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Highlights

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SRSG Qazi holds consultations in Cairo on Sudan

The SRSG Ashraf Qazi began his consultations yesterday with Egyptian officials on the overall situation in the Sudan including the CPA implementation, reports ***Al-Sahafa***.

Egypt's Foreign Minister, Abu al-Gheith, affirmed to Qazi his country's concern with Sudan's unity and territorial integrity, adding the CPA could be a real bridge to that end. Egypt's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hussam Hosni called on the international community to assist the Sudanese parties to overcome current challenges. He said Abu al-Gheith briefed Qazi on the projects being implemented by Egypt in southern Sudan, its support to the CPA implementation and ongoing efforts to make unity attractive for southern Sudanese. He added that Abu al-Gheith said he was confident that the CPA partners would overcome the challenges, pointing out that Abu al-Gheith and Qazi agreed to continue their consultations to ensure promotion of the Sudan's CPA.

Qazi also met with the National Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi and they discussed the sensitive stage through which Sudan is passing, the CPA challenges and the need to address them as well as the Darfur issue.

According to ***Al-Intibaha***, Qazi has ruled out new conflict and clashes over Abyei, adding Abyei arbitration decision might be announced in July or before that and both sides were committed to accept the arbitration decision. The SRSG expressed hope that differences between Sudan and Chad would be resolved through negotiations.

Al-Ahdath reports Qazi said Egypt's role was extremely important, citing Egypt's strong support to the CPA implementation. He said all the countries of the region share a common interest in sustaining stability, adding Egypt's view point would be seriously taken into account by UN. He called on Egypt and other TCCs for more troop contributions.

Kiir says not satisfied with census results

"I am not happy and unsatisfied with the census results," FVP Kiir said, in his address yesterday to the opening session of the *Sultans* conference in Bentiu, southern Sudan, according to ***Al-Rai Al-Aam***. He said the census results should not be used as a basis for power and wealth sharing. Kiir stressed that there would be no going back to war. While Kiir said it was impossible for elections to take place on schedule due to insecurity in southern Sudan, he stressed GoSS's ability to address the challenges to ensure elections and referendum to take place as planned.

GoSS Vice President Rieck Machar told reporters yesterday that the conference would focus on the security situation in southern Sudan, spread of arms as well as the CPA implementation and key challenges.

According to ***Al-Sahafa***, Kiir has instructed the governors of southern states to disarm tribes in their areas and described the security situation as "deteriorating". GoSS VP Riek Machar said the army and police would be used in the disarming process and appealed to the neighbouring countries for assistance. Kiir has apologized to the conferees about the violations committed by

the SPLA at the time of war.

Meanwhile, Unity State governor Taban Deng said his government was determined to enforce execution penalty as a means to minimize murder crimes in the state.

No differences over Bashir's candidacy – Mustafa Ismail

In a lengthy interview to *Al-Sahafa*, the Presidential Adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail said Al-Bashir's candidacy for upcoming presidential elections would be decided by the NCP general assembly scheduled for November. However, he denied any differences over this issue. He revealed a plan by the government to counter the ICC within the Security Council by explaining that the ICC is inappropriate to tackle the issue. On Sudan-US relations, he said there was a rapprochement between Khartoum and Washington under the Obama Administration especially on Darfur and the ICC but said there was a divergence between Khartoum and Europe.

Darfur war crime suspect confident of innocence before ICC

Sudan Tribune website 18/5/09 – A Darfur rebel leader accused of leading an attack against African peacekeepers in 2007 appeared before a judge at the ICC, a day after he voluntarily surrendered himself to The Hague based court.

Abu Garda was confined to an undisclosed location which ICC officials say it is part of the court's premises.

At 1500 GMT the rebel leader entered the courtroom with his ICC assigned lawyer Karim Khan from Britain and confirmed his identity upon questioning from Italian Judge Cuno Tarfusser who is carrying out the functions of Pre-Trial Chamber I while the other two judges are in recess.

Judge Tarfusser thanked him for surrendering. "The court appreciates very much your voluntary appearance. In doing so, I think you have sent out a very good message" the judge addressed Abu Garda.

Abu Garda, wearing a gray suit and striped tie, answered "yes" when asked whether he understood the charges and his rights. He was not required to enter a plea.

He gave his profession as "commander of a resistance movement" and thanked the court's registry for facilitating his arrival to The Hague.

Tarfusser set Oct. 12 for confirmation of charges hearing, after which judges must rule whether the case is strong enough to merit a trial. The rebel chief is not obliged to attend but his lawyer refused to waive his right to be present.

