



Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission In Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

International Websites

Thousands flooded by Sudan dam closure - villagers

KHARTOUM, Sept 30 (Reuters) - Thousands of Sudanese villagers were flooded out of their homes on Tuesday, village representatives said, blaming the floods on a new \$2 billion dam on the River Nile.

But the Sudan government's Dams Implementation Unit denied it had shut the gates of the Merowe dam, downriver from the villages, saying any floods were caused by seasonal rains.

Many villagers from the northern Manaseer area are refusing to leave their river-side farms and homes to make way for the Chinese-built dam designed to double Sudan's electricity supply.

The dam, which is due to start generating power by the end of the year, will flood a large part of the surrounding area 350 km (220 miles) north of Khartoum.

Hashim Ali, spokesman for a committee representing the Manaseer villagers, told Reuters more than 1,000 families on four islands in the Nile were stranded without food and shelter on Tuesday morning.

"Right now parts of the islands are being submerged...Farms near the river have been destroyed. They are fighting the water. The people have had to go to higher ground on the middle of the islands," he said.

He said that villagers had been left without help as local authority offices were closed on Tuesday, the first day of the Eid holiday marking the end of the Muslim Ramadan fast.

Ali said waters started rising on Sunday when managers closed the gates to test Merowe dam, around 100km (60 miles) downriver from the islands, and floods had peaked in the early hours of Tuesday morning. But a spokesman for the Dams Implementation Unit dismissed the accusations. "The gates have not been shut. This area floods every year," he said.

Lakes State Governor says recent Rumbek killings regrettable

(***Sudan Tribune website***, 30/9/08) JUBA –Lakes State Governor Daniel Awet Akot said the SPLA's recent disarmament exercise in Rumbek, which left several people killed and wounded, was regrettable. He was addressing the 6th Governors' Forum of Southern Sudan on Monday in Juba.

[GoSS had called for voluntary and forced disarmament of civil populations in the region, directing state governments to implement the campaign using the organized forces in their respective states.]

Awet told the Governors Forum that 80% of the security incidents he faced in the state stem from internal fighting between various Lake State Dinka clans over "cattle rustling and theft, competition over grazing lands and water points and bad judgments of judiciary personnel in settling crime cases."

He spoke of citizens “killing themselves” and of “county against county and payam against payam”. Among the clans fighting against one another, he listed Nyang vs Joth section, Amothnhom vs Pakam, Kuacdit vs Kuac Thii of Ciec clan of Yirol East, Apak vs Atuot-Luac and Gok vs Jarwaw.

Awet said some of the security issues affecting the state were caused by cross-border conflicts with citizens of Warrap, Unity and Central Equatoria states.

He went on to blame SPLA “sons of the area” for the Rumbek killings during the 8 September disarmament exercise, saying members of this group went to specific residences and committed the atrocities. He said he had ordered that the culprits be arrested and brought to book.

The Governor did note that the disarmament exercise yielded up to 4,000 guns collected from citizens.

South Sudan President calls for Public Service reform

(***Sudan Tribune website***, 29/9/08) JUBA – The 6th Governors Forum of Southern Sudan began on Monday in Juba with a keynote speech by First Vice President of the Republic of Sudan and President of the GoSS, General Salva Kiir Mayardit. He called for introduction of Public Service Reform and further decentralization of governance in the semi-autonomous region.

He directed the Government institutions to immediately embark on reforming their institutions in accordance with the guidelines to be provided to the institutions by the Ministry of Labor, Public Service and Human Resource Development.

President Kiir also stated that “both public and private media must undertake mass education on the importance of reform and its implication on the future of this country.”

Kiir said his government had already identified functions that should be further devolved to state governments and said he also expected state governments to further decentralize to counties as part of their reform program.

He predicted that there are those in the government that may try to resist the reform “because it challenges the status quo and destabilizes the comfort zones of the few individuals in the system.”

“Those few individuals whose comfort zones shall be affected will try to resist the changes being introduced, but I want to remind us all that this nation is bigger than any one of us, so we must by all means ensure that we sacrifice our individual interests for the benefit of the country,” he stated.

Kiir further explained that operationalizing decentralization is an aspect of the wider reform which is meant to ensure that government services reach the people and that it is in line with the philosophy of “taking towns to the people”.

Lack of security, the need for administrative and fiscal decentralization, workforce downsizing of workforces and the harmonization of tax collection at border points dominated the subsequent presentations by the ten governors of the Southern Sudan States.

