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Media Monitoring Report

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Highlights

NCP down plays opposition threat of popular uprising

Al-Rai Al-Aam 17/1/11 – the NCP has downplayed ability of the opposition political parties to mobilize the people into a popular revolt, describing the opposition as “opportunist”.

“It is an opportunistic position on the part of the opposition,” Dr. Qutbi Al-Mahdi, NCP secretary for organizations, told reporters yesterday. “They want the people to act against the law and bring about change”. “They want to use the people to bring about a failed government, the people have been disillusioned,” he said.

However, Kamal Obeid, Minister of Information and NCP leader, said his party has no objection to listen to the opposition but rejected any preconditions, calling on them to cooperate with the government during the forthcoming period.

“We are keen on dialogue with other parties on the constitution which may be put for popular referendum to ensure greater consensus,” Haj Majid Siwar, Youth and Sports Minister and NCP mobilization secretary said.

But opposition spokesperson Mr. Farouq Abu Eissa said leaders of the opposition political parties would hold a meeting during the two coming days to agree on a specific vision on how to mobilize a popular uprising. “We do not fear death. The political parties are stronger and most popular than their Tunisian counterparts,” he told reporters yesterday in Khartoum, adding that the legitimacy of the government and the constitution will come to an end in July. “We oppose the NCP’s call for joining a broad-based government and we also reject a patched constitution,” he said.

Sudan Tribune.com 16/1/11 reported that mainstream opposition parties in north Sudan have announced plans to stage street protests against austerity measures adopted recently by the government to offset the impact of the near-certain secession of the oil-rich south Sudan.

Meanwhile, the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) in north Sudan has threatened to take back the “freedom” enjoyed by the opposition if it attempted to “incite sedition.”

The National Consensus Forces (NCF), a coalition of opposition groups comprising the Umma National Party (UNP), the Popular Congress Party (PCP) and the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), on Sunday said it would encourage the Sudanese people to follow the footsteps of the Tunisian people who managed to overthrow president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on Friday after weeks of violent protests over unemployment and corruption.

“The Tunisians took to the street and died and they were able to free their country, that’s what we must also do,” NCF spokesman Farouq Abu Eissa told reporters in Khartoum yesterday, according to a report published by Bloomberg.

Opposition parties have been demanding that the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) holds a

conference to write a new constitution for north Sudan and form a transitional government. But NCP officials, including president Al-Bashir, dismissed the opposition's demands. Instead, president Al-Bashir invited the opposition to join his government.

The opposition said it would divulge more details on the protests on January 19, according to the PCP's Political Secretary Kamal Omer.

But the opposition has received a stern warning over its plans from the NCP's deputy president Nafi Ali Nafi.

While addressing celebrations of Coptic Sudanese in Shandi town on Sunday, Nafi threatened to curtail the freedom of the opposition if it attempted to "incite a sedition for which it lacks courage and enough supporters."

"It is a group capable of nothing but pelting your ears with squealing and shouting over the troubled situation and the necessity for the government to go" Nafi said of the opposition.

"We tell them that you're building your dreams on the delusion that the Sudanese people will fallout with each other...and that you will incite a sedition for which you lack the courage and the numbers."

The hard-line NCP official further warned the opposition that it stands to lose "the freedom and the movement" among people if it staged protests.

AFP Khartoum 17/01/11 reports Sudanese Islamist opposition leader Hassan al-Turabi said Monday that a Tunisia-style uprising is "likely" in the north amid mounting economic woes and fears over the looming secession of the south.

In an interview with AFP, Turabi, a one-time key mentor turned bitter opponent of President Omar al-Bashir, warned that if Bashir failed to share power in the face of popular protests, it would lead to bloodshed.

"This country has known popular uprisings before," Turabi said, referring to popular revolts which toppled military regimes in the Arab world's largest country in 1964 and 1985.

"What happened in Tunisia is a reminder. This is likely to happen in Sudan," he said, referring to the month-long deadly protests that prompted veteran Tunisian strongman Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to take refuge in Saudi Arabia after 23 years of iron-fisted rule.

