



Breaking News

- Sudan police arrest more than 60 journalists (**AFP**)
- Sudan approves key electoral commission (**AFP**)

Local News Headlines

- Deployment of 80% of UNAMID troops by next March - UN (**Sudan Vision/dailies**)
- France and Britain decide to support efforts to defer ICC indictment of Bashir (**Local dailies**)
- Southerners do not exceed 22% of Sudan population – Yassin (**Al-Sudani**)
- South Sudan oil share \$ 264.32 m for September (**Al-Sudani**)
- Controversy over Elections Commission resolved (**Akhbar Al Youm**)
- 210 SPLA officers in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan integrated into police (**Al-Watan/Al-Intibaha**)
- 65 SPLA officers off to South Africa for training (**Al-Intibaha**)
- NCP complains of obstacles hindering its activities in southern Sudan (**Al-Intibaha**)
- Preparations completed to receive Bashir in Kassala (**Sudan Vision**)
- FVP visit to northern State delayed due to busy schedule (**SMC**)
- Government to allocate hall for UNAMID at south Darfur airport (**Akhir Lahza**)

Websites/International Headlines

- No need to consult SPLA on purchase of weapon – SAF (**Miraya FM**)
- Sudan president asks Saudi King to press Washington on ICC deferral (**ST**)
- SLM rebels say Sudanese army conducted reconnaissance flights in Darfur Jebel Mara (**ST**)
- Sudanese economists optimistic Obama to review sanctions (**ST**)
- Jordan to convey Sudan's position during ICC members meetings (**ST**)
- JEM delegation to fly soon to Qatar for talks on Darfur peace (**ST**)

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Highlights

Breaking News

Sudan police arrest more than 60 journalists

(AFP) — Sudanese police detained more than 60 journalists, herding them into a truck after they protested against draconian censorship outside parliament today (Monday), witnesses and reporters said.

Scores of journalists rallied outside parliament condemning the censorship which flouts the freedom of expression supposed to be enshrined in the country's interim constitution following the end of a north-south civil war.

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement, former southern rebels who now share government with the Arab-led north, condemned the arrests after parliament approved an independent electoral commission paving the way to free elections.

Police, who had asked the reporters to disperse, ordered all remaining journalists into at least one waiting truck and drove them to a police station in Omdurman, the twin city of Khartoum, shortly after midday (0900 GMT).

"They took us very harshly in one lorry. We are about 78. Now we are in custody. They are talking about interrogation. They took our mobiles and money," Murtada el-Ghali, the editor in chief of the Ajas Al-Hurriya, told AFP.

"We are in one room. We are sitting on the floor. They took our names. I am the only editor in chief, but there are editing managers, high-ranking journalists and 27 girls among us," he added.

Police were not immediately reachable for comment, but SPLM deputy secretary general Yasser Arman quoted an officer at the police station as saying that 63 journalists were under arrest.

Two witnesses put the number of arrested journalists at around 60 to 65.

"This is a clear violation of the CPA and the constitution. The SPLM condemns this act of aggression against the journalists. This indicates how the democratic transformation is lagging behind," Arman told **AFP**.

Unless outstanding legislation pertaining to the interim constitution is passed in the current session of parliament "SPLM MPs will not endorse the budget of 2009, which was submitted today to the parliament" he said.

"What is going on right now in the police station is contrary to what happened in parliament. You cannot pass the electoral commission and stop freedom of expression," he added.

Sudan approves key electoral commission

(AFP) Sudan's parliament today approved an independent electoral commission in a crucial step towards free elections due next year that was immediately overshadowed by a mass arrest of journalists.

The line-up of the nine-member commission, appointed by the presidency and submitted to parliament for approval, was passed by 298 votes to 12 objections more than three months behind schedule, said an AFP reporter.

The names were drawn up by the three-man Sudanese presidency, head of state Omar al-Beshir, First Vice President and leader of the semi-autonomous south Salva Kiir, and Vice President Ali Osman Taha, after lengthy disagreement.