Disturbances, political crisis continue in capital of Sudan's Lakes state

(***Sudan Tribune website***, 29/9/08, RUMBOK) — Protests and a political crisis continue in Rumbek, the Lakes State capital, according to government officials and anonymous sources. A group of legislators who have sought to impeach the state finance minister is currently at odds with the state executive and his supporters in the assembly. The impeached speaker of the legislative assembly, Isaiah Machinkok, who led efforts against the allegedly corrupt finance minister, said by phone that he will not quit his office because he was removed by the governor and his cabinet and not by proper procedures in the assembly.

Warrap traditional leaders form council for peace

(***Sudan Tribune website***, 1/10/08) TONJ – Over 100 chiefs from Warrap State have formed a council in Tonj to strengthen their positions as traditional leaders so that they can more effectively deal with inter-clan conflict that residents claim have killed thousands of people since the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The new Council of Traditional Leaders of Warrap State is the fifth such state council. Similar bodies already exist in Eastern, Western and Central Equatoria as well as in Lakes State.

GoSS President Salva Kiir attended the first three days of the Tonj meeting. He admonished the chiefs for the inter-clan and inter-tribal killings that have continued to plague the state. "You are killing yourselves," he said.

He told the chiefs that their powers had not been taken away by the executive of government but rather, in practical terms, by the judiciary. Judges were dealing with matters "that are supposed to be addressed by the chiefs, who know about what is happening to their people," Kiir said. This was why the chiefs had been side-lined as administrators of justice even on family problems. He promised he would take up the issue of restoring the chiefs' traditional legal powers with the South's Chief Justice.

The new Council's 15-member executive includes representatives from all of the state's six counties and from Abyei, which may choose to join Warrap in 2011 when its citizens vote on their future. A representative from the small Bongo tribe was also included in the body since all ethnic groups and languages must be represented equally irrespective of the size of the group.

The chiefs agreed that the council should be apolitical; that it would meet at least once a year; and that its central office would be located in Kuacjok. Council positions of treasurer, secretary and chairperson were filled by Chief Peter Mawien Mawien, Chief Baket Makuac Abiam and Chief Jacob Lang Madel respectively.

High on the Council's list of priorities is finding a way to halt inter-clan fighting in the state. This week, the Agouk, Kuac Ayok and Apuk ethnic groups agreed to a peace deal following the conflict which earlier this year killed dozens and displaced hundreds of people. The deal was overseen by President Kiir. (ST)

Sudanese newspaper resumes publication after suspension

(***Radio Miraya FM website***, 30/9/08) -- The National Press Council in Khartoum has lifted the suspension on the English language daily newspaper *The Citizen* with immediate effect. Editor-in-Chief Nhial Bol told Radio Miraya he had received a letter from the Council allowing him to resume the newspaper's publication without preconditions. *The Citizen* and the *Sudan Tribune* had been suspended by the National Press Council in early September following allegation that the editors of the two dailies were not resident in Khartoum as National Press Council rules require.

Italian town brings joy, gifts to children of Darfur on eve of holiday

September 29, 2008 (EL FASHER) — To mark Eid El-Fit, more than 500 students from schools in El Fasher and from the nearby Aboushouk and El Salam IDP camps have received gifts from the people of Brindisi and UN staff based in the Italian city. The gifts, donated via UNAMID, included clothing, shoes, toys, books, pens and pencils.

Mohammed Yousef Mohammed, Director of the Darfur Handicapped Centre, which helps some 1,167 victims of armed conflict, traffic accidents and polio, welcomed the donations.

In recent years, the people of Brindisi (home to the UN Logistics Base, support hub for UN peacekeeping activities) have joined UN staff based there to raise donations for children caught in conflict or disaster zones. Similar donations had been sent to children in Burundi, Pakistan, Lebanon and Liberia. **(ST)**

Congo civilians flee to Sudan to escape LRA attacks

KHARTOUM (**AFP**, 30/9/08) --Hundreds of refugees from northeastern Congo have fled to neighboring south Sudan after rebels launched brutal attacks, a UNHCR statement said Tuesday.

Some 1,200 Congolese trekked through remote forest to reach the Yambio region of southern Sudan's Western Equatoria state, after gunmen destroyed their homes and abducted children in the Dungu region of Congo. The raiders are reported to be from Uganda's rebel Lord's Resistance Army.

"Approximately 1,200 refugees fled to the villages of Gangura and Sakure following attacks by armed groups believed to be LRA fighters around Dungu," the statement read. "Refugees gave accounts of abducted children and homes set ablaze in acts of savagery."

