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Media Monitoring Report

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Post-Referendum Watch

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Highlights

CPA parties sign agreement on Abyei in Addis Ababa

Local dailies 21/6/11 – The NCP and the SPLM signed yesterday in Addis Ababa an accord to demilitarize Abyei.

Information Minister Kamal Obeid expressed the Government's welcome of the agreement, hoping the SPLM would deal with the agreement in a spirit of responsibility and respect to charters. He said the Government accepted the accord without conditions but the SPLM's hesitation delayed the signing. "We turn the attention of the international community to the fact that some SPLM leaders were not keen on reaching an agreement on Abyei.

AFP 20/6/11 reported US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Monday welcomed the accord but said the real test would be how both sides implemented the deal.

The rival governments of north and south Sudan signed the accord Monday to demilitarize the disputed region and let in an Ethiopian peacekeeping force, mediator Thabo Mbeki told the UN Security Council.

"The agreement signed today is an important first step -- but the real test of the parties' commitment will be the full implementation of its provisions in the coming days," Clinton said in a statement.

"We will work within the UN Security Council to seek a resolution authorizing the agreed-upon interim security force to support the swift deployment of the Ethiopian peacekeepers.

"At the same time, I urge all parties to follow through on their commitment to withdraw their military forces and take steps to facilitate the return of the tens of thousands of people displaced by recent fighting."

Mbeki said the North's troops, who occupied Abyei on May 21, will withdraw under the deal, amid escalating tensions ahead of southern Sudan's formal declaration of independence on July 9.

Praising Mbeki and UN envoy Haile Menkerios for their roles in the talks, Clinton said the deal "will reduce tensions in Abyei and improve the security and humanitarian situation on the ground."

"I know these negotiations have not been easy. I commend both parties for resolving their differences peacefully after the outbreak of violence."

But tens of thousands of people have already fled Abyei, mainly to the south. Aid agencies say there is now a growing humanitarian crisis in South Kordofan, another disputed border region.

Clinton said the United States "is still concerned about on-going violence in Southern Kordofan and the resulting humanitarian crisis.

"We call on both sides to allow unfettered access for aid workers to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need. We also urge Sudanese leaders in Addis Ababa to agree on an immediate cessation of hostilities."

She urged both sides to channel their "cooperative spirit" and "work together in the lead up to July and start a new chapter in their country's history. One of peace, prosperity, and closer ties with the international community."

Meanwhile, Khartoum described the agreement as a "sustainable solution," primarily because it locates the disputed region in the north.

The agreement will see the formation of a new administration for Abyei, composed of two members from each side, a police force to be drawn from the local community and overseen by a joint committee, the withdrawal of all northern and southern troops, and the deployment of Ethiopian peacekeepers.

Khartoum's chief Abyei negotiator Al-Dirdiri Mohammed Ahmed told AFP the government was satisfied with Monday's agreement because it had taken care of its main concerns about the bitterly contested region, primarily that it remain in the north.

"We think it is a sustainable solution, and that peace will prevail according to this formula," Ahmed said.

"First and foremost, for us, is that Abyei is still a part of north Sudan, being north of the 1956 border, which makes the SPLA claims on Abyei being in south Sudan baseless," he added.

Asked how soon the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the respective armies of the north and south, might withdraw from the region, and be replaced by Ethiopian peacekeepers, Ahmed said that should happen "within 13 days of the UN Security Council endorsing the agreement."

After the announcement of Monday's agreement, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Sudan Rice, called for "urgency" in the deployment of the proposed Ethiopian peacekeeping force.

Xinhua 20/6/11 reported Daffa-Alla Elhag Ali Osman, Sudan's permanent representative to the UN, as saying that the deal was "good news," and demonstrates the determination of the government in Khartoum to resolve all pending issues in Sudan.

Meanwhile, Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth, head of South Sudan's mission to the United States and the UN, said South Sudan welcomes the agreement.

Under the agreement, "Abyei will no longer have a special administrative status under the presidency of the Republic of Sudan, but rather will fall under the supervision of both the president of South Sudan and the president of the Republic of Sudan," he said.

"We reiterate our belief that the UN's main objective should be to support the full implementation of the CPA and to avoid a security vacuum after July 9," Gatkuoth said.

UN throws full military weight into Abyei force

AFP 20/6/11 - The 4,000 Ethiopian troops that the United Nations wants to send to the disputed Sudanese region of Abyei will be one of the strongest forces ever assembled for a territory of this size, officials said Monday.

There are currently about 1,000 UN troops in Abyei, which has been occupied by north Sudan forces since May 21.

The Ethiopian contingent is also expected to take attack helicopters to patrol the territory that has become nearly deserted since the Khartoum military operation, which prompted tens of thousands of people to flee to south Sudan.

"It is a big force but there is already fighting in South Kordofan nearby and the border conflict could spread further," warned one UN diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity as the United Nations has not yet officially announced the force size.

"We also want the people who have fled to return."

The United States has said it will quickly propose a UN Security Council resolution giving UN backing to the Ethiopian force for Abyei.

"We want to underscore the urgency of Ethiopian troops deploying immediately to Abyei" under UN auspices, US ambassador Susan Rice told a Security Council debate on Sudan where a north-south accord on Abyei was announced.

"The United States will soon circulate a draft Security Council resolution for council consideration to authorize creation of this proposed interim security force," Rice said.

