed the envoys of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in Khartoum about the air strikes carried out by Chadian military airplanes yesterday.

The meeting also was attended by representatives of the United Nations, African Union, Arab League and the Libyan ambassador.

Ali Youssef, the Acting Undersecretary of the Sudanese foreign ministry, who met with the envoys, said Thursday evening that he told them that Chad assault was a serious threat to peace and security in the region.

Also, Sudan summoned on Friday the Chadian ambassador in Khartoum to protest over the "flagrant violation of Sudanese sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The foreign ministry also said it would inform the Qatari government, the sponsor of the latest reconciliation agreement, about the Chadian air strikes.

Most rebels have quit Chad: diplomat

AFP 16/5/09-Most of the rebels who were beaten back after launching an offensive in Chad on May 4 have withdrawn into neighbouring Sudan, a well-informed diplomatic source said Friday. "In spite of rebel claims to have people believe that they're still in Chad, the situation is that most of them are in Sudan," the diplomat posted to the Chadian capital N'djamena told **AFP**. "Moreover, the Chadian army has returned to its positions on the border prior to the attack," the source added. "Rebels who are still in Chad are those who were on foot after fleeing the fighting."

A well-informed observer confirmed these statements.

"Apparently, the bulk of the rebel forces have driven deep back in Sudanese territory. There may be a few small groups left, but we can say that the situation has returned to normal."

Both President Idriss Deby's government and Western diplomatic and military observers have for a week stated that Chad's army had defeated the rebel Union of Forces for Resistance

(UFR) by May 9.

However, what distinguished last week's offensive from previous attacks is that the rebels failed to withdraw immediately beyond the border.

The rebels were still claiming Friday to be in the arid southeast of the largely desert nation in north-central Africa, where in February 2008 they succeeded in crossing the whole country to Ndjamena in the west.

Deby then kept his grip on power with French military help in the shape of intelligence reports and ammunition supplies, but between last May 6 and 8 a better-equipped Chadian army and air force kept the rebels confined to east Chad, then drove them back.

The government has claimed a "decisive victory" over rebels it alleges to be mercenaries in the pay of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir, but diplomats and foreign military observers are more guarded, speaking only of a rebel defeat.

"Nobody can say the rebels are destroyed and have no capabilities left," one observer said. "I believe they are still equipped."

Chad and Sudan have regularly accused each other of backing rebel movements, but the May 4 offensive, when the rebels claimed to be traveling in more than 800 pick-up trucks, came just a day after a latest peace deal signed in Doha.

The neighbouring countries vowed to lend no support to rebel groups from the other. One hypothesis advanced by a diplomat for the rebels' claims that they were regrouping in southeast Chad for a further attack was that Bashir had "asked the rebels not to return."

Another was that in the past few days, "residual rebel forces" tried with Sudan's backing to find a way to negotiate.

One source in Sudan close to the rebels told AFP that al-Bashir "perhaps doesn't want to send a bad signal to the international community at the moment," but the Chadian rebels returned to the vast Darfur region because they could not hold out in Chad.

"When we left Sudan, we were prepared as if we were never going to return," a source in the UFR told AFP, stating that there were still Chadian rebels in Chad.

President receives invitation from Senegalese President

SUNA 16/5/09 - President Al-Bashir has received an invitation from the President of Senegal Abdallah Wade to attend the Third Negro Festival which will be organized by Senegal in next December. The invitation was conveyed to President Al-Bashir by the visiting envoy of the Senegalese President and Minister of Industry.

North Darfur Wali and UNAMID discuss security situation

SUNA 16/5/09 -The Governor of North Darfur State Osman Mohamed Yousif Kibir Saturday met with representatives of UNAMID and the international voluntary organizations operating in the region. He said at the meeting that North Darfur State is keen to bolster the peace and stability in the region. Kibir also met with representatives of the signatory movements of Darfur peace agreements and discussed the security and stability situation in the state.

Darfur rebel leader to appear before war court

AFP — the leader of a Darfur rebel faction, Bahr Idriss Abu Garda, suspected of war crimes, has been ordered to appear here before the International Criminal Court, the court announced today. Abu Garda is set to appear for an initial hearing on Monday at 2:00 pm local time (1200 GMT), the ICC based in The Hague said in a statement.

"Abu Garda, member of the Zaghawa tribe of Sudan, is charged with three war crimes allegedly committed during an attack carried out on 29 September 2007 against the African Union mission in Sudan (AMIS)," the statement said. Twelve AU peacekeepers were killed in the

attack at Haskanita in north Darfur.