The refugees said they were forced to trek for four days through thick jungle and swamps despite heavy rains and floods as the LRA had blocked other routes.

"Unconfirmed reports indicate that bodies were seen floating in rivers along the way," the UNHCR statement read.

Uganda: Starve rebels for peace

(**BBC**, 30/9/08) - Uganda's government has urged aid agencies to stop supplying food to the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Minister for Disaster Preparedness Tarsis Kabwegyere said this would increase pressure on the group to sign a peace deal to end their 20-year war. He said the LRA should be starved out of its camps in the forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mr Kabwegyere said rebel leader Joseph Kony had manipulated peace talks to gain access to food and medicine. "Whoever is giving food to LRA should say: 'We're giving you food only when you can sign,'" he told the *BBC's Focus on Africa* programme.

Darfur rebels call for probe in UN chopper crash

(**Sudan Tribune website**, 30/9/08) LONDON -- Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) today called for an international investigation into Tuesday's UN helicopter crash, alleging that the Sudanese security service is behind the crash. An Mi-8 helicopter contracted to carry food supplies for UNAMID crashed near Kalma IDP camp shortly after takeoff from Nyala on 29

September. Sudanese authorities accused the rebels of shooting the plane.

JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein Adam accused the Sudanese security service of shooting the Russian helicopter and attributing the responsibility of the attack to the rebels.

The Russian foreign ministry said today that it is initiating an investigation, since three of the four crewmen who died in the crash were Russians.

Adam also accused the security service of preparing the ground to "commit new atrocities" in IDP camps, claiming Khartoum had sent additional security units to implement a "dangerous plan" to dismantle camps in the region.

Sudan: Darfur aid flight shot down - 4 crew dead

(**Associated Press**, 29/9/08) An aid helicopter for the U.N.-African Union mission in Darfur was shot down outside a refugee camp on Monday, killing all four crew members and scattering debris over a half-mile, Sudanese police and the U.N. said.

Police Gen. Hashim Ibrahim Fadul al-Mawla said the helicopter was shot down in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. The helicopter was operated by a private company and hired by UNAMID to carry relief materials to Muhajiria from Nyala.

UNAMID spokesman Ahmed Salah said the crash killed the Russian pilots of the helicopter, which belonged to the Sudanese Supreme Company and was contracted to deliver food aid. Salah did not say whether the aircraft came under fire before it went down near the Kalama refugee camp. Two crew members died immediately while two others died later at the hospital.

The governor of South Darfur, Ali Mahmoud, told the *Sudan News Agency* that witnesses reported the helicopter caught fire in mid-flight and burned before hitting the ground. The governor told *Sudanese Radio* that the helicopter was hit by gunshots fired from Kalma refugee camp. He said the helicopter had a crew of four, three of them foreigners, one a Sudanese citizen. All lost their lives. The governor said a committee was immediately set-up to investigate the cause of the crash.

[Earlier this month a UN helicopter in Darfur was able to land safely after being shot at in the third incident of its kind in Darfur. The Kalma camp is host to some 80,000 IDPs and the site of clashes last month with Sudanese security forces that resulted in the death of dozens of residents.]

Freed Egypt hostages deny gunfight

(**Al Jazeera**, 30/9/08) -- A group of Italians who were among 19 people kidnapped in the Sahara have denied official accounts of them being rescued in a military operation. Contradicting comments by Sudanese and Egyptian officials about a "rescue and recovery operation" and a gunfight, they said on Tuesday that they were released by their captors and driven to safety by their Egyptian tour guides.

The five Italians, who were on a desert safari in Egypt along with five Germans, one Romanian and eight Egyptian tour guides when they were seized on September 22, said they had made it back into Egypt where they were spotted by two armed men.

"First, we feared they could be more kidnappers but luckily they were Egyptian soldiers and we realised it was all finally over," said 68-year-old Walter Barotto.

The hostages said they had been kidnapped by what they estimated were 40 masked and armed men, who took them across the border into Sudan and demanded a ransom for their

release.

On her return to Turin, Michele Barrera, 71, described how their ordeal had finally ended. She said the kidnappers had suddenly shouted "go, go, go," packed them all into one car and told them to drive away.

Mirella De Giuli, 70, said: "Shots? We didn't hear any. We put our trust in God and drove in the desert for five or six hours, with no spare tyre and very little water. If we made a mistake, we would die."

