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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Commentaries/Links

- **Another bloodbath in Darfur?**. [Commentary]. By Eric Reeves. *Sudan Tribune*.04/02/2009. (Noon).
<http://unhq-apps-01.un.org/dpi/nmu.nsf/ac/2009-02-04ASPN-7NXN27>
- **No way out for nearly 3 million trapped in cycle of despair in Darfur's camps.** [News Story]. By Simon Tisdall. *The Guardian (UK)*.04/02/2009. (Noon).
<http://unhq-apps-01.un.org/dpi/nmu.nsf/ac/2009-02-04GVEL-7NXRKZ>

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Southern Sudan referendum is major challenge – Bashir

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports President Bashir as saying that the referendum in southern Sudan in 2011 will be the country's major challenge and that efforts are continuing to make unity attractive. According to ***Al-Sahafa***, President Bashir said ICC Prosecutor Ocampo's allegations had generated unprecedented popular support for the president. He revealed that Ahmed Haroun had earlier tendered his resignation but he refused to accept it and reiterated that Ocampo is just a "mosquito buzz".

Al-Sudan reports the President as telling his audience of retired military and police officers that free and fair elections would be held this year and that all state leaders are on the ICC list.

SAF recaptures Muhajeria

Local dailies report SAF has recaptured Muhajeria and that JEM remnants are still being pursued. An army statement described the recapture as a major victory. Defence Minister Gen. Abdul Rahim Mohamed Hussein said SAF suffered no casualties and called JEM "bandits".

Meanwhile, a source says a gradual UNAMID pull out is expected in order to avoid the SAF-JEM confrontation. The source claimed the UN would have to bear the blame if any UNAMID soldier came to harm because it had been notified about the need to leave the town. The same source commended UNAMID JSR Adada's efforts to avoid devastation in the town.

The Sudan Vision reports South Darfur State governor Ali Mahmoud as saying SAF was carrying out mopping up operations while chasing JEM combatants northwards in the Masharif area, leaving casualties behind among civilians.

Al-Ahdath reports JEM leader Khalil met with UN-AU chief mediator Bassole in N'djamena yesterday and that he also met with JSR Adada. SAF 16th Brigade CO, Maj. Gen. Mohamed Ali said SAF would no longer tolerate the concept of so-called "liberated territories". JEM Commander Suleiman Sandal said his forces had pulled out of Muhajeria and were now 30 km away having been bombed by SAF for the last two days. SLA leader Minni Minnawi has demanded that the town be returned to his troops before mid-February. UN representatives in Nyala said they planned to visit Muhajeria tomorrow.

Al-Ahdath reports Foreign Minister Deng Alor as saying that SAF's entry into Muhajeria was a state policy decision and that the UN would have to accept and deal with that. "My information is that JEM fighters are stationed outside Muhajeria," he added. He blamed lack of coordination for failure of the UNAMID fact-finding mission to gain access to Muhajeria.

Reuters reported yesterday that gunfire erupted in Muhajeria, forcing thousands of civilians to take shelter outside a peacekeeping base, officials said. UNAMID peacekeepers told ***Reuters*** their forces heard shooting and three loud explosions around Muhajeria.

A spokesman said it was unclear whether the shots were caused by full-blown fighting, or whether troops from one of the warring parties were firing into the air to celebrate a victory.

There was no indication which side might have gained the upper hand.

UNAMID communications chief Kemal Saiki said peacekeepers in Muhajeria heard sporadic gunfire through the morning and early afternoon. "They saw armed vehicles, that were possibly a Government of Sudan patrol, circling the area," said Saiki, adding it was still unclear what stage the clashes had reached. "Civilians from the market converged on the UNAMID camp and they are still coming," he said.

Sima Samar visit request under consideration

Local dailies report that the authorities are now considering Human Rights Rapporteur Sima Samar's request to visit Sudan from February 25 to March 11, according to Human Rights Advisory Council Rapporteur Abdul Moneim Osman.

Websites/International News Coverage

Ukraine says ship held by pirates free

AP KIEV, Ukraine – A merchant ship carrying tanks and weapons held by pirates off the coast of Somalia since September has been freed, Ukraine's president announced Thursday. A spokesman for the owners of the MV Faina said on Wednesday that a ransom had been paid to the pirates. Statement from the office of President Viktor Yushchenko said the ship was freed as the result of an operation involving special-services agents from Ukraine.