The hearing which lasted over 30 minutes was attended by ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo and senior trial attorney handling the Darfur case Essa Faal and other members of his office.

Abu Garda speaking to *Sudan Tribune* by phone from the Netherlands said he turned himself in "out of clear conviction that justice be achieved in Darfur".

"I hope this step is a clear message to everyone and an affirmation of the cooperation with justice and refraining from insisting on non-cooperation with the court on the grounds that it is a foreign conspiracy. People must face internal issues and stop making these claims" he said.

The rebel leader reiterated that he is innocent and said he will be at the disposal of the court. He also accused the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) of “spreading lies” on his involvement in the attack against AU peacekeepers. He refused to disclose his next destination after leaving the Netherlands.

Sudan’s NCP official Mohamed Mandour Al-Mahdi called yesterday’s appearance as a “ridiculous play” by both sides and that the government is aware of conspiracies against it.

The spokesperson of the French Ministry for Foreign affairs Eric Chevalier told reporters yesterday that the “willingness to cooperate voluntarily with the Court is a positive development”.

“The investigation conducted against the perpetrators of this attack demonstrates the impartiality of prosecutions initiated by the ICC in which we renew our trust and support” he added.

Yesterday Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a statement saying that the issuance of a summons to appear “underscores the gravity of attacks against those deployed to protect civilians”.

“The criticism coming from a few non-ICC members that the court is anti-African inexplicably ignores the thousands of African victims whom the court is fighting to defend” said Richard Dicker, director of international justice program at HRW.

“This criticism is even more dubious given the court’s effort to try those allegedly responsible for attacks on peacekeepers from Botswana, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal” he added.

UN chief urges end to fighting in Sudan-Chad border area

AFP 18/5/09 UN chief Ban Ki-moon appealed for an end to fighting in the Chad-Sudan border area, his press office said yesterday as N’djamena claimed it struck deep into its neighbor to destroy several rebel camps.

"The Secretary-General is concerned by recent violence and tensions in the border area between Chad and Sudan and calls on all parties to cease fighting," a UN statement said.

"He underscores that there is no military solution to the situation in the sub-region and urges the governments of Chad and Sudan to refrain from any act that may lead to a further escalation of tensions," it added.

Cabinet to meet in Kadugli

Al-Raed reports the Council of Ministers will hold its regular meeting Thursday in Kadugli, Southern Kordofan State. President Al Bashir will visit the region tomorrow and will chair the Cabinet meeting the following day.

President Bashir inaugurates Shendi Bridge

Addressing a rally yesterday marking inauguration of a bridge linking the towns of Shendi and Matama in the north, President Al-Bashir called on the people not to heed to foreign provocations, saying the government’s response will continue in the form of sustainable development, **Al-Rai Al-Aam** reports.

China promised to block sanctions against Sudan – NCP official

Al-Wifaq reports NCP official Mohamed Mandour Al-Mahdi as saying that the Chinese government promised them to play a powerful role within the Security Council to prevent imposition of sanctions against Sudan. Al-Mahdi made the statements upon return from a visit to China.

Meanwhile, **Al-Ayyam** reports Al-Mahdi described Bahar Idries Abu-Garda's appearance at the ICC as a conspiracy intended to weaken the government to prevent Al-Bashir from contesting upcoming elections.

Defence Minister leaves for Belorussia

Al-Akhbar reports a military aircraft flying a high level military delegation headed by the Defence Minister to the Republic of Belorussia on an official visit, made an emergency landing yesterday at Dongola airport when one of the engines failed. The Defence Minister and the accompanying delegation returned to Khartoum and proceeded to Belorussia.

Army closed the border with Chad

Al-Sudani, citing unnamed military source, reports that the border between Sudan and Chad has been closed, saying Sudan's army stands ready to repulse any Chad-backed JEM assault on Sudanese territory.

One killed and one wounded in shooting among Mundari

Sudan Tribune website 17/5/09 — As the two commissioners of Juba and Terekeka Counties were attempting to ensure a ceasefire before reconciliation among their warring communities, one Mundai was shot dead yesterday morning at 6 am by a fellow Mundari and another wounded because they were suspected of spying for the Bari people.

The body of Phiilp Loro Morobe is still at Juba Teaching Hospital mortuary while the wounded man is recovering in the same hospital.

While the wounded victim was still confined to the hospital this afternoon, a section of Mundari vowed to revenge him, whose mother and parental uncles are from Bari.