The hostages' version of how their ordeal ended appeared to clash with statements out of Sudan and Egypt. Officials had given scant and contradictory details about the release, with reports that six of the hostage-takers had been killed in a gun battle. One freed Egyptian hostage said the kidnappers had abandoned the group, which was rescued by Egyptian forces "moments later".

The hostages said they were not subjected to violence and heaped praise on the Egyptian tour guides who were kidnapped with them. "Our real strength were our Egyptian guides, who protected us throughout," said Giovanna Quaglia.

Quaglia said that the women in the group had been especially afraid. "Particularly in the first days, we women, by our own choice, kept scarves on our heads and kept our eyes pointed down to the ground and tried not to have any contact as you are a bit more frightened when you are a woman," she said.

Franco Frattini, Italy's foreign minister, who had said on Monday that his country's intelligence and special forces were involved in the release, said on Tuesday that there had been no "blitz", or armed rescue, and no ransom paid. "Great international co-operation between Italian, German, Sudanese and Egyptian intelligence permitted the kidnappers' movements to be tracked," said Frattini. He said the kidnappers had freed their hostages when they realised the scale of the international rescue operation.

Sudan Tribune (29/09/08) reports that the turning point in the operation occurred when the kidnappers clashed with the Sudanese army leading to the death of their leader Bakheit Arkiny. Arkiny is believed to be a dissident member of the SLA-Unity faction.

Armed Forces official says Darfur rebels SLM "armed robbery movement"

(***Suna website***, 30/9/08, Khartoum) – Suna reports that the two captives arrested in freeing the tourists arrived in Khartoum Tuesday from Egypt along with five SAF soldiers and an officer on two military aircraft. [According to the report, this followed the fierce battles with the abductors in which their leader, the Chadian Bakhit Abd-al-Karim and five of his aides were killed.]

In joint press conference at the Air Force Base in Khartoum with SAF Intelligence chief Maj-Gen Ibrahim Nasr-al-Din, Information and Communications State Minister Dr Kamal Ubayd on Tuesday paid tribute to the professionalism of the Armed Forces throughout the saga. The Minister said documents found proved that the terrorist SLA [Sudan Liberation Movement] had become involved in armed robbery.

"Reluctance in dealing with terrorism and armed robbery is dangerous not only for Sudan but for the Libyan-Chadian borders, a matter which confirms what we already said that terrorism has no religion and has no homeland", Dr Ubayd explained. He said the terrorist operation is coinciding with introduction of more weapons into the displaced camps targeting the main airports in the country.

During the press conference, Dr Ubayd showed a number of documents which proved affiliation of the group to SLA. He also disclosed that the group had robbed 53 Somalis, 22 Sudanese and 11 Bengalese, and he showed how the group planned to distribute the booty of the abduction of the tourists. He also noted how the armed movements in Darfur could not agree on one political issue and how three movements had divided into 39 movements. He said armed robbery had been politicized to become criminal practice across the border. Western countries, he concluded, were sending the wrong message, in stating that war in Sudan was between the government and its people.

For his part, Maj-Gen Nasr-al-Din pointed out that the abductees were handed over to the Egyptian Intelligence at the Karkor Talha area at the Sudanese-Egyptian border. "We have provided Egyptian Intelligence with full information about the operation [even] while the wounds of our soldiers were still bleeding ", he asserted.

Sudanese minister attacked in Darfur

(From ***Sudanese radio***, 1/10/08) – Southern Darfur State Agriculture Minister Umar Abd-al-Rahman has been attacked by an armed gang along the Nyala-Kass road and his personal body guard killed. In a press statement, state governor Ali Mahmud said the perpetrators had been arrested and they would be brought to justice.

SUDAN: Southern town celebrates end of demining

KAPOETA, 29 September 2008 (***IRIN***) - In July 2008, Kapoeta became the first town in Southern Sudan where all exit routes were fully cleared of mines. Demining work started in June 2005 and covered 283,000 sqkm.

According to local officials, the mines have always stood in the way - of gold diggers and in the paths of cattle herders, in the way of schools and hospitals, and obstructed the region's emergence as a major trans-Africa transit route.

"Landmines [will] be a problem for Southern Sudan for many years to come," David Gressly, the regional coordinator for the UN Mission in Sudan, said. "There is always a residual risk," he added, pointing to mines that blew up a vehicle in Magwi in an area that had already been cleared. The UN, Gressly said, would resume demining following the rainy season in October after being suspended in June. Residents of Kapoeta, however, will not be waiting for the deminers any more.

"Without extraction of landmines in Kapoeta there would be little the government would do to benefit from the resources here," the commissioner of Kapoeta, Peter Lokuju, said.