Sudan's new electoral law grants women 25 percent of the seats in parliament and introduces proportional representation by enshrining quotas for political parties in what has been billed a road towards democratic transformation.

That election was boycotted by the opposition, and Beshir was first declared president after a 1996 poll widely denounced as fraudulent.

Complete democratic transformation in Sudan is also dependent on a major overhaul of legislation governing the media and national security.

"We need to have the elections, but they should be in a better environment, they should be fair and free," said Arman.

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Deployment of 80% of hybrid forces by next March

Sudan Vision reports USG Susana Malcorra has affirmed that 80% of UNAMID troop deployment would be achieved by next March. She expressed satisfaction for implementation of tripartite mechanism's agreement concluded last October. She said the next meeting would convene in January.

MFA Undersecretary Mutrif Siddig said government keen to implement all what had been agreed upon. He said UN pledged to fund infrastructural projects such as airports, roads and railways to facilitate provision of aid. He said the helicopters issue had also been addressed, an African country agreed to provide the choppers. Ms Susana also had a meeting with Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie for discussion on the hybrid issue. Malcorra said the meeting was good and emphasized the need to overcome all challenges hindering full deployment of troops so that the Mission could protect civilians in Darfur in line with its mandate.

SUNA says UN announced commitment to deploy 60% of UNAMID troops in Darfur by the end of current year, promising to raise it to 80% by the end of next March. Commenting on the deadline set by the UN to deploy 80% of the UNAMID, MFA Undersecretary Mutrif Siddig expressed hope that the percentage would be met, explaining that Sudan would work to assist them to reach that end.

According to **local dailies**, USG Susana described her meetings as "constructive" and the parties are working harmoniously to implement the memo of understanding. However, Malcorra

said lots of steps need to be taken but did not elaborate.

Akhbar Al Youm reports UNAMID agreed to Sudan Government's request to protect relief convoys in Darfur and an agreement was also reached on entry visa and use of railway to transport UNAMID's equipment. MFA spokesperson Ali Al Sadiq said all issues raised at the meeting yesterday were addressed especially customs, entry visa and permission for movement within the country.

France and Britain decide to support efforts to defer ICC indictment of Bashir

Local dailies report France and Britain yesterday decided to send delegations to look into Doha's plan to resolve Darfur crisis. Informed sources told **SUNA** in Damascus that France and Britain decided to support efforts at SC for deferring President Bashir's indictment by the ICC for another year. Senior officials in the two governments informed human rights organizations that the step is meant to protect peace processes in Darfur and southern Sudan. Human rights activists in Damascus said London and Paris would join efforts with Arab League, AU, China and Russia to support UNGA resolution this month to defer decision to indict President Bashir.

The sources said London and Paris decided to take this step after they felt that Darfur peace process and CPA are at risk. The sources confirmed that British and French Foreign Ministers are expected to meet on 23 November to discuss a unified position on the ICC issue.

Southerners do not exceed 22% of Sudan population – Yassin

Al-Sudani reports Central Bureau of Statistics Chairman Yassin Al-Haj Abideen said fifth population census results have not yet been disclosed to authorities in the north and the south. Reacting to South-South Conference's recommendation to reject census results, he expects the number of southerners not to exceed 22% of population. Abideen said census results would be handed over to official authorities in December and final analysis would be declared in February next year.

South Sudan oil share \$ 264.32 m for September

Al-Sudani reports total oil revenues for September reached \$590.66 m; Sudan government's share is \$326.34 m and GoSS share is \$265.32 m. \$ 182.82 m from revenues of exported oil and \$81.46 m from revenues of crude oil used by local refineries. Finance Ministry Undersecretary El-Tayeb Abu Ganaya said after meeting of the Oil Revenues Sharing Committee that total direct transfers to GoSS for September reached \$219.45 millions. He said the total transfers to oil producing States including Abyei reached \$13.60 m - \$3.55 m for Unity State, \$6.21 m for Upper Nile State, \$2.02 m for southern Kordofan State and \$1.82 transferred to Abyei.

