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Highlights

Juba Alliance likely to boycott elections

The political parties (Juba Alliance) are reportedly weighing a complete elections boycott because of failure of the NCP to create a conducive climate for the process, **Akhir Lahza** reports. Sources confided to the newspaper the likelihood of the SPLM contesting elections in the South only although it is keen that the process takes place before the referendum to ensure that the elected president signs the referendum results. Meanwhile, **Al-Khartoum** reports that the Juba Alliance has threatened to withdraw confidence from the NEC should it fails to respond to the political parties' petition. According to **Rai Al-Shaab**, Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi, speaking to reporters after a meeting with the visiting Russian envoy, did not rule out the convergence of the Juba Alliance members on a single presidential candidate to compete with Al-Bashir.

Presidential candidates to meet on Friday for consultations on elections

Al-Khartoum reports independent presidential candidate Kamil Idriss as saying that all the presidential candidates have been invited for a meeting on Friday at Umma Party leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi's residence for consultation on their participation in upcoming elections.

Foreign troops threat to elections – experts

Intibaha reports unnamed political and security experts have warned of a possible impact of foreign interferences and the presence of foreign troops in the country on the upcoming electoral process, adding it could be a cause of violence during elections. Although the experts say Sudan's recent history is free of electoral violence, they expressed concern that some political forces might resort to violence if they loose. According to **the Citizen**, the experts and observers warned of violence similar to those that occurred in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Iran. However, the NCP has reportedly downplayed talk about possible violence during elections.

Russian Parliament to dispatch electoral monitors to Sudan

Visiting Russian envoy Michael Margelov has revealed that the Russian Parliament intends to send observers and civil organizations to monitor Sudan's elections, **Al-Ahdath** reports. He said that the issue of elections delay is Sudan's internal affair.

South Sudan election candidate complains of arrests

Reuters 10/3/10 - GoSS has arrested dozens of supporters of a leading independent contesting the governorship of the region's main oil state, the candidate said on Tuesday.

Angelina Teny, the wife of GoSS VP Riek Machar who is running independently in Unity state, said April's vote would not be fair. She told Reuters some of her supporters were still in jail.

"There are a number of them in prison in different locations," said Teny, a former SPLM member who disagreed with the party's method and choice of candidate for the post. "There is no freedom. You couldn't possibly have free and fair elections under such circumstances."

N. Bahr el Ghazal fires 22 employees over their election views

Sudan Tribune website 10/3/10 reported that authorities in Northern Bahr el Ghazal state have fired 22 state government employees in different locations from Aweil West County over allegations that they are supporters of the independent candidates contesting the upcoming

elections against official nominees of the SPLM.

Commissioner of Aweil West County Riak Wol Atuer reportedly suspended the salaries of 19 teachers and three health workers because they are supporting independent candidates.

Al-Bashir says no guarantee for conduct of elections all over Darfur

President Al-Bashir reportedly said has doubts that elections would be conducted all over Darfur, *Al-Ahdath* reports. "Even if we achieve peace now, who will guarantee full elections in Darfur," he told the Blue Nile TV Channel yesterday. According to *Al-Rai Al-Aam*, Al-Bashir told the Channel that he would form a broad-based Government if he wins upcoming elections, adding that he would be unhappy if the Sudan is partitioned. "Separation with peace is better than unity under war," he said.

Darfur JEM says election delay crucial, Bashir rejects talks' exclusivity

Sudan Tribune website 9/10/10– The JEM said that the postponement of April general election is crucial to reach a lasting settlement in Darfur. Al-Bashir, however, warned that Khartoum would not accept preconditions. He added that any one who refuses to join the Doha talks will isolate himself and pay a high price.

According to *Al-Ahdath*, JEM officially informed the Darfur talks' mediators about the need to postpone elections.

Other highlights

Al-Bashir and Kiir in Wau to inaugurate railway

Sudan Tribune website 10/3/10 – President Al-Bashir and FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit arrived in Wau, the capital of Western Bahr el Ghazal, to inaugurate today a railway line connecting Northern and Southern parts of the Sudan.

The railway, which will resume functioning for the first time after the war, is seen as a campaigning bid for the two incumbent presidents.