It is not just the herders celebrating a life without mines. The Association for Aid and Relief (AAR) of Japan digs boreholes for clean drinking water.

"Without demining, we can't work. First we ensure that demining is complete," Shuichi Ishibashi, AAR's programme coordinator, said. "We work with government and local people to clear the bush; they tell us that this area is safe before we start."

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) welcomed the end of demining in the area.

"They are providing water; we the food," Rajendra Gupta, WFP programme officer in Kapoeta, said of AAR. "With or without demining we provide food, but we ensure that where the food is supplied is demined."

The situation has transformed the area. "Now we are looking forward to sending our children to school," Lomoya said. "Now women can go to fetch firewood."

"It [the minefield] has been in existence for many years," said Stephen Naude, MAG technical field manager. "It prevented the expansion of Kapoeta area."

Sudan: Growing Women's Power in Government

(Inter Press Service – Johannesburg – 30/9/08) by Skye Wheeler, Juba -- When Sabrina Dario Lokolong, the Speaker of South Sudan's Eastern Equatoria State Assembly, enters or leaves Parliament, all the other members of parliament must stand up.

"People, especially men, really don't like this," Lokolong said. She is 40 -- young in South Sudan's political scene -- unmarried and without children; all factors that add to her difficulties as a female figure of authority.

It would be a tough job for anyone: the south is barely out of decades of conflict, physical and administrative structures are weak where they exist, money is short and deep ethnic divisions remain. But like other women in Africa's newest government, she also faces obstacles men do not.

Southern politicians are frequently accused -- usually with few consequences -- of corruption and nepotism. Women leaders also have to contend with even juicier, sexual rumors that spread faster and are often entirely untrue. And while wrongly distributed cash or jobs can at least be understood as beneficial to the individual's relatives, accusations against women tend to hurt their relationships with their family.

Anne Ito, secretary general of the governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in the southern sector, said she had been labeled as a prostitute by the press, causing her relations distress. "They say things like you only got the job from having relationships with men," Lokolong echoed. It is hard to control lawmakers, to push for change with these rumors encircling you, she added grimly. "Change is slow."

But southern men and women know the commitment has been made to get women into leadership in the south. There is no going back.

A peace deal in 2005 ended the two-decade-long north-south war, allowing the South its own semi-autonomous government headed by the SPLM, the political wing of the main southern rebel group.

The southern constitution, passed in 2006, called for women to get 25 percent of jobs in the new judiciary, executive and parliament.

Ito said the much-cited 25 percent has a long history as a tool of inclusiveness for the rebel movement.

It was agreed in 2004, at the first SPLM convention, in recognition of the role women had played in the southern rebellion. Women fought as soldiers, farmed the land to feed the rebels, raised the young sons who were quickly engulfed into the army and drummed up cash in the Diaspora for the rebels.

"There was no way in which women did not serve," Ito said, adding that the SPLM also had to recognize the after the bloody conflict that killed millions of largely male southerners, most of the adult population is female.

In the war, Ito explained, women were also left alone to deal with the homesteads and internal and inter-tribal conflicts. Once they found themselves in these positions of authority, there was no way they would return to the dutiful shadows.

There have always been strong women in Southern societies, Ito said, but the push now is to make high-profile women the rule, not exceptions allowed by their families.

The 25 percent target was greeted with jubilation by women and is much talked about at rallies and in speeches by southern leaders who have managed to -- or are making steps towards -- filling the quota. In some ways it is an easier promise to fulfill than improving the wrecked health and education sectors.

But critics say the 25 percent has become a bar: male leaders think once they achieve this, there is nothing else to be done for the cause of gender equality.

Very few institutions have managed to achieve 25 percent representation of women, although a handful are close. Proportions across the board are far better than before, when women made up perhaps one percent of the Khartoum-controlled government. Still, women tend to be in less powerful positions.

A lack of qualified women is often given as the reason and Ito said this is not just an excuse but a real barrier. "Historically girls have not been sent to school and their literacy rate is extremely low," she said.

Figures back her up: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in 2005 that a Southern girl child is more likely to die in child birth than complete her primary education.

And while women did fight in the bush war, most senior commanders were men and a strong sense of entitlement to government positions often meant top jobs have fallen to them: gender equality still has less resonance than war-time loyalty.

The south's civil service is huge, containing both Khartoum's former employees and the thousands who served in rebel-held areas as administrators. Hiring more people, including women who have returned to the South with skills, has been discouraged and badly-deficient labor laws mean firing is difficult.

