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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

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Highlights

Local Arabic and English Language Press

Widespread concerns about ICC

Media reports a range of ICC-related stories about possible repercussions of the impending ICC decision on President Al-Bashir.

Today, the Presidency meets in Khartoum to discuss outstanding issues, including the ICC decision and attempts to resolve the Darfur crisis.

Meanwhile, African and Arab foreign ministers meet in Doha. "Our meeting aims to study what's happened in terms of contacts with the Sudanese government and armed groups and see what we can do to suspend international justice efforts to bring proceedings against President Bashir," AU Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra said.

Today's local press features reports that Popular Congress Party Chairman Dr. Hassan Al Turabi has come under widespread attack from political and media figures alike for his statement urging President Al-Bashir to surrender to the ICC. Most claim that the controversial opposition leader put the national interest at risk in favour of pursuing his well known differences with the NCP regime.

In Juba yesterday, First VP and GoSS President Salva Kiir spoke publicly for the first time of the risk to the CPA if Bashir is charged by the ICC. Noting that he had raised this concern with U.S. officials during his recent visit to Washington, Kiir pondered what the fall out would be, especially with regard to the south. Would there be a referendum in 2011, he asked. "Let's assume that the NCP said that our president now stand accused so we are not obliged with the agreement [CPA]. What will the situation in Sudan be like? People will revert back to war because anything that happens to the CPA will suspend the constitution that represents the agreement in itself" he said. The SPLM leader did say that he was confident the NCP would exercise self restraint "and not resort to violence" should an arrest warrant be issued.

Today's local press also carries a report that Sudan has withdrawn its principal agreement to the Rome Charter on ICC establishment. Reportedly, the agreement is retracted because the National Assembly refused to ratify the Statute in the backdrop of the ICC proceedings against President Bashir.

MFA spokesperson Ali Al-Sadiq said intensive efforts were underway to convince the world that an arrest warrant for Bashir would have negative impact on peace efforts and would also increase suffering in Darfur. However, He reiterated Sudan's commitment to UNAMID deployment.

10 killed, 10 injured in Southern Kordofan

Al-Rai Al -Aaam reports at least 10 persons killed and 10 injured when SPLA clashed with some tribes in Khur Al-Dalaib area, Rashad Locality, of southern Kordofan.

NCP official calls for CPA review

Al-Wifaq reports NCP official Qutbi Al-Mahdi as saying that the Government should have the

guts to review the CPA because of SPLM violations. He also accused the CPA guarantors of lack of integrity and of being biased.

Abyei official threatens to resign

Al-Sahafa reports the Abyei Administration head of finance Ar Deng as saying that the Federal Finance Ministry should release the Abyei budget within a week otherwise “all options are open including resignation”. The Abyei Administration has also called on the Presidency to intervene to address the financial crisis. Deng said the Finance Ministry had agreed yesterday agreed to provide half of the sanctioned budget for the Administration to function.

UN to repatriate Sudanese refugees from Israel, Libya and Egypt

Akhir Lahza reports UNHCR Representative in Sudan Chris Etishi as saying that the Commission is planning to repatriate Sudanese refugees from Libya, Egypt and Israel. He said UNHCR office in Cairo should know by end of January the total number of refugees to be returned particularly to Southern and Eastern Sudan. Repatriation would not include Darfur refugees because of instability in the region, he said.

Presidency to receive border demarcation report soon

Al-Rai Al-Aam reports GoSS N-S Border Demarcation Commission Representative Col. Rek Degol as saying that Abyei area lies in the north. He told the paper that Abyei area was part of Western Kordofan before the state was integrated into the North and South Kordofan States. He expects the committee to submit its report to the Presidency this month.

Websites/International News Coverage

ICC exceeds its remit – Saudi Justice Minister

SUNA website reports Saudi Justice Minister Dr. Abdullah bin Mohamed Al Al-Sheikh said in Khartoum that the ICC had exceeded its remit in the Bashir case. Suggesting the court should stick to the purpose and mandate for which it was set up, the visiting Justice Minister told **SUNA** that once ICC got back on the right track it would understand that it lacked the evidence to support its allegations.

Bashir urges Arabs to end Gaza crisis: Syrian news agency

SANA website reported from Damascus yesterday that President al-Bashir of Sudan stressed the need for Arab countries to work together to halt Israeli aggression in Gaza and to ensure withdrawal of the occupation forces, immediate lifting of the blockade and the opening of the crossings. Before departing Damascus on completion of his two-day visit, President Bashir told reporters he hoped the Doha summit would result in a “lasting and firm Arab position that preserves the firm Arab principles and the right of the Palestinian people and not giving up.” President al-Bashir told reporters before leaving Damascus. During his two-day visit, President Al-Bashir met with Syria’s President Assad and with leaders of the Palestinian factions in Damascus.

