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Media Monitoring Report

United Nations Mission in Sudan/ Public Information Office

Referendum Watch

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Highlights

UN referendum panel begins third visit to Sudan

Sudan Tribune website 19/12/10 - The United Nations Secretary-General's Panel tasked with monitoring the upcoming referenda on self-determination in Sudan arrived in Khartoum Saturday to hold meetings with officials from the north and south of the country.

As well as meeting politicians from the national and southern regional governments they will also meet the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC), who are conducting the referendum, with technical assistance from the UN, as well as international and domestic observer groups and foreign diplomats.

The third visit of the UN panel comes three weeks before voting is due to start on January 9, with most observers anticipating that the south will chose to secede from the north.

The chair of the Panel, former President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, upon his arrival in Khartoum said that the voter registration process was "transparent and largely peaceful and orderly." "Momentum is building towards the vote on 9 January and preparations remain on course. Now we are in the exhibitions and appeals period, which is an important phase in the process, but we hope it can be concluded speedily and the vote can take place on time in a peaceful and successful manner."...

SPLM warns southern Sudanese against remaining in the North

Akhir Lahza 19/12/10 – The SPLM has warned southern civilians against staying in the North, saying they will risk their lives as they will lose their citizenship should the South secede.

National Assembly Speaker (SPLM) Atem Garang advised southerners to leave for the South because remaining in the North means risking their lives.

Garang said there are over 6 million Arab pastoralists at the border between the North and the South, wondering how they will access the South after secession, as aliens or with another status. He said the NCP had neglected this issue but confirmed that the SPLM would guarantee their right to pastures.

Abyei administration says SAF deployed troops in the region

Sudan Tribune website 18/12/10 - A local administration official in the contested oil-producing area of Abyei on Saturday reported that the northern Sudanese army has deployed troops in southern Kordofan state, which borders southern Sudan.

The daily newspaper Al-Akhbar quoted the press secretary of Abyei administration, Shul Angok, as saying that the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) was continuing to increase military province in the southern Kordofan region.

Angok claimed that the 31 battalion of SAF was currently present in the areas of Nama and Laffat al-Tumsah, adding that the battalion was receiving large reinforcements.

The press secretary, who warned of a military escalation in the area, said that south Sudan army, SPLA, did not have any presence in the area except the battalion affiliated to the Joint Defense Forces (JDF).

However, SAF's spokesman Al-Sawarmi Khalid Saad said the 31 battalion deployment in the area was permitted under the security arrangements protocol. He said that the battalion was inside the city and now it had been re-deployed to its area.

Abyei, southern Kordofan committees agree to promote security

Al-Rai Al-Aam 19/12/10 – The security committees of southern Kordofan and Abyei Area have agreed to take immediate steps to enhance security along roads linking the two regions to ensure a safe movement of civilians commercial goods.

The two committees, at a joint meeting in Kadugli yesterday chaired by governor of southern Kordofan state Ahmed Haroun and Abyei Chief Administrator Deng Arop, discussed safe migration routes for nomadic tribes. The meeting stressed the need for coordination among relevant organs in the two regions and to exchange of information on daily basis to enhance security.

Political parties and legal experts to file petition against referendum today

Al-Ahdath 19/12/10 – Northern and southern political parties, legal experts and northern and southern individuals are reportedly determined to file a suit today with the Constitutional Court against referendum.

According to informed sources, the petition focuses on violations of the referendum law with regard to the formation of the SSRC rather than its performance.

Misseriya threaten to block routes leading to South if they are not compensated for looted cattle

Al-Tayyar 19/12/10 – Members of the Misseriya tribe have warned against any attempt to go back on the Unity state's pledge to compensate them for 1000 heads of cattle looted by southern quarters.

Misseriya Union's high level source said that the cheque, issued to them as compensation for their looted cattle, would be sent to the bank on Sunday but should any thing go wrong they would block all routes leading to the South for commercial activity or IDP movement.

S. Sudan Parliament kicks off voter education campaign

Radio Miraya 18/12/10 - The Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) began on Friday a voter education campaign in the ten southern states ahead of the 2011 referendum. The chairperson of the referendum parliamentary committee, Beatrice Aber Samson said the focus will be on educating voters on how to cast their votes.

