



Referendum Watch

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Highlights

National Assembly extends session over referendum

Al-Wifaq 30/12/10 – The National Assembly has decided to extend its session until the South Sudan referendum is conducted. Assembly Speaker Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir said the session is extended because the country is passing through a sensitive stage which entails the House to be on the standby.

The SPLM Caucus agreed on the extension but pointed out that sittings should stop after January 5th to enable southern MPs to cast their votes on referendum. The Caucus also indicated that it would oppose any move to discuss referendum results in the Parliament and take a decision accordingly.

UN advices Dinka Ngok in Abyei to exercise self-restraint

Al-Sahafa 30/12/10 –Dinka Ngok tribe said it had received advices from the UN to exercise self-restraint to avoid an impact on the upcoming referendum on 9 January, adding it had also informed them about the possibility of conducting the referendum in the Area after the same is conducted in the South.

Abyei Chief Administrator Deng Arop told the newspaper that he met with DSRSG Jasbir S. Liddar in Abyei yesterday and the meeting focused on security situation in the territory, voluntary repatriation and the urgent needs.

Sultan of Dinka Ngok Kuol Deng Majok said they conveyed to Mr. Liddar yesterday the concerns of the civilians and their feeling that they are losing their referendum rights. He said the UN official, however, asked them to convey to the people the hope for the conduct of the referendum in the Area after the same is conducted in the South and advised them to exercise self-restraint and to avoid insecurity which might affect the referendum.

The Dinka clans denied that they sought the advice of a US legal firm on the dispute over the territory.

Meanwhile, the Misseriya tribe has threatened to conduct a parallel referendum if the Dinka insist on a unilateral move. Misseriya leader Mukhtar Babu Nimir has warned of serious consequences if any provocative action is taken.

NCP threatens to stop referendum if SPLM takes unilateral action on Abyei

Al-Wifaq 30/12/10 – The NCP has threatened to stop the referendum on self-determination for South Sudan should the SPLM take a decision to annex Abyei territory before January 9th.

NCP official Al-Dirdiri Mohamed Ahmed who is also in charge of Abyei dossier said they are certain that the SPLM is seeking to take a unilateral action, describing the move as a threat to stability in the region.

NCP submits two proposals to SPLM to overcome Abyei crisis

Al-Sudani 30/12/10 – Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie has revealed that the NCP has submitted two proposals to the SPLM to break the deadlock over Abyei territory. He said the SPLM has two options: either the South Sudan referendum should be postponed altogether or it will be conducted and Abyei referendum is postponed. Nafie made the remarks at the NCP HQs in Khartoum yesterday.

UN missions aggravate conflicts in Sudan – Nafie

Al-Khartoum 30/12/10 – Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie has said that UN missions played the greatest role in aggravating conflicts in the Sudan, adding that the role of western military bases is also clear in those conflict, citing Israel's hand in conflicts over resources particularly water.

Nafie made the remarks while addressing a symposium organized by the Higher Committee for Independence Celebrations on “peace and security in Africa”, in the Friendship Hall yesterday.

Al-Ahdath 30/12/10 reports Nafie has said that UN missions are involved in inciting sedition and fomenting conflicts and described them as instruments that serve the purpose of countries that benefit from escalation of conflicts. He accused the US base in the Red Sea of interfering in domestic conflict and called on the African continent to expel foreign military bases.

Al-Akhbar 30/12/10 reports Nafie has accused UN missions in the Sudan of escalating conflict and destabilizing the situation, describing them as mechanisms that do not represent the member states but advance the interest of specific countries.

Talks kick off between GoSS and Athor in Malakal

Al-Sahafa 30/12/10 – Talks kicked off in Malakal yesterday between renegade George Athor and GoSS in a bid to reach a peace agreement.

SPLA Chief of Staff James Hoth told the newspaper that GoSS president Salva Kiir had formed a five-member committee headed by SPLA deputy director of operations Brig. Major Aluer to discuss ceasefire with a similar committee from Athor.

Hoth said talks between the two sides started yesterday in Malakal and discussed a ceasefire proposal to be followed by discussion on a range of other proposals today including reintegration of Athor into the SPLA.

GoSS appreciates Al-Bashir's statement on South independence

The Citizen 30/12/10 - On behalf of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Dr. Barnaba Marial Bejamin, yesterday said in press briefing at his Ministry that the GoSS appreciates President Al-Bashir's statement that the North would recognize an independent South if it opts to secede and the two nations shall stay together peacefully and brotherly.

