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Referendum Watch

- 65% voter turnout for the referendum (*Al-Ayyam et al*)
- South Sudan vote will meet global standards-Carter (*Reuters*)
- David de Chan accuses SPLM of referendum rigging (*The Citizen*)
- SPLA reports security challenges to referendum in Unity State (*Al-Sudani*)
- Dinka Ngok and Misseriya discuss pending issues (*Al-Sahafa et al*)
- Dinka Ngok release Egyptian force accompanying Governor Haroun to Abyei (*Ajras Al-Huriya*)
- SPLM threatens to refer Abyei issue to the UN (*Al-Tayyar*)
- Abyei referendum must happen or the region be transferred to south – Amum (*Sudantribune.com*)
- Regular forces to escort returnee convoys to southern Sudan (*Al-Sahafa*)
- Interior ministry charts post-separation plans (*Al-Rai Al-Aam*)
- Popular Consultations to flag off in Blue Nile State tomorrow (*Al-Tayyar*)
- Status of forces in Blue Nile state contingent upon north-south agreement (*Akhir Lahza*)
- Northern separatist party criticized for rejoicing secession (*Sudantribune.com*)
- Man tries to seize Khartoum house from southern Sudanese tenant (*Al-Tayyar*)

Other Headlines

- No more tug-of-war between CPA parties – Riek Machar (*Al-Ahdath*)
- Situation of returnees to the South deteriorating (*Akhir Lahza*)
- Three U.N. contractors kidnapped in Sudan's Darfur (*Reuters*)
- South Sudan could become food exporter-WFP (*Reuters*)
- SLM's Minnawi would be brought to book – NCP (*Al-Tayyar*)
- New rebel group emerges in central Sudan (*Sudantribune.com*)

Links

- CNN: Not all in northern Sudan embrace Islamic Law
<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/01/12/sudan.islamic.law/index.html> Islamic law
- United States Department of State (Washington, DC) *Foreign Press Center Briefing: An Update On The Referendum Vote For Independence*
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201101130191.html>

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Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN
Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200

Referendum Watch

65% voter turnout for the referendum

Al-Ayyam Khartoum, 13/01/11 - SSRC Information Officer George Makuer says voter turnout for the referendum has exceeded 65% in the southern Sudanese states as polling stations closed on the fourth day of polling. He expects an 80% turnout by the final day of polling. Makuer expects voter turnout in the south to exceed 80% before polling closes.

SSRC Spokesperson Su'ad Ibrahim meanwhile reports that voter turnout continues to be high in the south compared to the north. Turnout in the north has topped 35% while the centres outside the country record a 74% turnout by the end of day 3 of polling, she reveals. She also said that polling has been suspended in the flood-hit Australian town of Brisbane but says they may consider an extension in those areas should the situation prevail beyond Saturday.

Al-Sahafa puts the overall turnout figure in the polling stations in southern Sudan at 1.5 million by day 3 with no violations being recorded.

The Citizen reports meanwhile that the weeklong schedule for voting may not be exhausted as most of the centres are expected to close after all their registered voters cast their votes before Friday. Turnout, the paper reports, was extremely massive at the beginning of the polls last Sunday but there were hardly people queuing yesterday at the close of the fourth day.

"Most of voters in the centres have voted but we expect to finish before one week of voting," Aloro Amos, Chairperson at Home and Away polling station, said.

Dr. John Garang's Mausoleum and Home and Away are the largest centres in the city but the official said yesterday less than 400 voters were left. "Some people still think that queues are still long but hope they will come and vote in the last date," he said.

Unlike the first days of voting, voters yesterday come in countable numbers.

Chairperson Manyang Malook at Dr. Garang Mausoleum polling station said there is need for more awareness of voters to come and vote as many fear long queues of Sunday that left many returning home without casting their vote.

South Sudan vote will meet global standards-Carter

Reuters Juba, 13/01/11 - South Sudan's independence referendum will meet international standards, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who is observing the plebiscite, said in the first significant endorsement of the vote.

Carter told journalists on Thursday he also believed international creditors should forgive most if not all of Sudan's crippling debt, to give both north and south access to fresh funds after the referendum.

"I believe it will meet international standards on the conduct of the process and also the freedom with which people have cast their votes," said the former president.

"We have two more days to go obviously but I don't think there is any doubt the results will be accepted without serious challenge."