The Mundari have accused Bari of maintaining militia that legally are required to be integrated into official forces.

Tribal clash leaves 5 killed, 30 injured in Rumbek

Clashes between the Dinka-Gok and Dinka-Aggar over cattle and land have left at least five people dead including three SPLA soldiers and 30 others wounded in Rumbek, reports **Al-Intibaha**.

Primary School teachers go on strike

Miraya - Primary School teachers in Juba Central Equatoria State have entered a one week strike in protest for three months arrears of salaries.

One of the teachers told Miraya **FM** that they have not received their salaries for three months. He also said the teachers were unhappy because only 75 % of their February salaries were paid to them. The teachers claim that they are not in a position to continue teaching due to lack of finance to sustain their families.

AL, OIC and AU discuss proposals to address Darfur – Adviser

Al-Sahafa reports the Presidential Adviser Ghazi Salah Al-Din has described the Arab League, OIC and AU consultative meeting as good, saying that daring proposals were presented for addressing the Darfur issue. He said Sudan government and the regional organizations shared identical views on how the issue should be resolved.

According to **Sudan Tribune website**, the regional organizations urged the international community to put pressures on Darfur rebel groups in order to negotiate with the Sudanese government a political solution.

AU Commission Chairperson, Mr. Jean Ping; Arab League Secretary-General, Mr. Amr Moussa; and OIC Secretary-General, Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu; held talks with the Sudanese president and visited Darfur where they met UNAMID officials and visited displaced camps.

The three chiefs of the regional organizations were in a two day visit to Khartoum in response to the invitation of the Sudanese government, and in line with their commitment to coordinate efforts to end Darfur crisis.

In a statement issued at the end of the visit, the three top officials said they were briefed on the latest round of Doha peace process between Sudanese government and JEM.

They renewed their call for the rebel movements to join the peace process, also called the international community to exert the necessary pressure on the parties refusing to join the Darfur peace talks in the framework of Arab-African initiative, sponsored by the State of Qatar.

The statement pointed out to the efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in the region and he concerted efforts with the UN and the NGOS.

Also the OIC Secretary-General, Dr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, announced the construction of 120 villages costing 485 million USD funded by the state members of his organization. He also said the organization will hold a special meeting dedicated to support Darfur development.

With regard to the ICC arrest warrant for President Al-Bashir, they visiting heads of regional organizations reiterated their position asking for the suspension of the ICC jurisdiction by the UN Security Council.

ICC decision against Bashir "undermines efforts to solve the problem of Darfur and jeopardize the peace in the Sudan and in the whole region as well as sending negative signals with regard to the Darfur peace negotiation."

The statement further said the three parties have agreed to coordinate and to combine efforts and intensify contact with other intentional and regional organizations to realize that objective.

Finally, they called on the leaders of both Sudan and Chad to respect the sovereignty of their countries, good-neighborly relations, common interests, and commitment to the implementation of the agreements concluded between them and the latest cessation of hostilities agreement signed in Doha on the third of May.

Parliament to debate press bill today

The National Assembly will discuss the controversial press bill today after the two partners agreed on the bill's general features, **Al-Sahafa** reports.

Parliament adopts severe security measures

The National Assembly is introducing a series of security measures including installation of electronic cameras to monitor MPs following reports of an MP entering the House with a loaded revolver, reports *The Citizen*.

Two students shot dead in Nyala

Al-Sahafa reports two students shot dead yesterday in Nyala, South Darfur State, by unidentified gunmen. The two students were stopped by gunmen at 9:00 pm Sunday and shot dead when refused to give their mobiles.

France asks Libya to ease Sudan Chad tension

Sudan Tribune website 17/5/09— French President Nicolas Sarkozy today urged the Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi to pursue his efforts to ease the current tension between Sudan and Chad.

French Defense Minister Hervé Morin was in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, to deliver a message from President Sarkozy to his Libyan counterpart on a strategic partnership, the official JANA said.

"Sarkozy appealed to the (Libyan leader) to continue his efforts to overcome the tension in Sudan-Chad relations. Also France expressed satisfaction at the prospects for the resumption of negotiations between the government of Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)," the agency further reported.

Sudan accuses Chad of sending troops to aid rebels

Reuters 18/5/09 - Sudan's top official in North Darfur accused Chad on Monday of sending troops into his territory to fight alongside Darfur rebels, raising the stakes in the simmering tension between the two countries.

North Darfur governor Osman Kebir said Chadian forces had reinforced fighters from Darfur's JEM in an attack on the strategic town of Kornoï on Saturday.