African Union mediator Thabo Mbeki told the Security Council that the Khartoum government and southern Sudan had signed an accord to demilitarize Abyei, which is disputed by the two sides.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the Sudan accord but warned both sides "to abide in full by its provisions to demilitarize the area" and provide "full cooperation" with the UN mission and the Ethiopian troops.

Parliament endorses FM's statement, supports government's position on UNMIS

Al-Rai Al-Aam 21/6/11 – The National Assembly endorsed yesterday a statement presented by Foreign Minister Ali Karti which indicated that the presence of the SPLM in the Ministry had negatively impacted Sudan's foreign policy.

The Assembly extended its session until the end of July in anticipation for any development in the wake of formal declaration of South's independence on the 9th of July.

On presence of UNMIS, Karti confirmed that the Government had asked UNMIS troops to leave the country as from the 9th of July. The MPs supported the Government's stance on the need for departure of UNMIS.

Sudan Tribune 20/6/11 reported that Karti reiterated before the Parliament accusations that armed groups from his country's western region of Darfur are fighting alongside the beleaguered regime of Libyan leader Muammar Al-Qaddafi.

Sudan foreign ministry spokesman Khalid Musa on 20 February suggested that some elements from Darfur could be involved in the fighting, but he fell short of confirming it, saying that the competent authorities were still in the process of ascertaining these reports.

Karti was asked by one of the MPs from the opposition Popular Congress Party on the veracity of previous statements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Darfur rebel groups were participating in the fighting on the side of Al-Qaddafi forces.

The top Sudanese diplomat readily confirmed the accusation, saying it was made on basis of investigations conducted by his ministry. Karti strongly denied that his ministry's accusation had caused harm to any Sudanese citizens in Libya.

"We have not received any information on a single Sudanese assaulted due to this statement. There are still tens of thousands of Sudanese in Libya and those who had incidents had it because they were present in the areas of fighting," he said.

Likewise, Karti told the parliament that the government had known for a long time that Libya was the main supporter of rebellion in Darfur, saying that Tripoli had supplied them with arms and setup training camps for them in eastern and southern Libya.

In a related vein, Karti said that the Libyan government had asked Sudan not to close its embassy in Tripoli.

SAF denies threat to shoot down UN aircraft

Al-Ahram Al-Youm 21/6/11 – the Spokesperson of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), Col. Al-Sawarmi Khalid, has denied that SAF had threatened to shoot down UN aircraft in southern Kordofan, saying these reports are baseless.

Sudanese forces "have threatened to shoot down UNMIS air patrols, they have taken control of the airport in Kadugli and refused landing rights to UNMIS flights," US Ambassador Suzan Rice told the UN Security Council, according to *AFP* 20/6/11.

The UN mission in the province is now "dangerously low" on food supplies, she added, calling the lack of UN access to the troubled province "alarming and indefensible."

South Sudan seeking UNMIS help to monitor border with the North

Al-Intibaha 21/6/11 – The GoSS and UNMIS have reached an agreement whereby several southern pilots would join the Mission's crew in an airbase.

Juba-based informed source revealed to the newspaper that the agreement includes the use of UNMIS aircraft to monitor skies and border with the North after the 9th of July.

Meanwhile, the sources said many US marines serving in the South had complained of bad

conditions and poor military infrastructures in the region, threatening to return to Washington is improvement is not forthcoming.

SPLM sought war in S. Kordofan to launch new Sudan- Minister

Sudan Vision 21/6/11 - Defense Minister Abdurrahman Mohamed Hussein announced that military operations in South Kordofan will continue to purge the region of what he called “remainder pockets here and there” to nub sedition in the bud.

He called on the international community to look at the incidents responsibly and neutrally.

Hussein justified continuation of military operations as an attempt by Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) to avoid civilian casualties, adding the densely populated region is preventing the Army from dealing with the situation decisively. He said the army is operating under difficult conditions with regard to protecting civilians and their properties.

In response to a question regarding alleged plot to take over the region to install southern Sudan aligned leader of Sudan People’s Liberation Army SPLA Abdulaziz al-Hilu as interim president of Sudan, Hussein said the conspiracy was that SPLA would ally with Darfur rebels plus other parties to move toward Khartoum to implement the project of “new Sudan”. He said foreign parties were aware of such conspiracy. “They wanted a decisive war in South Kordofan to impose new Sudan and restructure the state based on secularism,” the minister said.

He added that the town of Kadugli has been under constant attack until last Friday before SPLA were forced out of their stronghold area of Dafi, now under SAF control.

Hussein revealed that SPLA has deployed 10,000 fighters in more than 60 locations across South Kordofan state. He said SPLA has reneged on the implementation of the security arrangements agreement, which SAF has honored by 100%.

Sudan Liberation Movement is using expected popular consultation in the states Blue Nile and South Kordofan to redeploy northward, said the defense minister, further accusing SPLM of numerous violations in the region.

UNMIS vacates Radio Miraya offices in Khartoum

Al-Rai Al-Aam 21/06/11 – UNMIS has started vacating the Radio Miraya building in Khartoum as of yesterday and is relocating all the equipment there to southern Sudan. Radio Miraya has also stopped its broadcasts in Arabic as it starts preparing to wind up in the North ahead of 9th July.

A source at UNMIS says Radio Miraya staff affected by the down-sizing in Khartoum met in the last two days with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haile Menkerios to discuss issues related to the down-sizing and their after-service entitlements.

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