David de Chan accuses SPLM of referendum rigging

The Citizen Khartoum, 13/01/11 - The Chairman of the South Sudan Democratic Forum (SSDF), David de Chan told *Al-Jazeera* yesterday that he expects the SPLM to rig the referendum. “I doubt the referendum would be free and fair,” he said.

De Chan predicts that most southern would opt for unity “if given a fair chance to vote for the future.”

SPLA reports security challenges to referendum in Unity State

Al-Sudani Juba, 13/01/11 – SPLA Spokesperson Philip Aguer says the situation in all the southern Sudanese states is calm with the exception of Unity State that is facing some security threats to the referendum. He said that the SPLA is monitoring the movement of one splinter group heading towards the Higlieg area where, he says, they may cause trouble in some areas.

“The skirmishes in Unity State may continue for some time ... but the SPLA would guarantee security for the people,” he said.

On Abyei, he accused the NCP of amassing Popular Defence Forces personnel to the border areas. He also noted that they have report of a meeting of Misseriya with some military personnel and are monitoring the developments that may come out of that meeting.

Dinka Ngok and Misseriya discuss pending issues

Al-Sahafa/Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 13/1/11 –Dinka Ngok and Misseriya elders held yesterday a meeting in Kadugli in the presence of Southern Kordofan Deputy Governor Abdul Aziz Al-Hilu and the Adviser to the Governor Shibon Al-Dawi.

Misseriya leader Hamid Al-Doob said the meeting discussed the incidents that occurred last year between the two tribes and the blood moneys and compensations that are supposed to be paid.

Meanwhile, the Misseriya has denied attacking a convoy of trucks carrying southerners returning to the South from the North. Misseriya leader Nimir Babo Nimir said the situation in the Area is relatively calm but still volatile, citing presence of three SPLA camps north of Abyei. He said the recent clashes took place between the Misseriya and the SPLA and accused UN troops of not doing anything to avert recent clashes. “The international troops play no role in securing the situation in Abyei, the Misseriya tribe is exercising self-restraint,” he said.

Meanwhile Misseriya elders and tribal leaders say they would not participate in any dialogue conference with the Dinka Ngok unless the SPLA withdraw south of the 1/1/56 line, reports *Al-Raed*.

Dinka Ngok release Egyptian force accompanying Governor Haroun to Abyei

Ajras Al-Hurriya Khartoum, 13/1/11 – “Southern Kordofan Governor Ahmed Haroun travelled to Abyei under escort of the Egyptian contingent of the UN peacekeeping force without prior knowledge of the Abyei Area Administration and the UNMIS,” sources report. Governor Haroun, however, continued his mission without hindrance. The sources went on to say that the Egyptians were consequently arrested by the Dinka Ngok and the UNMIS office in Abyei did not even intervene to secure their release probably because “they were not informed of the coming of the Egyptian force.”

Egypt’s Defence Minister reportedly intervened the day before yesterday requesting the SPLA to secure the release of the Egyptians. The Egyptian force was later released as a result, he said.

SPLM threatens to refer Abyei issue to the UN

Al-Tayyar reports that prominent SPLM figure Atem Garang (also Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly) pointed out that should the SPLM would seek international arbitration on Abyei should the referendum result in separation. He pointed out that should the south secede, such arbitration would be binding on both parties. He pointed out however that there are efforts to resolve these issues but then the SPLM would seek other measures should the NCP not show willingness to resolve the issue. Atem pointed out that what happened near Abyei is an indication of a failed state that is not prepared to accept the fact that people are returning.

Meanwhile the NCP Leadership Office meeting late yesterday assured that Abyei would not be a cause for renewed north-south fighting, reports *Al-Raed*. The NCP resolved that all outstanding CPA issues would be resolved through dialogue.

Abyei referendum must happen or the region be transferred to south - Amum

Sudantribune.com Juba, 12/01/11 - Pagan Amum, Secretary General of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) said that either a referendum must be held in the contested region of Abyei as per the 2005 peace agreement or Sudan's Presidency should agree to transfer the region into the south.

Amum, who is also the minister for peace and the implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, told *Sudantribune.com* that either referendum must be rescheduled or Sudan's President should transfer the region to the south.

"There are only two options left for the issue of Abyei. One of these two options is the implementation of the Abyei protocol in accordance with the provision of the comprehensive peace and the ruling of the permanent court of Arbitration", Amum said.