A bill has been written by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Religion and Gender that will make the 25 percent a law, Ito said, adding that this should put fire back into the positive discrimination instrument.

"When the parliament passes it, it will be an obligation to fulfill it," she said.

The quota has played an important role at the grassroots level. Business woman Eunice Elisama Warija told IPS the quota is often discussed in rural areas. "The few women that are there can speak for all of us," she said, "there's not much but at least they are in."

Without formal elections, village community leaders have tended to sit together and chose a representative through consensus, working carefully through the character and experience of each possibility.

While a female representative might not be the most natural choice, the 25 percent has made it a possibility.

"A community will choose a good woman, if a woman is requested," Warija said.

In national elections set for next year, a quarter of seats will have to be filled by women: following the precedent started by the SPLM. "Now there is 25 percent in the electoral law and even the most fundamentalist and conservative political parties talk about it," Ito said. It has been an important success for the SPLM who have always claimed to want political change across Sudan, not just in the South.

But Warija -- like others -- believes that the women leaders, like their male counterparts, need to do more to reconnect with the grassroots. Women selected for positions of power tend to be those who left during the war and picked up skills and ideas elsewhere.

Many raised their profile by working the ladders of the large network of NGOs during the later years of the war, civil servant Gladys Juma* said. While many of the NGOs were Southern Sudanese they were safely based out of Nairobi with the rest of the donor and NGO community.

Most, Warija said, still do not spend enough time back in the rural areas.

Like other women in government, the top handful arrived at their positions in a variety of ways, including an important proportion through being married to top rebel commanders. But all were passionately dedicated to the rebel movement, making enormous sacrifices.

"They're all tough and very scary," Juma said about the five or six top ladies. While enormously respected - as mothers and grandmothers they also have a special "layer of power, influence and status" - there's not a huge amount of sisterhood to be seen.

And sisterhood is badly needed. Not only between rural women but between high-profile women and others in more lowly positions in government who may experience less spiteful sexual gossip and lies, but instead face endless sexual harassment.

"Everyone's dealing with it in their own way, there's not much talk about it," Juma said. A few men in power are truly abusive but even the more enlightened sometimes demand a good flirt.

"They need to know they're a man and in charge. It's a symbolic exchange."

[*Not her real name - this high-ranking civil servant feared retribution if her real name was used.]

Kenya reportedly "helping southern Sudan bust arms embargo"

(Kenya's **Daily Nation** website, 29/9/08) -- Naval ships and fighter aircraft have surrounded the ship hijacked by Somali pirates while ferrying tanks and other military equipment to Kenya. Speaking to the *Nation* on the phone on Sunday [28 September] one of the pirates, Mr Sugum Ali, confirmed they were surrounded but insisted they would not surrender. He also revealed that one crew member of the hijacked Ukrainian ship, MV Faina, had died after falling ill. Mr Ali said they seized the vessel after it encroached on Somali waters. "We will not let it go until we are paid 20m dollars. We seized the vessel in our waters and they must pay for use."

Earlier, the pirates had demanded about 35m dollars.

On Sunday evening, Mr Ali said his group was in communication with the warships and jet fighters surrounding the ship. "These people have asked us to free the ship. But we are not going to do so until our demands are met," Mr Ali said.

Meanwhile, a new twist was added to the drama when the pirates claimed that the cargo was destined for southern Sudan. They say they have documents showing that the arms were not destined for the Kenyan military as claimed, but were actually headed for southern Sudan, Mr Andrew Mwangura of the Seafarers Assistance Programme said. He said the pirates are threatening to make public a "damning report" on the consignee of the arms.

Military spokesman Bogita Ongeru could not be reached on Sunday, but government Spokesman Dr Alfred Mutua denied the allegations, describing the pirates as terrorists. "Those are terrorists speaking. That is our property. Who are we supposed to trust, terrorists or the government?" Dr Mutua said this was a tactic by the terrorists to "try and fend off reprisals". He maintained that "the Kenyan government will not talk to terrorists who hijacked important military equipment paid for by the Kenyan taxpayer for use by the Kenyan military." Dr Mutua said efforts to free the ship were going on.

An SPLA officer, Major-General Byor Ajang also denied that the weapons were destined for Southern Sudan. He told the daily, *Al-Sahafa*, that the government of Southern Sudan did not order the arms. "The SPLA do not have weapons coming here through Kenya. This is not true and could be just a guess or an assumption. We did not buy any tanks," he said.