Al-Bashir also visited Rumbek yesterday for campaigning." We respect the CPA. The CPA provides for election and after the election there will be the referendum in 2011 and all Southerners must decide whether to keep a united Sudan or to have two countries. One Sudan is better for us. One Sudan will be strong and it will be the best for all of us as Sudanese across the country. We are one Sudanese with one passport," Al-Bashir told a rally. According to *Akhir Lahza*, Al-Bashir admitted the existence of a famine in the lakes states but pledged to send urgent aid to the affected people.

South Sudan humanitarian problems worsening-report

Reuters 11/3/10 - Semi-autonomous south Sudan, wracked by inter-tribal fighting and hunger, will face a worsening humanitarian situation this year, a Norwegian aid agency report said on Thursday.

After many delays, Sudan will hold its first multi-party elections in 24 years in April, a key element of a 2005 peace deal that ended more than 20 years of conflict between north and south.

But on Jan. 9, 2011, only months after the polls, the south is due to hold a referendum on independence which most analysts believe will create a new African state.

The Norwegian Refugee Council said the international community must ensure the north-south peace deal is successfully implemented, but must also help strengthen the struggling south Sudan government to avoid more bloodshed if the south becomes independent.

"Displacement and humanitarian needs will continue to increase dramatically in 2010 due to intra-southern conflicts," the report said.

"Emergency response capacities must be immediately boosted both where intra-southern conflicts are combined with deteriorating food security as well as in areas historically most vulnerable to renewed north-south fighting," it said.

Progress in implementing the 2005 accord has been slow; the north has been accused of lacking political will to implement its provisions, while the south lacks the capacity to do so.

The lack of agreement on key issues including the long-delayed demarcation of the north-south border and how oil revenues will be shared after the referendum could lead to a renewal of armed conflict, the report said.

The Refugee Council said that as well as trying to help north and south Sudan overcome obstacles to the peace deal, the international community should tackle separate south-south tribal conflict.

"Failing to address intra-south causes of conflict would render a successful CPA process largely meaningless with regard to the current humanitarian situation in the south," the report said.

It urged donors to help strengthen the semi-autonomous Government of south Sudan, whose inability to resolve conflicts between ethnic groups played a significant role in last year's fighting.

The NRC said 80 percent of the south's health and education services were provided by international aid agencies, which was unsustainable. The government's weakness could increase tensions in the unstable region, it added.

"There are concerns that the lack of a common enemy among southern groups could further destabilise south Sudan in a post-referendum/independence future," it said.

Change impossible unless “Khartoum Government” removed – Arman

SPLM presidential candidate Yasir Arman, addressing a rally in Bentiu, said that not all the northerners are guilty of “embezzling” the South’s oil share, *Al-Sahafa* reports. Arman reportedly said a change and stability would be impossible to achieve unless “Khartoum regime” is removed from power. He said the SPLM is the only party that can guarantee the South the right to self-determination.

Sudan rebukes UNAMID over Darfur ambush

Reuters 10/3/10 – Sudan Government summoned yesterday head of UNAMID to express concern over a rebel ambush last week in which vehicles and equipment belonging to the Mission were seized.

The Foreign Ministry reportedly requested a rotation of the Nigerian soldiers out of the area near the Jabel Marra rebel stronghold, state news agency SUNA said.

UNAMID confirmed Wednesday's meeting but declined to comment on the request to rotate out the Nigerian troops.

"The whole issue of what happened in Jabel Marra is being discussed," UNAMID spokesman Kemal Saiki said. "It was agreed there would be further consultations with (the) authorities on the issue."

According to local dailies, the Government and UNAMID agreed to conduct a joint investigation of the incident.

Ugandan rebels seek refuge in Sudan's Darfur-report

Reuters 10/3/10 – The LRA rebels have found a safe haven in Darfur, an anti-genocide group said in a report that Khartoum dismissed as a lie.

A contingent of the feared LRA "has taken refuge in Government-controlled areas in South Darfur" the Washington-based Enough Project said in the report, an advance copy of which was provided to Reuters yesterday.

"The possibility of rekindled collaboration between LRA leader Joseph Kony and Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir ... should alarm policymakers and demands urgent international investigation and response," it said.

