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Media Monitoring Report

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Referendum Watch

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Highlights

South Sudan rolls out red carpet for Bashir

AFP 4/1/11 (Juba) On a rare visit to Juba today, Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir told southerners he would celebrate the result of Sunday's referendum on southern independence, "even if you choose secession."

"I personally will be sad if Sudan splits. But at the same time I will be happy if we have peace in Sudan between the two sides," Bashir said in a speech to senior southern officials broadcast live on state television.

"I am going to celebrate your decision, even if your decision is secession."

He had earlier been greeted by southern leader Salva Kiir on his arrival at Juba airport, where he was given a red carpet welcome by senior southern politicians, religious leaders and a guard of honour from the combined armed forces of north and south Sudan.

Around 500 people gathered outside the airport, shouting slogans for separation such as "no to unity," and waving southern flags, but the atmosphere was festive.

In his speech, Bashir said unity was the best choice for the southerners, but he also insisted he wanted good relations with the south if it chooses independence, and repeated his message that the links between north and south Sudan were unique.

"Anything you need in terms of technical, logistical or professional support from Khartoum, you will find us ready to give it," he said.

"The benefit we get from unity, we can also get it from two separate states."

A heavy security presence was deployed in Juba, where armed soldiers were seen patrolling the streets.

"We will give him a warm welcome," said southern information Minister Barnaba Marial said ahead of Bashir's arrival.

"His recent conciliatory statements have pleased a lot of people. We have asked our public to be courteous, welcoming and kind, because there is no competition here," Marial told reporters in Juba...

Posters erected by non-governmental civil society groups at the entrance to Juba airport on Tuesday served as a reminder to Bashir of the expected outcome of the referendum.

"We welcome you back to celebrate the independence of south Sudan," read one. "Welcome to the 193rd (world) state," ran another.

"Imposing unity by force doesn't work," al-Bashir told southern officials and civil society leaders, According to **AP** 4/1/11. "We want unity between the north and the south but this

doesn't mean opposing the desire of the southern citizen."

Hundreds of pro-independence demonstrators waited outside the airport for al-Bashir, chanting and waving placards...

Al-Bashir arrived in a suit but donned traditional southern robes when he descended from the plane. An honor guard of troops and a marching band serenaded him as he was welcomed by Southern Sudanese Vice President Salva Kiir.

President Al-Bashir to visit Juba today

Sudan Radio 4/1/11 - President Al-Bashir will visit Juba today for meeting with his FVP Salva Kiir Mayardit, GoSS officials and civil society organizations. Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail said that the President's visit comes in the context of the implementation of the CPA and to get acquainted with the referendum process. He described the visit as useful and fruitful and comes for the interest of the country whatever be the result of the referendum.

According to *Sudan Tribune website* 3/1/11, Barnaba Marial Benjamin Bill, minister of information and broadcasting service in the government of south Sudan on Monday called for massive reception of president Omer Hassan al-Bashir when he visits Juba on Tuesday...

Talks about fake voting cards unfounded – SSRC

Al-Intibaha 4/1/11 – SSRC spokesperson Dr. Sua'd Ibrahim Eisa said all preparations have been finalized and the polling centres are ready to receive voters on 9 January. She dismissed talk about the existence of forged voting cards, saying the cards are designed in such a manner that they could not be forged.

Popular consultations campaign in the Blue Nile to kick off on January 5

Al-Ahram Al-Youm 4/1/11 – the Parliamentary Commission for Popular Consultation in the Blue Nile state said all preparations are in place to kick off campaigns on 5 January at 116 centres across the state. Parliamentary Commission Chair Atta Al-Mannan said the process would continue for 20 days, calling on the government and donors to make available necessary funding needed to carry out the process.

30 opposition parties to convene a conference tomorrow to discuss democracy and referendum

Al-Sahafa 4/1/11- 30 opposition political parties including the PCP of Hassan Al-Turabi, National Umma Party led by Sadiq Al-Mahdi and the communist party will convene a conference tomorrow in Omdurman to discuss issues of democratic transformation, economic crisis and hard living conditions, Darfur crisis and the upcoming referendum.

Preparatory committee chairman Siddiq Yousuf told reporters that the closed conference sessions would focus on four papers that tackle the above-mentioned themes. He said the conference would come up with a final communiqué, sign a national charter and the leaders would also address a symposium.

Sudan Government request Netherlands to monitor referendum

Al-Rai Al-Aam 4/1/11 – The Sudanese government reiterated yesterday its pledge to conduct a

smooth vote on South Sudan self-determination.

Foreign Minister Ali Karti, at meeting with visiting Dutch International Cooperation Minister in Khartoum yesterday, said the government had requested the Netherlands to monitor any movements between the North and the South.

The Dutch Minister told reporters that his talks with Sudanese officials on the upcoming referendum were fruitful, saying the whole world is watching the Sudanese process because they have concerns. "We want a concrete commitment from the Sudanese government that the referendum would be on time, smooth and violence-free," he said, hoping that the CPA parties would be able to overcome the remaining obstacles. "We asked the Sudanese government to secure movement of civilians in the North and the South and to make means of transportation available to them and the Netherlands is ready to assist if so desired".

Japanese mission arrives to monitor referendum

Al-Ahdath 4/1/11 – A Japanese mission comprised of 15 members arrived yesterday to take part in monitoring the referendum.