“Bravo to Omer's statement, as a government spokesperson, I would like to inform the media that we are greatly pleased with his statement that he would recognize South Sudan as a nation in case of southerners vote for secession in the referendum,” he said.

He said there are yet so many things that the south Sudan would share with the North and that the only way to achieve this is through the peaceful relationship that Al-Bashir spoke about...

25,000 southerners transported from the North to Abyei

The Citizen 30/12/10 –The Abyei Higher Committee for Voluntary repatriation disclosed that 25,000 southern citizens were transported from the North to the Area during the past period and pledged to repatriate the 10,000 plus remaining citizens.

The Committee said the process is encountering challenges such as incomplete housing plan, budget shortfall, large crowds at waiting centres in Al-Dalanj and Karkar.

Absence of three judges delay Constitutional Court's decision on anti-referendum petitions

Al-Intibaha 30/12/10 – Reliable sources confirmed that the constitutional court would not be able to decide on the objections filed against the referendum on South Sudan self-determination if three judges who represent the South continue to absent themselves from the court.

According to the sources, the absence of the three court members for more than two weeks has paralyzed the work of the court, making it unable to decide on the petitions.

Clooney, Google, UN watch Sudan using satellites

Reuters (NY) 29/12/10 - Groups including the United Nations, Harvard University, Google Inc and an organization co-founded by actor George Clooney are launching a project using satellites to "watch" Sudan for war crimes before a vote that could split the African country in two.

The Satellite Sentinel Project, which begins on Wednesday, is meant to provide an "early warning system" for human rights and security violations before the Jan. 9 referendum on whether to divide Sudan into north and south.

"We want to let potential perpetrators of genocide and other war crimes know that we're watching, the world is watching," Clooney said in a statement.

The satellite project received funding for six months from Not On Our Watch, an organization co-founded by Clooney and his Hollywood friends, actors Don Cheadle, Matt Damon, Brad Pitt, David Pressman and producer Jerry Weintraub.

The group has been active in raising money to help the many displaced people in the Darfur region of western Sudan, which has been ravaged by war and genocide.

Clooney told Time magazine in an article posted on its website that he came up with the idea three months ago when he was in Sudan meeting refugees from its last civil war. He called it "the anti-genocide paparazzi," referring to photographers who follow celebrities taking their pictures.

Under the project, commercial satellites over northern and southern Sudan will photograph any burned and bombed villages, mass movements of people, or other evidence of violence.

The United Nations' UNOSAT program will collect and analyze the images, Harvard's Humanitarian Initiative will provide research, more analysis and corroboration from field reports from the anti-genocide Enough Project, Google and Trellon Llc, an Internet development firm, designed a Web platform for public access to information with the goal of pressuring Sudanese officials and other groups.

President Al-Bashir to visit Juba on Tuesday

Al-Ahdath 30/12/10 – GoSS VP Riek Machar has revealed ongoing preparations for President Al-Bashir's visit to Juba on 4 January to be updated on preparations for the referendum.

Meanwhile, Machar said 52,000 policemen have been prepared to secure the referendum in all the southern states.

Sudan's FM warns of war with Juba over Darfur rebels

Sudan Tribune.com 28/12/10 - Sudan foreign minister Ali Karti warned today that South Sudan support to Darfur rebel groups will lead to war with the new country.

If the South Sudan government wants to start its new era with a war that will be the case if it harbors Darfur movements, said the Sudanese official in a press briefing in Khartoum with the visiting Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa.

"We want the South to have a healthy start, safe and stable and we do not want it to be a party to what is going on between the government and the Darfur movements," Karti further said...

Karti stressed that the self-determination right aims to realize peace and not war he also said that his government will respect the outcome of the vote...

Sudan demands UN audit on soldier demobilization fund

AFP 29/12/10 - Sudan demands a detailed UN audit on a programme to rehabilitate ex-civil war soldiers, a Sudanese official said on Wednesday, following charges that millions of dollars have been embezzled or mismanaged.

"I am fighting for the audit to be released. I cannot confirm how much money has disappeared until the audit is provided," said William Deng Deng, head of Sudan's Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) commission in the south.

"The problem is that the money for the programme comes from the donors and is held in trust by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)," Deng told AFP.

"The UNDP are trying to resist calls to release the audit ... We want total transparency," he said, adding that if the government was not provided with a full report on the DDR it could protest to the UN secretary general.