"If it doesn't, there will be a lot of bloodshed. The whole country is armed. These people don't demonstrate, they fight."

"I'm quite sure if there's any uprising here, the Darfur region will be active," he said.

"The people of Sudan are shocked," he said of the week-long referendum that was the centrepiece of a 2005 peace agreement that ended a devastating 22-year civil war between north and south.

"They are really worried about the disintegration of their country," he said alluding to the civil

war in Darfur and a 12-year rebellion in the east which ended with a still-fragile 2006 peace agreement.

"Sudan is not a small country like Tunisia but it is exposed to a risk of chaos worse than Somalia," he said, adding: "The concept of poverty is felt," following the adoption of a stinging austerity package by the government on January 5.

Reuters Khartoum 16/01/11 reported that Sudan's opposition threatened on Sunday to take to the streets if the government did not remove its finance minister and dismantle parliament over the decision to raise prices on a range of goods.

"We demand the sacking of the finance minister who was not honest in his budget presentation and dismantling of the parliament which passed the price rises without even questioning the finance minister," a statement from the opposition coalition of around 20 parties said.

Opposition official Kamal Omer said the heads of the parties would meet on Wednesday to plan the street protests, saying they were "ready to fight for change and are preparing for our popular revolution."

The NCP has warned the opposition that street protests will not be tolerated. Khartoum blames the country's economic woes on the global financial crisis and speculation about the south's secession.

Sudan's youth, inspired by Tunisia where weeks of popular protests swept its president from power, on Saturday began a peaceful movement on social networking sites calling for people to stand outside their houses everyday at 7 p.m.

The event attracted more than 2,000 members on Facebook in its first day.

Sample shows over 90% in the south favour separation

Al-Sahafa et al Khartoum, 17/01/11 - Preliminary results coming out of the polling stations in Juba yesterday have revealed that some 98% of voters are in favour of separation. The results were drawn from a sample of 8,000 votes around some centres.

Meanwhile in the north, voters for separation are said to be in the 50% – 60% range from a random sampling.

Preliminary results from Europe show that a vast majority of the 640 voters who turned out (97%) opted for secession.

Most international observers have lauded the polling process that they say went on peacefully and in a fair and transparent manner. They also commended the National Government in Khartoum for keeping to its commitment to respect the schedule.

Referendum observation committee underscores need for civilian protection

The Citizen Khartoum, 17/01/11 – The UNSG's Panel on the Referendum in Sudan has called on the government and the South Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) to exert their utmost to periodically appraise citizens on progress in the referendum until announcement of the final

results. The panel also urged the media and political forces to deal with referendum issues in a spirit of responsibility.

In a statement issued yesterday, the committee underlined the need for protection of civilians in the coming weeks so that southern Sudanese living in the north and northern Sudanese living in the south can proceed with their daily lives in security and dignity.

The panel expressed its full satisfaction at the peaceful end of the vote for allowing the opportunity for the Sudanese people to freely express their will. It revealed that results from about 300 centres were being sent to the committees at district and state levels and thereafter to Juba and Khartoum, adding that the final results would be announced in a few weeks.

International observer says referendum involves violations

Xinhua Khartoum, 16/01/11 - An international observation mission for monitoring south Sudan referendum on Sunday said that the referendum polling process witnessed many violations and illegal practices that negatively affect the referendum's credibility and transparency.

Tina Kantola, the head of the Association of World Citizens (AWC), affirmed at a press conference in Khartoum Sunday that legal violations took place by staff of the South Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC) in south Sudan and by government of south Sudan. She said the mission members were threatened and had not received any cooperation inside some of the polling centers in Juba.

She added that they observed continuation of campaign promoting for separation during the polling process despite the fact that the law stipulated an end of media campaign before Jan. 7, 2011.

Kantola also referred to interventions by polling staff and their influence on the voters, particularly the illiterates, adding that there were directions by the referendum commission staff in the south for the voters to vote for a specific option.