Court sentenced man to six months imprisonment

Khartoum North Court yesterday sentenced a man to six months imprisonment because of assaulting a female employee of the National Fund for Social Insurance in Khartoum, *Al-Ayyam* reports. The man slapped the female employee when she asked him to produce more documents to encash his cheque.

Peace in Darfur – one step forward, two steps back

IRIN 18/5/09 - Rebels in Sudan's Darfur region are showing signs of unity, but it has not brought their region any closer to a comprehensive peace, analysts said, as the government wrapped up another round of unsuccessful discussions with the most active rebel group. Since the indictment on 4 March of President al-Bashir for war crimes, JEM claims to have made big strides towards uniting fractious rebels by bringing other groups under its umbrella.

"We are quite hopeful that by mid-June [at the latest], we will have one organization," Gebreil Ibrahim, JEM's economic adviser and brother of the group's leader, Khalil, told *IRIN*. "Now we have started calling it the New JEM."

What flared up in 2003 as a conflict between the government and two main rebel groups – the

JEM and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, or SLM/A – over marginalisation and distribution of wealth and power, has resulted in fighting between splintered rebel groups, increased banditry and ethnic clashes.

But Darfur's rebellion has come "full circle" and is once again re-emerging as two main groups – the JEM and the faction of the SLM/A led by Abdel Wahid Mohammed Nur, according to Theodore Murphy of the Geneva-based Humanitarian Dialogue Centre, which has helped facilitate negotiations between rebels and the government.

"To a degree, it's down to efforts within the movements to unite, but also because the smaller groups are falling apart and being absorbed into the larger," he told IRIN, calling it "unity by attrition".

Last month, Suleiman Jamous, an influential commander with the Unity faction of the SLM/A, announced that he, 30 commanders and 500 soldiers were joining the JEM, virtually decapitating the SLA-Unity faction.

The JEM said hundreds more soldiers from various factions of the SLA and other rebel groups had also joined.

Following the government's expulsion of 13 major international aid agencies from Sudan – most of whom were serving the 2.7 million people living in camps in Darfur – hundreds of civilians have also joined JEM ranks, according to spokesman Ahmed Hussain Adam.

For the first time, Hussain said, members of Arab groups traditionally aligned with the government – the Beni Halba, the Rizeigat and the Misseriya – were joining the JEM in their hundreds.

Nur's faction of the SLM/A is similarly "dabbling" with bringing in former splinter groups, Murphy said.

But despite these strides, a comprehensive peace deal remains elusive in the semi-arid western region of Sudan, where as many as 300,000 people are estimated to have died and another 4.7 million depend on aid to survive.

The JEM was the only player in a February attempt at restarting peace talks with the government, at which it signed a "goodwill agreement" to exchange prisoners and facilitate the flow of aid to Darfur. Renewed discussions beginning 6 May on implementing that agreement came to a close in the Qatari capital Doha last week with no tangible results.

While the return to two main rebel groups is a "step forward", Murphy said both groups refused to negotiate together, so "it may not get us that much closer to a comprehensive process". Others fear the JEM can never be the only unifying force, as some groups will always oppose its Islamist nature. Many analysts say its recent popularity is due to the money it offers new recruits. It has also engaged in various battles over the last few months, in an effort, analysts said, to prove its military strength and thus increase its leverage in negotiations.

"Unless the structural approach that has been taken to the Doha talks is opened to include other movements ...comprehensive peace agreements in Darfur will not be possible," said Paula Roque, a researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, a Pretoria-based think-tank.

On 15 March, the SLM's Unity and Juba factions, as well as the SLM faction led by Khamis

Abdallah Abakar, the breakaway JEM faction led by Idris Azraq and the United Revolutionary Forces Front, signed an agreement in Libya “to create a unified front and participate in the peace negotiations”, according to the latest Darfur report by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

This small alliance was not present during the recent discussions between the JEM and the government, which ended on 12 May and will resume on 27 May.

“The special relationship the US and the Sudan government are building up with the JEM, prioritising [leader] Khalil Ibrahim’s movement in peace talks, risks backfiring unless balanced by other contacts, especially with Arabs,” writes Julie Flint on the blog, Making sense of Darfur.

The Darfur conflict pits mostly non-Arab rebels against the Arab-dominated government and has exacerbated tensions between nomadic Arabs and settled Africans in the region. While the Africans have suffered most in the conflict, Arabs have also been victims.