Last week, German newspaper TagesZeitung published a report based on an internal UN audit alleging that only 328 of 466 United Nations staff budgeted for in the demobilisation programme have begun work.

The staff received more than 20 million dollars in 2010, compared with the estimated staff costs of around 16.7 million dollars, "about 14 million of which went to just 50 international experts."

"The programme has fallen far short of its intended outcome. That's why we are asking for a review," Deng said.

"It is very serious. If the government asks for that audit document to be released, it is incumbent on the UNDP to provide it."

In response to charges that it siphoned off funds, the UN published a statement on Tuesday admitting that its DDR programme in Sudan, the biggest of its kind, faced "many challenges particularly in the south."

It also expressed concern about the low number of total former combatants who have been reintegrated.

"The UN has already taken the initiative to conduct audits and evaluations to address the challenges," it said. "UN senior management is taking the results of these assessments very seriously so as to improve the programme delivery on the ground."

Al-Bashir's tenure is five years – Presidency

Al-Rai Al-Aam 30/12/10 – the Presidency announced that the Interim Constitution determines that the term of office for president Al-Bashir is five years from the date of assuming the post and the Interim Constitution 2005 allows his reelection for a second term.

The Presidency press release added that according to article 75 of the constitution, the president and his FVP shall complete their term of office. If the South secedes the president will continue in his post if he is a northerner but if he is a southern then shall be considered to have resigned and the FVP shall take over as president.

SPLA JIU soldier kills northern trader, two civilians in Wau

Al-Ahram Al-Youm 30/12/10 – The newspaper's sources have confirmed the killing of three civilians by an SPLA soldier yesterday in Wau, the capital of West Bahr el Ghazal, among them a northern trader. Reportedly, the SPLA soldier attempted to commit suicide after killing the three people and is taken to Wau Medical Corps for treatment. According to the sources, the attack is directed against pro-unity supporters.

INTERVIEW-Rapper enlists global stars to work on south Sudan

Reuters (Khartoum) 29/12/10 - South Sudan's most famous export, rapper Emmanuel Jal, hopes a little help from friends Alicia Keys, George Clooney and Kofi Annan will shine a light on Sudan's north-south civil war and prevent further atrocities.

Jal, a former child soldier who was rescued and smuggled out of the south by a British aid worker, has since dedicated his life and music to one target: a future for his people. His new single "We Want Peace" hopes to persuade Sudan not to return to war as the oil-producing south looks to secede next year.

"No foreign government is going to be interested until the people in their country find an issue important -- that's when the diplomatic pressure will be at its highest," he told Reuters in a

telephone interview on Wednesday from London, where he is based.

"By raising awareness it can bring pressure to both sides to bring peace -- we want a free and fair referendum," he added.

Jal wants to extend the focus on Sudan's more well-known conflict in Darfur to the north-south civil war, which claimed 2 million lives and created four million refugees.

Music stars Alicia Keys and Peter Gabriel, actor George Clooney, ex-U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter appear in the "We Want Peace" video to help spread the message that international help is needed to avoid a return to north-south conflict in Sudan.

"When you bring light to a dark place, evil will achieve less," Jal said. "The reason the damage has been limited in Darfur is because of the maximum awareness that was created."

His nights are still haunted by nightmares filled with screams, fire and the horrors of war. Now he dreams of returning to live in a new south Sudan.

"There's freedom in the south -- it's hopeful, but we will have a lot of work to fight tribalism because that is the biggest beef we have there."

Jal said the new government must delegate power to the people and invest in education, agriculture and health...

U.S. growing more optimistic about fate of Sudan Referendum

By Mary Beth Sheridan

Source: Washington Post News Service Date: December 29, 2010

U.S. officials are growing optimistic that Sudan will fulfill a central part of an American-brokered 2005 peace agreement - and potentially avert a bloody war - by holding a referendum next month that could split the African country in two.

The referendum had been in doubt because of delays in preparations and the Sudanese government's reluctance to let the south secede.

But Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir has begun to publicly accept the referendum, and registration for the vote has gone fairly smoothly.

"I am far more optimistic about it than I was six weeks ago or so," said one senior State Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive diplomacy involved.

Still, risks persist. Perhaps the most serious is the apparent failure to achieve agreement on a parallel vote on the sensitive, oil-rich Abyei region on Sudan's north-south border.