Both Bashir and Kony are wanted for war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Bassole hold talks with Darfur rebel chief in Paris

Sudan Tribune website 10/3/10 – UN-AU Chief Mediator Dijibril Bassole met yesterday with SLM leader Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur in Paris for talks that focused primarily on the recent fighting in Jebel Marra.

Al-Nur told Sudan Tribune that Bassole urged him to facilitate the work of UNAMID particularly in light of the civilian casualties and displacement in the region that resulted from the clashes.

Sources at the UN said that hundreds of civilians were killed in the fighting which rebels say was initiated by the Government. This week Khartoum said it took control of Jebel Marra despite earlier denials and claims that the SLM-AW were fighting among each other.

"I told brother Bassole that we want the UNAMID to have meaningful presence but this is not the case right now. Their mandate is very weak and they are unable to function and protect civilians" Al-Nur said.

"The Sudanese Government launched a massive attack against us but they targeted water sources, bread storage places and schools. This is a deliberate work to drive civilians out of their homes and proves what we called on constantly. Stop the killing and extermination of civilians, establish security, disarm militias then we will not hesitate to join peace talks," he added.

The SLM chief reiterated his previous demands related to civilian protection in response to a request that he join the Doha peace talks currently involving the JEM and other rebel groups.

Analysts say that Al-Nur, who enjoys popular support among IDPs, is crucial to any attempts to

bring peace to the war ravaged region.

US envoy racing against time to conclude Darfur peace process

Sudan Tribune website 10/3/10 – The US special envoy to Sudan Scott Gration said today that it is imperative that a peace deal be reached in the war ravaged region of Darfur prior to the April elections and suggested that the crisis there has shifted attention from the South ahead of the 2011 referendum.

“There is going to be a lot of things that are keeping us from focusing on Darfur.... That’s why in my view we have this little window where we really need to get the framework solidified. And then we can reach out and really put some flesh on the bones” Gration said.

The US special envoy made the remarks in Nairobi where he attended the extraordinary summit on Sudan organized by Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

East Sudan, a first step for Eritrea's Europe-bound migrants

AFP 11/3/10 — Fleeing a military regime, thousands of young Eritreans stream into neighbouring east Sudan, the first stage of their long migration to Europe, Israel -- or even Khartoum.

For four decades refugees from Eritrea have flowed into eastern Sudan, a dirt-poor region enriched only by golden, sun-beaten plains that unfurl until they hit the rocky, majestic peaks of the Taka Mountains.

In the past few years a new wave of refugees has been arriving here, the "jediddine" or newcomers in Arabic. They are young, educated Eritreans as well as Ethiopians and Somalis who make Sudan their launching pad toward a new life.

"I was a student, but the government wanted to force me into the army, which I did not want to do. I wanted to study," said Mukhtar, his bright eyes shining through stylish glasses.

Eritrean men and women are forced to serve a minimum 18 months of military service, after which they can be conscripted indefinitely -- a draconian measure that has pushed many young to flee.

Between 400 and 500 Eritreans arrive every week at the odd enclave with its diner and its "CinemaRoma" - a large tent with plastic tables and chairs where music videos blare through a small television screen.

There are two groups of refugees in east Sudan, said Mohamed Dualeh, head of the UNHCR in Kassala, in east Sudan. The first lot, who number around 66,000, came about 30 to 40 years ago and most are Muslim who speak Arabic and have family ties to local tribes. The second group "is completely different. They come from Asmara and the highlands (of Eritrea). They are less integrated because they don't speak Arabic and they are Christians," he said.

Around 19,000 of those registered with the UNHCR in 2008. Some 23,000 registered last year and today there are only 7,000 in the camps.

"The ones we see are not the total number", they are only "the tip of the iceberg", said Dualeh. Rather than risk the dangers of the Red Sea or cross the border into neighbouring Ethiopia, these young migrants traverse into eastern Sudan in the hope of reaching Europe, Israel or simply Khartoum.

"The east is becoming the transitory route to Europe. They go through Egypt or through Libya," Dualeh said.

Refugees pay smugglers 650 Sudanese pounds (270 dollars) to get to Khartoum, or 3,000 Sudanese pounds (1,250 dollars) for Israel, a Sudanese official said.

In Khartoum, thousands of Eritreans are packed into the popular neighborhoods of Deim, Gerif and Sahafa.