She said that the AWC regarded those points as having affected the credibility of the whole process.

Report: “UNMIS, will it stay”?

Al-Khartoum 16/1/11 – UNMIS came to the Sudan based on the CPA ... but after the agreement reaches its terminus, the mission's mandate is also approaching its end or, precisely, will end in July 2011.

There are differences over extension of the mission's mandate. While some say it will stay so long as there is a dispute between the South and the North over the border, others are of the view that it will leave the country as soon as the CPA is accomplished.

According to UNMIS spokesperson Kouider Zerrouk departure or extension of the mission will be decided later.

Atem Garang, National Assembly deputy speaker, says if the newly-born southern state sees continuation of the mission important it will press for a mandate but if the vote result is unity

then both parties have to decide its stay or departure. But if war resumed between the North and the South, UN will come under Chapter VII because it will not tolerate international peace and security being threatened.

Mr. Ali Al-Sayed (lawyer), member of the Democratic Unionist Party, says UNMIS will stay so long as the North-South conflict continues. He adds that Sudan is a UN member so the organization has the right to intervene to resolve conflicts.

Dr. Salah Al-Douma, political science professor, says NCP leaders' talk about expulsion of UN troops is just "talk for political consumption". He adds that a new state in the South will need assistance so it will renew the mandate for of the Mission.

Signs of war in Abyei, 17 Misseriya abducted

Al-Tayyar 17/1/11 – 17 Misseriya were kidnapped yesterday in Abyei among them Abdul Rahim Abdullah Mahdi, a UN staff member. The tribe has called on the UN to protect its staff members who belong to the Misseriya and blamed the abduction on SPLA; warning of serious consequences if any harm is caused to them.

Meanwhile, Misseriya leader Abdullah Wad Abok has accused southern Kordofan Governor Ahmed Haroun of turning a blind eye to the SPLA military presence in the territory and accused the SPLM of poisoning and land-mining water sources in the area.

In another development, the Misseriya tribe has rejected the recommendations of the recent Misseriya-Dinka conference held in Kadugli, saying they would soon convene a conference in Mujlad, adding that their difference with the Dinka is not payment of blood money.

"The Misseriya will not abide by any agreement that opens the territory for the SPLA and restricts the tribe movement," Daoud Hargas, Misseriya leader said, adding that the leaders who have signed the agreement enjoy no full mandate to do so, according to *Al-Sahafa* 17/1/11. Hargas said despite calm in the territory, there is tension and anxiety among the Misseriya caused by the Kadugli agreement and its repercussions.

S. Sudan early returns show big vote for secession

AP 16/1/11 - Exhausted poll workers posted the first preliminary results from Southern Sudan's weeklong independence referendum on Sunday, and an Associated Press count of a small sampling of the returns showed a huge vote for secession.

Sudan's south ended its independence vote Saturday, a vote most everyone believes will split Africa's largest country in two at the divide between Sudan's Muslim north and Christian and animist south. Poll workers counted throughout the night to post results.

An AP review of results at 10 sites in the south's capital of Juba found that almost 96 percent of the almost 30,000 ballots cast were for secession. About 3 percent were for unity and the rest were invalid.

That's only a small sample of the approximately 3.2 million votes cast, but almost all observers believe the south voted for secession. The referendum needs to pass by a simple majority.

At a church service Sunday, Southern Sudan President Salva Kiir - a stoic man not known for showing emotion - smiled, gently clapped and swayed during the musical portions of the service.

"We offer a prayer of gratitude for the peaceful voting of the referendum," Kiir said. "We present these votes to God, who will bring change through his people of this country."

The independence referendum was promised to the south in a 2005 peace deal that ended more than two decades of north-south civil war in which 2 million people were killed.

If the process stays on track, Southern Sudan is due to become the world's newest country in July...