Southern Sudanese are widely expected to choose independence in the Jan. 9 referendum. The southerners, who are largely Christian and animist, have long complained of discrimination by northerners, who are mainly Muslim Arabs.

President Barack Obama's administration has devoted increasingly high-level attention to Sudan, amid worries that Africa's biggest country could erupt in civil war if southerners feel they were deprived of a fair vote.

About 2 million people died in conflict between the north and south before a 2005 peace deal. The agreement, which the George W. Bush administration considered a major achievement, granted limited autonomy to the south for five years, followed by a vote on independence.

On Tuesday, Bashir emphasized his acceptance of the referendum, telling southerners in a speech that was broadcast: "The decision is yours. If you want unity, you are more than welcome. . . If you want separation, you are also welcome," according to the BBC.

Bashir's government stands to lose more than half its budget if the south, with its lucrative oil reserves, votes to split.

As part of its recent diplomatic effort, the Obama administration has said that it will remove Sudan from a list of state sponsors of terrorism if it honors the peace accord.

That pledge was delivered by Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, who visited Sudan twice last month. Kerry was seen as an important messenger because of his influence in Congress, which could agree to eventually roll back economic sanctions on Sudan, according to people involved in the diplomatic effort.

U.S. officials do not meet directly with Bashir because the International Criminal Court has indicted him on genocide charges stemming from the separate conflict in the western Darfur region.

Preparations for next month's referendum got off to a late start and were complicated by the fact that the balloting involves millions of voters - some of them refugees abroad, others living in northern Sudan, and others in the south, an impoverished region the size of France that does not have a single paved highway.

Jon Temin, a Sudan specialist at the U.S. Institute of Peace, said voter registration went "as well as anyone could have hoped for. There's been some really impressive logistical preparation going on, against pretty high odds."

But the failure of plans for a referendum on Abyei was worrisome, he said. The north and south were split over who would be eligible to vote on the region's fate.

The southern Sudanese have long been allied with the Ngok Dinka tribe that dominates Abyei, Temin noted. The north, meanwhile, had sought participation in the vote for members of a tribe, the Misseriya, who graze their cattle in Abyei for several months each year.

"If the fighting starts locally around Abyei, the question becomes whether it escalates into a larger-scale conflict," Temin said.

Also unresolved are important questions on how the north and south would interact if there is a split. The border has not been fully demarcated, and there are ongoing negotiations on how oil revenue would be divided and how the two armies would coexist.

In addition, it is not clear whether the tens of thousands of ethnic southerners who live in the north would be stripped of their Sudanese citizenship.

Other Headlines

Sudan's Bashir sets Darfur talk's deadline

AFP 29/12/10 - Sudan will withdraw from the Darfur peace talks in Doha and organise its own negotiations if no agreement with the rebels is reached imminently, President Omar al-Bashir said on Wednesday.

"If we reach an agreement tomorrow, praise be to God. But if there is no agreement, we will withdraw our negotiating team and the talks will then be held in Darfur," he told thousands of supporters in the South Darfur capital Nyala.

"We will fight those who choose to take up arms, but we will sit next to those who want development," he added in a speech broadcast live on state television.

Sudanese officials had earlier set December 31 as the deadline for a Darfur peace accord, with a referendum on independence for the south, now just 11 days away, due to dominate the government's agenda next month.

Bashir's special adviser on Darfur, Ghazi Salaheddine, was expected to arrive in the Qatari capital on Wednesday to push the talks, according to Sudan's official SUNA news agency...

According to *Al-Sahafa* 30/12/10, President Al-Bashir has rejected claims that he undermined unity of the country, saying he signed a peace agreement with the southerners and implemented it in full. He reiterated adherence to the application of Islamic Sharia, saying he would not reverse his decision whatever pressure exercised.

Masked men broke into residence of Dr. Rashid Diab in Khartoum

Al-Watan 30/12/10 – Sources said a group of nine masked persons have raided the house of Dr. Rashid Diab in Amarat (Khartoum) but Diab was not in the house at the time of the raid. The incident was reported to local authorities.

SPLA conducts military parade, 20 MiG aircraft took part

Al-Intibaha 30/12/10 – The SPLA organized yesterday in Juba a military parade to celebrate the arrival of 20 MiG aircraft from South Africa. The function, which was attended by the GoSS Ministers of Defence and Interior and SSLA Speaker, also witnessed the parading of 50 armoured vehicles donated by Uganda. Reportedly, the attendance praised the sorties, combat and defence tactics made by southern pilots.

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