South Sudan authorities detain Juba Post managing editor

Sudan Tribune website January 13, 2009 (KHARTOUM) — The managing editor of The Juba Post, Isaac Billy Gideon, was detained Monday for a press release that was run in the newspaper two months ago. Gideon, who spent about nine hours in custody, was arrested at

10:00am yesterday but was bailed out at 6:50 pm.

The Juba Post newspaper has been registered in Khartoum on 9 January, 2005 and start printing 5,000 copies weekly from Monday and Wednesday double a week said Luganya. "Our newspaper is read in Southern Sudan and in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan."

Clinton says she will "sound the alarm" on Darfur

WASHINGTON, Jan 13 (**Reuters**) - U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton said on Tuesday she would focus on the Darfur crisis as top U.S. diplomat and the Obama administration was looking at options including the creation of no-fly zones.

"There is a great need for us to sound the alarm again about Darfur. It is a terrible humanitarian crisis compounded by a corrupt and very cruel regime in Khartoum," Clinton said at a Senate hearing to confirm her nomination as secretary of state.

She said the incoming Obama administration was reviewing U.S. policy toward Darfur and the UN/African Union force must be fully deployed.

"We have spoken about other options, no-fly zones, other sanctions and sanctuaries, looking to deploy the UN/AU force to try to protect the refugees but also to repel the militias," she said. "There is a lot under consideration," she added.

Foreign policy experts say 200,000 people have died and 2.5 million driven from their homes in five years of fighting between rebels and the army and government-backed militias. Khartoum accuses the Western media of exaggerating the death toll.

The deployment of a joint UN/AU peacekeeping force is behind schedule and Darfur activists have been pushing the new administration to do more to get those troops on the ground and look at fresh ideas to stop the violence.

Clinton has said on several occasions she wanted to see a NATO "no-fly" zone over Darfur to support peacekeepers against militias.

Jerry Fowler, president of the Save Darfur Coalition, an advocacy group, said there was no time to spare in acting to end the violence in western Sudan and facilitate a lasting peace there.

"Secretary-designate Clinton and the new administration must be prepared to lead on ending the genocide starting next Tuesday and not a day later," said Fowler.

Human rights bill passes in South Sudan legislature

The South Sudan Legislative Assembly today passed the Human Rights Bill following yesterday's unexpected adjournment.

Hon. Caesar Bayeh Loyalala attempted to revise the original text, which he considered in favour of government, arguing that the Human Rights and Anticorruption Commissions including auditor general chamber have extra judiciary power.

There were 83 MPs present plus five absent with permission totaling 88 legislators for quorum, and the bill was passed for the third and final reading at 1:15 p.m.

Please secure ceasefire - UN Gaza official tells Ban

(**UN news center**)13 January - A senior United Nations official in Gaza warned yesterday that

“tragically the horror continues,” with 19 children reported killed and 52 injured in just the last 24 hours of Israeli-Hamas fighting, even as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the Security Council on his upcoming trip to the region to speed up diplomatic efforts for a ceasefire.

“For the Secretary-General our message will be as it has been consistently: Please, we have to get an end to the fighting, nowhere in Gaza is safe, the situation here is horrific for everybody,” the Gaza Director of Operations of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), John Ging, told a news conference in New York, speaking by video link from ground zero.

“Every hour that passes here, innocent women, men and children are dying and being injured in a very brutal way,” he said, adding that the fighting overnight in Gaza City was “very excessive” as the offensive which Israel launched with the stated aim of stopping Hamas rocket attacks against it moved towards its 19th day.

The overall toll is now put at more than 900 Palestinians killed, 42 per cent of them women and children, and some 4,000 wounded, nearly 50 per cent women and children. Mr. Ging said that, as with the reported child casualties over the past 24 hours, the UN had been unable to verify the numbers, but the Palestinian reports have seemed credible. There has been a massive amount of destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and homes, he added.

He paid particular tribute to the Palestinian ambulance drivers. “For me the bravest are the ambulance drivers. They’re the ones, and the ambulance staff, that are going right in to the frontline where they’re shooting and firing to rescue those who have been injured and get them the life-saving treatment that they need,” he said. “More lives will be lost every day and every night but for their tremendous courage and bravery under fire.”