UNMIS welcomes agreements between Dinka-Ngok and Misseriya

Al-Sahafa/Al-Sahafa 17/1/11 – UNMIS has welcomed the agreements reached between leaders of the Dinka and the Misseriya on 13 January, assisted by key government leaders, considering the agreements as crucial for peaceful co-existence in the Area.

UNMIS applauded the wisdom, vision and courage demonstrated by the leaders and their commitment to move away from conflicts towards the resolution of their differences. It is hoped that these agreements will also provide positive momentum for meeting in Kadugli between the federal interior minister and GoSS interior minister which will focus on security issues.

South Sudan's Kiir urges forgiveness for war

AFP 16/1/11 - South Sudanese president Salva Kiir urged his people on Sunday to "forgive" the north for a devastating 1983-2005 civil war, in his first public declaration since a landmark independence vote ended.

Speaking from the pulpit in the Saint Theresa Roman Catholic cathedral in regional capital Juba, Kiir said: "For our deceased brothers and sisters, particularly those who have fallen during the time of struggle, may God bless them with eternal peace.

"And may we, like Jesus Christ on the cross, forgive those who have forcefully caused their deaths."

A thousand-strong congregation turned out for Sunday mass at the cathedral to pray for their nation-in-waiting as results trickled in from the week-long independence vote which wrapped up on Saturday.

The North may not need an embassy in Juba

Al-Khartoum 17/1/11 – in an interview with the London-based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, NCP leading figure Ibrahim Ghandour said the North might not need an Embassy in Juba.

"We look forward for deeper relations where embassies are not needed," he said, adding that his party endeavours to establish strong relations with a newly-born state in the South which, he said, has become a reality.

Meanwhile, *Al-Wifaq* 17/01/11 reports Ghandour as saying that the "political and geographic secession" would not affect relations between Sudanese. He also noted that the idea of a

confederacy is being touted by international partners but pointed out that the two sides may opt for a stronger and better option for them all.

Khartoum will be safe and stable after referendum

Local dailies 17/1/11 – Khartoum state governor Abdul Rahman Al-Khidir said yesterday that Khartoum state would remain safe and stable and things would be business as usual regardless of the vote results.

Meanwhile, *Al-Ahdath* 17/1/11 reports increasing incidents of assault in Khartoum streets during the night which it describes as alarming.

Muawia Zahri, *Al-Ahdath* newspaper's staff member sustained serious injuries when two youths assaulted him in Al-Sahafa area in Khartoum. He was robbed of a mobile and cash and left bleeding.

Residents of Jebel Awlia in Khartoum have also complained of night attacks launched by unidentified youths. They told the newspaper yesterday that many residents have been attacked and looted and several incidents have been reported to the police. Hassan Kheirallah, a resident of the area, said a group of three youths attacked him last week around 9 pm while he was heading to a shop to buy some items. He was beaten and robbed of clothes and cash.

Husham Mohamed Al-Tayeb and Ms Sabah Ahmed have also revealed to the newspaper that they have been assaulted separately during the night. Ms Sabah sustained minor injuries but Al-Tayeb's condition is serious. They were robbed of their mobiles.

Referendum conduct was smooth and fair - says GoSS presidential adviser

Sudan tribune.com 16/1/11 - An advisor to the president of the government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), Muolana Telar Ring Deng, has commended the way the south's referendum process was conducted, especially in Yirol West county of Lakes state, his hometown, where he cast his vote.

Deng, who advises the southern President on Legal Affairs said he was pleased that the independence referendum was held peacefully, without any reports of violence across polling centers.

"I would like to congratulate the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission Bureau and entire population of Lakes State for the smooth and orderly conduct of the referendum, which enabled an overwhelming population of our people to participate in the historic stage of South Sudan", said Deng.

He said that while the region waits for results the southern leadership and the south's ruling party - the SPLM – the leadership should be congratulated.

Deng said that "in this spirit I urge that the current leadership should be permitted to take us through the forthcoming transitional period. Power struggle in an emerging state should be avoided for the progress of such a country. This is not to condone any shortcomings and misgivings we might have committed during the last six and half years. Unity of our people is required this time than any other time".