Reports by foreign [news] agencies after the ship was seized indicated the cargo was headed for Southern Sudan. However, the government immediately said the weapons were meant for Kenya.

The cargo is under heavy guard by the pirates near Xarardheere [central Somali coastal city], said Mr Mwangura, adding the cargo is the fourth military consignment headed for southern Sudan through Mombassa. Mr Mwangura said Kenya was helping southern Sudan bust an arms embargo imposed as part of a peace agreement between southern and northern Sudan. His claims were supported by three sources in the Kenyan military who did not want to be identified.

Somali pirates say arms shipment belongs to Sudan

NAIROBI, (**AFP**) - Somali pirates holding a Ukrainian freighter carrying military hardware said Tuesday the weapons were headed for Sudan and not Kenya, and denied that three of their own were killed in a shootout. "We are confirming that these weapons do not belong to the government of Kenya but belong to southern Sudan," pirate spokesman Sugule Ali said over satellite telephone from the ship. "But whoever is the weapons' owner is not our problem, our problem is the 20 million dollars," he said, referring to their demands for ransom, adding that "this is not ransom, but a fine for unlawfully transporting weapons on Somali waters."

Nathan Christensen, spokesman for the Bahrain-based US Fifth Fleet, said on Monday that the MV Faina -- with its cargo of 33 Soviet-type combat tanks and other military hardware -- was destined for a client in Sudan. Both Kiev and Nairobi have denied Washington's claim, as did a Sudanese army spokesman. Kenya had said from the onset that the shipment was being delivered as part of a deal with Ukraine to update its military hardware.

Nobel laureates urge pressure on Sudan, Myanmar

UNITED NATIONS (**Reuters**) - African Union leaders are more interested in protecting Sudan's president than its people and Southeast Asian leaders do the same when it comes to Myanmar, a group of women Nobel Prize winners said on Monday.

"All those clubs, the African Union, ASEAN, or the U.N. Human Rights Council club, recognize their job as protecting the state rather than protecting the human rights of people from states that violate them," said Jody Williams, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for campaigning against land mines.

She criticized the African Union for siding with Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir over a request by the prosecutor of the ICC to charge Bashir with genocide in Darfur. Bashir and AU leaders have said the move would damage prospects for peace in the region.

"We need to put intense pressure on these institutions that are supposed to be having a role in protecting people," Williams told a news conference at the United Nations, reporting on a fact-finding trip to south Sudan, Chad, the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa and the Thai border with Myanmar.

The trip was organized by the Nobel Women's Initiative, which was founded in 2006 by six women Nobel Peace Prize winners, including Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan environmentalist who won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize.

Williams said the reason for visiting refugees from both Myanmar and Sudan was to show the linkages between the two situations -- especially the role of China in buying oil and providing weapons that helped support the governments.

Actress Mia Farrow, a vocal campaigner on Darfur who was part of the delegation on the trip, said AU officials had been "quite agitated" when she and the others raised the subject of the ICC indictment on Bashir when they met in Addis Ababa.

She said women she met in refugee camps in Chad who had fled Darfur were unanimous in supporting the indictment requested by ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo. "Babies are being born, babies are being named Moreno Ocampo," she told the news conference.

Taha security detail rough up BBC crew in NY

(***Sudan Tribune website***, WASHINGTON) – The security team accompanying Sudan 2nd VP Taha in New York scuffled with a crew from BBC's Arabic TV last week, a UN diplomat told the *Sudan Tribune*. The incident happened following an interview by BBC presenter Luqman Ahmed with Taha as he was leaving. An aide to Taha got into an argument with the BBC staff raising objections about his conduct during the interview.

The UN diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity said that Taha's aide accused Ahmed of disrespecting the Sudanese Vice President and forcefully confiscated the tapes before destroying them. According to the UN official the BBC Taha was later made aware of the incident after which he apologized for it and conducted a new interview that was aired last week.

Al-Jazeera TV interviews ICC Prosecutor

(***Al Jazeera TV*** Encounter programme, 28/9/08) -- Doha Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel Television (Arabic) carried an interview with Luis Moreno-Ocampo, ICC chief prosecutor, by Abd-al-Rahim Fuqara, in New York, on Darfur and the arrest warrant against Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir.