Mr. Ban told the Council in closed consultations that at each stop on his trip beginning in Cairo tomorrow he would stress to the leaders of Egypt, Israel, the occupied Palestinian territory, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Syria the vital need for an immediate and durable ceasefire and for the urgent provision of humanitarian aid without restriction.

At a news conference yesterday he laid out the basic essentials for settling the crisis at talks with the parties underway in Cairo: agreement on an immediate ceasefire, with at a minimum a halt to rocket attacks by Hamas militants and withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza; international cooperation to stop the smuggling of weapons into Gaza; and full re-opening of border crossings into Gaza.

Mr. Ging said 5,000 more people fled their homes overnight seeking shelter in UNRWA schools, bringing the total to 40,000, although this represented only a fraction of those seeking refuge, since many others had gone to relatives and friends. He paid homage to the dignity of the people as they sought to cope with the horrors of the crisis.

Assistance was getting through some of the crossings from Israel, with 90 trucks passing today but that, together with the daily three-hour lull instituted by Israel to allow for distribution, was not nearly sufficient, he said. Shortage of flour was still a major problem, and fuel was still lacking with the Gaza power station operating at only 40 per cent capacity.

Sewage pumps are still not functioning due to the lack of electricity, diminished fuel supplies for back-up generators, and the lack of spare parts, 500,000 Gazans still do not have access to running water, and 80 per cent of drinking water is not safe for human consumption, according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, while in Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya, in northern Gaza, sewage is flowing in the streets.

Mr. Ging said public health was “a very real concern” with the possibility of cholera or other disease outbreaks, as Israel’s daily three-hour lulls were not nearly enough time to repair the destroyed water infrastructure.

He also reiterated his call for an independent investigation, and accountability, over Israel’s

deadly mortar attack near an UNRWA school and bombing of a house in Zaitoun last week amid continuing conflicting reports about the incidents. But he said he “very much appreciated” Israeli cooperation on UN aid delivery after last week’s killing of an UNRWA driver in an authorized run, highlighting a marked improvement in coordinating convoys for food and medicine.

He stressed, however, how difficult it was to deliver aid in a conflict zone, noting that while he was at an Israeli checkpoint at Netzarim today they came under attack.

And on a more personal level, he bemoaned the ongoing lack of cash in the blockaded strip, noting that he had been told yesterday that Israeli approval for a transfer had been given yesterday, but now was told it had not.

The shortage has kept 94,000 special hardship cases, “the poorest of the poor,” from receiving any UN cash aid since 18 November, while his own staff got only half of their December salaries. “Of course they (my staff) reminded me today – and I have to take it on the chin – that the Hamas staff have all been paid (by Hamas),” he said.

At least 34 UN staff members killed in attacks worldwide in 2008

(UN NEWS CENTER) A radio reporter in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a schoolteacher in Gaza, seven food aid truck drivers in Sudan and Somalia and ten peacekeepers in Darfur are among the 34 United Nations staff members killed by malicious acts in 2008, the world body’s Staff Union said today.

Although the figure represents a slight decline from the previous year, “2008 was another harsh year for United Nations personnel around the world,” Staff Union President Stephen Kisambira said in a press release.

“The Staff Union is particularly concerned by the killing of many contracted workers who are increasingly being used as a substitute for United Nations staff in many dangerous areas in the world,” he added.

“The Staff Union once again appeals to Member States to guarantee the minimal security conditions necessary for the United Nations to carry out its life-saving work,” he stressed.

One of the most deadly incidents occurred when a joint police and military patrol was ambushed by at least 200 attackers on horseback and armed SUVs between Gusa Jamat and Wadah, North Darfur on 8 July, killing seven peacekeepers and wounding 22 from the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

On 29 October a security advisor and a driver for the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) were killed in a suicide car bombing of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) compound in Hargeisa, northern Somalia. Six staff members were also injured, two of them seriously.

In addition to malicious actions, air crashes also took their toll, the Staff Union said, with seven staff members dying on 3 March in a crash in eastern Nepal and another seven losing their lives when a plane carrying humanitarian supplies went down in the eastern DRC.

At least 10 UN personnel were taken hostage during 2008, and one was still missing in Somalia at the end of the year.

In addition, on 14 December, the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Niger, Robert Fowler, his assistant and their UN driver went missing while driving near the country’s capital, Niamey

Links

Sudan

Sudan: Overtaxed, over-ticketed, and overcharged nation. [Commentary]. By John A. Akec. *Sudan Tribune*. 13/01/2009. (Noon).

<http://unhq-apps-01.un.org/dpi/nmu.nsf/ac/2009-01->