Meanwhile, the head of the Information Committee of the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly, Joy Kwaje Eluzai, said the Assembly will shortly take legal action against the newspapers she accused of propagating false news about the referendum.

She added that the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission is the only body that can speak about any postponement or suspension of the referendum.

Sudanese president makes an “Oil for Unity” offer

Sudan Tribune website 17/12/10 - The Sudanese president Omer Al-Bashir offered to let the South take the entire revenue from the country's oil wealth in return for a unity vote in the referendum that will take place in less than a month.

The Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) in control of the South has persistently accused the North of paying them less than the 50% stipulated in the peace accord.

Bashir made the proposal public during his meeting on Thursday with a visiting delegation of the African Union Peace and Security Council.

"We say if they choose unity, we are ready for the national government to give up its full share in the oil of the South to the government of the south," he said.

But Atem Garang who heads the SPLM bloc in the Sudanese parliament told the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera TV that the issue of unity is not oil related but rather a "matter of principle".

He added that democratic transformation has not occurred since the CPA was signed and that human rights are not preserved either.

This is not the first time the Sudanese leader makes such an offer. Last October he promised that the central government will pour billions in dollars for development projects in the South and will seek funding from any source including borrowing.

"As for the wealth sharing, we are ready to embrace the development of programs and projects adopted by the Unity Support Fund, in the areas of education, health, electricity, infrastructure, agricultural projects and manufacturing, until it reaches a level comparable to services provided in other states of Sudan," Bashir told lawmakers at the time.

The Sudanese president said that the government will seek funding for these projects from the national budget, grants or loans "even if it exceeded 100% of the oil revenue".

The statements reflect the general feeling about the inevitability of South Sudan's separation.

On Thursday, Bashir's assistant Nafie Ali Nafie said that efforts to campaign for unity have failed.

"No matter what we do we will reach this conclusion which will be recognized by the entire world... we must not deceive ourselves or cling to wishful thinking, we must resign to facts and realities," he said.

Nafie accused the SPLM of working to make secession the likely choice.

Presidents Mubarak and Kaddafi due in Khartoum to discuss post-referendum issues

Al-Khartoum 19/12/10 – President Al-Bashir, GoSS President Salva Kiir Mayardit, President Mubarak of Egypt and President Kaddafi of Libya will hold a mini-summit meeting in Khartoum tomorrow to discuss Sudan's status quo and post-referendum issues.

Parties to the CPA resume talks in Addis

Al-Ayyam 19/12/10 – Complementary talks between the two CPA parties began yesterday in Addis Ababa under the patronage of Austria.

The talks focused on economic relations between the North and the South in anticipation for secession besides political and security issues. The talks which will be concluded today will explore the two parties' visions on the issues on the table in order to assist them to arrange for post-referendum issues.

SPLM-Kadugli threatens to refer Popular Consultations to IGAD

Al-Sahafa 19/12/10 – The SPLM in Southern Kordofan has called on the government to be prepared to make concessions in order to reach an "administrative and political consensus" on the issue of Popular Consultations in the state, saying the concessions should include granting the state full control over its natural resources particularly oil.

The Deputy Chairman of the SPLM (Kadugli Chapter) painted several scenarios should the Legislative Assembly reach a deadlock on the issue including the possibility of referring the issue to the IGAD for arbitration.

Kiir discusses referendum with Egypt and EU

Al-Ayyam 19/12/10 – FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit has discussed referendum issue with delegations from the EU and Egypt's Foreign Ministry. The delegations have been briefed on the registration process.

EU special envoy to Sudan said the Union would provide diplomatic support to assist solution of the Abyei issue and would also support efforts aiming at building agricultural capacities and general services in southern Sudan.

Sudan's Bashir sees Islamic law, defends flogging

Reuters 19/12/10 - Sudan's president on Sunday said the country would adopt an entirely Islamic constitution if the south split away after a referendum, in a speech in which he also defended police who were filmed flogging a woman.

"If south Sudan secedes, we will change the constitution and at that time there will be no time to speak of diversity of culture and ethnicity," President Omar Hassan al-Bashir told supporters at a rally in the eastern city of Gedaref.