The Faina is loaded with military hardware and there had been fears the arms would fall into the hands of al-Qaida-backed Somali insurgents. Presidential spokeswoman Irina Vannikova was quoted as telling Russia's ITAR-Tass news agency that "the ship is now under the guard of forces of the U.S. navy and is preparing to head for the Kenyan port of Mombasa."

On pirate confirmed to **AP** that they no long had the vessel. "We have all indications that a ransom was paid regarding Faina," Lt. Nathan Christensen, a spokesman for the Bahrain-based 5th Fleet, told the **AP** on Thursday. He added that U.S. Navy ships, monitoring the Ukrainian arms ship, "saw something that could be a ransom, dropped on the ship on Wednesday."

Mikhail Voitenko, a spokesman for the ship's owner, said the pirates had received a ransom on Wednesday. He did not say how much was paid, but ITAR-Tass news agency put it at \$3.2 million. The pirates originally demanded \$20 million.

The MV Faina carrying a cargo of tanks and other weaponry plus about 20 mostly Ukrainian crew members was seized in September off the Somali coast.

According to **Reuters**, Kenya said it had bought the tanks for its army but foreign diplomats said the arms were bound for south Sudan -- a potential embarrassment to Nairobi, which brokered a peace pact for the region on its northwestern border.

JEM rebels and peace mediator discuss confidence building measures

Sudan Tribune websites 5/2/09 (PARIS) — JEM and the Joint Peace Mediator Bassole met in capital N'djamena today.

Hours after the withdrawal of JEM troops from the South Darfur town of Muhajeria, where SAF celebrated their victory and pledged defeat JEM troops in other battles.

JEM delegation led by Khalil Ibrahim discussed confidence building measures assigned to enhance

prospects for talks with the Sudanese government before peace talks start under Qatari sponsorship.

Ahmed Hussein Adam, the JEM spokesperson, said the N'djamena meeting indicates JEM commitment to the political solution of Darfur crisis despite the ongoing tension in southern Darfur. "The meeting discussed the necessary confidence building measures that Khartoum should implement before to negotiate in good faith," Adam said. He added that a meeting could be take place in Doha very soon with a GoNU delegation.

Proposed CBMs include: the release of JEM fighters detained or sentenced after last May's raid on Khartoum, IDP protection, an end to forced repatriation of the displaced; and, cessation of air strikes on civilians.

"Dr Khalil Ibrahim clearly underscored during the meeting that the peace process should not affect the ICC jurisdiction on Darfur crimes," the JEM spokesperson said. He reiterated JEM's opposition to any attempt to prevent the ICC from issuing an arrest warrant for the Sudanese president. "The leadership of the movement stressed that the ICC is part of the equitable peace process" Adam said.

ICC action diverts attention from Sudan's CPA - SG

UNITED NATIONS, 4/2/09 (*Xinhua*) -- ICC actions against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir have distracted attention away from implementing a major peace accord, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Wednesday.

The ICC actions have "a major impact on Sudanese political dynamics and have diverted much attention at a time when outstanding issues related to the CPA require the parties' cooperation and renewed commitment," Ban said in his latest report to the UN Security Council on the Sudan.

Ban said that while he is encouraged by the assurances of continued support by the government, he is also concerned about remarks by some of its officials that the government may redefine its relationship with the UN mission in Sudan (UNMIS) should an arrest warrant be issued against al-Bashir.

The secretary-general called upon the government to fulfill its obligations to ensure the safety of United Nations staff and of nationals of the state members of the United Nations in the Sudan.

SLM chief Nur visits Tel Aviv

SMC reports Diplomatic sources said SLM Chief Abdel Wahid Mohammed Nur had left France for Tel Aviv possibly to seek political support from among Sudanese migrants in Israel who may have infiltrated the country through Egyptian borders. Nur's advisor Ibrahim Bushara told the **SMC** that the SLM has a liaison office in Israel.

SLM/MM spokesman Yahya Bolad said his movement opposed US plan promoting unity between SLM and JEM if it undermined SLM's role.