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- *World should not mix justice and politics - Darfur rebel chief. [News Story]. Sudan Tribune.26/09/2008.*
- <http://unhq-apps-01.un.org/dpi/nmu.nsf/ac/2008-09-26ASPN-7JUNNA>

Bashir's indictment would overthrow Darfur peace process - Taha

Sudan's Vice President Ali Osman Taha has urged the United Nations to defer the prosecution of President Omer Al-Bashir on charges of Darfur crimes saying it could bring down efforts for peace.

Speaking to the U.N. Assembly General today Taha said that the no peace could be reached if the international community didn't stop the application of arrest warrant filed by the ICC prosecutor to the pre-trial chamber.

"Realization of peace in Darfur and in Sudan, and the steps taken by the prosecutor-general of the ICC are two parallel lines that can never meet," said Taha at the end of 15 minutes speech before the Assembly General.

The Vice-President said Ocampo charges would hinder the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. He presented the Sudanese President as a man who works to implement peace and conducts democratic transition in the country.

"The arrest request targeting the country's leader, symbol of its sovereignty and dignity, is a failed attempt at political and moral assassination and derailing the peace process," he said.

He also reiterated the commitment of the Sudanese government to the Darfur peace process, and accused ICC move of hindering t this efforts because its encourage rebels to not take part in the negotiations he said.

"We would like to stress anew from this podium our complete commitment to achieving a peaceful and political settlement to the Darfur issue," the vice president added.

Under the Rome Statue, the treaty governing the ICC, the U.N. Security Council can invoke Article 16 of the treaty to suspend jurisdiction of the court in a case for up to one year that can be renewed indefinitely.

However such a resolution requires the affirmative votes of 9 UNSC members without a veto from a permanent member of the council.

Yesterday the U.S. Special envoy to Sudan said the United States will veto any UN Security Council resolution that defers the ICC indictment of S President Al-Bashir.

"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 at a hearing of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom on Wednesday.

The Vice President urged the international community to meet their pledge made at Oslo summits in 2004 and 2008. He also urged the U.S. to lift its economic sanctions on Sudan.

"We also call for lifting of unilateral sanctions against our country that defeat the real purpose for comprehensive peace, which is that Sudanese citizens enjoying the fruits of peace," Taha said.

Activists rally at UN against efforts to block ICC investigation

Human rights activists with Amnesty International USA demonstrated outside the United Nations on Thursday evening to press the UN Security Council to reject the efforts of some countries to block the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes committed in the Darfur region of Sudan.

About 200 demonstrators gathered in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza in New York to support the ICC process and to urge member states to keep the promises they have made for more than a year to send 26,000 peacekeepers to protect civilians in Darfur. The United States would like to see an increase of 4,000 troops in Darfur before the end of the year, a US diplomat said Thursday – still putting the total number of peacekeepers at significantly less than 26,000.

"Delays in deployment are putting millions of lives at further risk in a region where hundreds of thousands of individuals have died in more than five years of unrelenting, horrific violence," said Larry Cox, executive director of Amnesty International USA.

At the demonstration on Thursday, activists from 15 organizations erected 15 eight-foot-high silhouette figures blindfolded and carrying scales of justice.

"Nobody, including the current head of state of Sudan, should be protected from prosecution for the most serious crimes under international law," said Cox. "If attempts to block the ICC's investigation of President Bashir succeed, it would set a dangerous precedent for others to try to undermine international law. It would send a message that the international community is not serious about ending impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes."

Sudanese officials disagree, pointing to their own judicial process and the importance of Bashir's role as head of state. "I think it would not be a peaceful world to live in if a head of state is just an individual," said Bona Malwal, special advisor to President Bashir, on Sept. 18 in Washington. "I have seen the devastation that the war has brought to the people of southern Sudan over 22 years," he said, also stressing that an election should be used to remove a head of state, not a foreign court.

Sudan is currently leading a diplomatic effort at the United Nations to suspend the ICC proceedings, using the power granted to the security council in the Rome Statute, the treaty governing the ICC. The African Union and the League of Arab States have joined in this effort, although several permanent Security Council members have stated that they will veto a measure to suspend the ICC proceedings. Sudan scored a symbolic victory on Friday when African nations in a ministerial meeting of the Group of 77, a coalition of developing nations, elected Sudan to chair the group throughout 2009.

"Efforts will continue until such a time as the ICC judges rule," predicted Amnesty's Director of International Justice Vienna Colucci, referring to the Sudanese diplomatic effort.