The court said the attack was allegedly carried out by splinter forces of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), under the command of Abu Garda, jointly with troops belonging to another armed group. The court's pre-trial chamber had issued a summons for Abu Garda under seal on May 7 which was lifted today.

The judges said a summons rather than an arrest warrant was deemed sufficient since the prosecutor said the suspect had expressed a willingness to appear before the court. On Monday, the court will read to Abu Garda the charges against him and his rights.

A subsequent confirmation hearing will then determine whether there are "substantial grounds to believe that he committed the crimes charged," the court said.

The court issued in March an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.

Beja Congress calls for ICC investigation of Port Sudan incident

Sudan Tribune website 16/5/09 — The Beja Congress of eastern Sudan issued an appeal to an international lawyers' group to bring a case before the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Abu Amna, a representative of the organization, sent a statement to **Sudan Tribune** urging justice for a massacre allegedly committed in Port Sudan on January 28, 2005. On that day, 22 Beja citizens including women and children were shot dead and more than 400 injured during a peaceful protest.

Amna would like the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) to help bring a criminal case before the ICC. The IADL is an association founded in 1946 in Paris by lawyers who had participated in the Nuremberg Trials conducted against adherents to the regime of German leader Adolf Hitler.

Africa peacekeeping problems abound for U.N. envoys

Reuters 16/5/09 - 16/05 United Nations Security Council envoys starting an African peacekeeping tour face dilemmas ranging from how to improve massive but struggling missions, to deciding whether to stay put or pull out elsewhere.

In Somalia in the east, the problem is whether to send in the U.N. blue helmets; in Liberia in the west, the problem is how soon to take them out; in between, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, there are problems of how existing forces can cope with the challenges they face.

All these issues feed in to the wider question of how U.N. forces can fulfill their mandate of protecting civilians in countries where -- with the possible exception of Liberia -- the combatants have not really decided to stop fighting.

"Millions have suffered the disastrous effects of armed conflict in each of these African countries," Georgette Gagnon, Africa director at Human Rights Watch, said this week.

"The Security Council should urgently address serious human rights abuses with national leaders and the African Union."

The envoys from the 15 Security Council states, who were due to arrive in Addis Ababa late Friday, will meet the African Union's Peace and Security Council before traveling on to Rwanda, Congo and Liberia. They will not go to Somalia or Sudan but will discuss those countries with the African Union.

No country dramatizes the U.N.'s challenge better than Congo, which has 17,000 blue helmets,

the world body's largest force. But after a decade of peacekeeping, it remains mired in violence fueled by politics, ethnicity and mineral wealth.

The conflict has left 5 million dead since 1998.

In the short term, the United Nations wants to boost its force, known as MONUC, to some 20,000 following criticism that it failed to curb violence and protect civilians last year.

Reinforcements were approved in November but, apart from some Bangladeshis, Egyptians and Jordanians, they, and helicopters needed to support them, have been hard to find.

Assuming gains made ending a Tutsi rebellion hold, the U.N. now talks about drawing down and handing over to civil agencies, possibly after national elections in due at the end of 2011.

"I hope the consolidation of the security situation in the east will allow us in the near future to progressively reduce MONUC's presence across the whole country and prepare our departure," MONUC chief Alan Doss told the council last month.

But U.N. troops remain committed in the east to supporting government operations against Rwandan Hutu and Ugandan rebels, which have provoked further accusations of failing to protect.

Consequently, U.N. officials say any pullout is still some time away. "It's very, very fragile still," one said.

"If pressure is not put on the (Hutu) FDLR and other groups, and if the government doesn't step up with pay for the (Congo army) forces, we're not declaring victory and starting to pack."

Not surprisingly, the Security Council has been reluctant to yield to African calls for peacekeepers in another hornets' nest -- Somalia, where 130 civilians died in clashes between Islamist rebels and the Western- and U.N.-backed government this week.

The AU is likely to renew that pressure this weekend.

"They will have their view, and we will have ours," said one Western envoy.

U.N. peacekeeping chief Alain Le Roy told the council on Wednesday that sending in peacekeepers would be a "high-risk operation" likely to fail unless the situation calms.

Peace prospects seem equally bleak in Sudan's western Darfur region.

A U.N./AU peace force is gradually deploying and is now approaching two-thirds of its planned strength of 26,000 men.

It, too, is short of helicopters but another obstacle lies in the government and rebels both seeking a victory, envoys say.

By contrast, Liberia looks a relative success story as it seeks to rebuild following a devastating 1989-2003 civil war.

That has led some in the Security Council to suggest the 10,000 U.N. peacekeepers still in the West African state could be rapidly withdrawn.

But U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said continuing delays in building up national security forces and the need for supervision of elections in 2011 mean only 2,000 can be removed by the end of next year.