Head of the mission told reporters yesterday after meeting with SSRC Chair Mohamed Ibrahim Khalil that Japan had provided \$8 million in support of the referendum, hoping that the process would be conducted in a transparent and neutral atmosphere.

China says it will send observers to Sudan referendum

Reuters 4/1/110 - China will send observers to Sudan when the south holds an independence referendum on Jan. 9, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

"At the invitation of both the north and the south, China will send observers to participate in the referendum," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters at a regular news conference.

"China is willing, together with the international community, to continue to play a proactive and constructive role for the sake of Sudan's peace and stability," Hong said...

3,930,916 voters are eligible to vote in the referendum – SSRC

Al-Sudani 4/1/11 – The SSRC has announced that 3,930,916 voters have been registered and are now eligible to vote on 9 January. SSRC member Chan Reec told a press conference yesterday in Juba that 52% of the registered voters are females, adding that all voting materials would be delivered across the South today. He did not rule out extension of voting duration if the SSRC sees valid reason.

Commander of military zone killed in Malakal

Al-Intibaha 4/1/11 – Commander of the military zone in Malakal, "Kude Kunjore" was killed in his residence in the Upper Nile by unidentified armed man along four other officers and his eight guards were also wounded.

A source told the newspaper yesterday that an unknown gunman broke into the residence of the commander, opened fire and fled.

President Al-Bashir witnesses military maneuvers in Port Sudan

Sudan Radio 4/1/11 – C-in-C of the Sudanese army Field Marshal Omer Al-Bashir witnessed yesterday military maneuvers in Port Sudan in which Navy, Air Force and ground troops took part including the successful test of a Sudan-made drone. President Al-Bashir, addressing the ceremony praised the achievements made by Sudan's military industry, saying peace without military might would be fragile and could easily collapse. He affirmed the government's keenness to care for the armed forces and its continuous support to provide it with all its requirements for its leading role in protecting the country's gains.

The President added that the Government of Southern Sudan's accommodation of some Darfur rebels represents a rebellion against the one-state's authority.

US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Kerry due in Sudan today

Al-Sahafa 4/1/11 –Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry is due in the country today on 4-day visit to Khartoum and Juba.

Kerry will meet with officials in the central government and the GoSS to acquaint himself with preparations for the upcoming referendum on self-determination of South Sudan.

U.S. says environment in Sudan “constructive” ahead of referendum

Sudan Tribune.com 3/1/11 - The United States today expressed optimism on the prospects for a smooth conduct of the South Sudan referendum this weekend.

“We believe that the right signals are being sent both in North and South in terms of the upcoming referendum and respecting the results. So the environment, we think, is constructive leading into this weekend,” U.S. state department spokesperson Philip J. Crowley told reporters during the briefing on Monday.

“I would say at this point that we are optimistic about the referendum this coming weekend. Sudan and Southern Sudan have come a long way over the past few months,” he added.

He acknowledged that there are still outstanding issues to be resolved between the North and South in reference to post-referendum arrangements such as citizenship, wealth sharing, international agreements, national debt and border demarcation.

“We know there's still a long way to go and a difficult road ahead as we get into negotiations between the North and the South on the post-referendum issues, depending on the choice that the people of South Sudan make” Crowley said.

The U.S. official said that special envoy to Sudan Scott Gration is heading to the region along with Ambassador Lyman and Dane Smith, who are the envoy's special advisers on South Sudan and Darfur respectively.

He did not address reports from Khartoum that U.S. Secretary of state Hillary Clinton will visit Sudan on Saturday accompanied by former Secretary of state Collin Powell and special envoy to Sudan John Danforth.

Other Highlights

Collin Powell to replace US envoy Gration

Al-Sahafa 4/1/11 – the newspaper has learned that the US Administration is in the process of replacing its envoy to the Sudan Scott Gration with ex-secretary of state Collin Powell immediately after the referendum. Reportedly, Gration would be replaced due to mounting pressure within the White House over his policies toward the Sudan. He will take over as US Ambassador to Kenya.

Serious outbreak of sand fly disease hits southern Sudan

IrishTimes.com 4/1/11 - SOUTH SUDAN is suffering from its worst outbreak of kala-azar in eight years, with cases set to peak as returnees with no immunity to the disease arrive ahead of an independence referendum on January 9th.

Patients, their feet swollen from the parasitic bite of the sand fly, limp into Malakal's teaching hospital in Upper Nile State.

The spread of the disease is currently under control, after a team from Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctor's Without Borders) arrived in November, reducing the death rate from 25 per cent to under 5 per cent. But they could peak again, as tens of thousands of southerners return home after years working and living in the north.

"The transmitting season is over now that the rains have stopped," says Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) doctor Daniel Zimmerer. "But the worry now is that as returnees come back, it will get worse. They have no immunity to the disease."

In the stadium 2km from the town's centre, 800 recent returnees from northern Sudan wait to be processed before they get to their home towns. More than 10,000 have passed through in recent months, putting pressure on a health system that is already creaking after years of war.

MSF has had to bring all its medication in by air because there are few roads to transport it. This means many people have to rely on the river Nile to bring them to hospital or clinics, a journey that can take days.

"Outside of cities and towns there is little access to healthcare centres, as there is no infrastructure" says José Hulsbeck, MSF's head of mission in south Sudan.

"You either go by foot or by plane, which means many health staff are not willing to work in these places."

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