Sorting and counting has been underway since Saturday evening across the 214 polling centers across Lakes state various counties; sorting and counting began at 7PM.

The preliminary results will be published at the polling centers at the end of the counting for voters to see while the official and final results of the poll will be announced by the National Referendum Commission by mid February.

Obama congratulates Sudanese, urges restraint

AFP 16/1/11 - US President Barack Obama congratulated the Sudanese Sunday for what he called an inspiring referendum on their country's future, but urged calm as an expected secession is worked out.

"The referendum now moves into another phase, and while official results will not be available for some time, independent observers have been extremely encouraged by the credibility of the process to date," Obama said in a statement.

"We urge all parties to continue to urge calm and show restraint as the parties work to complete implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement."

"The sight of so many Sudanese casting their votes in a peaceful and orderly fashion was an inspiration to the world and a tribute to the determination of the people and leaders of south Sudan to forge a better future," Obama said.

He commended the organizers of the referendum and the domestic and international observers, but "most of all, the voters who turned out in high numbers and high spirits to take their turn at the ballot box."

"The past week has given the world renewed faith in the prospect of a peaceful, prosperous future for all of the Sudanese people -- a future that the American people long to see in Sudan," he said.

Voter registration in Southern Kordofan postponed for two days

Al-Ayyam Khartoum, 17/01/11 – The High Elections Committee in Southern Kordofan has announced that the start of voter registration in the state due to have kicked off yesterday has been delayed for “further consultation with the political forces”.

Committee chairman Adam Abdeen told Radio Miraya that a delegation from the National Elections Commission is expected in the state today to seek means to resolve the differences over the voter registry.

Carter Center: S. Sudan vote peaceful and credible

AP Juba, 17/01/11 - A group of election observers led by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said Monday that they found the just-concluded Southern Sudan's referendum to have been credible.

Carter's observation mission also praised Sudanese for their patience and commitment during the weeklong vote, which ended Saturday. U.N. and EU missions have also said the vote was largely peaceful and legitimate.

"The referendum process to date is broadly consistent with international standards for democratic elections," the Atlanta-based Carter Center said in a statement, noting that "with the exception of a few isolated incidents, polling was conducted in a peaceful and orderly environment."

South Sudan struggles to absorb returnees

Financial Times 14/1/11 - Sitting on a mattress in the middle of scrubland, two mothers shield their babies from the burning sun. "Even though now we don't have a place to stay, we are in our own country," says Mary Nyaluak, as rickshaws and donkeys pass her by in Bentiu, a state capital in southern Sudan's border area.

As southern Sudan waits for the close of polls in its referendum on independence on Saturday, the likely new state will struggle to accommodate the many newcomers to an area that has seen decades of civil war

Ms Nyaluak is among 150,000 southern Sudanese who, since October last year, have packed up their lives in the north ahead of a referendum that is expected to split Africa's largest country in two.

The government expects half a million to return by July, when southern Sudan will break away from the north, if results confirm an expected overwhelming victory for separatists.

Officials organising the vote say a heavy turnout could force an extension of the seven-day ballot beyond January 15, but that the 60 per cent turnout needed to validate it has already been achieved. Khartoum officials have declared themselves satisfied with the voting process, which they acknowledge is likely to lead to secession.

Many returnees simply want to go home after years running from war; others are unsure of what their status will be after secession if they stay in the north, where they say they cannot find work and suffer discrimination.

The exodus in Sudan threatens to create a humanitarian crisis. Already WFP, the UN's food agency, has handed out emergency rations to 116,000 returnees.

"There's been a sharp spike in returnees and the pace has started to outstrip the capacity of the government and its partners to cope," said Lise Grande, chief humanitarian co-ordinator in the region and deputy of the UN peacekeeping mission. "We are really worried."

William Kuol, director of the Southern Sudanese Relief and Rehabilitation Commission charged with welcoming the returnees, said the southerners have faced grave dangers on the way.