Asked about the meetings he held with AU and Arab League officials in New York, Moreno-Ocampo (speaking in English with superimposed translation into Arabic) said: "I briefed the Africans on the various aspects of the issue. I sent a memorandum demanding the arrest of Al-Bashir because he is involved and personally responsible for crimes committed in Darfur. Evidence shows how Al-Bashir has personally issued instructions to attack people in camps. Therefore, I think he is responsible for what happened. The second point I explained to the Africans was what will happen in the future because the judges have to decide. They can reject the case or accept some charges and reject others. I presented 10 charges and the judges summoned me to listen to my opinion. This is the start of the judicial process and this stage usually takes a few months before the trial begins. This is very important because there are several initiatives discussing the way to improve the situation in Darfur. It is important for all to understand the implications of the judicial process. Finally, I told the Africans that I am working on three issues. The first is related to Ahmad Harun and Ali Kushayb. Ahmad Harun works at the Interior Ministry and he coordinated attacks on villagers in 2003 and 2004. My second case is against Mr Al-Bashir. He was responsible for Mr Harun and he was the one who ordered the attack on villages and camps. My third case is on attacks on the AU peace-keeping forces."

On whether the AU and Arab League were convinced of his charges against the Sudanese officials, he said: "I do not have to convince the Arab League or the AU of the credibility of my case; I only have to secure the support of the judges. Judicial efforts are part of the efforts made to find a comprehensive solution to the crisis of Darfur. The Arab League and AU are currently responsible for political negotiations. I had to explain to them the judicial aspect of the case. I did not have to convince them but convince the judges, and they have to take things into consideration in their political negotiations. Accordingly, I inform them of what is going on but I do not wait for an answer from them."

When told that French President Sarkozy said his country would not be opposed to using Article 16 of the Rome Statute of the ICC if Sudan changes its policy, Ocampo said: "I have the judicial task of investigating crimes and presenting evidence to judges. Also I inform governments of what I do, but I do not have any political responsibility. Therefore, I cannot comment on what President Sarkozy said."

Asked what would happen if the international community decides to defer Al-Bashir's trial, he said: "I present my case to the ICC and not the Security Council. Therefore, the judges are the ones who look into and assess evidence. I cannot comment on political ideas. These are not my responsibility and people need to make sure that my mission is purely judicial. I will never get involved in the political aspect but maintain my objectivity."

Asked if he is against deferring the trial of Al-Bashir even if deferral improves the chances of peace in Darfur, he said: "I have a judicial mission that was entrusted to me by the Security Council in 2005 in order to investigate crimes committed in Darfur. I did my job. They urged Sudan in June last year to respect the ICC and arrest Harun and Kushayb. This is what I am doing now. I am not at all responsible for other things. If someone decides to take a political action, this will not be my responsibility. Therefore, I cannot comment on other areas. My role is judicial and I will not comment on the other aspects."

When told that the French president called for dismissing the two Sudanese ministers wanted by the ICC, and asked if this marked a change in the international position on the issue of putting these two on trial, he responded: "The charges were levelled at the two Sudanese officials by the ICC. No head of state can change the court's decision. Therefore, the arrest of Harun and Kushayb was demanded by me and this decision will not be reversed regardless of the political circumstances. It is a court decision. In order to reverse this decision, they have to convince the court that I was mistaken. They will then have to produce their evidence."

Asked about other ways in which he could respond to the criticism levelled at him by the Sudanese Government, which says "this is a political case fabricated by the West," he said: "I only apply the law and disclose facts. I sent the judges 12 arrest warrants and they accepted them. I think the ICC provides an opportunity to change the concept that there is no justice in the world. We are making progress and we are upholding justice. Several big powers, including the United States, oppose us. Nevertheless, we will continue and this is in the interest of the victims."

Interviewer: Neither the United States nor Sudan is a signatory to the ICC treaty and so are not legally obliged to cooperate with the court.

Ocampo: "Sudan is bound to cooperate with the court because it is a UN member state and the Security Council referred the case to us. The issue has nothing to do with the ICC treaty but with the United Nations' system."

Asked if mediation, especially by Qatar, can lead to a breakthrough and accomplishment of his mission in Darfur, he said: "The Qatari role is extremely important and the Qatari prime minister dealt with it accordingly. He tried to achieve results and is trying once again to do something. I think it is extremely important for an Arab country to try to help those people in Darfur. I met with the Qatari prime minister at the Qatari embassy and explained to him the issue and what is going to happen. He asked me to meet with the Arab League member states to explain to them all the same idea."

Finally, asked if he met with senior Sudanese Government officials within the framework of the Qatari mediation, Ocampo said he only shook hands with Sudanese VP Taha in New York when the Qatari prime minister introduced him to him, adding that he respects the Sudanese Government.

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