Controversy over Elections Commission resolved

Akhbar Al Youm reports the Presidency at last brought an end to controversy over nominations for membership of the elections commission. The list of nominees will be submitted to the National Assembly today for endorsement. The Assembly will also continue deliberations today on the Presidency's nominees for the post of chairman and members of the Parties Council.

210 SPLA officers in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan integrated into police

Al-Watan/Al-Intibaha report 60 SPLA officers from the Blue Nile State and 150 others from Nuba Mountains Sector have been integrated into police. Blue Nile State's AEC co-chair Zaid Musa said CPA implementation in the Area is progressing satisfactorily. The Blue Nile AEC and Southern Kordofan AEC will hold a joint workshop 25-26 November for consultation.

65 SPLA officers off to South Africa for training

Al-Intibaha reports a third batch of 65 SPLA officers left for South Africa for training. According to informed military sources, the group will be SPLA's nucleus for an air force in southern Sudan. The paper also learns that heavy weapons continue pouring into a north-south border area. Eyewitnesses said heavy SPLA weapons were transported to southern Kordofan (south of Abyei). They said many SPLA officers are unhappy about tendency of SPLA elements hailing from Abyei Area who continue pushing for a military action in the Area.

NCP complains of obstacles hindering its activities in southern Sudan

Al-Intibaha reports NCP complains of many obstacles and problems preventing it from exercising its political activities in southern Sudan. NCP official Mohamed Mandour Al-Mahdi said there are a number of bilateral issues need to be addressed by the two partners including freedom for NCP and other political forces to exercise political activity in southern Sudan as well as removing problems facing SPLM activities in some northern States.

Preparations completed to receive Bashir in Kassala

Sudan Vision reports President Bashir will inaugurate a road linking Kassala and Eritrea and also address a rally marking 19th PDF Anniversary in Kassala today.

Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Mohamed Hussein told **Al-Rai Al-Aam** newspaper that the PDF would be maintained so long as there are challenges facing the country.

FVP visit to northern State delayed due to busy schedule

SMC reports FVP Kiir postponed his scheduled visit to northern states indefinitely. SPLM spokeswoman for northern sector Kinigi Garmali told **SMC** that the sector sends letters to FVP requesting him to visit northern states and addresses a number of national issues. However, he said the scheduled visit clashed with Kiir's busy timetable. The visit would take place some time later.

Government to allocate hall for UNAMID at south Darfur airport

Akhir Lahza reports the director of international relations at South Darfur State who is also the rapporteur of the high state committee for UNAMID affairs Muhammad Salih Abu said Sudan government agreed to allocate a special hall at Nyala International Airport for UNAMID provided it is run by Sudanese authorities.

Websites/International News Coverage

No need to consult SPLA on purchase of weapon – SAF

(**Miraya FM**) SAF Spokesperson Office Director Lt. Colonel Alsawarmi Khalid Saad told Miraya FM that there is no need for SAF to consult SPLA on purchase of weapons. He explained that SAF is the national army of the country and the SPLA is an integrated faction. Alsawarmi added the Naivasha agreement allows the army to buy weapons.

On the other hand, UNAMID stated it has formed a committee to probe the allegations by some Darfur movement that they had been attacked by government forces after the ceasefire announcement in Darfur.

Sudan president asks Saudi King to press Washington on ICC deferral

(**Sudan Tribune website**) President Bashir asked his Saudi counterpart to bring up the issue of his indictment with US officials, an Arab diplomat in Washington told Sudan Tribune.

The request was made during a two day visit by Al-Bashir to the Saudi capital last month where he met with King Abdullah privately.

According to the diplomat who asked not to be named, the Sudanese head of state urged the Saudi monarch to use his country's strong relations with Washington and press them to drop their opposition to a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution freezing the International Criminal Court (ICC) move against Al-Bashir.