"Sharia and Islam will be the main source for the constitution, Islam the official religion and Arabic the official language," he said.

Southerners are now three weeks away from the scheduled start of a vote on whether to declare independence or stay part of Sudan -- a plebiscite promised in a 2005 peace deal that ended decades of war between the Muslim north and the south where most follow traditional beliefs and Christianity.

That 2005 accord set up an interim constitution that limited Islamic sharia law to the north and recognised "the cultural and social diversity of the Sudanese people".

Bashir also defended police shown lashing a woman in a film that appeared on the video-sharing website YouTube.

"If she is lashed according to sharia law there is no investigation. Why are some people ashamed? This is sharia," he said.

Other Highlights

Khartoum criticizes UN independent human rights expert

Al-Ahdath 19/12/2010 - Head of the Advisory Council for Human Rights, Ahmed Idriss, has deplored statements by Mohamed U. Chande, the UN independent expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, saying they are unfounded because of being based on information received from organizations without checking with any government body to verify. Mr. Idriss said that the 11 person Chande was talking about have been arrested a couple of weeks ago in connection with Radio Dabanga case and would be brought to justice soon, adding that their case has nothing to do with human rights.

Radio Miraya 18/12/10 reported that Chande called on the Government of Sudan to release journalists and human rights activist from detention. Speaking at a press conference on Friday, Chandi expressed concern on the continued detention of 11 human rights activists and journalists.

He stressed that Sudan is signatory to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which includes freedom of expression and prohibits arbitrary arrest or detention.

In reaction, the Head of Sudanese Journalists Union, Muhei-eldin Titawi, told *Radio Miraya* that a journalist should not be detained but held, investigated and then released.

He referred to the case of three journalists of the *Rai Al-Shaab* who were tried, and added that the union has repeatedly called for dropping the rest of the punishment and for the release of the journalists.

Sudan, Darfur rebels clash one day after UN rebuke

Reuters 17/12/10 - Sudan's army clashed with Darfur rebels for a third time in a week Friday, a day after U.N. envoys criticised Khartoum for launching attacks on the insurgent force, peacekeepers said.

Government soldiers exchanged fire with the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) loyal to Minni

Acrua Minnawi in the south Darfur village of Khor Abeche for more than two hours in the afternoon, the region's joint U.N./African Union UNAMID peacekeepers said.

"SAF (Sudan's Armed Forces) went to Khor Abeche. There were SLM Minni Minnawi elements there and a firefight ensued ... The fighting was intense," UNAMID spokesman Kemal Saiki said.

UNAMID said there had been an unknown number of casualties and civilians had taken shelter at a nearby peacekeeping base.

No one was immediately available to comment from Sudan's army.

Sudan's army attacked Minnawi's forces in Khor Abeche, 80 km (50 miles) northeast of the capital of south Darfur, Nyala, last Friday and Saturday, killing at least one person, burning houses and forcing hundreds to flee, UNAMID reported.

U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said on Thursday she strongly condemned the attacks.

"We have heard deeply disturbing reports of Sudanese armed forces blocking the movement of civilians, then looting and burning the village. These reports deserve the council's serious attention and effective responses by UNAMID," she told the Security Council.

Government delays Referendum staff entry visas - UN

Radio Miraya 17/12/10 - The UN Undersecretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy, said that the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) is facing problems in processing visas for its employees entering the country for the 2011 Referendum process.

He said that the number of delayed visas is about four hundred. However, Le Roy called on the government to speed up the process. The State Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, Muttrif Siddiq, said that the visas are being processed.

40 families flee Khor Abeche after armed clashes

Radio Miraya 18/12/10 - 40 families have fled the Khor Abeche area in South Darfur after clashes between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan Liberation Army (Minnawi faction), Minister of Humanitarian Affairs for South Darfur State Suleiman Ahmed Omer said.

Speaking to Radio Miraya, Omer said that the state government would send a team to assess the humanitarian and security situation in the area. Radio Miraya correspondent reported that a number of civilians have fled Khor Abeche to neighbouring areas.

Meanwhile, the United Nations/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) said that a number of citizens came to the UNAMID camp for safety and medical care.