"Any deferral of this investigation would seriously undermine the painstaking work to establish a deterrent to grave human rights abuses," she said. "Such a move would signal that the Security Council is willing to tolerate blackmail."

Some observers have expressed fears that the issuance of an arrest warrant for Bashir could worsen the situation in Darfur, especially after direct threats from Sudanese officials that the government would expel humanitarian organizations and the UNAMID peacekeeping force. But Colucci stressed that any fall-out from the ICC indictment is not the responsibility of the judicial body, but would rest "squarely on the government of Sudan."

"What the UN should be saying is that this is not going to be tolerated," Colucci argued. "Certainly we don't want to imply that it is not complex," she said, but reiterated that the present situation is not a case of pursuing justice after-the-fact, but it is about bringing to justice a party that is still committing crimes and genocide.

Amnesty International is calling on Zalmay Khalilzad, the American ambassador to the United Nations, to use his influence to prevent the Security Council from obstructing the investigation.

"I thought that yesterday's rally really was very heartening. I thought that it really showed the coalition that has come together to demand this," Colucci told Sudan Tribune.

Sudan elected to chair Group of 77 at UN

Sudan scored a diplomatic victory at the United Nations today when African nations in the Group of 77 coalition of developing countries handed it the 2009 chairmanship of the organization, which includes most of the countries of the "global South" as well as China.

The Group of 77 is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing states in the United Nations and aims to articulate and promote the collective economic interests and enhance the joint negotiating capacity of its member states during negotiations at the United Nations.

At the group's ministerial meeting on Friday evening in New York, on the sidelines of the current meetings of the UN General Assembly in New York, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon congratulated the Sudanese Vice-President and head of Sudan delegation to the current General Assembly's session, Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, on winning the confidence of the group.

Sudan was elected in part because it was an African nation's turn to lead the group, providing Sudan with an opportunity to push its candidacy in the midst of a wider diplomatic offensive at the UN to stall the International Criminal Court's indictment of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir. This step was regarded as a new accomplishment of Sudanese diplomacy.

After the election process, Taha addressed the meeting, expressing Sudan's thanks to the member states of the Group of 77 for their confidence.

The meeting was attended by a number of ministers of the group, who expressed their confidence on Sudan's capability to assume the leadership of the group.

As chair of the Group of 77, Sudan will lead on economic issues, international trade negotiations, issues of the Millennium Development Goals initiative, climate change, poverty, the international food shortage, and preparations for the Summit of the South Countries.

South Sudan scales down supplementary budget as oil prices fall

The Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) has resolved to scale down its supplementary budget it passed earlier in August due to fall in global oil prices, resulting to decrease in oil revenues flowing from the Khartoum-based Government of National Unity (GoNU).

In August thirty-one GoSS' institutions, after exhausting their respective 2008 budgets in mid-year, presented requests for supplementary budgets to cover their respective activities for the remaining 2008 fiscal year.

GoSS depends solely on its share of 50% oil revenues generated in Southern Sudan by the GoNU, in accordance with the provisions of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between North and South that created the semi-autonomous government.

According to GoSS Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Kuol Athian Mawien, the global oil prices dropped from \$130 dollars per a barrel in August - the time the supplementary budget was passed - to \$90 dollars per a barrel in September, forcing him to revise the financing projections for the supplementary budget.

The resolution that was passed on Friday in the Council of Ministers meeting chaired by the GoSS President, Salva Kiir Mayardit, called for reduction of the previously approved supplementary budget from 5.473 billion to 2.045 billion Sudanese pounds (over \$2.5bln - \$1bln).

Athian explained that the approval of previous 5.473 billion Sudanese pounds supplementary budget was based on the assumption that the oil prices would be maintained at least for the next three months.

He said despite the fact that GoSS had started receiving 45 million Sudanese pounds (SDG) every month from its Abyei share of oil revenues since June after the signing of the Abyei Roadmap agreement, the amount was not sufficient to increase the supplementary budget or compensate for the fall in global oil prices.

Athian said GoNU still owes GoSS 228mln SDG of oil revenues arrears incurred between January and July this year.

He however pointed out that despite the reduction in the supplementary budget, GoSS would continue to honour ongoing contractual commitments against which it has already made payments, the availability of existing balances on ministries' budgets as well as the importance of maintaining the supplementary allocations to the army.

The three years old GoSS has huge responsibility of rebuilding the war-ravaged region with proposed development projects that run into billions of dollars in various sectors of development.

It also embarks on introducing and developing other sources of non-oil revenues to improve its budget, which averages \$1.4 billion dollars a year.