"The other option is presidential order to transfer the region from the north to the South from where it was originally transferred to Kordofan region in central Sudan," Amum told Sudan Tribune from Wau, capital of Western Bahr el Ghazal state shortly after arriving from Abyei where he held several meetings with local officials and traditional leaders there.

Regular forces to escort returnee convoys to southern Sudan

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 13/01/11 – The security situation at all polling centres remains stable except for a single incident reported to police in Southern Kordofan involving carjacking and looting of a convoy of trucks carrying southerners returning to Bahr-el-Ghazal State, says the Chairman of the Higher Referendum Security Committee Gen. Ahmed Imam Al-Tohami. He added that a joint mechanism from the armed forces and police would be tasked to escort convoys carrying returnees to the South. Gen. Al-Tohami said police stations in the North registered no polling-related incident over the past three days.

In a separate story, *Khartoum Monitor* reports that Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal State has decreed the suspension of trips for returnees to southern Sudan until further notice. State Governor Paul Malung told a press conference that the decision was taken to avoid a repeat of the violent incident involving the returnee convoy from the north last Monday. He urged returnees en route to the state from Khartoum to remain where they are pending arrangements between the state and federal government to prevent similar incidents in future.

He blamed the UN and international organisations [*the paper does not say for what*] and accused an official of the national government of masterminding the violence.

Interior ministry charts post-separation plans

Al-Rai Al-Aam Khartoum, 13/01/11 – Sudan would institute changes to the Passports Law in line with developments in the international scene, according to the Assistant Director-General for Passports and the National Registry. Gen. Adam Dalil also said that the Interior Ministry has plans in place to regular the presence of illegal immigrants in the country as well as to resolve the issue of southerners who would be considered foreigners should the south secede.

Popular Consultations to flag off in Blue Nile State tomorrow

Al-Tayyar Damazein, 13/01/11 – The Parliamentary Commission on Popular Consultations in Blue Nile State says consultations would kick off tomorrow. Commission head Siraj Hamad they would prepare the people around the state for the implementation of this constitutional obligation that calls for concerted efforts to see it through to a successful end.

Al-Raed meanwhile reports that the NCP Leadership Office met yesterday to discuss among other things, the southern Sudan referendum and Popular Consultations for Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, said NCP Information Officer Fathi Shila.

Status of forces in Blue Nile state contingent upon north-south agreement

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 13/01/11 – Blue Nile State Governor Malik Aggar says the status of SPLA forces in the border regions of Blue Nile and southern Sudan's Upper Nile State is contingent upon whatever agreement the National Government and the GoSS would reach on the issue. He pointed out that his forces are there neither as a support force for the SPLA nor as a threat to the north. Their numbers are known to the two sides as well as the UN, he told *Al-Shorouq TV*.

Northern separatist party criticized for rejoicing secession

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 12/01/11 - A group of political parties allied with the Sudanese government has warned against "negative" acts of expression by pro-secession supporters in both north and south Sudan as the latter currently votes in a referendum on whether to remain united with the north or secede to form an independent state.

As voting in the referendum began on Sunday, 9 January, a group of supporters of the northern separatist party Just Peace Forum (JPG) gathered in front of the Khartoum-based headquarters of the SPLM, which controls south Sudan, and slaughtered a bull as they lifted placards expressing the party's favouring of south Sudan secession.

JPG supporters further toured several areas in Khartoum and distributed sweets in celebration of they termed as "the beginning of Sudan true independence".

On Wednesday, the Committee of Political Parties and Organizations (CPPO), an umbrella group comprising political parties backed by the Sudanese government, warned that acts of expressions carried out by JPF supporters would negatively affect the political situation and the "historic ties" between north and south Sudan in the post-referendum period.

CPPO chairperson, Abod Gabir appealed to the media to refrain from covering negative acts of expressions by separatists inside or outside Sudan, warning that such acts could affect post-referendum arrangements.

Gabir emphasized the importance of maintaining "historic ties" and economic cooperation between the north and the south in the case of secession.

Man tries to seize Khartoum house from southern Sudanese tenant

Al-Tayyar Khartoum, 13/01/11 – Khartoum State Police have foiled an attempt by a man to illegally seize a Khartoum house from a southern Sudanese resident. Emanuel Al-Haj who has been living in the house for the last 20 years or so was surprised when a stranger came in yesterday claiming to be the owner of the estate. The stranger then asked him why he has not left for southern Sudan as his other compatriots and promised to send a vehicle the next day to evict Emmanuel and his family and send them back south.