During the meeting Al-Bashir lashed out at "Western conspiracies against Arab and Muslims" the diplomat said. King Abdullah however, was noncommittal on heeding to Al-Bashir's plea on mediating with the US.

The US, which is not a state party to the ICC, has emerged as the staunchest opponent to suspending ICC prosecution of the Sudanese president.

"If asked—if forced to vote today—the United States, even if it was 191 countries against one, would veto an Article 16 [resolution]," Ambassador Richard Williamson said.

SLM rebels say Sudanese army conducted reconnaissance flights in Darfur Jebel Mara

(Sudan Tribune website) SPLM led by Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur accused the Sudanese army of aerial reconnaissance flights over its positions in Jebel Mara saying it used planes painted with the names and colors of INGOs.

He also warned that humanitarian flights should be signaled to his movement to avoid any confusion because they will shoot unnotified flights.

The SLM chief told Sudan Tribune that Sudanese army using planes painted by the colors and the acronyms of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) conducted dozens of low level reconnaissance flights over the positions of SLA troops in eastern and western Jebel Mara in western Darfur.

Al-Nur denounced the low level flights that have caused a state of panic among civilians in the vicinity. He further added that Khartoum government is "the regime of falsehood" and appealed to the international community to not trust Sudanese president pledges of ceasefire and peace in Darfur.

Al-Nur urged INGOs to inform his movement about the flights of their planes warning the SLA troops will shoot starting from today any plane flying over SLM controlled areas. He said "it is clear that the government troops intend to attack our positions and we should be ready for that."

Sudanese economists optimistic Obama to review sanctions

(Sudan Tribune website) A number of Sudanese economists have expressed hope that the US president-elect Barack Obama would lift sanctions imposed since 1997.

The economists interviewed by the pro-government Al-Rayaam said that Washington will likely review its Sudan policies including the economic sanctions "to achieve US interests particularly oil".

Dr. Osman Al-Badri one of the economists interviewed said that “anything is subject to change” speaking on US policies towards his country.

The former presidential adviser Dr. Esam Al-Sideeg stressed that unifying the internal front and resolving Darfur conflict is the key to influencing the new US administration.

Al-Sideeg gave an example of Gum Arabic which the US excluded from the sanctions on the grounds of “national interests”.

Another economic expert Dr. Mohamed Sir Al-Khatim echoed Al-Sideeg’s call and added that the government “must adopt policies supportive of its people”. He further said that any upcoming dialogue with Obama’s administration “must be based on understanding the American mentality”.

Jordan to convey Sudan’s position during ICC members meetings

(Sudan Tribune website) The Sudanese justice minister Abdel-Basit Sabdarat will travel to Jordan this week and deliver his country’s position on the indictment of president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The Jordanian daily Al-Dustoor said that Sabdarat will meet his counterpart Ayman Ouda and provide him with a written response to the ICC move to be discussed during the meeting of states parties to the court.

The newspaper said that Jordan agreed to pass on Sudan’s position during the meetings which adjourn on November 22nd.

In mid-July the ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo announced that he is seeking an arrest warrant for Al-Bashir.

The newspaper report said that Amman advised Sudanese officials that they are only able to offer legal assistance but will not be able to intervene in mediation efforts with Western capitals to freeze Al-Bashir’s indictment.

Furthermore Amman recommended that Khartoum cooperate with the ICC.

JEM delegation to fly soon to Qatar for talks on Darfur peace

(Sudan Tribune website) JEM said will send a delegation to Qatar to hold more talks on a peace mediation that the Arab Gulf country seeks to sponsor. However, the rebel movement said they have not yet taken a final stance over the initiative.

Ahmed Hussein Adam told Sudan Tribune that a delegation would soon fly to the Qatari capital Doha for further consultations on the Qatari efforts to achieve peace in Darfur. "The delegation will carry JEM’s vision on the whole peace process but also it is keen to listen to the Qatari officials" he added.