The next GoSS fiscal year budget for 2009 will start in January, three months from now.

DDR Round Table Conference Suggested in Juba Next October

DDR commission for the south said it would arrange for holding round table conference on October 26, 2008 in Juba to push donors and UN provide assistance they pledged to pay to the south.

Head of DDR in the south Deng Deng said the proposed conference would mainly discuss the DDR supportive program and donors shares besides coordination between north and south.

The conference agendas include discussion of how DDR coordinating council recommendations (reached at recent meeting held at republican parlance) could implemented. Deng explains that demobilization program proceeds well and good funded by local component and national support efforts. However, he said donors" contribution support is very week.

Bahr Al Ghazal Endorses Arabic Language for Instruction in Schools

The endorsement of Arabic came in response to pressure from IDP returnees families that most of their children studied in the North. A number of sultans in Bahr Al Ghazal told (SMC) that they have informed the state's government to return to the North if authorities refused to accept Arabic as language of instruction in schools. Ministry of education in the state has given instruction previously to return IDP children having studies in the north to lower classes a thing that was opposed by parents of the children.

US official visits Jonglei to assess peace progress

United States' Assistant Secretary for Law Enforcement paid a day visit to Jonglei capital Bor Friday to evaluate challenges the state (Jonglei) is going through since the return of peace to Sudan three years ago.

The assistant secretary, David Johnson, was received by all state authorities fronted by Governor Kuol Manyang Juuk before commencing a brief closed meeting there. He was accompanied by the U.S. chargé d'affaires to Sudan, Alberto Fernandez.

David Johnson, who led a delegation of six persons, filled his notebook with arms, food insecurity, poor roads, weak police forces and limited safety of drinking water, State Minister of Information told reporters at a press briefing following the meeting.

Minister Taban Juch stressed that Jonglei government congratulated the American government for the effort exerted to realize Sudan peace deal during

Naivasha negotiations, signing and implementation for the last three years. He added: "We thanked the US government for hosting our people peacefully during the war and now." Most of Southern Sudan refugees in the US are predominantly refers to as 'Lost Boys of the Sudan,' a good number from Jonglei.

Asked what the diplomats say in response to the numerous constraints represented, Juch sounds optimistic. "He told us that his government can assist in any field but never specified," he said adding that "we need police training to carryout law enforcement effectively (as a priority)."

The US law secretary is third diplomat of high profile to visit Jonglei after China envoy and the head of British consulate in the past few months.

Among the problems that facing South Sudan's vast and oil producing state of Jonglei, the state poor roads as well as food insecurity.

"Insecurity (raiding and child abduction) is caused by competition over resources; which is sparked by low harvest and lack of understanding to government's policies," a source that attended the meeting quoted one of the State chiefs as saying.

The inadequacy to apprehending government, Jonglei maintains, is caused by lack of all season road.

Ocampo tells BBC he will pursue Sudan over "crimes"

(BBC Arabic Service) -- ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo has told the BBC he will continue to push for Sudan's leader to be charged with war crimes. He said there was strong evidence that President Omar al-Bashir was behind attacks on civilians in Darfur province.

"We found evidence that al-Bashir himself was controlling the attacks on these people who normally live in Darfur," Mr Ocampo told the BBC's Arabic Service. He said local people had been raped and killed by both the Sudanese army and Janjaweed pro-government militias. Mr Ocampo said the attacks were continuing and that he could not ignore the alleged crimes. He is to put his case before ICC judges next week. In July, he asked the judges to issue an arrest warrant for Mr Bashir.

Opponents of the investigation argue that it is hindering efforts to establish peace in Darfur. The African Union and the Arab League have said the investigation should be dropped. AU Chairman Jean Ping told the BBC it was unfair that all those indicted by the ICC so far were African. "We are not against international justice," he said. "It seems that Africa has become a laboratory to test the new international law."

The ICC is expected to rule on how to proceed before the end of this year. It can refuse to prosecute the case if it believes that doing so would be a threat to peace and security. The AU has already asked the UN Security Council to block the case.

Darfur peace hopes damaged if Sudanese President is arrested, UN hears

(UN News) -- The decision of ICC prosecutors to seek an arrest warrant for Sudan's President over alleged war crimes in Darfur will only undermine existing efforts to bring peace to the region, the country's Vice-President told the GA annual high-level debate on Thursday. VP Taha told delegates that the Sudanese Government had taken great strides to implement the peace and reconciliation process in Darfur. He said President Al-Bashir had guaranteed commitment to the process. Taha added that issuing an indictment against the President would be detrimental to the peace process, noting that national elections are planned for next year.