The surprised tenant called the police who were quick to react and arrest the man who denied Emmanuel's claim but was nonetheless locked up.

Other Highlights:

No more tug-of-war between CPA parties – Riek Machar

Al-Ahdath Khartoum, 13/01/11 – The NCP and the SPLM are close to a deal on a road map that would outline the form of former relations between the two sides. GoSS Vice-President Riek Machar says he would soon be meeting Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha in a bid to seek a mechanism for total cooperation between north and south Sudan and was optimistic that relations between the two sides would improve much.

"The tug-of-war days are over," he said, pointing out that the two sides intend to resolve all outstanding issues, especially that of Popular Consultations, after the referendum.

Situation of returnees to the South deteriorating

Akhir Lahza Khartoum, 13/1/11 – While the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs has admitted that the situation of returnees to the South is deteriorating, the GoSS has called on NGOs to assist in enhancing humanitarian situation of IDPs particularly that some returnees have no households in the South.

Kormaj Chol, an official of the ministry who is also in charge of voluntary return told *SMC* that the situation of returnees in the South is worsening, citing GoSS' lack of capacity to cope. He urged NGOs to assist.

Three U.N. contractors kidnapped in Sudan's Darfur

Reuters Khartoum, 13/01/11 - Three helicopter crew members contracted to the U.N. World Food Programme were kidnapped in Darfur on Thursday, the agency said, the latest in a wave of abductions hindering aid in Sudan's war-torn region.

"Three helicopter crew members ... managed by WFP have been abducted by armed men ... at an air strip today," said WFP spokeswoman Amor Almagro.

South Sudan could become food exporter-WFP

Reuters Khartoum, 12/01/11 - With investment and security south Sudan could become a food exporter and end its chronic food dependency within a decade, the U.N. World Food Programme said on Wednesday.

WFP Sudan Regional Director Amer Daoudi said the U.N. agency was working with south Sudan, which is voting to become an independent nation in 2011, to build strategic grain

reserves and a road network to link rural farmers to urban markets.

"South Sudan has the potential to be not only self-sufficient but a major exporter of fresh produce," Daoudi told reporters in Khartoum.

"If all things go well, if the international community remain engaged, if everything continues to improve...it would not take more than a decade for the south," he told Reuters after the news conference.

But he said all other areas of south Sudan's economy must be developed in tandem to allow agriculture to progress. "With the support of the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS)...we will be building feeder roads to help the farmers and villagers to get their produce to the local roads as well as linking them to the trunk roads," Daoudi said.

"Secondly (WFP) is looking at establishing with the GOSS grain reserve hubs in south Sudan."

He added that once the south had begun to produce a food surplus, WFP could buy it to use as aid elsewhere in the region, opening up markets, but he warned there was a long road ahead.

"Agriculture is an important pillar to the development and economy of south Sudan and we are going to be greatly contributing in that area," Daoudi said.

Sudan's north has some large irrigated farms but the south is almost entirely dependent on rain-fed agriculture. With good rains last year, WFP said the number of southerners receiving emergency food aid would fall to 1.4 million in 2011.

SLM's Minnawi would be brought to book – NCP

Al-Tayyar Khartoum, 13/01/11 – Rabie Abdul'Ati, a high ranking member of the NCP, says his party has no information on an imminent return of SLM's Mini Minnawi to Khartoum but the SLM would "have to be brought to book should he return to Khartoum."

He said that his party remains committed to the provisions and the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

New rebel group emerges in central Sudan

Sudantribune.com Khartoum, 12/01/11 - An unknown Sudanese group has claimed it has scorched 5000 acres of government-owned sugar-cane farms in central Sudan as a declaration of rebellion against the northern government in Khartoum, in yet another sign of the growing domestic volatility as the country hurtles towards a likely breakup.

The group, which dubs itself "the Revolutionary Front of the Central Province – Battalions of Sons and Youth of Farmers" on Wednesday issued a statement saying it had started a new rebellion in Sinnar State in central Sudan. The group claimed it had set aflame 5000 acres of sugar-cane farms owned by the Sudanese Sugar Company.

However, the group's claims could not be independently verified nor confirmed by the central government.

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Address: UNMIS Headquarters, P.O. Box 69, Ibeid Khatim St, Khartoum 11111, SUDAN

Phone: (+249-1) 8708 6000 - Fax: (+249-1) 8708 6200