"The government of the north does not escort them and the government of the south has no way to go into the north," said My Kuol, adding that 51,000 have so far arrived in Unity State alone, and he estimates 30,000 have not yet registered.

The southerners have embarked on long journeys by Nile river barge or buses that cross areas at the mercy of militias, hijackers and northern cattle raiders.

The UN could not confirm reports that 10 returnees were killed in an ambush on a bus heading towards southern Sudan this week, nor that Ahmed Haroun, governor of South Kordofan, a border state, had closed one of two main roads south to returnees.

The UN mission is brokering emergency talks after reports of deadly clashes this week in Abyei, a disputed territory that neighbours Unity State, where the southern government said militia fighters had also launched attacks to disrupt voting.

“In the case of Abyei, we have increased our patrols and air patrols to ensure there is no further possible escalation or any air provocation from either side,” UN mission spokesman Kouider Zerrouk told the Financial Times.

The southern government has promised to allocate land to those who return, but many have not been able to secure transport back to their villages.

At the Nile port in the southern capital Juba, men smoke sheesha pipes in front of a collection of furniture, mattresses and dried fish braided into plaits for safekeeping following a 12-day journey. Many said they were still waiting for government transport to take them back to their villages, eight days after arriving.

For Adam Haroun, 40, a northerner who is based in the south and shuttles between Khartoum and Bentiu’s bus park, business is the same as ever and he said he had no plans to leave the southern region and scurry north.

“The only change I can see is that now I might need a passport to do my job.”

PopCon Highlights

5000 take part in Popular Consultation in Blue Nile state

Al-Khartoum 17/1/11 – The third day of Popular Consultation (PopCon) in the Blue Nile state saw a big turnout at all centres. Local Assembly MPs and Chair of the PopCon commission visited yesterday the centres where the process is taking place.

Commission Information Officer Ms Siham Hashim said the security situation in the area is stable and the process is moving unhindered, adding that the turnout across the state was estimated at 5000 participants.

Calls for Blue Nile autonomy

Al-Ayyam Khartoum 17/01/11 – As Blue Nile State continues to gather public opinion in the Popular Consultations process that kicked off last Friday, some voices stressed the need for autonomy for the region within the framework of a united Sudan. The Deputy Speaker of the Blue Nile State Legislative Assembly, Mamoun Hammad, has revealed that a number of citizens have requested regional autonomy while most other people have called for development and job opportunities.

Other Highlights

JEM says it will not stay in Doha “forever”, dismisses Mbeki’s initiatives

Sudantribune.com Washington, 16/01/11 - The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) on Sunday slammed the Sudanese government for what it described as “foot dragging” in coming to the peace talks in the Arab Gulf state of Qatar.

“Our commitment to the talks is not open-ended. The government must indicate clearly whether it wants to sit with us to reach a peaceful settlement but we cannot stay in Doha forever,” JEM spokesperson Ahmed Hussein told Sudan Tribune by phone.

Hussein reiterated his movement’s refusal of the government’s new Darfur strategy saying that insisting on it contradicts with the ongoing process in Doha.

The government’s strategy is founded on the conviction that the rebel groups have become an obstacle to end the conflict. Ghazi Saleh Al-Deen, presidential adviser tasked with the file, considers also that the rebels distorted the origins of the conflict which had been disputes over pastures and land between cattle herders and farmers.

The head of the African Union panel on Darfur Thabo Mbeki and U.S. special envoy Scott Gration have voiced their approval of Khartoum’s plan.

“You cannot say you approve of the government’s plan and at the same time announce that you support the Doha process. These two things are mutually exclusive” JEM official said.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs to recall some diplomats abroad

Al-Sahafa Khartoum, 17/01/11 – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs says it is recalling some of its diplomats abroad.

Ministry Spokesperson Khaled Musa says the step has been taken for consultations following the cut announced by the finance ministry on its budget. He pointed out that the diplomats summoned would still maintain their positions in the ministry and their diplomatic passports would not be withdrawn.

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