The Vice-President stressed that while his Government fully supported the accountability that the indictment was supposed to bring about, it was already implementing measures to achieve that accountability, and therefore the ICC prosecutor's move was "corroding" the peace process.

Mr. Taha said the Security Council should reverse prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo's decision. He pointed out that many States have made public their objections to the indictment. He also said that the Government was committed to improving humanitarian relief efforts across Darfur and that Khartoum was supporting the work of the UNAMID peacekeeping mission in Darfur.

VP Taha's Al-Jazeera TV interview

Q. Why did you and not First VP Salva Kiir Mayardit, who is also president of the southern Sudanese government, lead the Sudanese delegation to New York?

Taha. This UN General Assembly session acquires a special importance and it is natural to be attended by heads of state and their deputies and heads of government. The Sudanese presidency, which is made up of the president of the republic, the first vice president, and myself, asked me to lead the Sudanese delegation to these meetings because I was once a foreign minister and I continued to follow up the file of international relations and the issue of peace in Sudan.

Q. Have you sensed any understanding of Sudan's position on the ICC and the arrest warrant against President al-Bashir?

Taha. The issue currently at hand is solving the issue of Darfur. This issue has two aspects. One is related to addressing the issue comprehensively and another is related to addressing the position stemming from it as a result of the request made by the Criminal Court prosecutor. Our contacts here show that there is agreement to push the political peace process forward in order to completely solve the problem through a comprehensive political settlement. Within this context, we continue our efforts and pool support for the negotiations track, especially in view of the Qatari-led Arab initiative, in which the African group and international mediator are participating. As for the Criminal Court, we explained our point of view, which says Sudan is not a member of this court and, therefore, the court has no jurisdiction over Sudan. This is from the legal point of view. Politically, we explained the repercussions of issuing such a warrant as this

will disrupt the political process and lead to a stalemate if not deterioration of the situation.

Q. Some may say the main reason for your chairmanship of the Sudanese delegation to the UN GA meetings is convincing the international community of the Sudanese point of view about Luis Moreno-Ocampo's memorandum. Have you managed to convince the leaders in New York of the Sudanese point of view in the light of Sarkozy's statement that enacting Article 16 [of the Rome Statute], which can freeze the memorandum and defer prosecution by the ICC, is linked to the fulfilment of certain conditions? Have you managed to counter this statement with another point of view that had an impact on those present?

Taha. Yes, there is an understanding of Sudan's position and what can result from the issuance of such a decision as this will complicate the entire situation. This is proven by the clear position adopted by the African Security and Peace Council, which supported the Sudanese point of view and noted the repercussions of such a decision. Therefore, the African Security and Peace Council reiterated its call on the UN Security Council to defer taking any action and to give political efforts more time. The same position was expressed by the Arab League Ministerial Council yesterday. The Nonaligned Movement and the OIC also adopted a similar position as noted in our contacts with them.

Q. How prepared are you to accept the French conditions as set by Sarkozy? He does not represent only France, but also the EU. He called on Khartoum to change its Darfur policies and activate the peace process.

Taha. This is what I wanted to talk about. Together with other parties, including western countries like France, Britain, and the United States, we believe there should be action on the political, humanitarian, and security tracks. This is what we agree on as a result of the understandings reached between the AU and the Security Council in November last year. We are now holding contacts and dialogue with the French and US sides on the action needed on these various fronts. We said a full chance should be given to the Qatari initiative to reach a political settlement and to encourage the concerned parties to hold political dialogue. We drew attention to the need to persuade the armed factions to participate in this political process. On the other hand, and with regard to the humanitarian situation, we are holding discussions and dialogue with the joint operations command of the AU and United Nations with the aim of reinforcing the humanitarian track.

Q. What is the first step that will be taken and implemented after your return to Sudan from the meetings you held in New York?

Taha. The step is that we will continue to prepare for the anticipated dialogue in Doha. The step is that we are going to prepare for an internal dialogue. The President of the Republic announced this in the Sudan pledge initiative. Measures will be taken, in cooperation with the United Nations, to secure the arrival of relief aid and the deployment of the UNAMID forces. These are the practical steps that will be taken during the next stage.

Q. At a time when all are looking for a solution to the crisis, the rebel movements continue to accuse you of using excessive force in Darfur. How much does this influence your efforts and attempts to market the official Sudanese position?