“The peace process has always been between the government on one side and the predominantly non-Arab rebel movements on the other,” Flint writes. As the JEM becomes the main negotiating partner, and Arabs continue to be excluded from the process, “the parameters of the peace process are shrinking rather than expanding, as they must”.

Who represents the region’s native group, the Fur, has become another problem. Nur, the Fur’s rebel leader and one of the founders of the rebellion, refuses to negotiate with the government until the violence in Darfur stops. Other rebel groups say he has been averse to any co-operation with them as well.

“Abdel Wahid [Nur] has essentially painted himself into a corner,” said Colin Thomas-Jensen, a policy adviser at the Washington-based Enough Project. The JEM’s political and military surge has led to increasing discontent with Nur’s leadership, “but there’s no one to fill that vacuum.

“The Fur, being the largest group in Darfur and being the largest group affected by this war, need strong representation in any peace process. The consensus view among negotiators and mediators has developed that Abdel Wahid will not provide that... Finding a Fur representation has become an obsession for many within the mediation.”

Thus while some degree of rebel unity is a step forward for Darfur, increased politicisation of the conflict and the lack of representation of some groups continue to plague peace efforts. Meanwhile, analysts and civil society alike have grown “tired” of the constant making and breaking of alliances among the rebels.

For Ibrahim Mudawi, chairman of the Sudan Social Development Organization, Sudan’s largest NGO, which is active in Darfur, these latest rebel mergers are insignificant.

“All of them [the rebel groups] are irrelevant. All are fragmented. They are sitting on smaller and smaller constituencies,” he said. “There is no one having a vision or plan.”

OP-ED: Government and the right to information

(Al-Ayyam - Mahjoub Mohamed Saleh) Government should review its information sharing capabilities and institutions. The media continues to get important information on Sudan from outside the country and could not publish such information because of lack of feedback from the officials in our government. This only increases tensions between the executive organs and the legislative organs of state that keep seeking information from officials to no avail. Local media

outlets also lose credibility as they fail to get the official government line on the issues. Government also stands to lose from this. Transparency is now a basic tenet for good governance and the right to access to information is an inalienable basic right. The release of information on the facts, even if they were negative, would not hurt Government but would instead help it counter challenges.

It is unacceptable that Israel should carry out a raid on Sudanese territory while our Government remains silent. We came to know the information from foreign media thus forcing government to quietly confirm without even briefing the legislative organs of government. It is also unacceptable that the legislative organs continue to demand an explanation without receiving any satisfactory response from the parties concerned. The scenario repeats itself with the recent Chadian raid on Darfur. As for the local media, communication channels are totally blocked when events that require a formal statement occur. The local media could not receive any reaction from local officials in confirmation or denial of important reports on Sudan from the international media. The result is that the news keeps on circulating in its original form as published by the foreign media outlet with no official comment on the issue. This is especially true if the report is related to security or the military where local media will be required to seek permission that is hard to come by before publishing it.

Government's failure to provide information to the media may not be all that surprising but then the failure to inform parliament is hard to believe. The executive organs of government could have held closed briefing sessions with parliament on information of a sensitive nature, among other measures ... but it seems that the right to publish information is not part of the agenda of the state.

On the forthcoming elections

(Al-Ayyam – Mohamed Musa Hireika) Current rhetoric over the elections have not left the “we are ready for the elections” stage and are yet to proceed to elections strategies and statements on how to address the issues. None, save those few people in the know, are aware of the technical aspects of the actual elections process.

The people of Sudan envisage the forthcoming elections to be like the last elections processes in which one was to cast the ballot for a symbol that represents one's preferred candidate. The forthcoming elections are more complex. Voters will have to elect the President of the Republic, the VP, state governors, Members of Parliament amid a plethora of complexities that one has to carry out within a few minutes.

The GoSS was right to propose mock elections to prepare voters for this process but then the problem is that such an exercise requires extra funding that may increase the expenses of the actual elections. All this shows a total lack of voter education and the dilemma the voter is bound to face in the forthcoming elections.

State-owned media - especially television – should use drama to educate the people on the complexities of the process while maintaining impartiality in their promotions.

Should the status quo continue, then the entire electoral process becomes an enigma that would give birth to all the wrong processes during the elections. This is bound to open the doors to some sort of legal forging of the elections and they will say that ignorance of the laws is no justification for wrongdoing.

Photo

*The front page of **The Citizen** newspaper of today carries the photo in colors of a truck carrying a number of vehicles with the UN logo and the caption: **WE'RE NOT LEAVING: Truck carrying newly-arrived UN vehicles in Khartoum.***