Taha. The activities taking place in Darfur by the government or movements are an open book because there are many citizens, services, and sides that accurately follow up what is taking place on the ground. Hence, we believe that the claims some movements make against the government are no more than a political manoeuvre to undermine the progress made by present contacts on all levels. These claims are refuted by the clear facts on the ground. We are exercising the policy of self-restraint. We are only carrying out our duty in fighting the groups that loot and obstruct the arrival of relief aid as the WFP itself announced. The activities we carry out take place in coordination with the AU and the United Nations and with their knowledge.

Around \$16 billion in new commitments unveiled at UN MDG event

(UN News) Governments, foundations, businesses and civil society groups have rallied around the call to action to slash poverty, hunger, disease and other socio-economic ills by 2015, by announcing an estimated \$16 billion in new commitments to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), at a high-level event at UN HQ.

The gathering "exceeded our most optimistic expectations," the Secretary-General told a news conference at the end of the day-long event. He noted that the estimated \$16 billion generated included some \$1.6 billion to bolster food security, more than \$4.5 billion for education and \$3 billion to combat malaria. If realized, this would be all the more remarkable, coming "against the backdrop of financial crisis," the SG observed. Mr. Ban has called for a summit on the MDGs in 2010 to further assess the delivery of the commitments undertaken.

Mr. D'Escoto said the new initiatives will inject new energy,

Ugandan rebels deny attacks in Congo and South Sudan

(DPA) Ugandan LRA rebel group has denied reports it recently launched attacks and abducted children in both the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. "The recent media reports of LRA attacks are fabricated and dangerous imaginations formulated by those bent on stifling the current peace process between Uganda and LRA," rebel spokesman David Nyekorach-Matsanga said in a statement.

On Tuesday, UNICEF demanded the immediate release of 90 schoolchildren it said had been abducted from the DR Congo by LRA the previous week. UNICEF also accused the LRA of killing villagers and abducting two Italian missionaries in the northeast area of the DRC, which borders Uganda.

Catholic aid agency CARITAS said that 75,000 civilians have fled the rebel group in DR Congo.

There have also been reports of attacks and abductions in South Sudan.

Nyekorach-Matsangasaid that there were many other armed militias operating in both DRC and South Sudan, and that the "malicious" reports should be cross-checked before blame was laid at the LRA's door.

Pirates "want \$35m for tank ship"

(BBC) Pirates who seized a Ukrainian ship off the coast of Somalia have reportedly demanded a ransom of \$35m (£19m) to release the vessel and its crew. The pirates earlier warned against any attempt to rescue the crew or cargo of the MV Faina, which is carrying 33 battle tanks destined for Kenya. Earlier reports suggested the cargo was destined for south Sudan, but Kenyan government spokesman Alfred Mutua confirmed the tanks were heading to Kenya. "The cargo in the ship includes military hardware such as tanks and an assortment of spare parts for use by different branches of the Kenyan military," he said. Yesterday, Ukrainian Defence Minister Yury Yekhanurov confirmed 33 Russian T-72 tanks and "a substantial quantity of ammunition" were aboard the Faina.

Hostages now in Libya - Sudan

(Reuters) Kidnappers holding 11 European tourists and 8 Egyptians moved from Sudan into Libya with their hostages Thursday, a Sudanese spokesman said.

Syrian car bomb attack kills 17

(BBC) At least 17 people been killed and 14 hurt by a car bomb on the outskirts of Syria's capital, Damascus, reports say. The target of the blast was unclear, but it struck close to an important Shia shrine and a security post. Such attacks are rare in Syria. Syrian Interior Minister Bassam Abdul-Majid described the explosion as a cowardly "terrorist act," but declined to say who he believed was responsible. Syria's Dunia television said a car packed with 200kg (440 lbs) of explosives was detonated near a security checkpoint on the road to the airport. Security forces cordoned off the area. A spokesman from Syria's ministry of information told the BBC the number of casualties was expected to rise.

Explosion rocks Indian capital

(Reuters) An explosion in a busy market in the Indian capital New Delhi has killed at least three people and wounded up to 20 others, according to local media and police. Police said that the Mehrauli market in the southern part of the capital was packed with shoppers when the suspected bombing occurred on Saturday, according to the Press Trust of India. Police were investigating the nature of the explosive and described it as "a low-intensity blast". The blast came just two weeks after an apparently co-ordinated series of bombings in the city killed at least 21 people and wounded more than 100 others. That attack was claimed by a group calling itself the Indian Mujahidin, which also said it was behind blasts in Jaipur, Ahmedabad and Bangalore. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Saturday's blast.